STATE POLICY, SETTLEMENT SERVICES, AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN CANADA

by

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Abstract

Drawing on over 150 hours of participant-observation and 41 semi-structured interviews conducted between September 2013 and April 2014 with the participants and organizers of an employment and leadership skills program for immigrant women at two Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver, this ethnographic study examines the influence of Canadian immigration policies and settlement services on the employment trajectories of immigrant women. A key research finding concerns how women with precarious legal status and/or limited English language skills negotiate gaps accessing services and employment opportunities, and thus how the prompt provision of settlement supports and work permits would improve immigrant women’s labour market participation and economic standing in Canada. A second key finding concerns the value of settlement-oriented employment programs that recognize and emphasize newcomers’ skills rather than deficits, and that leverage this human capital to promote participants’ social integration and sense of citizenship in Canada. This dissertation is sociologically significant in its contribution to explicating the distinctive institutionalized racial and gender barriers that research participants encountered in their attempts to achieve meaningful employment and full citizenship in Canada. The policy recommendations suggested by this research include: 1) more efficient federal-level procedures for processing immigration applications and issuing work permits, 2) improved access to provincially-funded healthcare services and English language for employment training programs, 3) affordable, employer-recognized programs for assessing foreign credentials, and 4) greater outreach and education about multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity and inclusivity at the local level of settlement service agencies and neighbourhood-based community organizations.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Heather Holroyd. The research required and received approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Boards (certificate #H13-02360).
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List of Abbreviations

ANHBC – Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia
BC – British Columbia
BREB – Behavioural Research Ethics Board
CIC – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (federal government department name prior to November 2015; see ‘IRCC’ below)
CPNH – Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House
ECE – Early Childhood Education Certificate
ESL – English as a Second Language
FLNH – Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House
FSW – Federal Skilled Worker program
H&C – Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds
HIPPY Program – Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
IVEFS – Immigrant Vancouver Ethnographic Field School
IRCC – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (federal government department name after November 2015; see ‘CIC’ above)
LCP – Live-In Caregiver Program
MSP – Medical Services Plan
NH – Neighbourhood House
PR – Permanent resident/residency
PtL – Pathways to Leadership
SAHM – Stay at home mom
SSP – Spousal sponsorship program
UBC – University of British Columbia
UEFS – Urban Ethnographic Field School
US or USA – United States of America
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Dedication

To all immigrant women, and especially my own grandmother and mother, who bravely sacrifice so much in hopes of building a better life for those they love. Your courage and determination inspired this work.
Chapter 1: Mediated Pathways to Women’s Integration After Arrival in Canada

1.1 Questioning poverty, promoting leadership

On a sunny and warm September afternoon in 2012, a group of women gathered around a table in the smaller, recently renovated, multipurpose room on the second floor at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House\(^1\) in East Vancouver. After having secured a grant from a non-governmental philanthropic foundation, the group was excited to start planning for the launch of a pilot program for women who had immigrated to Canada and attempting to secure living wage employment in Vancouver. The women in the room – the ‘Advisory Committee,’ as I will call them throughout this dissertation – included: Shannon, Rebecca, and Katherine, three staff members from Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, the organization holding the grant to deliver the program; Serena, a staff member from Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, also located in East Vancouver; Neeharika, a self-employed facilitator who had been contracted by Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House to deliver the four cycles of the program (two at each Neighbourhood House); Tamara and Francine, two accomplished consultants and activists in the community who were donating their time and skills to assist with the project evaluation; a UBC social work student who would be replaced shortly by Marta, a senior-level undergraduate social work student from the University of

\(^1\)I use pseudonyms for the Neighbourhood Houses and research participants to protect the identities of the individuals who consented to participate in this study. Some research participants selected their own pseudonyms while most left the decision to me. The participants in the program and Advisory Committee gave me permission to use the real name of the employment and leadership skills program, the Pathways to Leadership program, and I also refer to public figures by their actual names.
British Columbia (UBC) who assisted with the evaluation as part of a practicum course; and myself, a PhD student in the middle of writing comprehensive exams and searching for a dissertation project that would offer the opportunity to contribute to social change and sociological research on newcomer integration and employment in Canada. I had been invited to attend the meeting to see whether I might be interested in volunteering to assist with the program evaluation after a phone conversation with Tamara where she reviewed my curriculum vita and asked about my interest in the project. As will be described in the next section, Dr. Jennifer Chun, a faculty member in the UBC Department of Sociology, facilitated this introduction.

The passion and energy of the group that afternoon was invigorating and I could not believe my luck connecting with such a diversely positioned group of women committed to organizing a program for women who were mostly ineligible or unable to attend other employment programs for reasons that will be discussed in this dissertation. Not surprisingly then, this September meeting marked the first of many I attended to help plan the logistics, delivery, and evaluation of the employment and leadership skills program that Neeharika had been contracted to facilitate for up to 60 immigrant women (15 participants per program cycle, for four cycles, over two calendar years). “Pathways Out of Poverty” was the project name on the grant application, which listed the following four goals for the employment and leadership skills program that would make up the core of the project’s activities: 1) “Immigrant women understand the possible pathways out of poverty and for achieving a living wage;” 2) “Immigrant women navigate the broad range of training & employment services & related community supports local & provincial;” 3) “Immigrant women develop leadership & speaking skills to facilitate participation in public dialogues/forums to address
systemic barriers & other key employment issues;” and 4) “Immigrant women develop the problem solving, networking & assertiveness skills needed to address personal and systemic barriers” (see Appendix A for a timeline of Pathways project and dissertation research activities).

The application for funding had been successful for a number of reasons: the need for the program was backed by evidence; members of the Advisory Committee had consulted extensively with the funder prior to submitting the application; and the language appealed to the grant adjudicators. Yet, the Neighbourhood House staff, the facilitator, and external consultants knew that framing the employment and leadership skills program as a way out of poverty could be greatly offensive to potential participants. Moreover, the grant application’s language of economic hardship, of offering “Pathways Out of Poverty,” presented an economic reality that may or may not be true for the women who would benefit from the program, and the goals listed focused on participants’ presumed vulnerabilities and deficiencies rather than their existing strengths and skills.

The grant application’s language reflected what funders expect to read but was contradictory to Neighbourhood Houses’ place- and asset-based approaches, which focus on sharing and honing participants’ skills rather than seeking out and improving personal deficiencies (McKnight and Block 2010). John Kretzmann and John P. McKnight (1996, 27) define “asset-based community development” (ABCD) as a community development strategy that “starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area – not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs.” As Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham (2003, 474) explain,
the appeal of ABCD lies in its premise that people in communities can organize to drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing (but often unrecognized) assets, thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity. In particular, ABCD draws attention to social assets: the particular talents of individuals, as well as the social capital inherent in the relationships that fuel local associations and informal networks.

Given that Neighbourhood Houses operate from an asset-based approach, it is easy to understand why concerns about the grant language and program name were raised almost immediately at this first project meeting: to retain the name ‘Pathways Out of Poverty’ would be to launch a program that put a deficiency – economic poverty, in this case – as a starting point. Doing so would run counter to the Neighbourhood Houses’ approach of working with members to identify the gifts, skills, and capacities held by each individual and subsequently mobilizing these talents for the purpose of self and community development. Thus, the program name came up several times during the first meeting. To start, Katherine, a staff member at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, opened the meeting by standing at the flipchart and writing “Pathways Out of Poverty (POOP)” on the top of the page. The group laughed at the acronym before launching into the meeting agenda. Then, the name came up again in the discussion of how each of the two Neighbourhood Houses involved in the program intended to recruit women for the program. The frontline staff members who would be discussing the program with potential applicants were especially keen to settle on an alternative and more uplifting name for the program.

To generate the new name, the women around the table each flipped through the original funding application and collectively realized the application highlighted leadership skills as a program deliverable that would assist women in seeking and securing meaningful work and a living wage. The group agreed that “Pathways to Leadership” (PtL) was more
uplifting and aligned with the Neighbourhood House mandate than “Pathways Out of Poverty,” and that the new name was better suited to the program’s purpose of facilitating personal and professional development. While the project continued to be called the “Pathways Out of Poverty Project” in the annual reports to the funder, it became known to the Neighbourhood House staff, and eventually the program participants, simply as “Pathways” or the “Pathways program.”

The act of renaming the program highlights the Advisory Committee’s position as intermediaries who simultaneously traversed a discourse of struggle when speaking to funders about the program and a discourse of empowerment when speaking to the women registered in the program. The Advisory Committee, especially the senior staff from the Neighbourhood Houses and the external consultants, were aware of the multiple obstacles facing newcomer women in Canada as they struggled to obtain living wage work related to skills and training from their home countries (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Creese and Wiebe 2012; Chun and Cheong 2011; Oreopoulos 2011; Rodriguez 2008; Man 2004; Pratt 2004). In addition to the systemic barriers facing immigrants, such as precarious legal status, the non-recognition of foreign credentials, and perceived language ability, many women have familial commitments that limit their participation in the standard employment relationship (Fudge and Vosko 2001). For women who have immigrated and who have young families, these systemic barriers and familial commitments intersect and may further reduce the possibilities of their labour market involvement. While communicating these struggles to funders and policy-makers is necessary, the women affected rarely need to be reminded of the challenges they face.
What is less researched, however, are the psychosocial impacts of these legal and structural issues, and the role of settlement programs in rebuilding the volumes of social and cultural capital that some women lose, often unexpectedly, during and after the immigration process. This multi-sited dissertation project employs an ethnographic approach to examine newcomer women’s struggles, and the individual and organizational efforts to overcome these struggles in the context of a free employment and leadership skills program for self-identified immigrant women regardless of their legal status in Canada and/or English language proficiency, located at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House and Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, British Columbia. The primary objective of this dissertation is to provide a deeper understanding of minority immigrant women’s experiences seeking employment in Vancouver, an urban labour market, after their arrival in Canada.

1.2 Arriving to the study

My interest in the labour market and integration experiences of women who have immigrated to Canada developed over the course of two years and through three distinct experiences:

1) as a teaching assistant for Dr. Jennifer Chun’s Sociology of Migration course from January 2012 to April 2012;

2) as a teaching assistant and community liaison for the Immigrant Vancouver Ethnographic Field School (IVEFS), a six-week intensive course where students conduct ethnographic field work with Neighbourhood Houses and community organizations, from May 2012 to June 2012, and again from May 2013 to June 2013;
3) as a volunteer and evaluator for the Pathways to Leadership program from September 2012 to June 2013.

The teaching assistantship for the Sociology of Migration course introduced me to the literature focused on employment and economic issues related to immigration, while my work with IVEFS (now the Urban Ethnographic Field School) exposed me to the lived experiences of recent immigrants and inspired me to connect my longstanding interest in the relationship between work and identity with issues related to migration and newcomer integration. Through IVEFS, I learned about the challenges that many individuals, and especially women, face in adjusting to life in Canada and providing for their families. I also learned about Neighbourhood Houses and their unique service-delivery model, which I describe in more detail below.

A newfound awareness of the presence Neighbourhood Houses throughout Metro Vancouver piqued my interest in how these organizations facilitate collaborative efforts between participants, volunteers and staff. As detailed above, I began volunteering with the Pathways Out of Poverty project, as it was first called, at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House and Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House in September 2012, several months after completing my first year with IVEFS teaching team. As Dr. Chun had been a founding faculty member of the IVEFS course, I contacted her by email after the Field School ended and asked whether she was aware of any skills-based volunteer projects I could join. Dr. Chun put me in touch with Tamara, one of the external consultants involved in the evaluation of the Pathways project. Dr. Chun had collaborated with the Advisory Committee on a previous research project (Chun and Cheong 2011), the findings of which informed the objectives of the Pathways Out of Poverty project. By the time the Pathways Out of Poverty project was
preparing to launch in September 2012, however, Dr. Chun had relocated to the University of Toronto and was no longer actively involved in the project planning. From November 30, 2012, to January 9, 2013, Marta and I conducted pre-program interviews with 25 out of 30 of the participants registered to participate in the first cycle of the Pathways to Leadership program. The 11 interviews I conducted during this period were considered follow-up research data collected for Dr. Chun and are not presented or analyzed in this dissertation.

After completing the pre-program interviews and research assistantship for Dr. Chun in early January 2013, I attended each session of the PtL program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House from January to May as a project volunteer. I also continued to attend the evaluation committee meetings throughout the spring and summer of 2013, and in July 2013, I conducted nine post-program meetings with the women who had participated in the program at Forest Lawn and Crystal Pond. I retroactively obtained the permission of the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) and the consent of the women who participated in those meetings to include this data in the analysis presented in this dissertation (see Appendix A for a timeline of research project activities).

As a teaching assistant, research assistant, and project volunteer, I observed a gap between Canadian immigration policy and opportunities for some groups of newcomers to mobilize their skills and resources, and the subsequent social and economic challenges they faced. While immigrants account for approximately 40 percent of Vancouver’s population (Chui 2013; Hiebert 2009), the social and economic issues associated with immigration affect the Canadian nation as a whole, and are linked to a globally-scaled transnational network of migration. My dissertation project proposal began to form as I came to understand how the Pathways Out of Poverty project and its cornerstone component, the
Pathways to Leadership employment and leadership skills training program, intended to bring together a number of individuals, organizations, institutions and levels of government in one participant-focused initiative to address the multifaceted social and economic issues related to immigration.

Aimed specifically towards women who are unable or ineligible to participate in other settlement programs for reasons described in Chapter 3, I anticipated that fieldwork in this setting would provide an opportunity to interact with and better understand the experiences of a group of newcomer women whose voices are not typically represented in the literature by virtue of precarious legal statuses that limit their eligibility to access services and public goods, making them less likely to come into contact with researchers (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). At best, the experiences of women with precarious legal status might be captured in Statistics Canada’s Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada or Ethnic Diversity Survey. It is worth noting, however, that these surveys were last completed in 2005 and 2002, respectively, and as statistical overviews they do not provide in-depth and contextualized data about newcomers’ settlement experiences and their often-dynamic transition through multiple legal statuses prior to obtaining permanent resident (PR) status (if they do, in fact, obtain PR status). Moreover, both surveys used the computer-assisted telephone interview method. As I came to learn during my research, speaking on the telephone can be exceptionally terrifying for non-native English speakers and something they actively avoid, again affirming the frequently noted observation

2 The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada used face-to-face and computer-assisted telephone interview methods, while the Ethnic Diversity Survey used only the computer-assisted telephone interview method.

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that those who are most isolated and vulnerable, regardless of whether they have precarious or secure legal status, may not be making contact with researchers.

Additionally, my volunteer work with the first cycles of Pathways to Leadership participants prior to beginning my fieldwork enhanced my understanding of how much time and contact was required to build rapport with Neighbourhood House staff and the women in the program. I am therefore skeptical of the answers the women participating in the PtL program might provide via a telephone survey even if they did answer the questions. Establishing the trust of the women participating in the program required a more extensive investment of time and energy than the rapport-building suggestions highlighted in most textbooks on qualitative research methods (Warren and Karner 2010; Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 2007; Mason 2002). Chapter 2 provides more detail on the methods and methodology I applied to collect the data presented in this dissertation.

1.3 What is the Pathways to Leadership program?

The Pathways Out of Poverty project was developed primarily by Shannon, a staff member in senior management at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, and the three well-known consultants on the Advisory Committee – Francine, Tamara and Neeharika – who have been conducting work related to workplace equity and diversity in the Vancouver area since the early 1980s. Serena, a staff member at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, also contributed to the project’s development. These five women had worked together in substantial ways prior to this project and all acknowledged that their paths had been crossing for at least the past two decades. Social ties were also important in securing the primary funding envelope for the project, a $73,794 grant from a philanthropic foundation. The reputation of the Neighbourhood House and of the external consultants’ other work, along
with the women’s knowledge of the funder and their funding requirements, strengthened the application and helped them to align the project and funder’s goals. The grant from the foundation was used to pay for 1) Neenahika’s role as facilitator, 2) Neighbourhood House staffing and operation costs, and 3) bus tickets and childcare during the program sessions. A small amount of money was used to purchase snacks and refreshments for the weekly program sessions.

Smaller amounts of funding from charitable organizations were used to provide for unplanned expenses, such as childminding for several participants’ children who required additional or one-to-one support. Tamara and Francine, the independent consultants on the Advisory Committee, provided in-kind support by donating their time for the evaluation, as did Marta and myself (with the exception of the $2,000 I received from Dr. Chun to conduct pre-program interviews in the fall of 2012). Given the duration and deliverables of the project – four cycles of the Pathways to Leadership program, with bus tickets and childminding provided – the overall cost of the project was extremely efficient and the project budget benefitted from strong teamwork between members in and outside the Neighbourhood Houses.

The structure and objectives of the Pathways Out of Poverty project address the challenges identified by the forty-four immigrant men and women who participated in focus groups led by Dr. Chun (Chun and Cheong, 2011), and the Advisory Committee’s extensive experience working with immigrants and organizations on projects related to employment and equity. The members of the Advisory Committee were well-aware that women of color with degrees from foreign institutions “experience the greatest labor market penalties” when their education, work experience, and wages are compared to other immigrants and non-
immigrants in Canada (Creese, Dyck, and McLaren 2008, 277). Struggles to obtain living wage employment are related to women’s limited access to affordable childcare, language barriers, and foreign credential recognition. Despite empirical knowledge of how exactly these factors influence women’s labour market participation, the provincial government provided most of the settlement program funding at the time I conducted my research and this funding only provided a limited number of free or low-cost childcare spaces, or no childcare at all. Furthermore, individuals wishing to participate in government-funded programs typically need to meet criteria related to their immigration status and language proficiency. For example, the Skills Connect program is one of the few employment programs that provides credential recognition and training support for newcomers to achieve more than low-wage survival employment but participation is limited to individuals who became permanent residents or citizens within the last five years, who are unemployed but not receiving Employment Insurance, and who are proficient in English.

Cognizant of these oft-cited barriers, the Advisory Committee sought out funding from the philanthropic organization as an alternative to government funding in order to offer a free, 16-week program, open to all women who self-identify as ‘immigrant’ regardless of their legal status. The program convened weekly at the respective Neighbourhood Houses for three hours, and bus tickets and/or free childminding were provided for women who needed these resources in order to participate in the program. A completed one-page application

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3 Settlement program funding is now managed at the federal level by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), formerly known as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The management of settlement program funding was recentralized to the federal level in April 2014, and the CIC to IRCC department name change took place in November 2015.
form was the only document each woman needed to provide in order to register for the program. The registration requirements set by the Advisory Committee and listed as checkboxes on the application form were as follows: 1) a commitment to attending each three hour session of the program, 2) a willingness to complete an additional three hours per week on program-related activities at home, and, for participants in the first two cycles of the program, 3) an agreement to participate in pre- and post-program meetings for the purpose of evaluating the program. None of these registration requirements were hard and fast rules – the Advisory Committee expected that women would miss sessions due to family circumstances or illness; there were no penalties for not completing the work assigned between program sessions; and only some of the program participants completed pre- and/or post-program meetings due to scheduling and childminding challenges.

Another unique aspect of the Pathways to Leadership program was its individualized approach to helping participants meet their career and civic engagement goals. Recognizing that most participants had accumulated significant amounts of cultural capital in the form of education and work experience (Bourdieu 1984) before and after entering Canada, the program aimed to support women in translating their existing strengths and skills into labour market opportunities beyond the entry-level or survival employment that other organizations seem to encourage (Creese 2011, 66; Ng 1996). The content of the program and Neelharika’s method of delivery revealed this participant-driven focus: the number of participants in each cycle was capped at 15, and each session started with a participant ‘check-in,’ where the women were encouraged to share resources, report back on meetings with potential employers or advisors at educational institutions, and/or discuss any personal or employment-related issues that have affected them since the last session. Then, Neelharika
would skillfully draw from the experiences the women shared during the check-in to engage them in the content she had prepared for that session, which included topics such as identifying and responding to racism, accessing the hidden job market, presenting one’s existing skills and strengths in the Canadian job market, selecting a training program or educational institution, and so forth. As the fieldnote excerpts in this dissertation demonstrate, the conversations tended to be rich in detail because of the intimate setting and Neelam’s efforts to make the program as relevant as possible to the experiences and concerns of participants.

The overall aim of the Pathways to Leadership program was to build the capacity of the immigrant women participating in the program by encouraging them to 1) develop a career action plan, and 2) design and deliver a community-oriented ‘civic engagement’ project. The civic engagement projects were essentially intended to be volunteer projects that the PtL participants conceived and spearheaded. The skills required to develop a career plan and lead a volunteer project were intended to provide women with concrete goals, accomplishments, and the internal confidence to address the personal and systemic barriers that prevent equitable access to economic and civic opportunities. The Advisory Committee defined economic and civic opportunities as including formal labour market participation, or membership in a civic domain such as the Parent Advisory Committee at their children’s school. Unlike other employment programs, which tend to focus solely on labour market participation, the Advisory Committee for the Pathways Out of Poverty project viewed civic participation and involvement in the public sphere as a route to gaining political representation in the broadest sense (Fraser 2009a), and to achieving a form of citizenship in Canada that includes status, rights, and identity (Joppke 2007, 38). Neighbourhood Houses,
with their participant-driven approach to programming, offered opportunities for such engagement and, as such, were an ideal setting for the Pathways Out of Poverty program.

1.4 Neighbourhood Houses as research sites: A history of the Settlement Movement

1.4.1 What is a Neighbourhood House?

Born from England’s Settlement House movement in the 1880s, Neighbourhood Houses have a 119-year history in British Columbia (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2014). With a strong focus on “addressing community needs through a highly accessible and inclusive service approach” (Sandercock 2009, 119), most Neighbourhood House programs and services are free or low-cost and many are volunteer-driven. Working together, staff and volunteers facilitate opportunities for people to come together in activities such as English as a Second Language conversation groups, parenting classes and workshops, employment programs, immigrant settlement programs, youth programs, seniors programs, cooking classes, free or low-cost lunches and dinners, as well as day-long festivals or weekend camping trips.

It is important to note that Neighbourhood Houses (NHs) are not oriented specifically toward newcomers but are intended to be gathering places for everyone. Neighbourhood Houses share some similarities with community centres: both, for example, offer programming geared toward young families, newcomers, youth, and seniors. Yet service delivery is only a starting point for the work of NHs. What makes Neighbourhood Houses unique is the way in which they engage members by supporting them to bring forth and implement ideas for events and programming in ways that make use of their skills for the benefit of the broader community. This approach is typically what is meant when Neighbourhood Houses and other organizations describe their approach as ‘place-based’: by
working with the assets and needs within the community, Neighbourhood Houses respond to
and support their members.

Neighbourhood Houses have a strong presence in Vancouver, although you might not
be aware of the Neighbourhood House operating just around the corner from you unless you
are looking to access their services or participate in their programs. According to the
Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia (ANHBC), the eight
Neighbourhood Houses in the Lower Mainland that belong to the association have 527 staff
members and 3,500 volunteers (ANHBC 2013). The ANHBC’s recorded average of 50,000
volunteer hours per year is evidence of the high level of community engagement that
Neighbourhood Houses inspire among their members (Association of Neighbourhood
Houses British Columbia 2013, 1). This staff and volunteer capacity make it possible for the
Neighbourhood Houses in the Association to “serve more than 100,000 individual visits
annually, or 17% of the population of Vancouver,” including “many of the invisible poor
from new immigrant families living eight to one bedroom, underprivileged families unable to
provide breakfast to their children, youth who lack leadership and are on the street and
seniors living alone with no family ties” (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British
Columbia 2013, 1). In 2013, the ANHBC ranked as the second oldest charitable organization
and the 11th biggest organization run by a woman in British Columbia (Association of
Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2013, 12). The ANHBC’s operating budget for the
2013/14 fiscal year was nearly $18.5 million, putting it almost on par with the $22 operating
budget of Immigrant Settlement Services of BC, one of Canada’s largest settlement agencies
(Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2014; Immigrant Settlement
Services of BC 2014).
In addition to the eight Neighbourhood Houses that belong to the ANHBC, there are seven more Neighbourhood Houses in Metro Vancouver not affiliated with the Association. The two Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted the research presented in this dissertation have been members of the ANHBC since their establishment in the 1970s, so I did not collect statistics about the number of staff, volunteers, volunteer hours, or annual visits at the seven organizations that operate outside the ANHBC umbrella.

1.4.2 A history of Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver

The Alexandra Neighbourhood House opened in 1938, and was the first Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, BC (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2013). Originally an orphanage, the history of the Alexandra Neighbourhood House is indicative of the link between Neighbourhood Houses and childcare that has existed since the inception of Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver. Between 1942 and 1987, seven additional Neighbourhood Houses opened and joined Alexandra Neighbourhood House as

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4 Alexandra Neighbourhood House can trace its roots to an orphanage supported by members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and members of local churches in the late 1800s. Called the “Children’s Home,” the orphanage outgrew its first location on Homer and Dunsmuir Street and moved to 1727 West 7th Ave. Built in 1891, this new location had originally been the site of the Alexandra Hospital for Women but the surrounding area was undeveloped, forested, and home to wildlife that frequently came onto the hospital grounds. As a result of these unwelcome visits from animals, the directors deemed the area unfit for a hospital and offered the land and buildings to the Children’s Home with the condition that the institution be called the “Alexandra Non-Sectarian Orphanage and Children’s Home of Vancouver.” The Alexandra Orphanage, for short, was incorporated in 1894 under the direction of the Alexandra Community Services Society and was one of British Columbia’s first non-profit societies (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2013, 1; Lauer and Reisz 2012, 3). As foster homes came to replace orphanages, the Alexandra Orphanage became the “Alexandra Non-Sectarian Children’s Home of Vancouver” before closing in 1938 and reopening several months later as the Alexandra Neighbourhood House (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2013, 3).
members of the ANHBC. According to the Association, Alexandra Neighbourhood House was inspired by the Neighbourhood Settlement House movement under Jane Addams and Queen Alexandra (Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia 2013, 3).

The Settlement House movement began in London, England, with the establishment of Toynbee Hall by Samuel Barnett and Henrietta Octavia Weston Barnett (née Rowland) in 1884, and came to North America with Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr’s establishment of Chicago’s Hull House in 1889 (Sandercock, 2009, 115). The Barnetts founded Toynbee Hall in the memory of Arnold Toynbee, an economic historian who sought to reduce the social inequality between the wealthy and workingmen that he perceived to be a result of the Industrial Revolution. Prior to his early death at the age of 30, Toynbee taught students at Oxford University about the “gifts of the poor and how they had been undervalued in society by the wealthy class” (Sandercock 2009, 115). The historical and cultural context of the Industrial Revolution and Toynbee’s early teachings on what we would today call “asset-based community development,” as described earlier in the chapter, informed the mission of the Settlement House movement in the United Kingdom; the Industrial Revolution, a term popularized by Toynbee, had increased urbanization and intellectuals struggled to understand and reduce the economic and political inequality between the owners of the means of production and the people they employed. It is unsurprising, then, that poverty and religious-based social reform were the chief concerns of the Settlement House movement in the United Kingdom (Briggs and Macartney 1984).

Jane Addams, a young American woman with a wealthy father and a “conviction that, even as a woman, she had a duty to humanity she could not ignore,” had read about Toynbee Hall in 1887 and made a plan to visit the Settlement House during her trip to Europe that
winter (Knight, 2005, 153-155). Addams had a long-standing interest in helping people; her original plan was to become a medical doctor but she did not complete her education after falling ill (Knight 2005). Instead, she struggled throughout her twenties to identify a new course of work that would allow her to pursue charitable aims. Addams was highly attuned to experiences of suffering and injustice, and deeply influenced by her visit with the Barnett’s at Toynbee Hall, which inspired Addams and her companion, Ellen Gates Starr, to establish North America’s first Settlement House in Chicago, Illinois.

It is important to note, however, that Addams did not import the Barnett’s vision in its entirety: she rejected Toynbee Hall’s involvement in the labour movement and the Barnett’s

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5 With a keen eye to ethnographic detail, Addams’ (1910, 67) memoir recounts how she had been affected by an experience she had while visiting East London in 1883, at the age of 23. Addams describes seeing “huge masses of ill-clad people clamoring around two hucksters' carts” to bid on rotting fruit and vegetables on a Saturday night, and how the vision that stuck with her from that evening “was not of ragged, tawdry clothing nor of pinched and sallow faces, but of myriads of hands, empty, pathetic, nerveless and workworn, showing white in the uncertain light of the street, and clutching forward for food which was already unfit to eat.”

6 In her book Twenty Years at Hull-House, Addams (1910, 85) reflects on how and why she and Starr came to found the Hull-House Settlement in the fall of 1889:

It is hard to tell just when the very simple plan which afterward developed into the Settlement began to form itself in my mind. It may have been even before I went to Europe for the second time, but I gradually became convinced that it would be a good thing to rent a house in a part of the city where many primitive and actual needs are found, in which young women who had been given too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines and learn of life from life itself; where they might try out some of the things they had been taught and put truth to ‘the ultimate test of the conduct it dictates or inspires.’ I do not remember to have mentioned this plan to anyone until we [Addams, Ellen Gates Starr and several others] reached Madrid in April, 1888.
support of Karl Marx’s economic theories. The fluidity of the American class system differed from the socio-economic climate in the United Kingdom, where Toynbee and the Barnetts viewed the Industrial Revolution as the root cause of insurmountable inequality for those on the lowest rungs of urban society. In the United States, however, Addams and Starr traced the growing level of social and economic inequality to the rapid influx of newcomers and aimed to provide the means through which people might develop or enhance skills to improve their individual status in society (Sandercock 2009, 116). These different perspectives influenced how ‘settlement’ was applied in each setting: at Toynbee Hall, it was the ‘settlement’ of privileged university-men in poor neighbourhoods with working class men; at Hull-House, educated women were helping with the ‘settlement’ of poor newcomers in a tumultuous urban area (Sandercock 2009, 116). As I discuss in Chapter 5, the North

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7 Louise Knight (2005, 172), Addams’ biographer, attributes this rejection to Addams’ wealthy upbringing and her tendency to focus on ideas rather than material conditions. Having benefited directly from the ownership of private property and naïve about the impacts of worker exploitation, the young Addams dismissed structural change and instead viewed the solution to oppression as ‘“entirely individualistic: each person should change his or her own behaviour”’ (qtd. in Knight 2005, 172). Robert Reinders’ (1982, 48) comparison of the American and British class systems offers another possible explanation for Addams’ individualism, noting that the American system was more fluid than the British class system, so American settlement workers did not necessarily view the poor as a “permanent underclass” but instead as a “group capable of improving their economic and social status.” Reinders (1982, 48) contrasts American settlement workers’ professional approach to assisting newcomers with Toynbee Hall’s reputation as “an establishment organization” where London’s elites could lead debates and give lectures as “an entrée to a career [where] ex-residents moved to positions of power in Britain and the Empire.” In contrast, the North American Settlement House movement is associated with the establishment of the social work profession: after their time at Hull House, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Edith Abbott, and Grace Abbott went on to form the Graduate School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago (The University of Chicago n.d.).

8 Although Addams and Starr shared the Barnetts’ interest in connecting educated individuals with individuals who had less material resources, Chicago’s Hull-House was established by
American Settlement House movement’s emphasis on engaging immigrants and newcomers, and especially women and families, was evident in the organization and operation of the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted the research study presented in this dissertation.

1.4.3 Neighbourhood Houses and university research: A longstanding relationship

Located in London’s East End, Toynbee Hall became a place where male university students paid to live and ‘settle’ among the working class in order to learn about their living conditions (Sandercock 2009, 115). In exchange, these students provided teaching, research,

two women and oriented toward activities to promote the integration and adaptation of all newcomers to the United States. Hull-House’s members were not limited to workingmen and university men, as was the case in London’s Toynbee Hall. Throughout her memoir, Addams (1910) highlights the gendered nature of the charitable work she initiated in founding Chicago’s Hull-House and her general call for privileged and educated women to preserve a traditional role as nurturers who ought to respond to the needs of others. For Addams, her work at the Settlement House was conceived as a response to the formal education and activism that upper-class women had begun to participate in, as well as an opportunity perform the emotive work expected of women at the turn of the century.

9 I had the opportunity to tour Hull-House while visiting Chicago in August 2015 for the meetings of the American Sociological Association and Society for the Study of Social Problems. Standing in Addams’ bedroom, our young female tour guide described Addams and Starr’s Hull-House as a “site of queer domesticity.” While Addams never openly described herself as a lesbian, her love letters and poems record a lifetime of significant romantic relationships with women including a relationship with her Hull-House’s co-founder, Ellen Gates Starr. Addams’ personal life and tensions related to gendered expectations were reflected in the initiatives taken up at Hull-House; while Addams may have perceived a woman’s natural role to be one of nurturing and providing aid, this outlook was not shaped exclusively in terms of functional gender roles and structurally dyadic pairing. Rather, the women of Hull-House acted independently and even established the “Jane Club,” where unmarried or widowed women aged 18 to 45 could live together in a “self-supporting and cooperative manner” for three dollars per week (Whitcombe 1901, 87). The Jane Club came about as a response to the living conditions and cost of rooming houses available to single women at the turn of the twentieth century. More broadly, however, this kind of organizing is just one example of the responsive initiatives and gendered programming that have characterized the Settlement House movement and Neighbourhood Houses since their establishment in North America.
and public service with the expectation that they would be advocates for improving the living and working conditions of the individuals they encountered in the Settlement House (Sandercock 2009, 115). First advocated for by Toynbee, the Barnetts also viewed this intermingling as a way of promoting inter-class contact and reducing the social distance between the working class and educated class.

In a lecture in 1892, Addams (1892, 125) described how the Settlement brought together theory and practice by doing something practical while simultaneously advancing an understanding of “social and industrial problems.” It is therefore unsurprising that Hull-House came to be well-known and respected as a site for groundbreaking sociological research conducted by women, some of which was most famously published in the *Hull-House Maps and Papers* in 1895 (Residents of Hull-House 2007). According to Mary Jo Deegan (1988, 6), a Jane Addams scholar, *Hull-House Maps and Papers* “predate[ed] and establish[ed] the interests of the early Chicago male sociologists” who made up the famous Chicago School.

The Settlement’s early emphasis on providing direct services and improving social conditions through evidence-based practices is not limited to Chicago’s Hull-House or college graduates. Reporting on the affiliation between New York City’s Greenwich House Settlement and Columbia University, Arthur R. Burns (1930, 128) describes the intention of the partnership as one where students would provide Settlement House members with services in exchange for gaining practical experience. In practice, however, the students were not able to provide the kinds of activities that the Settlement had initially hoped for, and so the direction of the affiliation shifted to a research project focused on the institutions’ mutual interest in the “study of social and economic conditions and in suggestions for their
amelioration” (Burns 1930, 128). Burns (1930, 129) goes on to state that the Settlement House gives students “practical contact with urban conditions among the lower income groups of the population” and that the settlement’s advantage as compared to other agencies is “its use as a social laboratory in which may be carried out field research by graduate students.”

Burns’ (1930) assertion about social organizations as laboratories for the academic study of urban conditions continues to be true today: Canadian Neighbourhood Houses, which evolved from the Settlement House movement, continue to provide undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members with community service learning and research opportunities. The fruitfulness of the university–Neighbourhood House affiliation is demonstrated by this dissertation, and the ongoing, evolving, and deepening relationships between the University of British Columbia’s Urban Ethnographic Field School and two Neighbourhood Houses that originally gave rise to my participation in the Pathways Project.

1.5 Research questions: Why is this study relevant?

This research begins from the standpoint of the women participating in the program in order to “find out just how people’s doings in the everyday are articulated to and coordinated by extended social relations that are not visible from within any particular local setting and just how people are participating in those relations” (Smith 2005, 36). The Pathways to Leadership program is a sociologically interesting site of study because of its unconventional operational structure and content as an employment and leadership skills program targeted specifically toward immigrant women who do not necessarily meet the criteria for participation in other settlement programs due to their immigration status, childcare needs, and/or English language proficiency.
As a multi-sited program funded by a non-profit foundation, delivered by a self-employed facilitator in the context of community organizations not entirely focused on settlement services, and evaluated by independent consultants, the PtL program offers a point of entry into a complex set of social relations and institutional orders coordinated across multiple settings (Smith 2005; Ng 1996). These social relations and institutional orders include, but are not limited to: everyday interactions between immigrant women, Neighbourhood House staff, facilitators and consultants; inter-institutional access to resources and services for the purpose of enhancing immigration-related social and economic integration; opportunities for the establishment of useful or meaningful social connections; and textual documents detailing government policies that structure immigration to Canada and the delivery of immigration-related services. Starting from the level of program participants’ experiences provides an opportunity to explicate the relations of ruling characteristic of institutional processes such as migration and settlement, and to explore how gender, race and citizenship status intersect for a particular group of immigrant women seeking employment in Canada (Browne and Misra 2003).

From the in-depth “first-hand working knowledge” (Ng 1996, 19) I generated through my involvement in the complex, multi-sited, and multi-layered Pathways Out of Poverty project and Pathways to Leadership program prior to commencing my fieldwork, I identified three guiding questions and directions for sociological investigation:

1) What is the role and value of small-to-midsized organizations like Neighbourhood Houses in facilitating newcomer integration in the context of federally regulated immigration processes?
This question guides the analysis presented throughout the dissertation in that it brings together program participants’ experiences with the unique structure of PtL and Neighbourhood Houses. What makes Neighbourhood Houses different from other settlement-service organizations, and what value is created through these unique features? Chapter 2 describes the way in which I approached the research project to answer this question: I argue that embedded fieldwork is necessary for generating quality data that gets beyond the well-rehearsed narratives of PtL participants and organization staff who are accustomed to reporting their experiences to institutional representatives who wield power over their immigration and funding applications, for example.

2) How do the experiences of participants in the Pathways to Leadership program illuminate ways that gender, as a social construction with significant structural power, intersects with immigration status and race in the Canadian labour market?

This question draws attention to the different immigration programs that permit entry and/or permanent immigration to Canada and the impacts of these programs’ varying policies on the lives and employment trajectories of women who immigrate to Canada. In keeping with the emphasis on the everyday experiences of actual people, the immigration programs I examine in Chapter 3 – the Live-In Caregiver program, spousal sponsorship program, and refugee programs – are those identified by the women I interviewed (see Appendix B for research participants’ demographic information). As part of this analysis, I examine the “differential gendered effects of immigration policy” (Walton-Roberts 2004, 268) and interrogate the relevance of the recent literature on precarious migratory status (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009) by tacking between the experiences of the women and the gendered ideologies that inform Canadian immigration policy. This discussion demonstrates how these
programs classify and administer the immigration processes of immigrant women in ways that have long-term effects on their settlement and integration in Canada (Goldring and Landolt 2011).

3) *How do the women participating in an employment and leadership skills program at a local non-profit organization make sense of their social location in Canadian society and in the Canadian labour market in light of their employment experiences and immigrant status?*

This question draws attention to research participants’ migration experiences in terms of their status and economic achievement in Canada, with a particular emphasis on participants who arrived in Canada via the Federal Skilled Worker program as principal applicants or dependents (Bauder 2003). From the literature and my experience volunteering with the first cycle of the Pathways to Leadership program, I anticipated that the women participating in this research project would have varying levels of work experience, income, education, and training, and that participants’ opportunities for employment in Canada may not reflect the work experience, education, and/or training they obtained in their home countries.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe participants’ experiences generating or converting cultural and economic capital in the Canadian context, and how they are making sense of their social location in Canadian society given these experiences (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1977). More specifically, Chapter 4 explores the gendered division of reproductive labour and expectations around childrearing and domestic care responsibilities and their influence on participants’ employment readiness and access to labour market opportunities, while Chapter 5 describes the impact of their participation in the Pathways to Leadership program on their feelings of self-worth and full citizenship in Canadian society.
1.6 Situating in the study in the literature

The questions presented above merit thorough consideration, given the demographic impacts of immigration in Vancouver, BC. Census figures show that between 2001 and 2006, the rate of growth of the foreign-born population in metropolitan Vancouver was over 12 percent, which was more than five times the 2.3-percent increase in the Canadian-born population (Hiebert 2009, 7). In absolute terms, Vancouver’s population saw a net increase of 92,700 foreign-born individuals, compared with an increase of just less than 37,000 Canadian-born individuals. Since 2006, the annual immigration plans produced by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the federal government department charged with managing issues related to immigration, refugees, and citizenship, have aimed to offer permanent residency status to between 240,000 and 265,000 individuals per year; in order to meet this target, the office anticipated accepting and evaluating 328,945 finalized applications in 2014 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2013). These statistics demonstrate Canada’s active interest and success in recruiting and accepting immigrants from around the globe, and its enduring legacy as a preferred destination country for newcomers. That 158,600, or 62.3%, of these admissions are allocated for economic class immigrants demonstrates the federal government’s interest and investment in attracting skilled newcomers (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2013).

The academic literature, however, documents the significant barriers many newcomers to Canada, including permanent residents and other migrants with more precarious legal statuses, face in their efforts to secure employment (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Creese 2011; Bauder 2003; Reitz and Sklar 1997). Understanding what is occurring for newcomers to Canada in the Vancouver labour market, and how their experiences are...
coordinated locally and extralocally is essential in providing direction on how to improve settlement and employment outcomes for immigrants. The following discussion highlights the major bodies of literature relevant to the proposed study, including: emerging theoretical and empirical work on the concept of “precarious migrant status” in the Canadian context; the deskilling and downward mobility of ‘skilled’ immigrants after arrival; and the intersection between race, class and gender manifested in employment and wage outcomes, especially as these pertain to racialized constructions of ‘immigrant women’ in Canadian immigration policy.

1.6.1 Precarious migrant status

Canadian immigration policy creates a host of legal statuses that do not fit into the binary of legal/illegal that dominates the discussions and debates of our closest neighbour, the United States of America. In contrast to the USA’s popular awareness and public discussion of ‘illegal’ immigration, the majority of individuals in Canada arrive with some form of legal status, including, for example, a visitor visa, temporary work permit, or a declaration that they wish to apply for refugee status. As a result, the majority of people within Canada’s borders are known to the government but may have fallen out of legal status for a number of reasons, some of which are discussed in Chapter 3 (Goldring, Berinstein, and

\[10\] The shorthand reference to immigrants who come through the Federal Skilled Worker program as “skilled immigrants” implies that immigrants who arrive or settle in Canada via other immigration programs are less skilled. This dichotomy needs to be disturbed, in that study participants spoke about the multiple immigration programs that they and their families considered, and how their decision was typically predicated on the overall best fit for their immediate and/or ultimate intentions. For example, a number of the women who were applying for permanent residency via the spousal sponsorship program would have been more than eligible for the Federal Skilled Workers program.
Bernhard 2009, 239). Despite the vulnerabilities associated with precarious legal status, little attention has been paid to the policies and bureaucratic processes that leave some newcomers in Canada without the formal legal status necessary to participate as social, legal, and economic members of Canadian society.

As Luin Goldring and Patricia Landolt (2013, 7) explain, it is difficult to even estimate the number of individuals with precarious legal status in Canada. The Canadian government collects data on the number of individuals with authorized temporary status who enter Canada in a given year, and separate data on the number of individuals with authorized temporary status still present on December 1, yet there are no estimates on the amount of overlap between those two categories or data on the number of individuals with temporary authorized status who may have entered in a previous year or left before December 1. Goldring and Landolt (2013, 8) do, however, provide some sense of how many people may be living in Canada with authorized temporary status, stating:

The 2010 grand total of temporary resident entries in all categories was 383,929, and the total number still present in all categories reached 660,801. The latter probably underestimates the number of temporary residents present for most of the year, while the sum of the two figures, 981,137 people, may be an overestimate.

With regard to individuals without authorized status – the so-called ‘illegal’ migrant population in Canada – there is even less data and no systematic estimates such as the one presented above for individuals with authorized temporary status. According to Goldring and Landolt (2013, 8), a 2006 estimate put the number of unauthorized individuals in Canada at 200,000-500,000 – a number they state has “undoubtedly increased, but no new estimates are available.” This lack of information about even the number of individuals with precarious
legal status in Canada highlights the need for more empirical research and attention to the experiences of this population in Canada.

In their seminal paper on the topic, Goldring, Carolina Berinstein, and Judith Bernhard (2009, 240) develop a conceptual approach to “precarious migrant status” by examining the way in which immigration policies and programs produce “a confusing array of gradations of uncertain or ‘less than full’ migration status.” Goldring et al. (2009, 240-241) define “precarious status” as:

The absence of any of the following elements normally associated with permanent residence (and citizenship) in Canada: (1) work authorization, (2) the right to remain permanently in the country (residence permit), (3) not depending on a third party for one’s right to be in Canada (such as a sponsoring spouse or employer), and (4) social citizenship rights available to permanent residents (e.g. public education and public health coverage).

The importance of defining and examining the experience of individuals with precarious migrant status in Canada is critical insofar as a lack of legal status creates and reproduces “an underclass that is vulnerable on several fronts, including inadequate access to health and other services, limited recourse in the event of abuse at work or other arenas, and deportation” (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009, 241). At the same time, people may shift through several legal statuses with different sets of rights and responsibilities as a result of the many different immigration programs administered by the Canadian state: For example, individuals who arrive in Canada through the temporary foreign worker program (TFWP) may be eligible to apply for permanent residency after fulfilling particular work experience requirements, while other programs cap the number of years that an individual may participate in a specific TFWP and the individual will be considered ‘illegal’ if he or she remains in Canada after that visa expires. The complexity of Canadian immigration policy,
the constant changes to its programs and processes, and long application processing times create dynamic and confusing conditions for determining someone’s legal status.

This dissertation adds to a growing body of empirical literature on the topic of precarious migrant status and “non-citizenship,” a term used by Goldring and Landolt (2013, 1) in their edited collection of work on the “regulatory, institutional, discursive, and practical terms under which precarious status non-citizens – those without permanent residence – enter and remain in Canada.” The connection between migration status and employment presented here is a fit with Goldring et al.’s (2009) intentional use of the word ‘precarious,’ which the authors employ in explicitly linking migration status to the growing body of literature on precarious employment in Canada (Vosko 2006). With the Canadian government’s emphasis on immigration as a route to economic growth (as cited above), scholarship examining the relationship between migration status and employment is critical. To the best of my knowledge, the study I conducted for the purposes of this dissertation is the first in-depth ethnography that purports to describe the experiences of a diverse range of women struggling to participate in the Canadian labour market for reasons related to their current or past precarious legal status.

1.6.2 ‘Skilled’ immigrants, labour market participation, and downward mobility

A large proportion of recent immigrants to Canada are admitted under the points system and are on the whole more educated and skilled than the native born population, yet their unemployment rates are twice as high as similarly aged non-immigrants and their wages

11 60 percent of recent immigrants have obtained at least an undergraduate degree, as compared to 20 percent of the Canadian-born population (Oreopoulos 2011, 149).
are approximately 35% lower (Oreopoulos 2011, 149). Skilled immigrants to Canada face exclusion from the middle and upper segments of the labour market as a result of professional associations, regulatory bodies, and employers that fail to recognize their foreign credentials and/or experience, or to provide efficient ways of having these assessed (Bauder 2003; Ng 1996). This devaluation of education and work experience contributes to immigrant deskilling and downward mobility (Creese and Wiebe 2012, 57). The situation is made worse by the fact that many immigrants to Canada “feel that they have been tricked” by “immigration policies and labor-market regulations that do not disclose to immigrants prior to their arrival in Canada that their human capital will be devaluated” (Bauder 2003, 713). The points system gives credit to education and credentials for the purposes of immigration that are not recognized in the Canadian labour market, which confuses and frustrates newcomers to Canada who expect to work in the same upper labour market segments for which they were trained in their home countries.

In addition to Canadian education and credentials, most mid- to upper-level labour market opportunities also demand several years of Canadian experience (Preston and Man 1999). However, the demand for Canadian experience in the workforce presents a paradoxical situation: without Canadian experience, newcomers have difficulty accessing meaningful employment, but this experience is difficult to gain if you don’t already have some Canadian experience (Chun and Cheong 2011). The requirement for multiple years of Canadian experience discriminates against recent newcomers who have not yet had the opportunity to accumulate this experience, which in turn causes downward mobility and deskilling over time as a result of being shut out of middle- to upper-level employment opportunities (Pratt 2004). Highlighting how textual documents serve as “objectified forms
of consciousness and organization” that mediate social organization and social relations (Smith 2005, 227), newcomers report the frustration of being told they are ‘overqualified’ based on resumes that include their credentials and qualifications from their sending countries, and on an economic reality that erases this cultural and human capital in their efforts to obtain survival employment (Creese and Wiebe 2012). The class and status displacement that a large proportion of newcomers experience as a result of coming to Canada is often unexpected, and, given the centrality of work in understanding one’s social value and location (Bourdieu 1984), this loss has significant repercussions on one’s confidence and identity. While the shock associated with unmet expectations may be changing as Internet access makes information about the settlement process more available, individuals can anticipate class and status dislocation through the experience of immigration, with effects worthy of scholarly investigation.

Assumptions related to language proficiency are an additional barrier to labour market integration. Offering a potential explanation for different callback rates to resumes with foreign-sounding names versus English-sounding names, Philip Oreopoulos (2009, 26) states that employers may “statistically discriminate by name and location of experience because they believe these characteristics signal a greater chance of inadequate language and cultural skills for the job.” Gillian Creese and Brandy Wiebe (2012, 65) also complicate the relationship between language proficiency and labour market opportunity in their discussion of accent discrimination: raised in Commonwealth countries and formally educated in English, the participants in their study had emigrated from African countries to Vancouver, BC, and identified accent discrimination as a major and ongoing barrier to obtaining employment. In another study, Creese and Edith Kambere (2003, 571) note that skin colour
and accents are inseparable characteristics, arguing, “African immigrant women experience language as a problem in their daily lives not because they have difficulty with expression or comprehension, but because their accents mark them as immigrant, African, Black, women perceived to have low English-language competency.” As these findings from Creese and Wiebe (2012) and Creese and Kambere (2003) indicate, common understandings of language proficiency are not only based on skill, but also intersect with hierarchies of race and colonial histories (see also Creese 2011).

### 1.6.3 Intersections of race, class, and gender in the labour market

Erasing the value of non-Canadian credentials, requiring applicants to have Canadian experience, and discriminating against qualified candidates based on accents all serve to prevent immigrants, and racialized immigrants in particular, from accessing living wage work in Vancouver. One participant in Creese and Wiebe’s (2012, 65) study went so far as to state that the real reason she was not promoted was because she was black – not because she spoke with an accent, as her employer had claimed. Highlighting the impact of race and immigration status as interlocking systems, Creese and Wiebe (2012, 58) state that “white immigrants fare better than immigrants of color, and a wage gap persists between Canadian-born women and men of color and Canadian-born whites.” Elsewhere, Creese (2011, 8, emphasis in original) states, “for Canadians of colour in particular, designation as immigrant and foreign never disappears, even for the Canadian-born.”

Jeffrey Reitz and Sherrilyn Sklar’s (1997, 269) study of the economic integration of immigrants to Canada demonstrates the economic implications of these designations, illustrating how, unlike immigrants of European origin who are “treated as ‘foreign’ on a culture-contingent basis, all racial minorities are treated as ‘foreign’ regardless of culture.
These [racial minority] groups experience earnings disadvantages unrelated to specific behavior or cultural-group attachment.” These findings are supported by Krishna Pendakur and Simon Woodcock (2010, 186) who, using data from the Canadian Workplace and Employee Survey to compare economy-wide wage outcomes, report that “immigrants face substantial economy-wide and within-firm mean wage gaps in comparison to Canadian-born white workers [and] unsurprisingly, mean wage gaps are larger for recent immigrants than non-recent immigrants, and larger for visible minority immigrants than white immigrants.”

As Reitz and Sklar (1997) and Pendakur and Woodcock (2010) highlight, the term ‘immigrant’ has racial connotations, and the phenotypical features ascribed to ‘minority immigrants’ have economic consequences. Put plainly, “women who are white, educated, and English-speaking are rarely considered to be immigrants,” even though the term “immigrant woman” technically refers to all women who are landed immigrants in Canada (Ng 1996, 16; see also Creese 2011). In addition to the barriers to labour market integration outlined above, racism and sexism intersect and impact immigrant women’s lives in ways that cannot be adequately considered by exploring the racial or gender dimensions of those experiences separately (Crenshaw 1991, 1244; see the discussion of theoretical concepts below). Such experiences include the racial division of institutionalized reproductive labour (Glenn 1992), labour market structures that conceive of women’s employment as supplementary rather than central to the economic livelihood of families (Engels 2010; Fudge and Vosko 2001; Ng 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Acker 1990), and familial expectations around care-giving and domestic work (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

Canadian state immigration policy contributes to this production of immigrant women as dependents with unequal citizenship by way of organizing immigration into two major
categories – economic immigrants and family class – a distinction that masculinizes “the independent class [economic immigrants] as an economically productive category, while feminizing the family class as one of ‘non-economic’ immigrants, ‘dependents’ who had to be sponsored and provided for,” according to Sunera Thobani (2000, 19). In 2013, the year this dissertation research was conducted, 51% of economic immigrants were men and 49% were women; however, 61% of the principal applicants were men and only 39% were women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015d). The way in which Canadian immigration policy distinguishes between principal applicants and dependent applicants demonstrates how the state contributes to the social construction of women as dependents or individuals most suitable for performing highly gendered reproductive labour, even when they enter Canada as economic immigrants.¹² Despite these constructions, however, most sponsored women enter the paid labour force soon after arriving in Canada (Thobani 2000, 19).

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss policy and gender issues in greater detail.

1.7 Theoretical concepts informing the study

The literature summarized above helped to hone my understanding of the issues and empirical areas of attention relevant to contemporary empirical studies of immigration in the Canadian context. At the same time, several key theoretical concepts and terms from everyday speech commonly used in institutional discourse have helped me to analyze the data I generated. These concepts and terms are not always referred to or explicitly cited

¹² The gender constraints of Canadian immigration policy operate in tandem and, in many ways, reproduce home-country gender ideologies. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed discussion of the relationship between home-country gender ideology and migration to Canada.
throughout the dissertation, but they provide the scaffolding upon which I initially constructed the interview guide and subsequently began my data analysis.

‘Immigrant women’ is a term that appears frequently in the literature and even appeared in the text of the recruitment poster for the Pathways to Leadership program. Ng (1996, 16) describes “immigrant women” as “a socially constructed category presupposing, among other things, a labour market relation,” noting how it “conjures up the image of a woman who does not speak English or who speaks English with an accent; who is from the Third World or a member of a visible minority group; and who has a certain type of job (e.g., a sewing machine operator or a cleaning lady).” Similarly, Guida Man (2004, 137) explains how “in using the term ‘immigrant’ women, I am not referring to the legal, technical notion of the word (i.e., someone who is legally not a Canadian citizen). Rather, I am employing the common sense usage of the word to refer to people who are seen as immigrants by others, regardless of their formal legal status.” Immigrant women is therefore a term that denotes the complex intersection between race and legal status, particularly in the context of Canada’s colonial history where whites are designated as “old stock Canadians,” a semantic term mobilized by Conservative party leader Stephen Harper in the 2015 federal election campaign, while bodies of other skin tones and colors are marked as different and immigrant regardless of when they or their families arrived in Canada.

In this dissertation, the term ‘immigrant women’ is a starting point for explicating the range of socially located, physically embodied, and historically contingent experiences described by research participants in this study. Through ideology and identification, the commonsense and prevalent understanding of the term ‘immigrant women’ functions to signal a particular social and economic location based on race and gender categories. In his
1971 essay, Louis Althusser (2009, 100, 102) defines ideology as “a ‘representation’ of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” and in particular, to the “relations of production and to class relations.” This “imaginary relation” has “material existence” in its conceptualization of the individual as “a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he [sic] freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes.” In turn, these ideas inform an individual’s attitudes and practices (Althusser 2009, 102). This “‘know-how’ [is taught] in schools, churches and through the media, in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (Althusser 2009, 88, emphasis in original). Ideology is in this way invisible and ahistorical, while nevertheless responsible for reproducing labour power, as well as labour power’s “subjection to the ruling ideology or of the ‘practice’ of that ideology” in classed societies (Althusser 2009, 88).

The poster placed in Neighbourhood Houses and posted online to advertise the Pathways to Leadership program described it as “an employment and leadership skills training program for immigrant women.” This description evoked a clear definition of the intended program audience: racialized women who wished to improve their class standing and relation to the means of production in Canada. Through practices of ideology, subjects such as ‘immigrant women’ are interpellated, or hailed, into particular subject-positions or identities with material consequences. For a non-white woman who migrates to Canada, a likely subject position is the one of ‘immigrant woman,’ with its associated class and status assumptions (Ng 1996; see also Creese 2011, 8-9). Stuart Hall (2000, 19) builds on Althusser’s concept of ideological interpellation, and provides direction for how I theorize the term ‘immigrant women’ as an “identity” in the sense of “the meeting point, the point of suture, between […] the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us
or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and […] the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken.’” In other words, ‘immigrant women’ becomes a term that calls or hails racialized women into programs such as the Pathways to Leadership program, while at the same time it serves to conjure up an (often misinformed) image of what it means – socially and economically – to be a woman of color in Canada. Ideology, interpellation, and identity are key concepts for exploring the classification struggles of participants of this study.

Interrogating the ideology that reproduces “immigrant women” as a discursive category and material reality requires a more nuanced conceptual understanding of social stratification and its institutional conditions than the concepts discussed above offer. In addition to the neo-Marxist concepts described above, I selectively draw from and combine concepts from Marxist and feminist theoretical traditions to support the Weberian approach to class and status that frames this dissertation. Max Weber’s (1978) discussion of class, status and party from Economy and Society, posthumously published in 1922, outlines a multidimensional framework for examining the class, status, and citizenship dimensions of classification as I explore them in this study. Weber (1978, 4) defines sociology as “a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences,” an orientation that fits with his emphasis on how social actors make meaning and exert agency within the constraints of a social structure that both enables and limits opportunity. In the passage below, Weber (1978, 937, emphasis in original) summarizes the distinctions between class, status, and power, highlighting the implications of each for an individual’s position within the larger social situation:
‘Classes’ are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas ‘status groups’ are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special ‘styles of life.’ An ‘occupational group’ is also a status group. For normally, it successfully claims social honor only by virtue of the special style of life which may be determined by it. The differences between classes and status groups frequently overlap […] ‘Parties’ live in a house of ‘power’ [and] parties may represent interests determined through ‘class situation’ or ‘status situation’ […] but they need be neither purely ‘class’ not purely ‘status.’

Weber’s (1978, 926) framework provides a set of conceptual tools for examining social stratification, a macro-level phenomenon, through a micro-level examination of an individual’s class position in terms of their economic situation; status in terms of prestige, honor or lifestyle acquired through birth, occupation or ethnicity; and power, defined as one’s ability to realize one’s own will in communal action even against the resistance of others. The concept of party, which Weber relates to the realm of politics and therefore to citizenship, is crucial to an analysis of how immigration policies reflect a particular value rationality reflective of the particular community, or Gemeinschaft, of Canadian society (Waters and Waters 2016, 2).

Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters (2016) offer a more precise translation of how Weber conceived of social inequality in his widely cited fragment, “The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party” (Weber 1978, 926-940). Waters and Waters (2016, 2) argue that in Weber’s thinking, “status groups (German: Stand/Stände) emerge from the most basic nature of society, rooted in what Weber identifies as the Gemeinschaft, or ‘the community.’” According to Waters and Waters (2016, 2), “for Weber the Gemeinschaft defines value-embedded issues like citizenship, equality before the law, human rights, the extent of markets and trade laws.” Accordingly, “the Gemeinschaft always underpins the Gesellschaft [including the rational marketplace and bureaucracies] for
Weber,” in that the values of the Gemeinschaft, or community, are then used to create the limits of the instrumentally rational Gesellschaft rather than the other way around (Waters and Waters 2016, 2). Following this logic, I consider how immigration policies are not the result of impartial arguments or thinking but instead involve a political struggle of the legal order that “occurs by appealing to the values of the Gemeinschaft [community], while using the amoral instrumental values of the Gesellschaft [society] to actually seek power” (Waters and Waters 2016, 4–5). Chapter 3’s discussion of Canada’s immigration policy history demonstrates the extent to which bureaucratic policies and practices are not neutral and objective, but in fact emerge from communal ideas and values about class and status.

While the political parties that implement immigration policies may claim to rely on instrumental rationality, Weber’s conceptualization of social stratification helps us understand the extent to which immigration programs also act as streams that determine an individual’s potential to achieve Stand. In Canada, some immigration policies provide a legal pathway for some newcomers to be included in the nation as formal Canadian citizens, at the same time as other newcomers are blocked from ever achieving that legal status. As a result, some newcomers are better positioned to achieve the Stand of being included in the national imagination as Canadian citizens while others face a much more tenuous and difficult path toward that same Stand. Despite the claim that immigration programs are based on a meritocratic ideology that formally assesses all individuals equally, their implementation may lead to inequality in actual practice: the regulations that accompany certain kinds of applications as compared to others, or the processing wait times and restrictions that often apply during these periods create the conditions by which people come to find themselves
with an inferior *Stand*, and consequently, without substantial economic power. For Weber, status inequality is ‘ideal typically’ rooted in abstract honour and privilege, not economics. And it is the inequality in abstract honour and privilege that has financial consequences. For Weber it is inequality in abstract honours and prestige of the *Gemeinschaft* that leads to economic inequality of the *Gesellschaft*, not the other way around (Waters and Waters 2016, 3).

Clarifying how economic inequality can arise from status inequality as a result of the *Gemeinschaft*’s power to allocate abstract honour and privilege is useful for examining why some groups of newcomers may experience expedited settlement and integration processes as compared to other groups. This conceptual discussion is especially relevant to the issues of occupational status and gender identity that I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, with regard to the structural barriers that block some newcomer women’s pathways to the paid labour market and mid- to high-status occupational positions.

These structural barriers to economic achievement and status recognition are also tied to newcomers’ perceptions of belonging and non-belonging, as I discuss in Chapter 5. These forms of struggle can leave newcomers feeling as outsiders rather than as members of the society. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012, n.p.) defines the terms *settlement* and *integration* as follows:

Settlement refers to the initial and short-term transitional issues faced by newcomers, while integration is an ongoing process of mutual accommodation between an individual and society. The key to maximizing the benefits of immigration is ensuring that newcomers have the information, tools and opportunities to realize their potential and become fully engaged in all aspects of Canadian society.

This definition highlights the temporal sequence of settlement coming before integration, and defines integration on the basis of shared accommodation demonstrated by newcomers and members of Canadian society. CIC’s definition echoes John W. Berry’s (1997, 9) widely-
cited framework on acculturation that describes integration as “an interest in both maintaining one’s original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups […] here, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network.” Berry (1997, 10–11) goes on to state that integration is only possible in “societies that are explicitly multicultural,” since integration requires “acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different people.”

Despite definitions involving mutual accommodation and acceptance of the right for group members to live as culturally different people, Peter Li (2003, 327) argues that the integration discourse in Canada “clearly upholds conformity as the desirable outcome of the successful integration of immigrants” and that the “discourse [suggests] that it is immigrants and not Canadian society and its institutions that are required to change.” Li (2003, 325) cites numerous empirical studies that measure integration as performing as well as or better than individuals born in Canada, where “proper integration necessitates immigrants performing as well as the average Canadian in terms of per-capita productivity, but successful integration requires immigrants to do better than the native-born so that the resident population can benefit from immigration.” Li (2003, 326) finds similar measures of success for cultural integration, where minority immigrants “are more likely to be racialized or stigmatized due to racial discrimination and a greater reluctance on the part of native-born Canadians to accept them as legitimate Canadians or equals.” Li’s findings demonstrate the tensions between the Canadian Gesellschaft’s institutionally sanctioned definition of the term ‘integration,’ and the Gemeinschaft’s everyday use of the term. Chapter 3 provides a more
extended discussion of multiculturalism in Canada and the complicated history it both accompanied and perpetuated.

On the whole, the dissertation raises questions about CIC’s idealized definition of integration given the class, status, and citizenship challenges faced by some groups of newcomers with racial and gender identities or precarious legal statuses that leave them vulnerable to economic, social, and political exclusion. Integration is often measured by immigrant’s achievement of particular forms of capital, including economic capital, which is “immediately and directly convertible into money,” and cultural capital, which are acquired assets that can be mobilized for the purpose of social mobility (Bourdieu 1986, 47). Heavily inspired by Weber (1978), Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 113) uses ethnographic data to explicate how class and status function through the accumulation and conversion of economic and cultural forms of “capital,” where capital is conceived of as “a social relation” rather than exclusively as a material substance. This “economy of practices” is organized hierarchically, and the social relation of capital “only exists and produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced” (Bourdieu 1984, 112). In other words, the value of one’s economic resources or status position can only be understood relative to the economic resources and status position of others in the same society.

According to Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of social space, each individual holds a volume of economic capital and a volume of cultural capital (concepts that broadly correspond to Weber’s [1978] concepts of class and status), the combination or proportion of which translates into conditions of existence that position the individual in the field of social space relative to other agents and their respective volumes and ratios of capital. I draw on Weber (1978) and Bourdieu (1984) to examine the relationship or ratio between class
(roughly determined by one’s volume of economic capital) and status (based mainly on one’s volume of cultural capital) among the ‘immigrant women’ who participated in this study. In Chapter 4, I explore questions related to shifts in overall volume and proportion of economic and cultural capital as a result of immigrating to Canada. That chapter provides a backdrop for untangling the complicated consequences of immigration on one’s position among other individuals and within in a new political structure. As research shows, the poorest of the poor do not tend to migrate internationally since they typically lack the resources and connections required to facilitate such movements (Lipton 1980, 4). Voluntary migrants – those who choose to leave their home country – are typically in a position to do so because they possess some volume of economic capital and/or cultural capital that they can convert into documents for entry into a new country, the cost for the physical transportation and establishment of a new home, and labour market prospects in the new country (Lipton 1980, 4). Chapter 4 explores the impacts of immigration to Canada on the class and status positions of study participants who were not able to convert cultural capital from their home countries as they had intended to, or believed they could, prior to immigration.

John Porter’s (2015, 73) classic 1965 study of social class and power in Canada revealed how the country’s colonial history has resulted in a situation where “immigration and ethnic affiliation (or membership in a cultural group) have been important factors in the formation of social classes,” namely in “building up the bottom layer of the stratification system.” Weber’s framework also discusses race and ethnicity as aspects of the status dimension of social stratification, noting that status groups may form along ethnic lines and give rise to “ethnic coexistences” that “condition the reciprocal repulsion and disdain but allow each ethnic community to consider its own honor as the highest one” (Weber 1978,
934; see Lamont 2000, 55-96 for an updated discussion on the role of morality in the maintenance of racial boundaries). According to Waters and Waters (2016, 9), Weber “considered race to be an extreme form of an ethnic Stand, in which inherited but arbitrarily selected visible characteristics are perceived as a common trait and a basis for repulsion.” In the section on “Ethnic Groups” in *Economy and Society*, Weber (1978, 385) explains how “persons who are externally different are simply despised irrespective of what they accomplish or what they are, or they are venerated superstitiously if they are too powerful in the long run.” As Weber (1978, 385) elaborates,

race creates a ‘group’ only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait: this happens only when a neighbourhood or the mere proximity of racially different persons is the basis of joint (mostly political) action, or conversely, when some common experiences of members of the same race are linked to some antagonism against members of an obviously different group […] In all groups with a developed ‘ethnic’ consciousness the existence or absence of intermarriage (*connubium*) would then be a normal consequence of racial attraction or segregation.

Weber’s definitions of ‘race group’ and ‘ethnic consciousness’ describe how these different categories come to be formed on the basis of social interactions rather than physical characteristics. Weber’s description thus supports the argument that race and ethnicity are socially constructed concepts that have real effects in terms of structuring group membership and social stratification, a point I substantiate throughout the dissertation and especially in Chapter 5.

Following Edna Bonacich (1972, 548), I define the terms *race* and *ethnicity* in this study according to the following distinction: “The difference between race and ethnicity lies in the size of the locale from which a group stems, races generally coming from continents and ethnicities from national sub-sections of continents.” Bonacich’s definition shares similarities with Weber’s conceptualization of race groups and ethnic consciousness, in that
members of an ethnic group share more intimate ties than members of racial groups. Moreover, I, like many scholars (Browne and Misra 2003; Espiritu 1992), conceive of race to be a fluid, socially constructed category loosely based on phenotypical features, and often employed for the purposes of social stratification. As Noel Ignatiev (1995) demonstrates in his historical examination of how Catholic Irish immigrants arriving in post-Revolution America became ‘white’ by perpetuating a form of racial oppression against Afro-Americans that they themselves had been subject to in Ireland, racial privilege and oppression are not ahistorically fixed but socially contingent. Similarly, work by Ruth Frankenberg (1993), Matthew F. Jacobson (1998), and Bridgit Rasmussen et al. (2001) documents the contested nature of “whiteness” as a racial category, and its role in the (re)production of social inequality. In my study, I show how whiteness as an aspect of racialization contributed to PtL program participants’ notions of what it meant to be a ‘real Canadian.’ As Chapter 5 describes in detail, the PtL program participants viewed “Caucasians,” a term they frequently employed, as “real Canadians” while all others were marked as being “immigrant” and non-members of Canadian society.

Study participants’ shared understandings of what it looks like to be a “real Canadian” and what it looks like to be an “immigrant” are critical because the concept of race cannot be understood apart from systems of class and gender. The term “immigrant women,” as used in the Pathways to Leadership program description and elsewhere, is a signifier of a particular economic and racial position in that it rarely conjures up an image of a light-skinned woman who speaks with a British accent. In this study, I conceptualize race and gender as “interlocking systems” thereby constructing an integrative approach to unpacking issues of intersectionality in order to better understand how these factors interact
to produce particular life-chances for women of colour (Glenn 1992, 3; Weber 1978, 927). Feminist theories of intersectionality, which describe how discrimination based on race, gender, and class overlap and diverge in certain ways and with consequences that cannot be wholly captured by looking at each dimension separately, provide tools for “reveal[ing] how power works in diffuse and differentiated ways through the creation and deployment of overlapping identity categories” (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Examining how Canadian immigration programs structure women’s legal and practical ability to access the employment and educational opportunities necessary to facilitate integration in Chapters 3 and 4, I demonstrate how policy and the funded settlement services that result from these policies create gendered and racialized pathways toward low-wage, precarious forms of employment and limited forms of civic participation.

Intersectional theories provide conceptual tools for better understanding how individuals located within particular structures reproduce privilege and inequality by simultaneously drawing on and constructing identity categories, such as ‘real Canadians’ and ‘immigrant women.’ As work by Arlie Hochschild (2004), Saskia Sassen (2004; 1981), and Irene Browne and Joya Misra (2003) demonstrates, neoliberal structural adjustment policies have made migration for economic reasons more lucrative, giving rise to a pool of ‘immigrant women’ who have relocated to wealthier countries in search of greater economic opportunity. While individuals may migrate for an infinite number of reasons, intersectional approaches to understanding labour market experiences help us to explicate how race, gender, and class shape labour market opportunities in the Canadian context.

Taken together, the concepts outlined above provide tools for analyzing the social processes that gave rise to the economic and social injustices PtL program participants faced.
after arriving in Canada. Nancy Fraser (2013, 192) offers a “three-dimensional theory of justice,” where she defines justice in terms of what she calls the “parity of participation: justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life,” and includes concepts that correspond with the class structure, status order, and political distribution of power described by Weber (1978) and Bourdieu (1998; 1984). Where Fraser (2013, 192-196) is more precise, however, is in her discussion of how “distributive injustice or maldistribution” and “status inequality or misrecognition” are linked to political injustice or “misrepresentation” (see also Kemple 2014, 131–133). Fraser’s (2013) scheme of justice is formulated in terms of the redistribution of wealth and resources, the recognition of status and identity, and the representation of citizens and group members. Of particular relevance to this study is Fraser’s (2013, 196-197) discussion of how misrepresentation may arise “when the community’s boundaries are drawn in such a way as to wrongly exclude some people from the chance to participate at all in its authorized contests over justice.” Attention to “misframing,” as Fraser (2013, 197) terms it, is critical, in that frame-setting about who counts as members and non-members “effectively excludes the latter from the universe of those entitled to consideration within the community in matters of distribution, recognition, and ordinary-political representation.”

Only Canadians citizens are eligible to vote in federal and provincial elections, and immigrants are not eligible to apply for citizenship until they have met a number of requirements, including a minimum residency period within the nation-state. As a result, newcomers in Canada are “denied the chance to press first-order justice claims in [the] given political community,” a reality that prevents newcomers from countering injustices of maldistribution or misrecognition unless they otherwise develop the individual and/or
collective capacity to advocate for themselves in alternative political domains. While the concepts of maldistribution and misrecognition are addressed in Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 highlights the way in which the Pathways to Leadership program raised participants’ awareness of how the economic, legal status, and social identity challenges they faced were the result of systemic barriers to integration rather than personal failings. This newfound awareness was critical to fostering PtL program participants’ interest in pursuing leadership opportunities, and was a first step in realizing the ideal of justice expressed in Fraser’s (2013, 199) slogan for parity of participation: “No redistribution or recognition without representation.” This slogan also highlights future directions for addressing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression related to gender, race, and class, as I argue in the conclusion.

1.8 Dissertation chapters

Drawing on the terms and concepts discussed above, the remaining chapters of this dissertation will focus on the fieldwork process and substantive research findings. Chapter 2 provides more detail about my methodology for conducting fieldwork and interviews, and highlights the distinctive insights about the experiences, challenges and understandings of the women involved and participating in the PtL program. Specifically, this chapter argues that when researching a group of women with complex and diverse migration pathways, embedded fieldwork is necessary for building the trust and rapport necessary to ‘get at the heart of the matter.’ The chapter also provides detail about the writing and ethnographic conventions that I do (or do not) adhere to in the dissertation and the rationale for these decisions. The effort to reflect on the research process in order to contextualize the data
generation and analysis processes is in line with the feminist theories and methodological approaches guiding this study.

Chapter 3 is framed by Canada’s history of immigration policy and the three major streams of immigration – economic, family reunification, and humanitarian – that have structured immigration practices since the late 1960s. Drawing on three narratives of Pathways to Leadership program participants’ experiences after entering Canada, this chapter focuses on how people engage in what I call (following Bourdieu [1984, 479-481]) ‘classification struggles’ as they apply to immigrate to Canada, and considers how the stream of immigration by which they enter has consequences for their settlement and integration experiences after they arrive in Canada, along with their longer-term trajectories of economic and status achievement in Canada. Drawing from Fraser’s (2013) concept of maldistribution, I argue that immigration programs that restrict women’s ability to work leave them vulnerable and at-risk of never achieving the ‘Canadian dream’ that motivated their migration to Canada in the first place. Focusing on the women who described precarious legal status experiences as they worked towards permanent residency and Canadian citizenship, this chapter contributes to the growing empirical literature on precarious migration status and its uneven impacts, particularly for women (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009).

Chapter 4 moves from the questions of class discussed in the previous chapter, both in the bureaucratic sense of being classified for the purposes of immigration and the economic sense of monetary earnings, toward a discussion of social status. This chapter examines the relationship between work and identity, and the socio-psychological consequences of having that relationship disrupted after immigration. In addition to
discussing the challenges that Pathways to Leadership participants faced as they struggled to regain some of the social status they had lost after immigration at the same time some were striving to attain legal status as permanent residents, this chapter explores how the post-arrival settlement programs funded precisely to alleviate these adjustment difficulties, including English language training programs, were not accessible to many of the PtL program participants I interviewed. This chapter focuses on the impact of foreign credential non-recognition, and the social status conflicts that occur as a result of the misrecognition of linguistic and educational forms of cultural capital (Fraser 2013; Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1984; Weber 1978).

Chapter 5 focuses on participants’ experiences in the Pathways to Leadership program, and particularly how Neighbourhood Houses offer a unique form of settlement services that serve to build citizenship. Following from Fraser’s (2013) slogan “No redistribution or recognition without representation,” I argue that the leadership skills component of the Pathways to Leadership program achieved its objective of building participants’ awareness of systemic barriers, which in turn motivated them to become more engaged citizens in their communities. The level of civic participation that women demonstrated by the end of the program was remarkable, given the relatively short term of 16 weeks. Neighbourhood Houses facilitate a sense of belonging in Canada by providing participants with meaningful opportunities for connecting with other individuals facing similar life circumstances. At the same time, the program participants gain concrete skills related to employment in Canada and are encouraged to reconnect with the self-confidence they may have ‘lost in translation’ when relocating from their home country to Canada. Taken together, this networking and skill building process promotes Neighbourhood House
members’ sense of civic membership in Canada even if they are not (yet) legal citizens of the Canadian state.

The conclusion highlights the key findings presented in this dissertation and its contribution to the sociological literature. It summarizes the challenges that Neighbourhood Houses and other non-profits face in terms of funding settlement services, and posits some potential citizenship-related solutions to these challenges. It highlights existing gaps in Canadian immigration processes and, on the other hand, looks toward the promise of brighter days in Canadian politics and what changing immigration policies might mean for newcomer women entering Canada within the next several years. The dissertation concludes by outlining four policy recommendations at the federal, provincial, and neighbourhood levels, and directions for future research in this area.
Chapter 2: A View From Somewhere: Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Through Embedded Fieldwork

But that’s the name of the game. You’re artificially forcing yourself to be tuned into something that you then pick up as a witness – not as an interviewer, not as a listener, but as a witness to how they react to what gets done to and around them.


As described in my introductory chapter, this dissertation is a product of a distinctive set of ethnographic fieldwork and interview experiences conducted over a prolonged period and in the context of three institutions – two Neighbourhood Houses, and one research-intensive university – with three sets of sometimes overlapping and sometimes distinct relationships. The most challenging aspect of producing this dissertation has been the process of translating the embodied and intimate nature of the fieldwork and in-depth interviews into a coherent and cohesive body of text that substantiates the analytical claims I, as sole interpreter and author, present here. Donna Haraway (1988, 589) offers a post-positivistic perspective on the necessary struggle of conducting and writing up research that the researcher acknowledges to be embodied and situated:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.

Following from Haraway’s notion of a view from somewhere, the first part of this chapter tracks the research process by discussing the methodological approaches that informed my conceptualization of the project and positioning the fieldwork in an ontological and real-time context. Then, I describe the first steps of the data generation from a reflexive standpoint. The third part of the chapter describes how I collected and analyzed the data, and accounts
for the messiness of the fieldwork by explaining my decisions about whom to interview. The chapter concludes with a discussion of research ethics in the context of long-term ethnographic projects.

In addition to accounting for how I generated and analyzed the data, this chapter demonstrates my embeddedness in the research sites and the depth of the relationships I formed with my research participants. The significance of this embeddedness in the generation of rich and deep narratives cannot be understated: for women who may have been excluded from formal membership and belonging in Canada, or from accessing social and health services, or isolated due to a lack of extended social networks and/or institutional supports for childrearing, the PtL program offered a space where their experiences could be shared without judgment. For many of the women participating in the program, this space was their first opportunity in Canada to describe their struggles to a group of other individuals who understood the challenges they faced.

Moreover, and shockingly, many women described the transformation they experienced when they learned through their participation in the program that they were not the only ones facing these difficulties. For many participants, the PtL program was the first instance they came to recognize how their inability to find employment was not the result of personal failings but of institutional policies and practices that structurally excluded them from the labour market. Similarly, although Neighbourhood House staff members were well versed in describing their day-to-day work, most were less used to connecting that work to their own migration experiences or articulating their personal reasons for their deep commitment to the women and families with whom they worked. With these issues in mind, I aim to demonstrate how my own vulnerabilities and presence in the research helped to
break down the barriers between the researcher and researched in an effort to co-create a deep understanding of women’s actual, everyday experiences as immigrants and/or advocates that would not have occurred via other research methods.

2.1 Standpoint, interpretation, and ethnography: A hermeneutic, context-oriented approach

No one who stepped into the Pathways Out of Poverty project four years ago has been unchanged by the collective experience of organizing or participating in the PtL program. Thus, it would be a mistake to write this dissertation as if the women who participated in this research remained static characters who would tell the same narrative today if I were to ask them the same questions about their experiences. For this reason, interview excerpts are presented in the past tense: there is no ethnographic present in this dissertation, because 1) the processes of immigration and integration are processes of upheaval and transformation for actual people, not deindividuated objects; and 2) as the medium for the data generation and interpretation, I do not stand outside the interactions that inform this text (Fabian 1983). By framing my analyses and commentaries on the interview excerpts in past tense rather than present tense, I follow a writing convention that nods to Dorothy Smith’s (2005, 126) methodological point regarding experience as a situated dialogue:

What we call experience is essentially dialogic. It begins where the body is, in a world known sensually, yet it is always and only an emergent in language and at the point of speech or writing. We generally think of experience as occurring before it has been told. However, if we bring to mind actual occasions of people speaking from their experience, we can see that experience actually emerges only in the course of its telling, and telling is to particular people at particular times and in particular places or, when written, to a future reader or readers.

The conversations that generated the data presented in this dissertation occurred in discrete interactions and at particular personal and historical moments. Moreover, the writing-up
process I have engaged in since these conversations has been geared toward the academic audience that will ultimately evaluate the rigour and original contribution of this work. These realities have shaped the project in substantial ways.

Acknowledging “that the experiential can’t be directly translated into the factual,” and that the rich complexities of lived actualities cannot be reproduced in text, Smith (2005, 124-125) nonetheless sees value in the dialogue necessary for researchers and individuals to produce the accounts “that can then be further processed into ethnography.” The keyword here is ‘processed.’ These accounts do not stand alone or speak for themselves; rather, the process of writing up ethnographic accounts involves “two stages of dialogue,” where “the primary dialogue is conversation in which experience emerges; the secondary dialogue then emerges as the researcher engages with the material produced in the first dialogue, which is now with other sources, her or his data” (Smith 2005, 142). The fieldnotes and interview excerpts presented in this dissertation are examples of the first stage of dialogue generated in situ and on particular occasions, while the thematic analyses are the result of the secondary dialogue between the material I have transformed from experience into text. At this stage of reflection, analysis, and writing, I engage in a process of tacking back and forth between my data and materials generated outside the scope of this particular study, including, for example, classical and contemporary theories, other relevant study findings, and state policy.

The decision of which tense to use when presenting data and what this means for my general approach to data generation reflects an ontological position that questions conventional social scientific notions of objectivity and objectivism, particularly in the context of an ethnographic project where the data has been generated and analyzed by an embodied researcher with a particular location the social world. I draw then from Smith’s
(2005, 10) method of beginning this inquiry from a “standpoint,” which she defines as “a point of entry into discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge of society or political economy.” The concept of standpoint is critical to Smith’s (2005, 10) “institutional ethnography,” a “method of inquiry that works from the actualities of people’s lives and experiences to discover the social as it extends beyond experience.” While this research project adopts some key concepts from institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry, it is not an institutional ethnography as Smith would define it: it does not go far enough in analyzing textual documents produced from lived actualities, and it does not place the same emphasis on textual documents to map ruling relations. In contrast to Smith’s (2005; 1987) suspicion of abstract theory, I occasionally adhere to the more conventional sociological tradition of drawing on abstracted concepts to make sociological sense of analytical points throughout the dissertation. On the whole, however, an inductive approach that emphasizes ‘standpoint’ is best-suited for exploring the key questions guiding this ethnographic research project, which focuses on the experiences of an underserviced group of immigrant women who have been largely excluded from receiving institutional support as a result of a variety of life circumstances that can be tracked to intersecting issues of gender, class, and legal citizenship status.

Methodological debates about the generation and interpretation of sociological data have existed since the discipline’s earliest days. Largely considered the founder of sociology, Emile Durkheim published The Rules of Sociological Method in 1895 (1982), where he delimits the subject matter of sociology and outlines a strictly objectifying methodological approach. According to Durkheim (1982), sociology should operate using methods as similar as possible to those of the natural sciences, which means the sociologist should abandon all
preconceptions (72), clearly categorize the subject matter of the research into a group of phenomena (75), and define the object of research as objectively possible (82). Durkheim’s aim was to transform sociology into a science by implementing a more scientific approach that did not rely on “ideological analysis” (60). This method poses significant challenges for sociologists and social scientists in general – namely, how do they go about objectively approaching the subject matter, classifying it into groups of phenomena, and objectively defining these groups in terms of social facts when they themselves exist within the phenomena they are attempting to study?

A similar ambiguity presents itself in Weber’s (1978, 4, emphasis mine) definition of sociology: “Sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences.” Weber’s definition and view of sociology includes the concept of interpretive understanding (Verstehen), an improvement over the objectifying pursuit of Durkheim’s social facts. For Weber, sociologists can understand “social facts in their cultural significance and explain them as culturally determined” through the use of “ideal-types,” which he defines as methodological devices that account for objects and events that influence human activity (Giddens 1971, 147–149). At the same time, Weber emphasizes the “empirical-analytic task of using proven lawlike hypotheses to explain social action and make conditional predictions” (Habermas 1988, 12). That the sociologist must determine the motivational link or inference in explanatory understanding is the interpretive element of Weber’s method – a method that may be capable of producing “objectively valid meanings” if one approaches the act to be interpreted as some motive, whether rational, habitual, emotional, and so on.

Bauman (1978, 87) offers a summary of Weber’s emphasis on meaning, motive, and
understanding this way: “Granted that meanings are subjective; granted that historical
categories, to make sense, must be relevant to these meanings; we can still have objective
social science.” Thus, while interpretation may provide depth to sociological findings, the
rigorous pursuit of “an objective science of the subjective” nevertheless remained ideal for
Weber (Bauman 1978, 72).

In his critique of attempts to explain the social world using natural science
approaches, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989, 293) posits an alternative approach to
interpretation: “the circle of understanding is not a ‘methodological’ circle, but [it] describes
an element of the ontological structure of understanding.” For Gadamer, ‘truth’ is not an
essence that can be mined out through interpretive methods; instead, the very act of
interpretation relies on the interpreter’s application of his or her fore-understanding that is
brought to the situation or text to be interpreted. In other words, the problem of “the
hermeneutical experience itself” is that “the interpreter does not know that he [sic] is
bringing himself and his own concepts into the interpretation” (403). In light of the implicit
ways in which these fore-understandings are manifested at each stage of the interpretive
process, the interpreter must be open and reflexive about what he or she brings to the
encounter. From this perspective, continual interrogation and awareness of the assumptions
and pre-understandings that one brings to any research undertaking is imperative in the
pursuit of ‘truth.’

Tying together Michel Foucault’s (2003) notion of “games of truth” to “games of
power,” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1999) critical discussion of anthropological
conventions seems useful for grasping what the social scientist aims or should aim to
accomplish in the course of research. In tracing the history of games of truth, Foucault (2003,
explains how, “since the age of the Greeks, our society has been marked by a lack of a precise and imperative definition of the games of truth which are permitted to the exclusion of all others.” Foucault (2003, 38-39) argues that the distribution of truth reinforces the distribution of power, since truth is established through consensus among free individuals “who find themselves within a certain network of practices of power and constraining institutions.” Thus, networks of power are maintained through games of truth where what constitutes ‘truth’ is often vague and the boundaries undefined. With Foucault’s argument in mind, Spivak (1999, 6) interrogates the notion of the “native informant,” that is, the traditional subject of any anthropological ethnographic account, which she describes as “a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man – a mark crossing out the impossibility of the ethical relation.” In the act of privileging the voices of the native informant while denying her or his full humanity, a hierarchy of power is instituted or reinforced in which the anthropologist-ethnographer gains a privileged voice and controls the regime of truth.

Situated within the university institution’s academic game of power, the ethnographic researcher may be authorized to pen “great narratives” of truth, where “cultural identities and roles are negotiated and renegotiated, implicitly and explicitly” through “meticulous scholarship” (Spivak 1999, 8). This knowledge-work involves what Foucault (2003, 39) calls a “care of the self,” defined as ethical and proper practices of freedom in the pursuit of truth and its accurate description. As Foucault (2003, 39) argues with respect to this tradition of scholarship, “a person giving an anthropological description of a society supplies not a construction [of truth] but a description, which itself has a certain number of historically changing rules, so that one can say that it is to a certain extent a construction with respect to
another description.” In this account, “truth” is not fixed, but nor is it a “void” where “everything is a figment of the imagination” (Foucault 2003, 39). Likewise, ethnographic description is both restricted and open to possibilities, in that “the person who has the capacity to formulate truths also has a power, the power of being able to speak the truth and to express it in the way he wants” (Foucault 2003, 39).

In her discussion of “stranger fetishism,” Sara Ahmed (2000, 57) examines how the Other is articulated in ethnographic research encounters. In her critique of methods that assimilate what is foreign in one’s own grammatical rules and language system, Ahmed (2000, 58) states that “cultural translation” is a “central model for the production of ethnographic knowledge.” Through this translation, a process of assimilation is at play in the interpretive act of ethnographic research and writing, where the “strange culture” is translated into “the language of ethnography, the language of the one who knows” (Ahmed 2000, 58, emphasis mine). Again, interrogating the concept of knowledge becomes key for inscribing the data of experience and its subsequent analysis. Throughout this process, however, the fundamental question concerning how the “professional stranger” comes to possess the “technique for the accumulation of knowledge” remains (Ahmed 2000, 60). If social scientists are ideally figured as professional strangers, then do research methodologies that present themselves as recipes for acquiring and analyzing data gloss over experiences and social, economic, and political relations that are otherwise too complex to be reduced to computer codes or statistical formulas?

According to Liisa Malkki (2007, 166), anthropologists such as “Malinowski, Boas, and other pioneers of anthropology pursued empirical research that they never hesitated to regard as both scientific and also as interpretive and experience-based.” Malkki (2007, 170)
defines ethnography in way that is sensitive to the critiques discussed above, namely, as “situated, long-term, empirical field research (as opposed to its other meaning as a genre of writing and a practice of representation), [which] is simultaneously a critical theoretical practice, a quotidian ethical practice, and an improvisational practice.” Ethnography is theoretical because of its attention to the “the form and ‘object’ of knowledge, about the categories that structure the enquiry” (Malkki 2007, 170). As Bronislaw Malinowski (1935, 321) describes this method of inquiry,

> The fieldworker in collecting his [sic] material has constantly to strive after a clear idea of what he really wants to know […] And since this idea has gradually to emerge from the evidence before him, he must constantly switch over from observation and accumulated evidence to theoretical moulding, and then back to collecting data again.

Further, these theoretical practices have ethical implications; fieldwork is “not a matter of the gradual accumulation of ‘data’ into a stable structure, but of moments of puzzlement and sudden realization, of making and unmaking” (Malkki 2007, 175). These everyday moments of puzzling through the form and object of the inquiry during the fieldwork itself entail ethical decisions: sorting out whom to interview and not to interview, for what purpose, what to say or not say during participation observation, and anticipating the consequences of these interactions.

The importance of acknowledging the temporality of fieldwork cannot be overstated. Ethnographic fieldwork is improvisational in the sense that “the ethnographer has to negotiate fieldwork in real time, in ‘live’ social contexts,” and in the sense that “life happens in the course of the work, as it should” (Malkki 2007, 185). At the individual level, the members of the Pathways to Leadership Advisory Committee and women who joined, completed, or left the program have had babies, lost partners, passed away, been hospitalized, seen their children move across the country, improved their English, secured employment,
completed educational programs, received permanent resident status or Canadian citizenship, or moved to other cities (to the best of my knowledge, however, no one has returned to her home country). At the organizational level, funding structures have changed and some staff positions at the Neighbourhood House have been rejigged and renamed as a result. At the federal level, this fieldwork was completed toward the end of the Conservative government’s nine years in power under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The Conservatives changed the face of Canadian immigration during their leadership by restricting the criteria to apply for permanent residency and by reducing the number of accepted permanent residency applications through family reunification immigration programs. Instead, the Conservatives emphasized economic class immigration by introducing revised and new initiatives, including Express Entry. In the time since I completed my data generation, the Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau has been elected and initiated the resettlement of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees in partnership with settlement service provider organizations, signaling a return to Canada’s commitment as a country that values humanitarian and compassionate class immigration.

The theoretical and temporal details presented in this section are critical to understanding the methodological and historical context in which this dissertation was generated. The use of past tense is intended to remind the reader that history and truth are not fixed but are instead co-created in moments of shared dialogue. Smith (2005, 77), borrowing from Valentin Vološinov, describes how interindividual territory, the notion that the use of language creates a reciprocal relationship out of speaker and hearer, “comes into being for them as their consciousness are coordinated in language.” I co-created the first stage of dialogue with the women who participated in this study, while the second stage of dialogue
has been created by my interpretation of fieldnotes and interview transcripts from the first stage of dialogue in relation to sociological texts. I have done my best to attend to my participants’ meanings, but the interpretation is ultimately grounded in my perspective as the ethnographer-researcher and presented in the format of an academic text.

2.2 Out of place to settling in the ‘field’: Reflexivity and positionality

At the time I started this degree in 2010, I knew very little about any of these personal, organizational, or political issues. Following my Master’s research, which focused on the relationship between women retail employees’ work and personal identities, I was interested in generating a deeper theoretical understanding of how an individual’s labour market position is related to one’s position in society and the larger classification struggles that people take up as they negotiate their class and status positions relative to other members of society. Beyond these academic interests, I was committed to developing a research agenda that would make an original contribution to the discipline of sociology and that could simultaneously be used to engage multiple audiences in order to advance social justice aims. Moreover, I knew I wanted to engage with organizations outside the university as part of a collaborative project that would take the form of an “organic public sociology” (Burawoy 2005). The short description of my project presented in the introductory chapter presents my process of becoming involved and conducting research in the Pathways program as a linear trajectory. In the discussion that follows, I weave a more reflexive interrogation of my standpoint into the description of the messy realities and often non-linear paths I experienced as I navigated my involvement in the program and came to understand the sociological significance of the program participants’ integration and citizenship struggles.
I initiated my volunteer work with the Pathways project because I was genuinely excited about the collaboration between organizations and partners from various social locations, but the path to this dissertation project was hardly straightforward. I wore multiple hats before taking on the role of a PhD researcher in the Pathways project, and I knew very little about the substantive issues around employment and immigration when I first joined the Advisory Committee. For example, I remember asking someone in an early meeting what they meant by the acronym ‘PR’ (permanent resident – the most basic term when discussing issues of immigration). I was more familiar with the term ‘landed immigrant,’ now an outmoded iteration of ‘permanent resident.’ In hindsight, I am surprised they allowed me to remain involved with the project after I asked such a silly question that revealed my naiveté. What that experience demonstrated, however, is how I came to the topic of women’s experiences migrating to Canada and attempting to secure paid employment with very little knowledge or presuppositions about what was or was not working at the settlement organization or government levels. Instead, I came to the project eager to learn from the women themselves about how they were navigating and making sense of their lives in Canada.

In November 2015, I attended a party for Tamara, one of the external consultants on the Advisory Committee. Francine, the other external consultant of the Advisory Committee, hosted the party and I spent most of the evening catching up with Neeharika. At one point, the four of us were talking about the Pathways program and the number of years we had all been working together. Tamara looked directly at – and almost through – me, shaking her head with a slight smile on her face. She commented at how much I had changed since our first conversation on the phone in September 2012, during which she had vetted my
participation in the project by reviewing my vita and asking me some questions about why I was interested in participating in the program evaluation. It was at the end of that phone call that she had invited me to attend the first meeting for the project, the meeting I describe in the opening pages of this dissertation.

Driving home from the party, I reflected on Tamara’s assessment and thought back to an early meeting I had with Marta and a Master’s of Social Work student who was initially going to be involved in the evaluation but did not end up continuing with the project as it did not fit with her academic work. This meeting took place on a grey rainy day in October 2012, at a Blenz coffee shop on Oak and 17th Avenue that no longer exists. I was a 28-year old and well-funded PhD student who should have been entirely focused on her comprehensive exams and work as a teaching assistant for a sociological theory course. As far as I know, no other graduate students in my department were volunteering on interdisciplinary, collaborative projects with multiple partners and stakeholders, and I had no experience with such initiatives. But, I was interested in working on this project because I was desperate to do something. I wanted to meet people who were connected to or working on the frontline of service organizations and interfacing with policy, and I wanted to know what was going on in the world outside of my books and theoretical concepts. It was this same motivation that had encouraged me to join the Board of Directors for Positive Women’s Network, Canada’s longest-running and largest service provider for women living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in the summer of 2012, although I had quickly realized that opportunity would help me gain new skills related to governance but not the kind of frontline experience I desired.

Marta and the other social work student, however, had much more experience working with mothers, new immigrants, and organizations: Marta’s family had come to
Canada as refugees when she was just a child and she been working in the childcare sector for over a decade, and the other student had been employed as a social worker before starting the Master’s program and she was herself a married, working mother. I, on the other hand, knew so little that I offered to take notes for meetings so that I could go home or to a nearby coffee shop and Google-search all the acronyms the meeting participants used to describe different organizations, government programs, training initiatives, settlement service organizations, and grassroots groups before sending the minutes to the meeting chair for feedback about whether I had gotten the details correct. In short, the fall of 2012 was an exercise in listening carefully, in order to learn a new language composed entirely of acronyms and to develop a mental map of the key players – agencies and individuals – in settlement matters at the local, provincial, and federal level.

Even before our meeting at the Blenz about evaluation strategies, I was cognizant of my own lack of lived experience, comparatively speaking. Yet, I was troubled at that meeting by the way in which Marta and the other student spoke about employment as something for all women to attain and especially all “moms,” as the women were frequently called at the Neighbourhood Houses. At the time, I was working on a comprehensive exam in Work and Society that focused largely on women’s employment experiences and I felt as though a perspective that emphasized securing paid work measured all productivity using a baseline of paid employment. I was concerned that such a perspective devalued the work that women did at home and elsewhere by only recognizing work as something that occurred in the sphere of the paid labour force. During the meeting, however, I was intimidated by Marta and the other woman’s lived experience and confidence in their knowledge of these issues, and worried I would be seen as entirely clueless if I were to ask them whether their understanding of paid
work as the standard to which all women should aspire only served to perpetuate a lack of recognition for the very real work that stay-at-home mothers (SAHM) and other women perform. So instead, I sat and listened. And in listening throughout the first cycle of the program, I learned more about the value of having one’s skills recognized and valued in the context of the market, and just how powerful the option of paid employment can be for women, for their sense of power in intimate relationships, their self-confidence, and their perceptions of what it means to be a productive citizen. By tacking back and forth between the data I was generating and the theoretical and academic literature – a hermeneutic method I explored in my PhD coursework with Dr. Lorraine Weir (summarized in the previous section), and taught to Field School students in 2014 (see Cerwonka 2007, 15) – I developed a more complex understanding of the relationship between employment and notions of citizenship; or, to use Nancy Fraser’s (2009) term, I began to pose questions about the recognition of women’s pre-migration skillsets as assets in the Canadian context.

I was similarly intimidated as well as overwhelmingly nervous the first time I travelled to Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House for a program information session. These sessions were intended to raise awareness about the program and to give potential participants a sense of the content that the program would cover. Additionally, the Advisory Committee wanted to be transparent about their plans and reasoning for conducting a thorough program evaluation that tracked participant outcomes through pre- and post-program meetings: as a pilot project funded by a local philanthropic foundation, the Advisory Committee recognized that demonstrating the improvement in women’s employment readiness and leadership experiences by checking in with them in one-on-one meetings
before and after their participation in the Pathways program would bolster attempts to secure ongoing and sustainable funding. My notes from that day in November 2012, read:

_I had never been to FLNH before this morning, so it was a new experience for me. I left the house early in order to meet with Neelhrika prior to the session. My Apple maps app ended up sending me to the wrong location. Standing on the street corner, looking at my screen with the blue dot sitting on top of the red dot, and then looking up at a school and houses but not a Neighbourhood House got me thinking to what it feels like when you have an expectation that something will be there, or be a certain way before you arrive, but then it ends up to be out of place, non-existent, or completely mystifying. In some senses, that must be what it is like to come to a new country full of expectations and careful plans, and to end up completely upside down and out of place. After finding the right address using the Google Maps (NOT Apple Maps!), I got back in my car and drove to the correct location, feeling humbled and in the right mental place to start the morning’s session._

This short passage provides a brief description of my spatial and mental orientation process on the morning of my first meeting with potential Pathways to Leadership participants.

Without having met the women with whom I would work closely during the first cycle of the PtL program as a volunteer, I got a sense of what it might feel like to have a destination in mind only to end up in a different position – economically, socially, and linguistically – than one had originally intended.

Yet, I was pleasantly surprised and my nervousness dissipated when the women gathered in the multipurpose room at the Neighbourhood House and started speaking to one another about the ideas and experiences they had in common:

_We had arranged the seats to form a smaller circle and Serena and Neelhrika told the group that they had just discovered their sons were the same age – 17. I mentioned how that is such an interesting age because boys seem to just sprout at that age and I said that my 26-year old brother just seems to fill every room he enters. The conversation started by speaking about sons, the size and presence of men, and how as they grow up they seem to take up more room, and how they are towering over you when you tell them that they can’t do something, and how they use their physical size to posture in defiance. Serena said that when her son does this she tells him “don’t do_

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13 Fieldnotes are italicized throughout the dissertation.
that body thing to me.” Already, an interesting dynamic of openness about children, family, and relationships with men was filling the room.

The arrangement of chairs in a small, intimate circle in the middle of the room and the conversations about how men occupy space as compared to how women occupy space demonstrate how Serena, the FLNH staff member, and Neeharika, the independently contracted program facilitator, set a tone for the session. Their conversation at the front of the group established the information session as a relaxed, women’s-only space, where frankness and intimacy were encouraged. As a novice researcher, I was shocked at the openness with which women discussed these gender and family issues, and I remember asking Neeharika after the session if this kind of conversation was common. She explained that women were not always that forthcoming on the first meeting, but she emphasized the importance of the facilitator’s role in terms of encouraging women to build connection through conversation.

The interindividual territory – the act of coordinating consciousnesses through language (Smith 2005, 77) – that was established through these first few exchanges was further developed as we took turns introducing ourselves and establishing our respective standpoints that morning:

The session started with Neeharika introducing the program and sharing a little bit about the format and what she hopes the program will offer. She discussed her own experiences as an immigrant woman in Canada, working with other women, and being self-employed. Marta introduced herself next, describing her immigration experience from a Spanish-speaking country and how her family had come to Canada through the refugee program. And then I introduced myself. I explained that I had been born in Canada but that my parents were both immigrants. I said that I was a graduate student at the University of British Columbia. Because I didn’t have children or a partner, I instead commented on how nice it was to hear about people’s family lives and to see their children, and I explained that my motivation for participating in the program is to help build a better community for my family today and hopefully the family I will have in the future, and for all of our families. Then, the participants started talking and I was surprised by how open they were about their struggles and what they shared with the group.
The three fieldnote excerpts above show just how much of a fish out of water I was when I started my fieldwork. At the time, I felt as though I did not belong in these meetings because unlike the others – Serena, Neelarkika, and Marta – I was not myself an immigrant, and I did not have children or much experience with children. I felt juvenile and embarrassed that I did not even have a serious partner that I could use as a kind of leverage to build rapport with the women, and the statement about my hopes for eventually having a family are evidence of that insecurity.

In hindsight, the things I identified as lacking in myself were, in fact, useful for helping me to perceive and recognize how these discourses of what it means to be an immigrant, mother, and/or wife functioned in the context of an employment and leadership skills program. The distance between my lived experiences and those of the women organizing and participating in the program – our differences in age, education, marital status, motherhood status, and so on – led us to question each other in more detailed ways about our respective lives. Just as I was curious to know about how the program participants were deepening romantic relationships or raising children in a new culture where they were already navigating their own changing sense of self, my lifestyle as a Canadian-born, mostly-single, university-educated woman living in downtown Vancouver with my sister was similarly of interest to the women participating in the program. In many ways, I became a ‘native informant’ for my research participants as they sought to generate their own understandings of what it means to be a ‘real Canadian,’ a term they frequently employed and I take up for discussion in Chapter 5.

I was open with the women participating in the program about how little I knew about immigration and settlement services, and did my best to tune into the experiences and
concerns they raised. In general, the women organizing and participating in the program responded to my inquisitiveness and willingness to learn with stories about their everyday lives as mothers raising children in a new culture, and as job-seekers preparing resumes and cover letters in a language they were just learning or mastering. Through these conversations, I was transformed from a naïve graduate student to a scholar with an in-depth knowledge of what it meant for these participants to be non-native English-speaking immigrant women, and often mothers, seeking employment in Canada. I also became a resource to them – my notes from the first session at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House end with a description of how one woman came up to me and asked me for advice about her son’s interest and eligibility to apply to the University of British Columbia.

At my dissertation proposal defense in May 2013, a committee member commented on the uniqueness of my relationship to my fieldsites and asked what it would mean for me to begin fieldwork in new and different cycles of the same program where I had already spent a significant amount of time as a volunteer and, briefly, as a research assistant. This concern about my embeddedness in the field and how it might blunt my ‘ethnographic eye’ is certainly valid. As Goffman (1989, 130) points out, “there is a freshness cycle when moving into the field. The first day you’ll see more than you’ll ever see again. And you’ll see things that you won’t see again. So, the first day you should take notes all the time.” Although I had taken notes during my volunteer work, as evidenced by the excerpts presented above, these were not always systematic and do not always adhere to the conventions that Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw (2011) outline for writing thick and vivid fieldnote accounts. By the time I began my fieldwork, my fieldsites, and the members of the Advisory Committee who came to be research participants, were no longer ‘fresh’ to me.
Without dismissing the value of freshness, however, the nature of long-term and transformative academic research experiences begs the methodological question of what it means to describe a ‘field’ or ‘project.’ Is an ethnographic research ‘field’ less fresh and therefore not an ideal study site if it is only a 15 or 20-minute drive from your house, as my mine are (Gupta and Ferguson 1992)? And how does an ethnographer analytically account for one’s own and one’s participants’ personal development over the course of a long-term project in which all parties are embedded, embodied, and continue to encounter one another in a variety of spaces and places? I argue that my personal relationships and institutional connections to my fieldsites and women who participated in this project helped to generate deeper, more trusting relationships that enabled me to provide a stronger analysis than would have been possible if my fieldwork at been limited to the eight-month period when I systematically observed the last two cycles of the Pathways to Leadership program, recorded fieldnotes and conducted most of my qualitative interviews. Recall, for example, the longstanding institutional bonds between Neighbourhood Houses and universities I described in the introductory chapter, and the reality that newcomers have repeatedly retold the narrative of their migration experiences to immigration offices, service providers, and in casual interactions. Both Neighbourhood House staff and the program participants have been asked repeatedly to explain their roles or experiences to less familiar individuals and university researchers. In turn, they have developed rehearsed accounts to provide in response to the typical questions they assume they will receive. The most stark example of rehearsed narratives came during the pre-program interviews we conducted as part of the program evaluation, when neither myself or Marta were familiar to the program participants.
Over time, however, I gained a more nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics and developed deeper relationships with the Neighbourhood House staff and program participants that encouraged greater trust and disclosure. For example, some women had brought typed notes about their immigration experiences to the pre-program meetings I had conducted while volunteering with the program evaluation prior to the first cycles of the program in December 2012 and January 2013. By comparison, none of my participants brought typed notes to the interviews I conducted for my dissertation research, as I discuss below in the section on my procedure for conducting the qualitative interviews. Having read a number of reflexive research reports produced by the students I taught in the Urban Ethnographic Field School, who were placed in the same organizations for just six weeks, I know that the time I spent in each Neighbourhood House was a key factor in recruiting for my interviews and connecting with my research participants. When the Advisory Committee asked me in the early fall of 2012, when I first joined the Pathways project, whether I was interested in pursuing my own research within the program I had said no because I was not yet at that stage of my doctoral degree. Rather, my interest in conducting a dissertation project focused on the experiences of the participants and the need for a program such as Pathways to Leadership evolved as I became more familiar with the program and developed an understanding of the unique settlement and citizenship work it was engaged in. As a result, the Advisory Committee were very encouraging when I approached them in the spring of 2013 with the idea of focusing my dissertation research on the Pathways to Leadership program.

Participating in Neighbourhood House and PtL program evaluation activities on a consistent and reliable basis for such a prolonged period eased my ability to gain research
access to the fieldsites. I had been working with the individuals involved in organizing the Pathways to Leadership program for at least a year, and in the case of the staff members involved in placing and supporting Field School students, for more than two years. As a result, all of the members involved in organizing the Pathways to Leadership program were comfortable with my approach toward community work. In other words, I had cultivated an understanding and trust about my intentions as a researcher among the program organizers and Neighbourhood House administrators who helped facilitate my access to the research sites. From there, key relationships with the staff at the two Neighbourhood Houses, the external consultants, and the program facilitator provided the social capital necessary to connect with the women participating in the Pathways to Leadership program. In fact, the Neighbourhood House staff and the program facilitator were often vocal about my personal credibility, as my fieldnotes from the first session of the second cycle of the program at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House (the cycle that began in January 2014) attest. These fieldnotes include a detailed description of how I introduced myself and my research to the program participants, and the facilitator’s response, which I summarized this way:

“Neeharika followed up by telling the women that I am wonderful and amazing, and a bunch of other adjectives that made me blush.”

While the propinquity effect may be one explanation for these connections, i.e. the frequency of contact over time encourages the formation of social bonds, my commitment to learning about the context and services of the organizations by way of my volunteer work as a program evaluator also established a level of trust among the organizational gatekeepers and research participants. As Susan Lewis and Andrew Russell (2011, 398-399) describe, such practices of “ethnography grounded in embedded research” appear to be growing in
Lewis and Russell (2011, 400-401) characterize embedded research as having two key elements: 1) the research is conducted as “some kind of team member”; and 2) the relationship between the researcher and collaborators is one where the researcher has independence, but “the depth of knowledge acquired by the researcher will be of most value to the organization being studied if fed back as soon as possible.” The dynamic of my work with the PtL program Advisory Committee fits this model of ‘ethnography grounded in embedded research,’ insofar as the community partners were happy to encourage independent and academically rigorous research with the expectation that my findings will offer critical insights and recommendations to improve their practices.

Support for my research was especially evident among the program directors and administratively-oriented staff members who spend a great deal of their working hours seeking and applying for grants, and writing reports for funders: they recognized that a systematic evaluation of the program would enhance their grant applications (for a critique of the non-profit industrial complex, see the work by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007). Because their standpoint involves work processes that require them to submit text-based documents with evidence to support proposed activities and/or their impacts to funders – grant applications, quarterly or annual project reports, and end-of-project reports, for example – administratively-oriented staff members recognized how the written output from this project (or even a summary of it) could render their activities “accountable within the ideological schemata of the institution” (Smith 1987, 176).

Frontline staff members who worked directly with Neighbourhood House program users accepted the need for evaluation given the funding landscape but were more hesitant
than administrators about the presence of a researcher. One clear indication of this hesitancy became evident during the program information session at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House that I begin to describe earlier in this section. After the introductions at the program information session, Marta and I were explaining the program evaluation plans, and Serena asked us, in front of all the women, whether we would be like other researchers who come in and collect data only to leave the organization and not return with their findings. I explained that the Pathways to Leadership program had been funded as a result of Dr. Chun’s Neighbourhood Cafes research (Chun and Cheong 2011) and that we intended to build on that success by demonstrating the outcomes of the program in an evidence-based evaluation report that the Advisory Committee could use to apply for future funding. I remember being surprised that Serena chose to ask this question in front of the women interested in joining the program when she could have instead opted to ask it at an Advisory Committee meeting. Serena remained aloof throughout the first cycle of the program at the Neighbourhood House, but did become more supportive of the Pathways to Leadership program and my research project as I developed greater rapport with her. This change in the dynamic of our relationship did not occur until the second cycle of the program at Forest Lawn in September 2013, which was almost a year after her comment about researchers disappearing with the data. My relationship with Serena is just one example of the length of time it can take to build the trust necessary for meaningful collaboration in the field.

I encountered a similar situation at Crystal Pond, where all the staff members except one were enthusiastic about the research process. Unlike Serena at Forest Lawn, the staff member at Crystal Pond, Katherine, did not criticize the program evaluation process outright but seemed resistant to helping us organize the pre-program interviews. Once again, I was
able to establish more rapport by working closely with her over the subsequent year. She became friendlier after I discussed my own project and intentions with her in greater detail, at which point she told me that she recognized the potential value of my research project in terms of what it might do to raise awareness of issues that women who have immigrated to Canada face when settling in urban Vancouver. This relationship only developed after my volunteer work ended in September 2013 but before I began my research at Crystal Pond in January 2014.

I developed more insight into Katherine’s hesitation to support the evaluation of the program during our March 2014 interview for my dissertation research: she revealed that she is paid for 35 hours of work per week but that she sometimes spends 60 hours at the organization trying to catch up on everything because she feels so connected to the importance of the work. As she told me: “You just keep working and working and working. That's the joy about this work. It comes with love. It's good for us.” Moments prior, however, she had explained that “we” – the Pathways program organizers, staff, volunteers, practicum students and researchers – need to be cautious about the expectations that we have for the women participating in the program, as these expectations can domino into additional work for Neighbourhood House staff. During my volunteer work, I learned more about the time and talent that went into coordinating logistics, and the extent to which program participants approached Neighbourhood House staff in order to complete their homework assignments or for administrative support in accomplishing the ‘civic engagement projects’ that were part of the program curriculum.

For Neighbourhood House staff members, the additional workload related to the Pathways to Leadership program began months before the program started: they sought to
recruit participants, distribute application forms, process completed applications,\textsuperscript{14} coordinate with Marta and myself to schedule pre-program meetings with the first cycle of women participating in the program, secure space at the Neighbourhood House for the pre-program meetings, book rooms for the program sessions and rooms for the childminding, and hire the childminders. This coordination of activities required a great deal of time and energy for the staff, as Rebecca from Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House explained in our interview:

So, [my role] is to also work with staff to help them manage their time, so that they're doing the best for that particular program, but also helping them find a balance between the demands of that program and the demands of every other program that they need to be in. Because everybody here is very passionate, so if we're not careful, people can become unbalanced because you want to do 110\% for maybe three programs. Right? When they should only be doing 30\% for each one […] For an example, when you guys came and said you needed all these interview hours [for the pre-program evaluations], that puts a huge pressure on everybody. Right? That's a fact of life here. So, my job is to say, "OK, I see you need to do that." But, also, Katherine can't spend all those hours doing those interviews, because she also has responsibilities to these other two programs. So again, it's working with the whole team to say, "Yeah, I can see why you need that, but it may not happen the way you think because these people also have responsibilities, or the rooms have been booked, and we need to find another way. Or, did you guys think about the childminding [while the women participated in the pre-program interviews] and how that may impact the finances and these issues, as well?"

Rebecca’s point-by-point discussion of limited resources and time pressures highlight the organizational realities that exist in most non-profit organizations. Rebecca’s comments describe the time and labour required to coordinate research requests in the context of an already-full program calendar. Rebecca and other Neighbourhood House staff members were clearly committed to their roles and to supporting program participants and researchers’ requests; these commitments, however, often came in tension with realities of limited time, \textsuperscript{14}

Despite the Advisory Committee’s initial worries about an influx of applications every woman who applied to the program was accepted into the program. The number of applications by women who could commit to participating in the program did not exceed the number of seats in the room or childminding resources.
space, and funding. With that said, program staff and management went above and beyond in supporting the evaluation components of the program, and women’s progress and participation in the program, and this dissertation research project.

While Katherine’s words of caution about the Advisory Committee’s expectations for the women participating in the PtL program were directed toward the additional support work that program participants sought from Neighbourhood House staff members they trusted to help them, Rebecca’s comments speak more broadly to the extra work entailed by the ambitious nature of the program. This extra work included the collaborative planning process involving multiple Neighbourhood Houses, the-more-extensive-than-usual evaluation process, and the goal that participants would develop both a career plan and a civic engagement project (these program components are described in greater detail later in the dissertation). The Advisory Committee expected that PtL participants would work on these activities during the three hours of independent work they had committed to completing each week (in addition to the weekly three-hour program session) when they registered for the program. During the first cycle of the program, however, the Advisory Committee came to recognize participants’ need for one-on-one support to develop their career actions plans and civic engagement projects. While Marta and myself were crucial in offering this support, several women participating in the program felt more comfortable asking Neighbourhood House staff for support.

Recognizing the organizational impact of launching a new program provides insight into the realities of conducting community-based research projects in partnership with community organizations. My experience collaborating with staff members at the Neighbourhood Houses showed me how important it is for researchers to acknowledge the
time and energy that organization staff members contribute to research endeavors, and for researchers to find ways of giving back to the organizations and individual staff members whose connections are so crucial to the success of research projects (Gibb and Hamdon 2011). Giving back in a meaningful and lasting way can be difficult to accomplish during the data collection phase of a project, but I made a concerted effort to support the women participating in the program (which was also an attempt to alleviate some of the extra work for Neighbourhood House staff members), and to participate in collecting, analyzing and writing up program evaluation data for the purposes of securing funding to operate subsequent programs with a similar structure and operational philosophy. While these activities are described in more detail in the section on relationships and reciprocity at the end of this chapter, it is worth noting here how the recommendations that emerge from a dissertation project such as this one can be useful tools for funding applications, reports, and program development. Yet, these benefits are not always evident or clearly communicated to the frontline staff members, although these individuals are the ones who are most frequently asked to support day-to-day tasks of participant recruitment and data collection.

2.3 Methods and methodological strategies

I started writing notes during my volunteer work with the first cycle of the Pathways to Leadership program but not in a consistent fashion: I mostly wrote notes when participating in what I considered to be ‘Remarkable’ conversations – that is, conversations where explicit discussions of experiences related to gender, race, discrimination, employment, or shifting attitudes related to any of these concepts, occurred. I always took notes at Advisory Committee planning meetings, and these notes became more extensive as my intention to conduct my dissertation research with the Pathways Project firmed up.
Administrators at both Neighbourhood Houses were aware and approved of these activities, and I sought the permission of the individuals on the Advisory Committee to take notes during meetings.

As described earlier in this chapter, I initially passed my notes from meetings onto to the meeting chair before circulating them to the wider committee in order to ensure that I had captured the finer points of the discussion, such as acronyms, names of different government offices and non-profit organizations involved in migration-related settlement practices, earlier steps that had been taken in the program planning process, and so forth. I stopped this practice when my notes began to shift from meeting minutes to include more analytical content, such as questions about the dynamics between the external consultants and frontline staff members related to misunderstandings about their different work processes and forms of embodied knowledge (Campbell and Gregor 2004). These ruptures became interesting openings for exploring how participants came to know what they know and their reasons for adopting everyday practices to organize their social world in relation to others who are similarly and actively, if not consciously, organizing their own everyday actualities (see Chapter 5).

The analytical questions recorded in my early notes informed the interview schedule for my dissertation research, while organizing the pre-program meetings for the program evaluation guided me in timing and designing the different phases of my data collection. A number of the women who participated in pre-program meetings during my volunteer work in the first cycles of the program were not forthcoming, showed up late, or did not show up at all. Although frustrating at the time, it is obvious in hindsight why this occurred: Marta and myself were essentially nothing more than prying strangers, asking women to tell us about
the social and economic experiences that, in many cases, have disrupted every facet of their sense of self. Moreover, we were asking them to use English to tell us about their deeply personal experiences of dislocation and reintegration; as a second language for most participants, the struggle to communicate these vulnerabilities in English highlighted their assimilation struggles more intensely (Brubaker 2001).

Because we were not able to contact the women directly to schedule the pre-program meetings and had to rely on the Neighbourhood House staff to organize these for us, there was little opportunity for Marta or myself to build rapport by providing context for the interviews prior to talking face-to-face. While some women did ask for copies of the questions in advance – so that they could translate words they would not immediately recognize during our meeting – it was not originally intended to be the standard practice but it came to be something we did for all of the pre-program meeting participants. One byproduct of sharing the questions for the pre-program meetings was that women prepared notes that they read from during the meeting, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This practice was most common among the women who were most nervous about these meetings, which reinforced my understanding of how important it is to have trust and rapport before attempting to conduct interviews about highly sensitive experiences. The members of the Advisory Committee were also concerned about the quality of the pre-program meeting data and communicated that they would prefer for the women to participate in these meetings without their children present. Some women did bring their children (particularly their very young children), and others found alternative care. For women who told us that they would be unable to participate without childcare, we organized a morning of meetings with childminding provided.
Each of these early challenges with the pre-program evaluation presented an opportunity to learn and improve the data collection practices for the post-program meetings and my own data collection. When I was organizing my own research interviews, for example, I ensured that I had a sense of familiarity and ease with each participant before approaching her to arrange a post-program meeting or interview. Additionally, I circulated copies of the consent form and interview questions in advance, worked with women’s schedules to arrange meeting times that would be the least disruptive for them and their children, and offered them a variety of meeting locations. The women occasionally brought their children to these interviews and I made sure that the children had activities to occupy them (toys to play with or crayons to draw with, depending on their age) while I spoke to the woman about her experiences participating in the Pathways Program. As a result, I did not experience the same problems scheduling the post-program evaluation meetings as we had faced during the pre-program meetings – no participants cancelled in advance, and participants largely showed up on time. This was true even though five out of eight of the post-program meetings were with the women who had completed the program at Forest Lawn, where the women seemed to face more challenges related to economic instability and domestic disharmony\(^{15}\) (I provide more details about the post-program meetings and interviews in Section 2.3.2).

\(^{15}\) I debated whether it would be appropriate to include detailed descriptions of the Neighbourhood Houses and key differences between the two fieldsites, eventually deciding that do to so would significantly reduce the likelihood of maintaining participants’ anonymity. I choose to use the Pathways to Leadership program’s real name because I thought it was a critical and characteristic example of the project’s emphasis on empowerment and I received the program organizers and participants’ permission to do so. Yet, to include both the program’s name and vivid details about the fieldsites could make members of the respective organizations highly recognizable.
I should note that there was not a budget for childminding during the post-program interviews or my dissertation research. The Advisory Committee raised the possibility of conducting post-program meetings by telephone with those women who did not feel that they could have their child(ren) in the room because the child(ren) would be too disruptive. As described in the introduction, many of the women participating in the program found the telephone to be a source of great anxiety and so I did not conduct any meetings or interviews over the phone. At least five of my dissertation interview participants described, unprovoked, how nervous they felt when speaking on the phone due to their lack of confidence with the English language. As Sunhe (35, South Korea) explained, for example:

I have to, you know [set up], TV and Internet, hydro, and actually my English was okay, but when I talked to them on the phone, it was a different story. So I was like, “What did you say? What should I do?” Like I was really scared if I made some mistakes and my bills goes up high or they explain the channels and, you know, they try to charge me more, try to sell something more to me. But yeah, that was sort of the scary part.

Sunhe’s worries about speaking on the telephone indicate how this activity is tied to anxieties around language, and her fear that the telephone call will leave her vulnerable to paying more for services she may not necessarily want. Developing a greater awareness of childcare and language issues was useful in planning my own research methods; moreover, these early experiences highlighted how face-to-face interviews are preferable to almost any other data.

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16 I include information about Pathways to Leadership program participants’ age and home country subsequent to their name throughout the dissertation. I recognize that this convention runs the risk of invoking stereotypical ideas about participants’ social location pre- and post-migration, but decided that this contextualizing information is helpful in terms of giving readers a shorthand sense of PtL program participants’ varied stages in the lifecourse and the countries from which they migrated. Please consult Appendix B for more extensive participant demographics.
collection method when the population in question is comprised of newcomers to Canada for whom English is a second language.

In my reflections on why the post-program meetings were worlds apart from the pre-program meetings, a key difference seemed to be the dyadic relationships I had formed with each participant. By the end of the program, I had assisted most of the women with a personal or professional issue and so we had established a level of familiarity and trust. With my own project, I was also able to ensure that I had developed a good rapport with participants prior to arranging the qualitative interviews. While conducting pre- and post-program interviews is necessary in an experimental design where the aim is to capture a baseline in order to measure performance outcomes, as the program evaluation aimed to do, my dissertation project instead aimed to generate a deeper understanding of how people make sense of their lived experiences related to migration and integration. As such, I generated the data presented here using ethnographic methods of participant-observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The multiple opportunities to interact in a variety of settings helped to foster the intimacy necessary to share highly sensitive and personal information within a context of trust.

Through extended, multi-sited participant-observation and interviews with program participants and key individuals involved in organizing the Pathways Out of Poverty project I came to understand how everyday practices and experiences connect to, reproduce and/or undermine extra-local relations of ruling at multiple levels. This conceptual thinking and language borrow from “the method of inquiry” that Smith (2005) calls institutional ethnography. These multiple levels include: 1) the standpoint of individual and interindividual experience, 2) the group dynamic in classroom sessions, 3) the institutional
organization of the Neighbourhood Houses and funders, and, ultimately, 4) the provincial, and 5) federal levels of government. By approaching the research questions with these five local and extra-local settings in mind, I gained a deep sense of how the relationship between the standpoint of lived experience and the social organization of everyday life influences the labour market experiences of immigrant women participating in a particular employment and leadership skills program at a local community organization. This method informs and guides my approach to the research as a whole, in that my research questions and sites evolved from my role in the previous cycle of the Pathways to Leadership program and from the time I spent listening closely to the concerns and experiences of the women organizing and participating in the program.

The approach of institutional ethnography and method of inquiry that Smith (1987) proposes requires a new mode of telling. If the relations of ruling are predominantly textually mediated, the sociologist wishing to work against this tradition must be cautious to avoid generating an account that seems to stand outside the world she is attempting to account for (Smith 1987, 17, 140). This task is challenging, since “sociology has developed powerful methods for producing texts that will operate in the extended relations of ruling,” and we cannot “magically transform those relations by writing our texts in different ways” (Smith 1987, 140). Despite the absence of an immediate antidote, the sociologist can proceed towards “a faithful telling” by committing to “an inquiry that is ontologically faithful, faithful to the presence and activity of her subjects and faithful to the actualities of the world that arises for her, for them, for all of us, in the ongoing co-ordering of our actual practices, both those within and those beyond our reach” (Smith 1987, 143). While sociological projects continue to produce texts for and within institutional settings, these texts ought to go beyond
reporting experiences and should instead strive to develop a knowledge of the “social relations within which we work and struggle as subjects” (Smith 1987, 140–141). This project strives to meet that standard of accountability by recognizing and problematizing the academic, organizational, and commonsense understandings of issues related to class, status, and citizenship in settlement processes.

My committee approved my methodology and methods during my dissertation proposal defense on May 31, 2013, and my project received approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board on September 18, 2013 (Approval Certificate #H13-02360). I began my research on September 20, 2013, and concluded my fieldwork and interviews on April 7, 2014, thereby ending the formally sanctioned research phase of my involvement with these Neighbourhood Houses. Nevertheless, I continue to be involved with the Pathways to Leadership project and am a current member of the project’s Advisory Committee.

2.3.1 Participant-observation and writing fieldnotes

Participant-observation and focus groups provided the richest sources of data during my time as a program volunteer and the success of these experiences informed the data collection strategy for my dissertation research. Participants seemed most comfortable expressing themselves in interactions that are less structured than interviews. For example, participants were likely to share the most personal kinds of information immediately after the tape recorder was turned off. Such self-censorship in the face of a tape recorder might be a result of their previous experiences with high-stakes interviews required to attain particular documents and visas during the migration process, or distrust stemming from experiences with authorities in their home countries and Canada (see Higgins 2004, 697, on the
challenges of interviewing immigrants from countries with oppressive government regimes). Some discomfort may have also be related to a heightened self-consciousness about being tape-recorded and observed while communicating in English. English was not a native language for any of the PtL program participants, with the exception of two program participants I did not interview (see Section 2.4).

Because there were no pre-program meetings for the two cycles of the Pathways program in which I conducted my research, I did not meet the women or introduce my research project until the first session of the program, at which time I provided a brief explanation of my role as a participant-observer in the program and stated that I would be inviting them to participate in a one-on-one, in-depth interview with me about their migration and employment experiences. I also circulated a half-page description of my research project and information about how I would be taking notes during the program sessions for the purposes of my research (see Appendix C for the letter of introduction I circulated to the participants in the second cycle of the Pathways Program at Forest Lawn and Crystal Pond Neighbourhood Houses). I explained that I would distribute notes by email after every session.

As part of my ethics application, the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted my research provided letters of support that explicitly outlined their approval of my research methods, such participant observation in the Pathways to Leadership program sessions and in-depth interviews with the program participants and Neighbourhood House staff. After consulting with my committee and considering the UBC BREB’s rules and guidelines, I determined that the institutional approval was sufficient and that I would not seek program participants’ active consent for the participant observation component of this project. Instead,
I took a passive consent approach: the half-page description of my research project encouraged women to let me know by email if they would prefer that their participation not be included in my fieldnotes. I did not have a single woman approach me to have her comments excluded from my fieldnotes.

I took fieldnotes during every session of the program, and I attended all of the sessions at each Neighbourhood House for the duration of my fieldwork from September 2013 to April 2014 with the exception of one session at Forest Lawn that I missed while attending an academic conference. In total, I conducted approximately 150 hours of participant observation during my official period of fieldwork (September 2013 to April 2014). I left each session and promptly went home or to a nearby coffee shop to transcribe these jottings into full and detailed fieldnotes. Each set of fieldnotes is approximately 7,000 words.

Once I had finished transcribing my jottings into fieldnotes I would prepare a set of ‘class notes’ for the session that outlined the content covered and links to resources that were mentioned during the program, and I would distribute these notes to participants via email within 24 hours of the program session. Distributing the notes from each session helped me to create a record of what happened during each session, and these notes served as a tangible deliverable that I provided to participants for the privilege of allowing me to attend each session of the program as a participant-observer. These notes were especially useful in helping to keep participants on-track with the program content and homework, and this was especially true for women who had to miss sessions due to sick children and conflicting appointments.
2.3.2 Qualitative interviews

I conducted 41 in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with program participants (n=31), members of the Advisory Committee (n=9) and a funder (n=1) for the purposes of this project. Of the 31 interviews with program participants, 8 were post-program meetings with participants from the first cycles of the PtL at Crystal Pond and Forest Lawn. I originally conducted these meetings for the program evaluation and they were not added to the data analysis for this project until I sought an amendment from the UBC BREB in February 2013. I sought the amendment to include these interviews in my dissertation research project because they were conducted in July 2013 – two and half months after the first cycles of the program ended – and so they offered a more reflective sense of what women gained by participating in the program. The UBC BREB approved this amendment and I contacted the women by email to seek their approval to have the data from these meetings included in this research project (see Appendix D for the email message). All of the women who participated in the post-program meetings agreed to have their responses included as data for this dissertation project. With regard to the interviews conducted during the second cycles of the PtL, eleven of the program participant interviews were with women registered in the second cycle of the PtL program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, and twelve interviews were with women registered in the second cycle of the PtL program at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House.

The consent forms (see Appendix E and F) and interview schedules for these different sets of interviews are appended to the dissertation (see Appendix G, H, and I). After scheduling the interviews with the women, typically in person before or after program sessions or during program breaks, I would follow up with an email message that confirmed
the time and location that we agreed on. I would also attach the consent form and interview schedule to this email so that women could take the time to read the documents over carefully and translate any words or phrases that they did not understanding into their first language. Because I was quite open in program sessions about the nature of my research project – I brought my research project up whenever possible, in order to remind the participants that I was not a Neighbourhood House staff member or practicum student – the consent form and interview schedule did not raise any questions among the women. I would bring two copies of each document to each interview: one copy of the consent form for the participant to sign and return to me before the interview started and the other for her to keep, along with copies of the interview schedule for each of us to refer to throughout our conversation.

Providing women with a copy of the interview schedule by email and in person at the interview served multiple purposes: 1) it provided a document for women to reference in case they were unsure of the meaning of a particular English word or phrase and, 2) it kept the discussion focused on the research project rather than content from the program sessions or other aspects of participants’ everyday lives. I recognize that it is unusual for qualitative researchers who use semi-structured interview methods to provide participants with copies of the interview questions but I found this level of transparency about what participants could expect from the interviews was important in term of minimizing PtL participants’ nervousness about having a detailed and in-depth conversation in English, and reassuring the Neighbourhood House staff, Advisory Committee members, and the funder that I would not be asking them to disclose sensitive or confidential information about the operation of their organization or personal lives. Additionally, because I had relationships with the women I
interviewed prior to arranging the interview component of my research project, it would have been very easy for these conversations to digress from the focus of the research.

I adhered fairly strictly to the interview schedules (see Appendix H and Appendix I) to ensure that I largely asked participants the same questions where relevant (e.g. I would not ask a participant to tell me about her employment experiences in Canada if she had not worked in the country). The consent form and adherence to the interview schedules demonstrate the extent to which language served to coordinate the research encounter, creating a shared understanding based on the two-sided act of speaking and listening (Smith 2005, 77). The use of text as a tool and medium for organizing the research encounter is evident in the fact that the analysis presented in this dissertation partially relies on two-dimensional, text-based interview transcripts produced from audio-recorded, three-dimensional conversations that occurred between two individuals who had face-to-face conversations organized by the typed words presented on the sheets of paper that sat between and in front of them.

These interviews were between one and three hours in length and took place at a variety of locations throughout the Lower Mainland. While the participant-observation provided rich data, the act of conducting interviews is a form of labour that participants, Neighbourhood House staff and the committee members of the Pathways Out of Poverty project understand as ‘research;’ in a project where I embodied multiple roles, conducting interviews helped position me in the field as a researcher and participant-observer more than as a volunteer or evaluator for the second phase of the Pathways to Leadership program. Scheduling and conducting interviews therefore served two purposes: one, to generate data, and two, to make clear my standpoint as a graduate student researcher in the ongoing
activities of the project and program. The consent form (see Appendix E and Appendix F) outlined what I intended to do with the information they would provide in the interview, how I would manage the information, and other generalities about what we could expect from one another. The textually-mediated interindividual territory of the explicitly research-focused encounter helped coordinate my subjectivity as a researcher; at the same time, the women who signed the consent form and participated in conversations guided by an interview schedule were aware that they had agreed to take on the subjectivity of a research participant.

I did not schedule my first one-on-one qualitative interview for my dissertation project until October 15, 2013, which was nearly a month after I started my fieldwork in the second cycle of the Pathways to Leadership program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House (see Appendix A for a timeline of research activities). This gap between the beginning of the program and the first interview provided program participants with ample time to become familiar with me before they agreed to engage in a private, one-on-one conversation. This familiarity also provided me with opportunity to ask probing questions based on information I gleaned during PtL program sessions. I created a similar gap between the start of my participant-observation and in-depth interviews when beginning fieldwork at Crystal Pond in January 2014. As I experienced when organizing the post-program meetings in summer 2013, allowing the time to build rapport seemed to positively affect participants’ willingness to attend the interviews and be forthcoming in terms of discussing their lived experiences.

My first interview took place at a participant’s home: Cynthia’s (46, China) daughter had recently moved away to attend university and she was living alone in a condominium on the UBC campus (see Table 2-1 for a list of locations where I conducted interviews). She seemed eager for our meeting and put out a dish of sliced fruits and crackers for us to share.
To my surprise, the interview lasted two and half-hours! Prior to meeting with Cynthia I had been nervous about starting the interviews – I worried that I was asking for too much time and intimacy from the women in the program, and worried that they would only offer to participate in interviews because they wanted to appease me. I had anticipated that my interview with Cynthia would only last an hour to an hour and a half and had planned accordingly. Yet, I had underestimated her desire to talk, share her experiences, and discuss her plans for the future. The interview with Cynthia helped me to realize that she was gaining something from the act of sharing her story and having someone bear witness to the difficulties she had encountered after arriving to Canada with a PhD from China and being unable to find employment in her field.

As the interviews progressed, however, I recognized that the early interviews were with participants who were the most forthcoming and relaxed. In hindsight, I suspect this difference was due to the participants’ eagerness: the early interviewees were those who had taken the initiative to immediately volunteer for an interview and they did not need reminders about scheduling a time and place to meet. Instead, they came up to me at the beginning or end of program sessions and inquired about setting up an interview. Mid-way through the interviews with PtL program participants at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, I realized that the women whom I had not yet interviewed might have some hesitations about speaking to me. Fortunately, the women who had already participated in the interviews often went back to the group and told the other women how much they enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences. I am grateful for those women who vouched for me to the other participants, as I am certain that these endorsements alleviated the apprehensions that may have prevented several women from speaking with me. Two notable examples were of
Jennifer (35) encouraging Isa (31), both from Peru, and Alice (38) encouraging Nikki (48), both from the Philippines, to participate in interviews with me. For the women who were less social and seemingly more introverted, a short conversation with them about whether or not they would be interested in meeting with me to discuss their immigration and employment experiences was often enough to schedule an interview.

I conducted interviews at a number of locations (see Table 2-1). I offered participants a list of places where we could meet and asked them to select the most comfortable and convenient location for them. Participants’ homes were the most common interview location and this was especially true for women with small children. I drove to North Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby, and East Vancouver for these interviews, which alerted me to the distance that some women were travelling to access free, low-barrier programming in Vancouver. While some participants lived within walking distance of the Neighbourhood House, others took public transit for 45 minutes each way with a hyper 3-year-old. That women travel this distance with small children highlights the need – and lack – of low-barrier programs with free childcare for immigrant women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview location</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At their home</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At various library branches throughout Greater Vancouver</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the external funders’ office</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2-1 List of locations where I conducted the interviews

Public libraries and a researcher’s home are less conventional locations for conducting qualitative interviews. I offered these options to all participants with the
recognition that many of the women had anticipated that they would achieve a better economic and material status in Canada than they had so far, and I did not want them to feel embarrassed about their homes or to feel as though I had forced myself into their private lives. Additionally, I was cognizant of the fact that some women were involved in relationships that might be considered abusive and wanted to ensure that they felt as though they could speak at the interview without fear of reprisal if overheard. The library was offered as neutral territory, and I met participants at the Vancouver Public Library’s Central Branch, the Burnaby Public Library’s Bob Prittie Branch, and the Richmond Library’s Brighouse Branch. Again, these locations highlight the distances that women travelled to access free and low-barrier programs, as these specific libraries were selected for their proximity to the interview participant’s home.

Isa (31, Peru), one of the participants I met at the library for an interview, seemed highly nervous during the interview encounter, which struck me as odd because we had excellent rapport in program sessions and she once asked me to meet her at a local Starbucks to help her prepare for an interview for a women’s entrepreneurial program. In our interview, Isa avoided all questions related to her first experiences in Canada as a Live-In Caregiver and her subsequent marriage: trained as an engineer, she had met her husband in Vancouver while she was working as a Live-In Caregiver and he was studying English on a visa from Mexico. She returned to Peru and the two stayed in touch, and she eventually returned to Vancouver to marry him; Isa rarely, if ever, spoke about her husband or spending time with him although I learned during my interview that they lived together with his mother, and he was continuing his studies in the health care field. Two of the other participants that I interviewed at the library expressed significant disappointment with their marriages, Overall,
I am unsure of whether these two participants would have been so forthcoming about their feelings towards marriage and life in Canada if we had been in their homes, where their husbands may have been present. The fourth participant that I interviewed at a library selected the location as a matter of convenience, as she volunteered there and wanted to meet before a volunteer shift.

My apartment was offered as an interview location easily accessible by public transportation: it is located at the intersection of Granville and Davie Streets, with a bus stop located immediately outside and proximal access to all of the Skytrain lines. By car, this location provides quick access to the Vancouver’s west side via the Granville Street Bridge, and to Vancouver’s east side via Pacific Boulevard and Terminal Avenue. Participants commented about how it would be convenient to meet at my home because it is so central. The apartment itself is clean and comfortable but it is very small and obviously a rental: the living room, dining room and kitchen are all located in one small area and there is only a single wall of windows in the entire home; the bedrooms are separated from the common areas with sliding glass for ‘walls;’ and the carpets and paint desperately need to be freshened up.

I also felt as though it was only fair to offer my home as an option when asking participants if they would like to have me over to their homes. While ease of accessibility and convenience was the reason for at least four of the six interviews that I conducted at my home, I believe that two of the participants saw this as a much-anticipated social opportunity. I provided all of the interviewees that I met in my home with tea and cookies. One participant whom I interviewed at my home, a refugee claimant, did tell me during the interview about her family’s financial struggles and when she asked me for a snack at the end of our very
long interview I prepared a bag of fruit, vegetables and yogurt for her to take home to her family.

All of the Neighbourhood House staff interviews were conducted during working hours at the Neighbourhood House where they were employed. I am not sure whether the Neighbourhood House compensated non-salaried staff members for the time they spent in interviews with me or whether staff volunteered this time; I was hesitant to inquire in case the organizations suggested that I provide financial compensation for the staff members’ time. I conducted the staff member interviews only after I established significant rapport, and I suspect that even if staff members were volunteering their time to participate in the interviews they did so because they recognized that the support I provided to program participants – resume and cover letter help, for example – reduced their workload. And, as outlined above, some staff members recognized the value of a research project such as this one, especially if the findings might be useful for future funding applications.

2.3.3 Data analysis

In addition to producing fieldnotes, as described above, I audio-recorded my qualitative interviews and produced verbatim interview transcripts. I transcribed the audio recordings from the post-program meetings myself, and hired a professional third-party to transcribe the interviews I conducted with the program participants in the second cycles of the PtL program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House and Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, as well as the interviews with the Advisory Committee members, Neighbourhood House staff, and the funder. I made this decision in light of the amount of data I generated through extensive fieldwork and interviews and the time constraints of the PhD program. Recognizing that the process of transcription is a key step in the analytic process (Bucholtz
I ordered one transcript and reviewed it while listening to the interview audio recording. I was relieved to see the professional transcription service produced “denaturalized transcriptions,” which Mary Bucholtz (2000, 1461) defines as transcripts that retain their faithfulness to oral language, a convention that “may make speech itself seem alien […] the more a text reflects the oralness of speech, the less transparent it becomes for readers unaccustomed to encountering oral features in written discourse.” Thus, while the transcription service added a layer of mediation to the interpretive process, the transcripts were quite possibly more verbatim than I would have produced myself. In fact, the transcriptions were so accurate in reflecting the oral features of the interviews that I have had to lightly revise and “naturalize” interview excerpts, a form of literacization that glosses over oral discourse features in order to make the passages more readable (Bucholtz 2000, 1461).

In contemplating my data analysis strategy prior to beginning fieldwork, I was aware that most of my participants would be non-native English speakers. Recognizing that I would be more interested in the overall essence of my participants’ comments rather than their grammatical conventions eased my decision to hire a professional transcription service. Because I had conducted the interviews and was very familiar with my research participants as a result of my participant-observation in program sessions and at Neighbourhood House events, I could detect where the transcriptionist’s layer of interpretation was inaccurate and go back to the original recordings to ascertain what the participant was trying to communicate, which I only had to do a few times during the open coding phase of the data analysis process. As Carol Warren and Tracy Karner (2010, 218) describe, open coding is an immersive process wherein the researcher is open to whatever they read in the data. As a first step in identifying analytic themes, the researcher will typically make margin notes to direct
This process of reading and re-reading was precisely what I did with the interview transcripts: I printed and read them in hard copy, making notes on the margins. These early codes were based on insights that emerged from the transcripts themselves, as well from my theoretical framework, literature review, and fieldwork experiences (Warren and Karner 2010, 220). Eventually, these notes coalesced into the themes that are presented in the chapters that follow this one. I also uploaded the interview transcripts into MAXQDA 11, a qualitative data analysis software program, and used the text retrieval function to crosscheck the frequency that participants mentioned keywords linked to the major themes I identified in the data. This step increased my confidence in the thematic analysis I was producing.

While less technologically-mediated, working with hardcopy versions of the long interview transcripts provided me with a better sense of how an interview excerpt fit into the larger context of the interview and helped me to be more present in the data analysis. The fieldnotes, however, were shorter than the interview transcripts and so I used MAXQDA 11 to assist with the open coding and thematic analysis of these documents. Again, I adopted an open coding and thematic analysis approach to making sense of this data. Additionally, I used the ‘Memo Manager’ feature to write short analytic reflections or practical reminders about particular fieldnote excerpts. I analyzed the fieldnotes prior to analyzing the interview transcripts. The fieldnote data was useful in terms of orienting my perspective on issues that were shared collectively; for example, struggles with precarious legal status and English language were common among most women and commonly discussed at both fieldsites.
Having an awareness of whether a topic, issue, experience was shared collectively or individually helped to orient my data analysis process.

2.4 Program participants I did not interview

There were four program participants I did not interview. Two of the women, Estelle (44, Mexico) and Mimi (33, China), had very limited English language skills and I did not have the capacity to conduct interviews with them in their first languages (Spanish and Mandarin, respectively). One woman, Dorothy, was black, and currently employed but on-leave from her unionized position after experiencing workplace harassment. I suspect, but cannot confirm, that Dorothy was born in the United States of America – she joined the program late, did not complete a registration form, and never disclosed her date or country of birth. Another woman, Sarah (36, Canada), was of Chinese descent but born in Canada, and had been out of the labour market since her son was born in 2008. Estelle, Mimi, and Sarah were participants of the second cycle of the program at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, while Dorothy was a participant in the second cycle of the program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House. Both Dorothy and Sarah stated during program sessions that they were interested in attending the program because they felt their race had an impact in their labour market efforts and experiences.

Estelle and Mimi, the two women with limited English language skills, were a better fit than Dorothy or Sarah for answering the mostly immigration-related questions listed on the interview schedule (see Appendix H), and I did devise a plan to interview them. Unfortunately, my fieldwork at Crystal Pond ended suddenly and unexpectedly due to unforeseen family circumstances and these interviews did not happen. Nonetheless, I think the plan I had devised raises interesting methodological issues worth considering and
sharing, especially in light of the Estelle and Mimi’s full participation in the PtL program and presence in the participant-observation aspect of this research.

Prior to my abrupt departure from the field, I had considered asking two graduate students (one Spanish-speaking and one Mandarin-speaking) to assist me in conducting interviews with these women in their first languages. I imagined that the three of us – myself, the woman participating in the program, and the female graduate student – would gather in one room, and I would ask the question, the graduate student would translate, and the participant would respond in either Spanish or Mandarin. Then, the graduate student would translate a summary of their response into English, so that I could ask follow-up questions. I had also planned to ask the graduate student whether she would be willing to transcribe a translated version of the participant’s verbatim response based on the interview recording.

Each of these steps would have made these interviews different from the others; three individuals in the room during the interview itself would change the dynamic of the conversation, and moving between languages would create additional issues to consider with regard to the research participant’s interpretation of the translated question and the graduate student’s interpretation and translation of the participant’s response. These issues of interpretation would be compounded with regard to the translated transcription (see Temple and Young 2004, and Spivak 1992). Furthermore, these assistants would have to be fairly compensated for the time and knowledge that I would be asking them to contribute to my project, and I expect that these costs would have been substantial for my unfunded project. For better or worse, pressing concerns beyond the scope of the project eclipsed these decisions.
These practical problems aside, the practical, linguistic, logistical, and financial challenges posed by these interviews raise interesting theoretical and methodological questions. For example, Estelle and Mimi’s limited English language skills are extreme examples of the linguistic barriers that I focus on in Chapter 4; that Estelle had been in Canada for 23 years and working as a hotel housekeeper provides insight into the relationship between English language and employment opportunities (and, perhaps more pointedly, employment silos). That these linguistic barriers add complications to sharing their experiences in the context of an English-language research interview highlights how the experiences of immigrants with less-than-full English language proficiency may be marginalized even in studies such as mine, which purports to focus on the experiences of women who do not typically make contact with academic researchers. My limited linguistic skills affected the richness of the research data by limiting my understanding of Estelle and Mimi’s experiences to the information they shared in PtL program sessions.

My reasons for not interviewing the two women who were born in Canada and/or the USA are different. I was still interested in understanding why these two participants had registered for, and wanted to attend an employment program for immigrant women, yet the opportunity did not present itself and, for reasons I outline below, it did not seem appropriate to force it. Yet, their presence and participation in the Pathways to Leadership program sessions illuminate the difference between the ethnographic and interview components of this research. Despite not being interviewed, Dorothy and Sarah’s participation in the program was integral to the fieldwork, and the ways in which participants reacted to Dorothy’s discriminatory comments about language and refugees and to Sarah’s comments about her hobbies and other status-related lifestyle issues provided microcosm examples of social
interactions between English-speaking Canadians (and Americans?) and non-native English-speaking newcomers. Dorothy and Sarah were aware that they did not face the same barriers as the other women participating in the program; for example, they did not need to strategize about how to acquire Canadian education or work experience, master a new language, or learn cultural nuances. Neither of them had children who required childminding – Dorothy did not have children, and Sarah’s son was in kindergarten – so they were not participating in the program as a break from mothering. Rather, they both seemed genuinely interested in the program content. Dorothy, for example, was especially interested in conversations related to race-based labour market discrimination, and Sarah was particularly interested in conversations about deskilling or perceived deskilling related to an extended leave from paid employment due to caregiving.

Both Dorothy and Sarah expressed their fit with the program even though they each openly admitted that they recognized they were not the exact participants the program organizers intended to interpellate via the recruitment materials. My fieldnotes from each woman’s introduction to the program are clear evidence of this assertion. A fieldnote excerpt describes my first interaction with Dorothy:

At 9:15 AM, the first participant walked in – a new black woman name Dorothy. Dorothy had her 11-week-old dog in the room with her – a tiny, Chihuahua-looking dog. I introduced myself to her, and she settled into the room as I set up more markers and pens. She told me that she had been emailing the woman filling in for Serena while Serena is with her family due to her father’s illness but hadn’t received a reply so she decided to come anyway, saying “to hell with the bureaucracy.” I welcomed her to the group and said that she would have to fill in an application form but that would be the end of the bureaucracy. She told me about how she was on a sick leave from her job because of the stress from dealing with a bullying and harassment claim at her work. She mentioned that she is very involved with the union and that she works as the shop steward. Without asking what she hoped to get from the program, she told me that she was here to gain leadership skills, to become stronger, and find her confidence again.
Dorothy’s boldness at showing up for a program that had a formal application and registration process highlights the confidence she brought to her first day in the program. In contrast to many of the other program participants, whose everyday activities and movements were limited by state policies and “bureaucracy” that they would never dream to challenge (as described in Chapter 3), Dorothy already showed a bold awareness of something Neeharika, the program facilitator, told the women throughout the Pathways to Leadership program: “everything in Canada is negotiable.” As Bourdieu (1984, 474) states in his discussion of classes and classification, “one’s relationship to the social world and to one’s proper place in it is never more clearly expressed than in the space and time one feels entitled to take from others.” Dorothy did not hesitate to share her opinion or to advocate for her own interests, as demonstrated by my first encounter with her which revealed how she was already excelling at many of the skills the program intended to develop.

A fieldnote excerpt from later in the same session provides more context about Dorothy’s interest in the PtL program:

Neeharika then asked Dorothy to introduce herself. Dorothy told the group that she is not a recent immigrant and that she has been in Canada for 42 years. However, she identifies with the struggles of immigrant women being that she is a visible minority and people often ask her ‘where are you from?’ and that these people are not satisfied until she answers ‘Jamaica.’ Interestingly, it seems to me that she speaks with a slight American accent. She told the group that she works ‘housing the homeless.’ She talked about how she had spent a lot of time in her 20s and 30s cruising through life and only thinking about herself but now is more interested in finding ways to give back and help. She mentioned that she wanted to run for elected office when her work situation is resolved. She discussed her role as shop steward and how she was being bullied because people don’t always appreciate the person who asks a lot of questions, which she described as her role as the occupational health and safety officer.

Dorothy’s interest in how to respond to racialization was certainly a topic discussed as part of the PtL curriculum, but her position as shop steward in a unionized job and intention to run
for elected office demonstrated that she had already achieved most of the employment and leadership skills the program intended to foster.

Dorothy’s subsequent comments in program sessions at times verged on anti-immigration and linguistic discrimination, and were frequently at odds with the program’s multicultural philosophy, which presented a personal and ethical challenge to my role as a participant-observer in the program. For example, my fieldnotes from Dorothy’s first day in the program go on to list an interaction with another participant, wherein Dorothy questions the validity of refugee claims:

*Carmen was talking about how Mexico is a dangerous country, yet the Canadian government does not recognize it as dangerous even though people are getting murdered by drug cartels and the police are violent. Carmen spoke about how planes of people had been migrating to Canada and applying for refugee status but it was becoming impossible to apply under these grounds, and now it was even difficult to get a tourist visa. She spoke about how even people with money had to wait many years to find out if they could gain permanent resident status. Dorothy interjected that a lot of refugee claimants were abusing the system. Neeharika interrupted to say that it wasn’t abuse of the system, but that undocumented refugees who come to Canada are highly publicized and their stories are made to appear more common than they truly are.*

Dorothy’s claim that a lot of refugee claimants abuse the system created an uncomfortable dynamic in light of Carmen’s (39, Mexico) status a refugee claimant. Additionally, Dorothy’s comment here and similar comments she made throughout the program were sociologically and ethnographically relevant in terms of providing examples of the anti-immigrant and discriminatory statements that newcomers face, and insight into how differently positioned individuals negotiate the tensions that result from these interactions. In addition to seeing how the other participants reacted to these statements, they also became opportunities for PtL program participants to learn from Neeharika and Serena’s abilities to gently rebuff statements of intolerance.
Interestingly, Sarah’s introduction to the group on the first day of the program at Crystal Pond was quite similar to Dorothy’s, but less forward and more quiet:

Sarah told us that she was born in Canada but still views herself as an immigrant and sees many of her struggles as being the same as immigrants’ struggles. She introduced herself by saying that she had been out of the workforce for six years and that she has a five and half year old child. She said that she was in the program to learn social, leadership, and speaking skills. She went on to say that she used to consider herself a successful working person, using her hands to indicate that she saw herself up at just above eye level, but since having kids she feels a lack of confidence, and dropped her hand to below her chest. I didn’t manage to take many notes while Sarah was talking since she was also making a lot of direct eye contact with me and I didn’t want to violate her trust by breaking this eye contact to write a copious amount of notes. Her eyes looked sad and she seems depressed or dejected. Neeharika told Sarah that there are many transferrable skills from being a mother and to think of all the amazing work it takes to build future citizens, and quickly clarifying that she means “citizens of the world.” She said that she had read a study that put a dollar figure to women’s work around the world and that “the world owed women seven times the earth.” I wasn’t clear on exactly what she was saying, but the message was clear, and she went on to say it forcefully – “we aren’t in debt to anyone, SOCIETY is indebted to US!” for all of women’s work contributing to families and communities.

In the same way Dorothy had demonstrated a keen awareness of the issues that would be addressed in the Pathways to Leadership program curriculum, Sarah’s introduction and brief exchange with Neeharika raised program-relevant issues related to racial discrimination as a Canadian-born woman of Chinese descent, the impacts of childrearing on women’s perceptions of employability, and the notion of women’s unpaid work as deserving of formal recognition. Like Dorothy, Sarah was already ahead of most other program participants in terms of recognizing these to be issues that unfairly disadvantage women, and particularly racialized women. It would have been interesting to interview Sarah in order to get a better sense of how her awareness around these issues evolved over the course of the program.

Unlike Dorothy, Sarah did not disrupt the group with interjections but she did seem to take up considerable amount of space by doing exactly the opposite: she made direct and prolonged eye contact with either myself or Neeharika when speaking, spoke slowly and
quietly but very articulately, and used her iPad to show the group examples of art she had 
accomplished using her creative skills and talents (of which she has many). Additionally, 
Sarah completed written homework assignments that she read out to the class, which differed 
from the other participants as most would only provide verbal reports or speak from a page of 
scattered notes. In many ways, Sarah’s accounts of her lifestyle set her apart from the group 
but not always in obvious ways. Again, this behaviour was sociologically and 
ethnographically significant as it brought class and status dynamics from broader society into 
the program sessions.

I have seen Sarah since completing my fieldwork at Crystal Pond but I have yet to 
have a conversation with her that feels more than rudimentary. I last saw her at a PtL 
program reunion in May 2015, where she approached me to ask me if I wanted buy anything 
from her cosmetics catalogue. She walked away without saying much else when I politely 
declined. This behaviour was ethnographically interesting, in that it implies something about 
Sarah’s perception of me and her relationship to the PtL program more generally.

Dorothy and Sarah’s participation in the Pathways to Leadership program was 
recorded in my fieldnotes and their presence provided an abundance of rich material for the 
analysis presented in the subsequent chapters, yet I did not have the opportunity to interview 
these participants. Dorothy attended most of the Pathways to Leadership program sessions 
and seemed to connect with the program participants, many of whom seemed enamored with 
her larger-than-life personality. She was not friendly with the Neighbourhood House staff 
members, Neeharika, or myself, however, and she did not acknowledge my efforts to 
encourage those participants who had not yet interviewed to approach me if they would like 
to participate in an interview. I had made tentative plans to meet with Sarah for a research
interview prior to abruptly ending my fieldwork in April 2014. Because we had not
connected on an interpersonal level, I felt that pursuing that interview opportunity would
have been intrusive. In hindsight, I regret these lost interview opportunities with these
anomalous program participants. The opportunity to get a better sense of their experiences in
the Canadian labour market and how they make sense of these experiences would have
enriched my analysis of the structural factors that affect racialized women’s employment in
Canada. Given that they were not the target audience for the program, it would have also
been insightful to learn more about what they were hoping to gain from the program and how
the program did or did not meet these expectations.

2.5 Research ethics and reciprocity in a long-term ethnographic project

While the other participants seemed to be quite awestruck and captivated by these
two women who spoke English so fluently and commanded such a presence in the group, I
had complicated feelings about the ways in which they were choosing to participate in the
program. Developing close relationships with non-academic research collaborators creates a
“complex research environment” that requires the researcher to take time to understand the
aims and processes of collaborators and organizations, participate fully and work
congenially, and demonstrate honesty, openness and trust (Lewis and Russell 2011, 404–
405). At the same time, establishing close and ongoing relationships throughout the research
process raises ethical dilemmas related to power and privilege in decision-making, as well as
questions about the researcher’s ability to maintain a critical perspective (Reid et al. 2011,
192). Having been in the field working closely with women from a variety of social locations
for so long, I developed deep, lasting, and meaningful relationships with most of the women
on the Advisory Committee and participants in the program. Yet, it was not always easy to understand or relate to all of the women I encountered, as the section above indicates.

Angela McRobbie (1982, 55) highlights the tensions that arise when “feminism meets sociology,” including the “awkwardness and even humiliation of forging a relationship with those women, girls (or men) who will provide the source material of the project,” especially when the questions “may seem important for the research, but feel unacceptably intrusive and nosy.” The fact that research is always imbued with power relations that are impossible to erase underscores the need to engage in reflexivity, defined as the “continuous examination and explanation of how they [the researchers] have influenced a research project” (Dowling 2008, 747). Lewis and Russell (2011, 409) state that “the reflexive process that accompanies the writing of fieldnotes works to ‘discipline’ the research process,” presumably by keeping issues of power, privilege, and dilemmas of closeness/distance at the forefront of the researcher’s mind. In my fieldnotes, I attempted to address the ethical dilemmas involved in conducting embedded research by reflexively questioning my methodological decision-making, interrogating my own assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about the research experiences and data I generated, and making use of these critical reflections to examine the broader social and political contexts within which these interactions occur (Dowling 2008, 747). The passages about Dorothy and Sarah above are examples of these reflections, as are my struggles in integrating Estelle and Mimi into the interview aspect of this research. Additional reflections about the potential consequences of the research are the reason why I did not offer my participants the option of being referred to by their real names in my dissertation. By thinking critically about the different aspects of the research project and the trust imbued in me by all of the individuals and institutions that agreed to participate in this
project, I hope to have created ethically informed, mutually acceptable, and sociologically significant relationships.

My commitment to supporting the program was tangible and evidenced not only through my attendance at planning and evaluation meetings; I also helped design the application form and advertising for the program, as well as survey questions, pre- and post-program meeting questions and mid-program focus group questions. Then, as part of the program evaluation, the social work student and I conducted the mid-program focus groups during the first cycle of the program at Forest Lawn and Crystal Pond and I prepared an analysis of the focus group data for the Advisory Committee. As previously mentioned, I took notes at every session of the three cycles of the Pathways program that I attended, and I distributed these via email to the program participants so that they could have a record of what was discussed and stay caught up if they had to miss a session of the program.

Beyond assisting with the launch, evaluation, and ongoing activities of the program, I supported participants throughout and after the program: I helped secure a tutor for the children of a woman who was participating in the program; I spent hours outside of program sessions meeting one-one-one with women to review their cover letters and resumes, and to help them prepare for job interviews; I supported community initiatives and civic engagement projects by attending events the women organized on evenings and weekends (e.g. Mexican and Bangladeshi ‘cultural dinner’ events, Parents’ Conferences, Cinco de Mayo celebrations, and so forth). I assisted them in putting together Neighbourhood Small grant applications, and proofread their posters to advertise activities that emerged from their successful grant applications. I also accepted a Mary Kay makeover and spent $50 on make up products I have never used, just to support the launch of a home-based small business
from an interview participant who had only several weeks prior spilled a mug of cinnamon tea on my brand new laptop, sending it to the shop for major repairs (it’s a fieldwork miracle that Apple was able to replace the damaged parts)! After my research ended, I wrote letters of support for a participant’s refugee claimant case, and another participant’s application for permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) grounds. When the latter participant followed up on my letter by asking for money to support her family’s H&C application I felt compelled to make a modest donation of $50.

Other examples of my efforts to ‘give back’ to participants in ethical ways are included throughout this chapter and the dissertation. I recognize that these efforts are not in keeping with more traditional practices of offering cash-based honoraria for research participants, but I believe that offering a standardized and formal offering such as a gift card or thank you card and cheque would have appeared cold in the context of embedded ethnographic fieldwork. My efforts at reciprocity were more relational and offered in response to emerging needs, which felt more genuine than the alternative. Furthermore, I feared that offering a small cash-based gift in exchange for sharing intimate details of their lives and experience could be an insult for women who have experienced significant class and status dislocation as a result of immigration – for participants who were psychologists and doctors for example, a $10 gift card in exchange for an hour or more of their time could be misperceived as an indication of what their time and expertise is worth in Canada as compared to their home countries and I did not want to run this risk.

Participating in the evaluation of the Pathways Project and executing my own research program made me aware of how community-based researchers must actively plan ahead to acknowledge and reciprocate, where possible, the support they receive from
frontline staff members. At the completion of this project, I intend to organize two knowledge mobilization activities. One will be a lunch for the members of the Advisory Committee and Neighbourhood House staff, and I plan to provide an overview of the research findings and to discuss how these might be used to support their work. The other event will be a knowledge translation activity for the women who participated in the two cycles of the Pathways to Leadership program where I completed this research, even if they did not participate in the qualitative interview component of the project.

These celebrations will be a way of giving thanks for the Advisory Committee members, staff members and program participants’ contributions to the project and to discuss its findings. The event with the program participants will be less focused on practical applications of the research and more oriented toward discussing the commonalities of their experiences. Such a discussion is important, as many of the women believed they were the only ones struggling with integration and employment issues prior to their participation in the Pathways program. By the time this dissertation is submitted to the university, it will have been more than two years since I wrapped up my fieldwork. Based on my relationships with the program participants and Neighbourhood House staff, I am certain that an opportunity to come together and discuss these shared struggles will be empowering and valuable for the women who participated in the program. It will also be a chance for many of us to reconnect in person. Additionally, the maintenance of institutional relationships between the University of British Columbia and the Neighbourhood Houses that participated in this study are important and productive beyond this study. Academics have much to gain from the expertise of community, and the community can benefit from the expertise of community-based
researchers, especially when these partnerships are managed in an ethical and mutually satisfactory fashion.

2.6 Conclusion

As Haraway (1988, 593) observes, actors/agents “come in many and wonderful forms. Accounts of a ‘real’ world do not, then, depend on a logic of ‘discovery’ but on a power-charged social relation of ‘conversation.’” This chapter has provided an in-depth description of my embeddedness in the Pathways to Leadership program and the organizations where the program took place. Rather than see this level of involvement as detracting from the empirical value of this dissertation, I have drawn on literature from the hermeneutic and sociological traditions to demonstrate the ontological value and intellectual significance of this methodological approach. Moreover, I provide empirical justification related to the unique context and population within which this research occurred – a pilot program with women who are largely excluded or unable to participate in other employment programs for reasons related to their legal status in Canada or caregiving responsibilities – to demonstrate why participant-observation and in-depth interviews were the most suitable methods for a study that aims to explore women’s immigration and integration experiences in Canada.

As will become apparent in the next chapter, a great deal of the data presented in this dissertation would not have been shared with me were it not for the messy and dynamic relationships I forged during my fieldwork with women struggling to find their bearings in Canada.
Chapter 3: Dreams, Love, and the Law: Participants’ Classification Struggles Migrating to Canada

Neve: [...] Because like back home, when someone go back home, and they [have] married a foreigner it’s like something really, you know.

Heather: What do you mean?

Neve: Like it’s, I don’t know how to say that. They really admire, like you really amaze, like all of this, especially if they have kids, like they going back home then like, because having someone and then they have a good job, right. The money from here is big there [back home in the Philippines]. So mostly the ones who married a foreigner, they have a good life back home.

So my sisters, especially my eldest one, she already died but she really, she’s the one who push me, like “It’s not like that, just you will work and then you help your niece and nephews, because like they will have their own life some day. And then how about you; you have no family. And then if our mom were gone you are alone.” So I realize like, “Yeah, I know that.” And then I said “Oh yeah, maybe I will – when I come back home, I come back there [Vancouver], I will try to have a date.” Especially at Kitsilano Beach, I used to run there, and then men would say hi but I ignored [them] because like, I am scared. But after that I come back, and I said, “Okay I will find someone.”

Newcomers face different joys, challenges, and milestones as they journey from their home countries to Canada, and toward the eventual goal of legal and social citizenship.

Neve’s (39, Philippines) comments, shared during our one-on-one interview in her home, a very clean and well-kept basement suite in an East Vancouver home with an architectural style best known as a ‘Vancouver Special,’ provide some insight into the kind of life Neve and Neve’s family back home had hoped she would build in Canada. As a Live-In Caregiver in Canada, Neve worked hard and supported her family “back home,” but had internalized the goal of marrying and having a family with a “foreigner,” a Canadian-born man, as the ultimate and most admirable goal because that would provide her with the economic class situation and classification to achieve that “good life.” Neve’s dreams highlight what some participants and their families imagine to be a successful life in Canada after migration: working in Canada is a good start, but the full achievement of the Canadian dream entails
establishing stability and permanence in Canada. Informed by Bourdieu’s (1984, 466–484) discussion of classes and classifications, this chapter explores the ways in which participants’ legal status, their official classification by the Canadian state, influenced the extent to which they were able to actualize these dreams.

To begin, the chapter provides some introductory information about the women who participated in the Pathways to Leadership program and the immigration classes and immigration programs by which they arrived and settled in Canada. As context for this introductory information and the three narratives that come later in the chapter, I present a brief history of the policies structuring the flow of permanent residents into Canada since the mid-20th century with special emphasis on the implementation of the points system in 1967. The points system was intended to increase economic immigration to Canada and served to introduce the three primary categories for evaluating applications for immigration that remain in effect today: the economic, family, and humanitarian categories.

Drawing from the 31 in-depth interviews I conducted with the Pathways to Leadership program participants, the three sections that constitute the balance of the chapter explore the PtL program participants’ experiences entering Canada via the three categories of immigration programs and the gaps between arriving in Canada and achieving permanent resident (PR) status. Paying attention to issues of class position, volumes of economic capital, and Fraser’s concept of redistribution, I present an in-depth narrative of one participant’s experience per section. I selected these three complex and detailed narratives to represent the three main streams of immigration, to highlight common patterns of experience among study participants with relatively similar volumes and ratios of economic and cultural capital, and to demonstrate how the immigration stream by which a participant arrived or
applied to remain in Canada affected their achievement of legal and meaningful citizenship. The narratives were selected for the way in which they describe experiences common to many of the PtL program participants who applied for permanent resident status via the same three immigration programs.

3.1 Participants’ immigration pathways and classification struggles in Canada

Reflecting on their migration experiences in PtL program sessions and our one-on-one interviews, women frequently described their difficulties securing the financial and/or legal migration status required to realize their dreams. While all of the women in this study were registered in the same employment and leadership skills program, the route they took to the program and their personal preparedness and legal ability to enter the job market was largely dependent on the immigration stream – economic class, family class, or humanitarian class – by which they came to Canada (see Table 3-1), and whether they arrived in Canada with permanent resident status (see Table 3-2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration class</th>
<th>Number of PtL program participants</th>
<th>Explanatory notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Participants came through a variety of economic class immigration programs, as described in Chapter 3 and 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Although I did not formally interview Estelle (44, Mexico) I knew she immigrated through a family class program from interview-like conversations with her during program sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cara came as a Government Assisted Refugee as a child, while two PtL participants were applying for PR through humanitarian immigration programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I could not determine conclusively which program Annie (40, China) and Dee (41, Chile) had immigrated through based on my interview data, and I did not interview Dorothy, or Mimi, as discussed in Chapter 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada-born</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sarah (36) was born in Canada, as discussed in Chapter 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of PtL program participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>Table 3-1 A snapshot of the immigration classes by which Pathways to Leadership program participants applied for permanent residency in Canada. For more detailed demographic data, see Appendix B</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like Neve, whose migration narrative and early experiences in Canada will be discussed in greater detail below, almost half of my interview participants (15 out of 31) arrived by economic class immigration programs. While the nine Federal Skilled Worker program applicants had arrived in Canada with permanent resident status, four other interview participants who had applied for or were applying for permanent resident status through other economic class programs landed with temporary legal status in Canada. One interview participant, Isa (31, Peru) had first come through the Live-In Caregiver program, but was applying for PR as a spousal applicant – a family class stream. Including Isa, a total of 12 interview participants had or were applying for PR via family class immigration programs. Similar to economic class immigration, family class immigrants may land in Canada with permanent resident status or may apply for permanent resident status from within the country (see Table 3-2). In this study, 11 out of 12 of interview participants who had or were applying for PR through family class programs arrived in Canada on tourist or study visas. By contrast, only three interview participants had obtained or were applying for PR via humanitarian class programs. One interview participant, Annie (40, China) immigrated to Canada at the age of 10 but the program by which her family had migrated was not clear.

As outlined in Table 3-2, seven of the interview participants did not have permanent resident status or a work visa in Canada at the time of the interview and were therefore unable to legally work in Canada. Of the 24 women who had landed with or obtained permanent resident status by the time of our interview, 17 were unemployed due to childcare-related issues: three women had infants under the age of 1, nine women had one or more than one small child between the ages of 1 to 5 and had decided that the cost of childcare was
prohibitive to their participation in the labour market, and the remaining five women had made similar ‘choices’\(^{17}\) when their children were younger. At the time of the PtL program, the children of these five women were school-aged or older, and the women were interested in entering or re-entering the Canadian labour market but were unsure where to start in their job search and were concerned about deskilling and their ability to secure living-wage work as a result of having been out of the paid workforce for a number of years. Among the 35 women who participated in the Pathways to Leadership program, Jennifer (35, Peru) had arrived in Canada only six months before starting the program while Cara (45, Vietnam) had been in Canada for 35 years. On average, PtL program participants had been in Canada for eight years and four months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration streams and categories</th>
<th>Interview participants who arrived via this stream / category</th>
<th>Interview participants who landed in Canada with PR status through this stream / category</th>
<th>Interview participants who did not have PR status at the time of interview</th>
<th>Interview participants with PR status but employment limited by childcare access at time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Economic class programs:</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business Investor Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provincial Nominee Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Federal Skilled Worker program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Principal applicants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) The single-quotations are used to indicate that these decisions are not made freely but are the result of women’s carefully considered analyses of much they can expect to earn in the paid workforce given their frequently devalued education and experience, and the cost of childcare in Vancouver.
Table 3-2 PR status of PtL program interview participants at the time of arrival in Canada and at time of interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration streams and categories</th>
<th>Interview participants who arrived via this stream / category</th>
<th>Interview participants who landed in Canada with PR status through this stream / category</th>
<th>Interview participants who did not have PR status at the time of interview</th>
<th>Interview participants with PR status but employment limited by childcare access at time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Federal Skilled Worker program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o ‘Dependent’ applicants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family class programs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spousal Sponsorship Program (SSP) (One participant originally arrived via the LCP, then applied for PR via the SSP)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian class programs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refugee-claimant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humanitarian and Compassionate appeal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government Assisted Refugee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown program:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All immigration applications must fit into one of the three classes, each of which classifies potential newcomers on a perceived continuum from least financially burdensome to the state (economic class) to most financially burdensome to the state (humanitarian class). That said, the three narratives shared in this chapter demonstrate that individual skills and determination, while popularly conceived as prerequisites for successful integration, are less important than the institutional pathways that structure newcomers’ migration status. In turn, these institutional pathways affect newcomers’ eligibility to participate in the labour market and their access to settlement, health care, and social services. These bureaucratically
administered immigration programs set up class and status positions that are not based on arbitrary or impartial decisions. Rather, Canadian immigration policies and programs are rooted in the context of a particular Gemeinschaft, a community of values and shared understandings that ascribes advantage and disadvantage to different groups relative to their Stand, their legal and social standing (Waters and Waters 2016, 9). As a result of the various legal conditions and restrictions associated with the different immigration programs, some newcomers arrive in Canada with fewer barriers to the labour market while others arrive far more.

Economic class immigration programs, for example, are popularly conceived of as programs that enhance Canada’s economic productivity, while family class immigration programs are viewed as programs that do less for Canada’s economy. The use of the term ‘class’ to describe categories of immigration programs that are ranked hierarchically in terms of perceived financial burden to the state hints at the function of ‘class’ as a term that designates both economic standing and status standing. These classifying class categories play out in classification struggles, which have gendered and racialized dimensions, as this chapter discusses. As described in the introduction and explored in greater detail below, women tend to come as dependent applicants rather than as principal applicants on economic class immigration applications, unless they migrate to Canada as principal applicants through the Live-In Caregiver program to perform gendered and classed caregiving work. As a result, there are culturally entrenched and gendered notions of ‘productive’ and ‘burdensome’ immigrants.

How do these struggles between social groups take hold? Individuals and groups themselves invest meaning into the classificatory system by investing and making use of the
classificatory system with “their whole social being,” an identity move that allows different groups to define themselves as an ‘us’ opposed to ‘them’ through classification struggles (Bourdieu 1984, 478). As Bourdieu (1984, 481) acknowledges, “the fate of groups is bound up with the words that designate them.” Bourdieu’s (1984, 471) discussion of how classification struggles play out in the social order provides an explanation of how powerful designations, such as the term ‘immigrant women,’ or ‘family class immigrant,’ take on class and status connotations:

Through the differentiated and differentiating conditions associated with the different conditions of existence, through the inclusions and the exclusions […] which govern the social structure and the structuring force it exerts, through all the hierarchies and classification inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (for example, the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgements, verdicts, gradings and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interactions of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds (emphasis mine).

Bourdieu’s description highlights how a group’s location in the social order is relative, in that it is perpetually coming into existence and constantly at stake in struggles for the distribution of advantages and obligations.

Canada’s immigration classification system exerted a very real structuring force on the lives of the women in this study, and particularly the women whose struggles are described in this chapter. For the 20 interview participants who arrived in Canada without permanent resident status (see Table 3-2), precarious legal status affected their immediate participation in the labour market either by institutional conditions that forbade them from engaging in any kind of paid work, or severely restricted their labour market participation to low-paid, low-status occupations such as caregiving. For the purpose of this chapter, I work from Bourdieu’s (1984, 479–481) discussion of classification struggles to explore how the
specific immigration pathways by which the women entered Canada set particular social and
economic forces in play, and how this play between these structuring forces and the women’s
agency affected their settlement and integration experiences in Vancouver.

There is a great deal of literature on the economic struggles that newcomers have faced since Canada started recruiting skilled workers from around the globe in late the 1960s; Chapter 4 contributes to that discussion by focusing on the intersecting gender and linguistic issues faced by many of the study participants, including those who came through the Federal Skilled Worker program and other skills- or investment-based immigration programs. This chapter explores the impacts of the precarious migrant statuses generated by specific streams of economic, family, and humanitarian class immigration programs. Precarious migrant status, as discussed in the introduction, leaves applicants vulnerable and at-risk of expulsion (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). This vulnerability was certainly true of the 20 women in this study who had applied or were applying for PR after fulfilling the work experience requirements of temporary worker programs (n=6) or conditions of the Business Investor Program (n=1) , or after submitting the paperwork and enduring the requisite processing time for the spousal sponsorship program (n=11), or after filing refugee claimant or humanitarian and compassion grounds applications (n=2). In addition to the burden of precarity borne from uncertainty regarding how the state would rule on their applications, the women who arrived without PR status had to endure years without access to health services, education and language training opportunities, or settlement supports.

In comparison to “undocumented” individuals in the United States, Goldring et al. (2009) explain that most of the individuals living in Canada with precarious migrant status are known to the state. In fact, the very precariousness that leaves them vulnerable and
largely invisible is a result of immigration policies that produce “gradation of uncertain or ‘less than full’ migration status” (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009, 240). As a result of the dynamic nature of the variety of state-granted legal statuses that newcomers move through as they attempt to secure PR status, the experiences of individuals with precarious migrant status in Canada have been understudied (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009, 240). This chapter contributes to the growing understanding of how individuals, and particularly women, come to experience precarious migrant status in Canada, and the impacts of precarious status on their settlement and integration experiences. The next section provides some historical background how the contemporary immigration system came to be.

3.2 Selecting “desirable future citizens”: Shifts in Canadian immigration policy

In a 1947 speech before a House of Commons debate on the second reading of an amendment to the Immigration Act,18 William Lyon Mackenzie King (1947), Canada’s Prime Minister at the time, outlined the government’s position on immigration (emphasis mine):

18The Immigration Act of 1910 was eventually replaced with the Immigration Act of 1952. All changes made to the Immigration Act between 1910 and 1951 were made as amendment to the earlier Immigration Act of 1910. Besides providing the officials with broader discretionary powers, the Immigration Act of 1952 did not diverge significantly from the Immigration Act of 1910. Like the 1910 Immigration Act, the 1952 legislation continued to focus on who should be kept out of Canada rather than who should be allowed in. 1947 was an especially critical year in terms of informing immigration and citizenship policy: in addition to the speech above, Mackenzie King’s government passed the 1946 Citizenship Act, which came into effect on January 1, 1947. Taken together, the Immigration Act and Citizenship Act extended the state’s power to determine who could enter Canada and, once here, who could be considered a rightful citizen of the nation. Importantly, the Citizenship Act provided the Canadian government with the power to confer Canadian citizenship as a legal and social status separate from British nationality. The main routes to citizenship outlined in the ‘1947 Act,’ by birth in Canada or naturalization after five years of residing in the country as a landed immigrant, remain in effect today.
With regard to the selection of immigrants, much has been said about discrimination. I wish to make it quite clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a ‘fundamental human right’ of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege. It is a matter of domestic policy. Immigration is subject to the control of the parliament of Canada. This does not mean, however, that we should not seek to remove from our legislation what may appear to be objectionable discrimination.

There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population. Any considerable oriental immigration would, moreover, be certain to give rise to social and economic problems of a character that might lead to serious difficulties in the field of international relations. The government, therefore, has no thought of making any change in immigration regulations which would have consequences of the kind.

Mackenzie King (1947) emphasized the recruitment of immigrants from Europe as a matter of preserving “the fundamental composition of the Canadian population,” a statement that glosses over the nation’s colonial legacy and erases the history of the First Nations who were here long before the French and British. Mackenzie King’s (1947) speech is especially notable for its defense of the discriminatory policies that reflected Canadian society’s racist attitudes toward immigration since its colonization by British and French forces, and up to the introduction of the points system in 1967 on the 100-year anniversary of confederation.

Mackenzie King’s comments about the “fundamental composition of the Canadian population” as white Europeans offers some explanation for why PtL program participants continued to define “Caucasians” as the “real Canadians,” to use their words. Writing shortly after the 1995 referendum where Quebec voters were asked whether the province should become its own country by proclaiming national sovereignty, Himani Bannerji (1996, 113) challenges the notion of English Canada and the “whiteness” that serves as “the key bonding element” of the country’s nationalism:
The notion of Englishness serves as a metaphor for whiteness, as do all other European national essences. Whiteness, as many have noted, thus works as an ideology of a nation-state. It can work most efficiently with an other/enemy in its midst, constantly inventing new identifiers of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ In the case of Canada the others, the First Nations, have been there from the very inception, modulating the very formation of its state and official culture, constantly presenting them with doubts about their legitimacy. Subsequently, indentured workers, immigrants, refugees and other ‘others’ have only deepened this legitimation crisis, though they also helped to forge the course of the state and the ‘nation.’

Bannerji’s discussion of whiteness as an ideology for legitimating the formation and unification of the Canadian social space underlines the tensions, erasure, and violence involved in white settlers’ nation-building project at the same time as it explains the ongoing power of Englishness as a metaphor for whiteness and legitimate Canadian citizenship.19

Yasmeen Abu-Laban (1998, 192) describes the period from the mid-1960s to mid-1990s as “Policy Era Two” in Canada’s history, which focused more on potential immigrants’ occupational skills and less on their race or originating nation. The majority of changes proposed in Jean Marchand’s 1966 White Paper on Immigration were adopted in the 1967 implementation of the points system, which aimed to measure an immigrant’s economic adaptability by assigning points based on the applicant’s English or French

19 It is worth noting that the 1947 Citizenship Act had failed to consider the citizenship status of First Nations peoples and so the Act was subsequently amended in 1956 to retroactively extend citizenship to ‘status Indians’ as defined by the federal government at the time (An Act to Amend the Canadian Citizenship Act 1956). Louis St Laurent, the Liberal prime minister who succeeded Mackenzie King, merged the Canadian Citizenship Branch and Indian Affairs Branch in order to form the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in a move that signaled the Canadian government’s perception that First Nations peoples were not citizens of the Canadian state by birth, but by acculturation. When a journalist asked about the rationale for bringing these branches together, St Laurent replied “that the goal was ‘to make Canadian citizens of those who come here as immigrants and to make Canadian citizens of as many as possible of the descendants of the original inhabitants [First Nations] of this country’” (qtd. in Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009, 428-429). In addition to demonstrating the level of institutionalized racism that informed Canadian citizenship in the mid-20th century, these examples highlight the privileges enjoyed by particular racial and cultural groups in the nation’s not-so-distant past.
language proficiency, education or skills, and employment experience. The first page of the White Paper set a radically different tone from the racist and exclusionary policies in place at that time by emphasizing the government’s newfound focus on so-called ‘skilled’ immigration for economic and population growth:

The Government’s view is that it is in Canada’s interest to accept, and if need be to encourage, the entry to this country each year of as many immigrants as can be readily absorbed. Subject to this limitation, we should accept or seek out people who have the capability to adapt themselves successfully to Canadian economic and social conditions. The only people who should be deliberately excluded are those who are likely to lack this adaptability or who represent a danger to public health or safety (Marchand 1966, 5, emphasis mine).

The White Paper is balanced, however, in pointing out the importance of non-economic immigration programs, including family sponsorship and humanitarian application streams. In keeping with the paper’s explicit purpose of proposing a new system that does not deliberately exclude potential newcomers on the basis of race or nationality, the conclusion outlines how “under the proposed new system, all Canadian citizens will be able to sponsor from all countries all of the classes of relatives who may now be sponsored [only] from Europe and the Americas” (Marchand 1966, 41). Table 3-3, which lists PtL program participants’ home countries, is evidence of how the changes to immigration policy instigated in the 1960s have resulted in increased immigration from Asian and African countries, and a decrease from European countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home country</th>
<th>Number of PtL program participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
A comprehensive review of Canadian immigration policies and practices was launched in September 1973. Formally known as the “Canadian Immigration and Population Study,” the review involved public discussions with members of the public and meetings with national organizations, and departments of the federal and provincial governments. In 1974, the findings from the review were compiled into a set of four reports called the *Green Paper*, which in turn informed the *Immigration Act* of 1976. Just as the 1966 *White Paper* had outlined, the *Green Paper* warned that the department overseeing the approval of applications for economic-based immigration must take into account Canada’s current and anticipated labour market demands:

> How much demand, for exactly what sort of workers and where – this information is the key to *using immigration as an effective instrument to serve the immediate demands of the Canadian economy* [...] As our ways to measure the present and future demand in Canada for immigrant workers improve, immigration policy must ensure that this capability is fully exploited and applied to the selection process (Gotlieb 1974, 22–23).

And yet despite the ongoing level of concern related to matching immigrants’ skills with labour market needs in order to avoid exceeding the ‘absorptive capacity’ of the nation, and specifically the economy, the PtL program participants described how immigration and labour market mismatching remains an issue. As Cierra (Mexico, 37) explained in our post-program interview,

> I’d like more [information] about how to make a business. And to go deeper into what is going to be my career and to learn more about what Canada needs. Because I have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home country</th>
<th>Number of PtL program participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3-3 PtL participants’ home countries. Dorothy is the participant from an unknown country (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4)*
ideas, but I don’t know what Canada needs. So [I’d like] more information about the careers that Canada needs.

Cierra had told me repeatedly throughout the program that she wished she had a clearer understanding of Canada’s labour market shortages, both in terms of where skilled workers were needed and in what positions, prior to her arrival in Vancouver. Cierra believed that this knowledge would have expedited her job search and settlement process.

Another significant change in Canada’s political and cultural landscape was Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 announcement that Canada would adopt an official multiculturalism policy, with the caveat that this policy would take effect within a bilingual (English and French) framework. The multiculturalism policy was intended to smooth over the tensions vocalized by ethnic groups who felt devalued by the Trudeau government’s implementation of the official bilingualism policy in 1969, and to “establish Canada as a unique nation, unlike any other, and to differentiate Canadians from Americans,” who take a more assimilationist approach to immigrant integration (Esses and Gardner 1996, 147).

Trudeau is quoted as saying,

Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say that we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more ‘official’ than another (qtd. in Forbes 2011, 28).

The multiculturalism policy was enacted into law with the assent of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988. Policies that protect multiculturalism are therefore critical for

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20 Of particular relevance to this study are the Canadian Immigration Act’s policies to: (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage; […]
ensuring an equitable society given the racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of contemporary immigration flows to Canada given the post-1967 points system policies.

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* received assent in 2002 but the general structure of Canada’s immigration programs largely remained the same at the time I conducted this research. Naomi Alboim and Karen Cohl (2012) document the far-reaching changes to immigration regulations that took place between 2008 and 2012. Of specific relevance to this research project is legislation by the Conservative government under the leadership of Stephen Harper in 2015 that introduced changes to the process for obtaining citizenship, as well as grounds for revoking Canadian citizenship from individuals with dual citizenship (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015e). In the same year, the Conservative government also implemented ‘Express Entry,’ an economic class immigration program intended to facilitate better labour market outcomes for newcomers by allocating points and expediting the immigration applications of individuals who have job offers in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015b). The Liberal government elected in late 2015 has vowed to repeal the Conservative government’s changes to the citizenship process and grounds for revoking Canadian citizenship. The Express Entry system was still in effect at the time of writing.

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(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation; […]

(f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada’s multicultural character; […]

(i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada (Government of Canada 1988).
3.3 Economic class immigration: “[My family,] they’re poor, so that’s why it’s also an opportunity that I came here”

Participants in this study who migrated to Canada through economic class immigration programs were largely aware that their credentials and experience would not seamlessly transfer to the context of the Canadian labour market. From a purely economic perspective, none of the participants in my study who had come to Canada through economic class immigration programs indicated that their migration had brought them immediate or easy prosperity. Most participants, however, indicated a belief that the opportunity to work in Canada would eventually improve their financial wellbeing and the wellbeing of their immediate and extended families. Chapter 4 provides greater detail on the incongruity between the state-led points-based system that was used to evaluate the employability of the nine study participants who arrived via the Federal Skilled Worker program and one participant who arrived via the Business Investor Program (both economic class immigration programs; see Table 3-2), as well as one participant who landed with PR as a family class applicant but had a graduate degree in psychology that she hoped would translate into living-wage employment in Canada. The non-recognition of foreign credentials and challenges with English language proficiency were critical for these study participants.

Six participants in the study migrated to Canada through two other economic class immigration programs: one arrived on a tourist visa and applied for permanent residency through the Provincial Nominee Program, and five arrived through the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP). For this group of study participants, legal status issues were more relevant to their immediate employment situation than credential and language issues. Four of the participants who arrived to Canada via the LCP – Alice (38), Louisa (46), Neve (39), and
Nikki (48) – are from the Philippines, and one – Isa (31) – is from Peru. Cierra (37, Mexico) arrived in Canada on a tourist visa and worked in the kitchen of a Mexican restaurant; her employer sponsored her application for permanent residency through the Provincial Nominee program. The remainder of this section on economic class immigration programs will explore the transnational political context of the LCP before delving into Neve’s experience in and after her LCP contract. The participant who applied for permanent residency via the Provincial Nominee Program experienced many of the same struggles as the participants who applied for permanent residency via the LCP.

The five women who migrated via the LCP were admitted to Canada for the specific purpose of providing childcare to upper-middle class and upper-class Canadian families while residing in the family home. The LCP’s appeal, relative to domestic worker programs in other countries, is that it offers participants a potential route to permanent residency in Canada and, eventually, Canadian citizenship. Live-In Caregiver programs in other countries rarely provide the option of permanent settlement.

That four of the five study participants who entered Canada through the LCP are from the Philippines is representative of a reality summarized by Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail Bakan (1997, 121-122):

The vast majority [of domestic workers in Canada] are women of Third World origins, now principally from the Philippines, formerly principally from the Caribbean, who work as domestics in Canada in hopes of obtaining permanent settlement for themselves and their families. Their aim is therefore to negotiate increasing citizenship rights, but in order to do so they fill one of the most vulnerable non-citizenship niches constructed on an international scale.

The labour export policies that gave rise to this emigration are a by-product of the structural adjustment programs and currency devaluation strategies that accompanied loans from the International Monetary Fund or World Bank (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, 8). The
conditions of the loans have exacerbated poverty and inequality in the countries where these strategies have been implemented, and the consequences have disproportionately affected those citizens who were already poor and struggling. Some participating governments have responded by actively encouraging women to migrate abroad as domestic workers, “reasoning that migrant women are more likely than their male counterparts to send their hard-earned wages to their families rather than spending the money on themselves. In general, women send home anywhere from half to nearly all of what they earn” (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, 7). Filipino men also work overseas, but the number of Filipina migrant workers exceeded the number of men in 1992; approximately one million migrant workers from the Philippines go overseas each year (Parreñas 2008). According to the World Bank (2016b), Filipinos sent home $23.05 billion in personal remittances in 2011, and $28.4 billion in 2014; data from 2011 to 2014 indicate that personal remittances make up 10% of the country’s annual gross domestic product (The World Bank 2016a).

Rather than addressing the gender ideology that perpetuates social and economic inequality among men and women, the Philippine and Canadian states are complicit in the structural reproduction of gender and class stratification through labor export policies and the LCP. These institutionalized obstacles have given rise to what Fraser (2013, 193) calls “distributive injustice or maldistribution,” defined as the denial of participatory parity “by economic structures that deny them the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers.” Stasiulis and Bakan (1997, 123) note how “in the absence of a national child-care policy which might provide affordable public child care, the Canadian state ‘subsidizes’ a privatized child-care service for its wealthier citizens, through recourse to immigration control.” The gap between the class and status positions of the Live-In Caregivers and
families who employ them highlights economic disparities that prevent these parties from interacting as peers.

Conversely, Geraldine Pratt, Caleb Johnston, and Vanessa Banta (2015, 2) summarize the appeal of the LCP, describing how “Filipinos’ migration to Canada is typically part of a transnational strategy, and the planning and wellbeing of Filipino immigrants to Canada is intimately interwoven with the planning and wellbeing of their families in the Philippines.” That Filipina women apply for Canadian economic class immigration programs specifically designed to fill a caregiving gap, an activity traditionally constituted as gendered work in the private sphere of the family, is an indication of the international tensions between what it means to be an economic class immigrant and what it means to be a family class immigrant. Live-In Caregiver program applicants may be seeking a better life for themselves, but they are just as often as interested in the economic and educational success of their immediate and extended families.

Like other Canadian economic class immigration programs, LCP applicants must demonstrate English or French language proficiency, have completed secondary school at minimum (most have completed a post-secondary program), and submit documentation that shows a need for the applicant’s services in Canada. Unlike the other economic class immigration programs, however, Live-In Caregivers are required to have a signed employment contract prior to receiving their work permit, and they typically come alone to Canada. Upon arrival, LCP workers are expected to do highly gendered care work in the home of their employer(s), which is typically a very different socio-economic context than the one they left. Using figures in American dollars, Arlie Hochschild explains the global economic inequalities that encourage educated professionals to leave their home countries in
search of employment opportunities to improve their own and their families’ overall economic situation:

The middle class of the Third World now earns less than the poor of the First World. Before the domestic workers Rhacel Parreñas interviewed in the 1990s migrated from the Philippines to the United States and Italy, they had averaged $176 a month, often as teachers, nurses, and administrative and clerical workers. But by doing less skilled — though no less difficult — work as nannies, maids, and care-service workers, they can earn $200 a month in Singapore, $410 a month in Hong Kong, $700 a month in Italy, or $1,400 a month in Los Angeles (Hochschild 2002, 17–18).

These wage differentials demonstrate the very real class and classification struggles facing Live-In Caregivers and program applicants: women who meet the requirements for the Canadian Live-In Caregiver Program, which required British Columbian employers to pay a minimum wage of $10.45 per hour with a maximum deduction of $325 a month for room and board21 (British Columbia Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training 2015), can ‘choose’ to give up the status of low-paying, higher-status occupations in their home countries to take on low-status but higher-paid work overseas.

In many ways, the institutional categories by which these immigrants are designated as independent individuals seeking to immigrate belie the larger family structures and economic realities of that inform women’s decisions to leave their home countries in search of better economic opportunities elsewhere. It is also important to note the deep costs of these decisions, as women are frequently exchanging their hard-earned cultural capital, in the form of education, for increased economic capital earned abroad. This economic capital is accompanied with a severe reduction in occupational and interpersonal status as a result of the low-status nature of caregiving work, the restrictions on LCP participants, and the

21 It is worth noting that the specifics of these policies have been influx since debates over the role of Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada started making popular news headlines in 2014.
complicated nature of the employer-employee relationship. These issues are described in the paragraphs that follow.

At the time of their participation in the Pathways to Leadership program, the LCP participants from the Philippines had finished their two-year contracts as Live-In Caregivers and were thus free from the work visa restrictions that forbade Live-In Caregivers from participating in any education or training programs, such as the Pathways to Leadership program. Pratt (2004, 46) rightly describes this restriction as a form of deskillng that ensures women are unprepared to enter better-paying occupations once they are released from the restrictions of the LCP. In fact, at the time of the Pathways program, all of the women who completed the LCP had been in the country for at least six years, and Nikki had been in Vancouver for 25 years. Prior to coming to Canada, Nikki had completed domestic worker contracts in Singapore and Europe, and Alice, Neve, and Maria had worked in Hong Kong. Isa came straight to Canada from Peru, and Louisa came straight from the Philippines. Louisa told me about her experiences, stating:

I faced difficulties when I came because I came as a Live-In Caregiver. And after two years I applied for my landed immigrant, and then I decided to go back to school otherwise I couldn’t get any good job. That’s the difficult thing I face – that I had to go back and study in order to get a different kind of job. I didn’t want to stay as a Live-In Caregiver. I believed if I went back to school I would get a good job and a good salary, and have a good future. I went back to school in 2000, then I finished my ECE [Early Childhood Educator Certificate] in 2001, and then after my ECE I took my license, I finished the 500 hours to get my license, and I was able to get a lot of work throughout Vancouver. My husband waited for me as my boyfriend in the Philippines for the four years I went abroad. And when I went back to my country he said ‘okay it’s time to get married!’ And we came back to Canada together. I had fear when I came to Canada, but I overcame because I have a sister in Italy… I came here to Canada by myself, and it was a great challenge to me.

Louisa’s comments about how she faced difficulties after immigrating because she came through the LCP highlight some of the points made above. After receiving permanent
resident status, Louisa believed that returning to school was the only way to “get a different kind of job,” a “good job” that would provide “a good salary” and “a good future.” These statements indicate that LCP jobs are not good jobs, and that the salary is insufficient for building a good future. The ECE certificate provided Louisa with these opportunities, but her time out of the workforce to raise her children had meant that her license had lapsed and so she registered for the PtL program to try to explore how she might rebuild her career.

Louisa’s experience gives a sense of the temporal dimension of settlement via the LCP, and it seems as though she completed her original two-year employment contract and was able to apply for PR almost immediately. Similarly, Nikki had finished her employment contract in the early 1990s and had met her husband, an immigrant from the Middle East, while they were both living in Vancouver. For Alice, the process has taken much longer: at the time of the program, she had been in Canada for seven years and only just obtained permanent resident status. Alice was trying to sponsor her three children from the Philippines but was having difficulties communicating with the children. Alice attributed these difficulties to the lack of intimacy in her relationship with her children, who she said were angry about her ‘decision’ to migrate to Canada. From Alice’s perspective, however, the family’s dire financial situation had left her no other choice but to emigrate.

Unlike the women from the Philippines, Isa had trained as an engineer in Peru and originally entered Canada with a work visa for the LCP but did not complete the two-year contract required to apply for PR as a result of returning to Peru partway through. She had, however, met a boyfriend through mutual friends while living in Vancouver. Isa explained that she and her boyfriend had maintained their relationship after her return to Peru, and that they decided to get married during this period of living apart. In 2011, she returned to
Vancouver on a tourist visa and married her now-husband, an immigrant from Mexico. Since the wedding, Isa has applied for permanent residency via the family class spousal sponsorship program and, at the time of the program, she was seeking ways of upgrading her education to obtain employment in an engineering-related field in Canada. Isa’s immigration experiences once again highlight the tensions and classification struggles between economic class and family class immigration: although she had first attempted to qualify for permanent residency as an economic immigrant, she abandoned that path only to apply again at a later date as a family class immigrant.

Neve (39, Philippines) provided me with detailed insight into her first employment experiences in Canada after arriving via the LCP. Neve’s account is worth highlighting because it was a striking moment in my fieldwork that revealed the multifaceted classification struggles study participants experienced during their settlement process. Not only did Neve struggle with being alone in a country far from her family and their home in a poor area of the Philippines; she was also living in the basement of her Canadian employers, a family in Vancouver’s West Side – a very expensive area of the city where a run-down home on a 33x122 lot recently sold for nearly $2.5 million, almost $80,000 over the asking price (Larsen 2016). Even though the work itself may be better regulated in Canada as compared to other nations around the globe, the emotional burden of managing the employer-employee relationship in the private domain and intimate context of a family home cannot be institutionally regulated in the same fashion as less intimate forms of work. Neve’s narrative, like the narratives below on family class and humanitarian immigration programs, highlights the emotional risks borne by some women who arrive through these immigration streams.
When I asked Neve why she came to Vancouver after working in Hong Kong, she explained:

After I graduated, I went to Hong Kong and I worked there for almost seven years. And yeah I enjoy [it] there. I wanted to stay there because even though the work there is really hard compared to here – it’s almost 24 hours [a day], even at night time you need to take care of the kids – but, because it’s close to home, and then you’re young, you’re enjoying the work. Most of my friends, they asked me “Why you’re not going to Canada? That’s the best place to go.” And I said “No I would rather to stay here because it’s close to home if I want to go back.” And it’s very expensive to apply here [in Canada]. Most of the agencies they charge you between three to five thousand US dollars. Yeah, so… but there is one, there is one agency, and they only charge 300 dollars. And so I tried but it takes a while.

Neve’s desire to stay in Hong Kong to be close to her family was questioned by her friends, who commented that Canada is “the best place to go,” an opportunity capitalized upon by agencies that connect domestic workers with potential employers in Canada. These agencies work to connect individuals interested in immigrating to Canada through the Live-In Caregiver program with potential employers, a much-needed service since an LCP applicant must have a signed employment contract in order for the Canadian government to approve her LCP application. Nikki and Alice also told me that their friends had recommended they go to Canada, pointing out how Canada offered an opportunity to gain permanent residency and to make better wages doing less intensive and better-regulated work. Louisa’s comments about her sister’s work experience in Italy as helping her to overcome her fear of migrating is another example of how close social or kin ties inform decisions related to immigration.

Like Neve, Alice described how she was finally convinced when most of her friends left Hong Kong to work in Canada. Alice’s comments demonstrate how common it is for women to leave the Philippines to work overseas, and how many of them ultimately came to Canada:
Most of friends who lived in the same hometown [as I], because I live in a small hometown back home. And like I don’t know how many percent were already in Hong Kong and we were there [together]. We [keep in] contact [with] each other. And then everything I call them, it’s like, “I’m already at the airport.” It’s like, “Where are you heading to?” And they said, “I’m going to Canada.” I was like, “What?” And then after how many weeks, I called again. “I’m at the airport.” I was like, “Where are you going?” “Canada.” And then another friend, [who used] the same agency, she said, “So I’m going to Canada. My flight is-” And I was like, “What? I don’t want to stay here [Hong Kong].” I was like, “I have to go.” So I really work hard for my papers.

The social process of migration has been documented in the academic literature. In an empirical study of Mexico-to-USA migration, Douglas Massey and Felipe García España (1987, 733) acknowledge the value of “migrant networks,” defined as “a web of social ties that links potential migrants in sending communities to people and institutions in receiving areas.” As Massey and España (1987, 733) explain, “the emergence of a well-developed migrant network dramatically lowers the costs of international movement and gives a powerful momentum to the migration process.” Louisa, Neve, and Alice’s comments demonstrate just how influential these networks are in encouraging flows of particular types of immigrants between specific countries.

Massey and España (1987, 734) describe three categories of “migration costs”: direct costs, such as agency fees, transportation, and establishing a new home; opportunity costs, such as earnings foregone before migration and during the settlement process; and, finally, psychic costs, defined as “the psychological toll of adjustment to a foreign culture and society, which may be considerable, especially if the migrant is undocumented.” All of the participant narratives featured in this chapter highlight these costs, which were often exacerbated due to the precarious nature of their migration status. While not ‘undocumented,’ all of these participants were admitted to Canada on visas that required them to rely on others
conditions make newcomers reliant on the goodwill of these gatekeepers, as Neve describes:

And then the first employer that I have here [in Vancouver] is very nice. They’re in [the] West Side. And so it’s a big adjustment [from Hong Kong] because like here you only work for eight hours and then most of the employers, they will say like, especially [if they’re] Caucasian and it’s first nanny they have, they will ask you only to work like this [only eight hours]. But for me, like I said, “Oh just let me do something for your house.” Like it’s okay, like “I will bring the kids outside then I will clean something, then I will cook.” They did not expect that because the contract here is, [childcare] is only the thing that you will need to do.

Then after that you’re so bored because you have no family [here], right. I have [only a] few friends so [I] said “What I’m going to do?” And then after how many months I made some friends and they asked me like “Do you want to work under the table?” So I said “Oh yeah I’d love to.” So I work in [a fitness job] for how many years at night time after my work as a Live-In – like I [work as a] Live-In [care-giver] from eight to four, and then from five to eleven, I do the other work.

And then during Saturday I am also working as a cleaning lady in North Vancouver, because like your body’s already used to you working hard and then you have nothing to do, right? So, you focus for the salary you can send back home because for us, we’re really happy to send money home, even if we have nothing here.

Even my employers, they say like “How come, Neve, you send all the money [home], how about yourself?” And I said “I don’t need money every month and then it’s like – because like my family, we’re not really… you know, like they’re poor, so that’s why it’s also an opportunity that I came here and I came to Hong Kong, so I’m happy to support them [family members in the Philippines].”

Having “nice” employers who abided by the hours of work set out in the employment contract enabled Neve to maximize her earning potential during her first two years in Canada. Neve’s surprise at her employers’ ‘niceness’ indicates that the women who perform domestic work as Live-In Caregivers are at the mercy of their employers when it comes to how much labour they are actually expected to perform. Having come from working as a domestic employee in Hong Kong, which she described as being much more strenuous than working as a Live-In Caregiver in Canada, Neve was accustomed to doing more hard work than her Canadian employers expected. As such, she used this ‘free time’ to seek additional, unreported, cash-only work at a fitness facility and as a housekeeper in another home, which
in turn allowed her to send much more money home to her family than she would have been otherwise able to.

Other participants echoed the importance and luck of landing with generous and non-exploitative employers. While telling me about her first few months in Canada, Alice described how her employers took her to a ski resort in the interior, something she had “dreamed to do”:

The first surprise to me was they gave me a ski lesson for free. They paid for it. So I was so happy, but in exchange I had the kids for Saturday and Sunday [her typical days off]. I didn’t mind. It’s just like for me, I’ve learned to embrace that we’re family, you know? So they’re my first family. That’s why every year I always to come to see them, the children, yeah, every December, to see them and say thank you for them that without you guys, you know, there’s no Alice here in Vancouver right now.

As the term suggests, Canadian ‘domestic workers’ participate in state-sanctioned, formal working relationships but in the private sphere of reproductive labour – which, in Western contexts, has typically involved the exchange of emotional and economic capital within dyadic and extended kinship networks. The entry of a third adult into the context of the nuclear family blurs the lines between work and love, as evidenced in Neve’s discussion of “first nanny” and “Caucasian” families being more fair than other families she has worked with, and Alice’s acceptance of longer working hours on the basis of learning to “embrace that we’re family.” Alice’s comments about dreams, family, and negotiating work hours demonstrate how caregiving work blurs boundaries between the intimate and interpersonal, and the economic reality of being a paid employee. No interview showcases this awareness better than Alice’s comment that “there’s no Alice here in Vancouver right now” without the children and their parents, all of whom were more or less her employers.
Both Neve and Alice were, however, making the sacrifice of being away from their own families in order to provide material resources of food and education. What happens when an employer replaces being ‘nice’ or being ‘family’ with market logic? Neve discovered at the end of her first two-year contract in Canada, which she had extended by a year:

Neve: So yeah, for how many, like three years I did that time running between jobs, running around. And after three years I changed employers because like, it was so good at first but later on it’s unfair what they’re doing. Because like, they gave the whole basement to me as my place to stay, and then when I almost finished my contract they take the bedroom and I only live in the living room, and… because [the living room] it’s big so I’m okay with that. And then after I finished the contract, their next-door neighbour, their nanny left so [my employer] she’s asking, like will I work with the neighbour too. They would pay me 12 dollars [per hour] and then I will pay [for] the basement $800. So I said, “So all my salary will go to the house?” right, and then [I will have] five children I will need to take care of. And at that time, I have a part time [job], like one kid only is $10 dollars [per hour, compared to five kids for $12 per hour].

So it’s like, I like them, but when I heard that it’s like they already [made up their minds] – I didn’t know, like I said – okay, I always don’t negotiate, mostly like [I say] “yes, yes, yes.” But I said like, “Can you give me more time?” because we talked Friday about the neighbour. And then I said “Okay can you give me until Monday?” And then [before] Monday, I talked to my employer and I said I didn’t want to accept the offer.

Heather: So can you explain that to me again? So, basically you were getting 15 dollars to take care of two kids before but they want to pay you 12 dollars to take care of five kids?

Neve: Because I’m under the Live-In Caregiver, it’s only basics, like $825 [per month]. But after your Live-In Caregiver program, you can find an employer that will pay you a big amount, especially on the west side, they will pay you like from between 13 dollars to 20 dollars [per hour]. So I found a family, I only work for [for them for] two days [a week] but they give me 12, no 15 dollars [per hour]. Whereas with them I will work for five children and they will only give me 12 dollars and I will need to pay their house for $800. So it shocked me. It’s like… it really make my heart so [devastated].

Heather: Oh my God.

Neve: Yeah, so I said, like I did not, so I said, “I will not accept the offer.” So she said “It’s okay if you don’t want to accept that, because we can also offer, like if you don’t want to take the 800 basement you can…” They have a spare room, one room so I will be with them [upstairs]. So it’s like I don’t have privacy, right.
For me, if I’m with you I will clean the whole thing the time I’m with you but so I said “I also will need a privacy. I need to rest.” So I said I will not take the job.

And so she thought I meant I wouldn’t take the [job] next door but I said also [I wouldn’t work] here, and so she’s really shocked. She cried! She left and then she went to her office, because she has an office in their house. So when she come back she said “It’s okay, Neve, I understand.”

And so I felt so very sad because I didn’t want to leave them too, because like they’re so very nice. Because when I worked - even when it’s illegal [for me] to work, they’ve supported me. I’m so crushed at that time too, but I need to move on, I need to find a job, a good job, right.

So when I almost leave them they said, “Why you did not negotiate, Neve?” So I said “How could I negotiate, you already hired me [before]. Just imagine like I’m only thinking for 12 dollars I receive from you for five kids and then I will pay 800.” And I said “And you know me. If I’m working with a family I will not only work with the kids I need to, I want to see that your house is organized and tidy. So two houses. I will work with them [and] I will work here. I-I-I don’t know what to do. So she said like “Okay.”

So like sometimes I call them, it’s not really, good, like we do not, really, have a contact anymore. But from my part time [job] on the West Side, after that I found two families and they have three days [with one family] and two days in the other [family], and so I have 15 dollars [per hour].

It was heartbreaking and infuriating for me to just listen to Neve’s story of her first employer’s attempts to “negotiate” a new contract with Neve after the expiry of their LCP contract. The new contract the female employer offered to Neve more than doubled the cost of rent that she had been paying while protected by the LCP contract, but provided only a minimum increase her in hourly wage for dramatically more work. The employer’s offer did not violate any labour codes, but it devalued Neve’s previous contributions to the family and sent a clear message that the family believed she was a commodity who could be ‘shared’ with their West Side neighbours. The employer’s emotional outburst in reaction to Neve’s decision to decline her employment offer adds an additional layer of confusion to the interaction, underscoring the overlapping tensions between the emotional and economic components that constitute the relationship between the Live-In Caregiver and employers.
Yet, I should not have been so surprised to hear this horror story. Bridget Anderson (2002, 112) sums up the employer-domestic relationship, in terms of how the relationship is framed either as something to embrace because “we’re family, you know,” as Alice said, or as something calculated and contractual:

As far as the employer is concerned, money expresses the full extent of her obligation to the worker. To the worker, this view is deeply problematic; indeed, it denies the worker’s humanity and the very depth of her feelings [...] many employers will invoke either a contractual or a family relationship under different circumstances, depending on what is most convenient.

Neve’s description of her interaction with her employer demonstrates the employer’s vacillation between an emotional relationship and a contractual relationship. The employer’s tears when Neve rejected an employment offer that would have seen her earning less money to do a significantly more demanding job, followed by the same employer’s question about why Neve did not negotiate the employer’s original offer, are examples of the complicated and conflicting dynamics at play in a woman-to-woman relationship premised on the exchange of money and legal immigration status in exchange for the performance of culturally-devalued and traditionally gendered care work. This emotional and economic exchange occurs between two women, but it finds its basis in multiple and varied institutions: the institution of the family and its accompanying gender expectations, the institution of the state and its immigration policies, and the institution of global capitalism and its flows of people, money and skills across nation-state borders.

It is notable that almost all participants described interacting with the female employer, and but never the husband. Reflecting on her own experiences employing nannies, Susan Cheever (2002, 37-38) writes:

In many families, where women take on most of the job of raising the children, along with doing their outside jobs, the nanny becomes the true significant other. It’s the
nanny who works with the mother to create a place where the children can thrive; the husband is at best an assistant to the team and at worst an obstacle to their aims. Sally, a nanny quoted by Cheever (2002, 38), states “In these marriages, the mothers depend on us so that they can work, and the fathers sometimes get off scot-free – a lot of time it’s as if they didn’t even have children.” Hochschild (2012, 244) speculates that two factors inhibit many women from pressing men to help more: “women still earn less money than men and marriages have become less stable” (244).

Why then, are women employers not more sympathetic to the struggles of the domestic workers they employ – the women they know intimately, and whom they know are making sacrifices to send whatever money and gifts they can to their families? Judith Rollins (1985, 184) states that a woman employer’s “low regard for this ‘women’s work’ may combine with her own sexism, racism and class prejudice to further degrade the work.” Moreover, the employer “benefits from the degradation because it underscores the power and advantage (easily interpreted as the rightness) of being white and middle-class” at the same time as she “contributes to the continuation of gender subordination in the society,” in that hiring a domestic resolves her own issues related to domestic labor without her having to “challenge patriarchal ideas of appropriate ‘women’s work’” (Rollins 1985, 184).

Neve, Alice, and Nikki were very open about their experiences obtaining permanent residency via the LCP, highlighting the joys and difficulties of working and living with different families, and the long wait times between meeting the requirements to apply for and receive permanent residency status. As of July 2015, the processing times for LCP participants’ applications for permanent residency had reached a record 50 months, or just over four years. Taking into account the 24 months of employment that Live-In Caregivers must accumulate before they can even submit the application, this processing time means that
women who arrive via the LCP will, in the best case scenario, spend more than six years living apart from their children, spouses, parents, and other loved ones. At the time I interviewed Alice she had only seen her three children a few times since leaving the Philippines in 2004, and on the application for the Pathways to Leadership program she had remarked that she did not have children. Isa, however, would not discuss her experiences as a Live-In Caregiver at all. Participants’ honesty and omissions about their experiences with the Live-In Caregiver program reveal the complexity of the relationships that it involves, both at the micro-level of the household and the macro-level of international relations between various nation-states. The experiences presented in this section have explored some of the ways in which the precarious legal status and restrictions associated with the LCP have affected the economic and family relationships of women who immigrated to Canada through this program.

3.4 Family class immigration: “You make trouble for your family too, just for that stupid document”

Before coming to Canada, Alice had asked her boyfriend, the father of her third child, to speak with his uncle in Winnipeg about sponsoring both of them, their daughter, and Alice’s two children from a previous relationship for permanent resident status in Canada. At Alice’s suggestion, the boyfriend did go to Winnipeg and obtain PR status while Alice was working as a Live-In Caregiver in Vancouver. In the meantime, Alice’s children remained in the Philippines. Alice’s sister agreed to take care of the youngest child, and Alice’s other two children resided with their father. As an engineer, Alice’s boyfriend faced licensing barriers in Canada and opted to return to the Philippines before securing Canadian citizenship. In the time since he left Winnipeg, he met another woman and had a second child in the
Philippines. At the time of our interview, Alice had a new boyfriend in Canada, an immigrant from Russia, and she was finalizing her permanent residency papers with the hope that her three children would soon join her in Vancouver.

Comparing Alice and Isa’s experiences highlights the various pathways participants considered in order to obtain permanent resident status in Canada: Alice had hoped to enter through spousal sponsorship but settled for the LCP, while Isa had attempted the LCP and ended up applying for PR via the spousal sponsorship program. While the family sponsorship stream was not successful for Alice, it has been for Isa: At the time of our interview, Isa had been granted her open work permit, an intermediary stage between applying for permanent resident status and having that status granted by the federal government. Family sponsorship, and specifically the spousal sponsorship program, was the most common immigration stream for the participants in my study. Five participants – Alicia (41, Peru), Chiyo (34, Japan), Jennifer (35, Peru), Negar (35, Iran), and Scott\(^{22}\) (39, Thailand) – had met their Canadian citizen husbands while the men were abroad in the women’s home countries. Seven participants – Akira (38, Japan), Estelle (44, Mexico), Isa (31, Peru), Naomi (38, Japan), Roxanna (40, Mexico), Sasha (44, Malaysia), and Sunhe (35, South Korea) – had met their Canadian citizen husbands while the women were visiting Canada on tourist visas (n=3) or study visas (n=4). From my understanding, all of the spousal sponsorship applicants except Alicia, whose experience is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, had applied for permanent residency status from within Canada.

\[^{22}\] Scott was one of my only study participants who choose to exercise the option of selecting her pseudonym. Scott’s decision is noteworthy given the gendered dimension of the name she selected.
Individuals with enough material resources and Canadian citizenship or permanent resident status can apply to sponsor their spouse, common-law partner, children, adopted children, parents, grandparents and, depending on the specifics of the family sponsorship program they are applying to, other kin from overseas. Family class sponsors must demonstrate that they meet an income guideline determined by the federal government and agree in writing to be responsible for providing the basics of life for the relative(s) for up to 10 years, depending on the sponsored relative’s age (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015a). As a long-term strategy, families may plan for the most qualified or best-positioned member to apply for the permanent residency in Canada through a temporary foreign worker or skills-based immigration program and for that family member to sponsor additional family members as soon as they become eligible; of course, this strategy can only work if the first family member to arrive in Canada is able to meet the minimum income requirements for sponsorship after achieving permanent residency.

Mackenzie King’s (1947) speech, quoted earlier in this chapter, demonstrates the long-standing acceptance of family class immigration programs relative to economic class immigration programs. Family class immigration, however, was deprioritized under the recent (2006-2015) Harper government. The Conservative government’s Report on Priorities and Plans for 2013-2014, the year this fieldwork was conducted, put the target percentage mix for economic class immigrants at 62.3%, family class immigrants at 27.2%, and humanitarian class immigrants at 10.5% (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2013). The most recent version of this document, the Report of Priorities and Plans for 2015-2016, lists a target percentage mix of economic class immigrants at 65.5%, family class immigrants at 23.9%, and humanitarian class immigrants at 10.6% (Citizenship and Immigration Canada
2015g). Notably, the 2015-2016 numbers will be dramatically different than those proposed in the Conservative government’s 2015-2016 report as a result of the newly-elected Liberal government’s plans to admit over 25,000 refugees, re-emphasize family reunification policies, and dedicate more resources to processing applications for permanent residency more generally (Liberal Party of Canada 2015).

The narratives described in this section emphasize the need for and importance of the Liberal government’s campaign promise to grant “immediate permanent residency to new spouses entering Canada, rather than imposing a two-year conditional status that puts spouses – often women – in a position of extreme vulnerability” (Liberal Party of Canada 2015). At the time of writing, this campaign promise had yet to be fulfilled and the application processing time for sponsoring a spouse or common-law partner for permanent residency while the applicant was living within Canada was 26 months (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2016b). For spouses or common-law partners living outside Canada, the application processing time was 17 months (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2016b). These wait times are an improvement over those reported at the time of my fieldwork: interview participants explained how the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers union was on strike with rotating job action from April 2013 to September 2013, which resulted in delays processing student visa and permanent residency applications. Jennifer (35, Peru) told me that she had expected the spousal sponsorship process to take approximately two years prior to the strike, but anticipated the job action would add an additional six months to the period between submitting her application and receiving permanent resident status.

The processing wait times of the LCP and spousal sponsorship program leave applicants in a liminal state, resulting in tremendous stress. It was especially stressful for
those participants who had never imagined emigrating from their home countries until they met their Canadian partners while the men were abroad in their home countries, as exemplified by Scott’s (39, Thailand) explanation of her immigration experience. Scott’s experience, described below, provides insight into how ideological dreams about marriage and life in Canada influenced her decision to say ‘yes,’ consequently inserting her into a variety of institutional processes that have only added to her stress and uncertainty.

3.4.1 “It’s not clear like, how [this] is [a] good life”: Isolation and vulnerability among women applying for spousal sponsorship

I interviewed Scott on a bright and sunny winter morning in a private study room at the Bob Prittie Library near Metrotown Mall, in Burnaby. Scott and her husband lived in Burnaby and Scott took the Skytrain and a bus to our Pathways to Leadership program sessions. As I walked from the Skytrain to the library myself, I noted the cleanliness of the library grounds, the green grass sparkling in the sun, and the seniors practicing Tai Chi on the lawn outside. When Scott arrived, we walked up to the second floor and settled into a room I had booked for our meeting. Scott was happy and relaxed, and launched with ease into telling me why she had come to Canada. Struggling at times to communicate her thoughts and ideas using heavily accented English, Scott used lots of visual metaphors to help me understand what she was trying to tell me.

Scott had never even considered travelling to Canada prior to meeting her husband. She had travelled to the United States to take an English program, and after returning to Thailand she was fortunate to work for a company that provided English classes. The instructor for the English classes was a Canadian man, and their twice-a-week classes together morphed into a friendship and, eventually, a romantic relationship. The two kept in
touch after he returned to Canada but she stopped responding to his messages after a few months, reasoning that the distance was too significant for the relationship to evolve. He returned to Thailand several years later and proposed to her at the end of the trip, which she did not take seriously:

And I just laughed a lot. I even [did] not wear the ring. I said, “Keep the ring” and I just was embarrassed. I don’t know – it was funny because he proposed to me when I do the laundry […] [Then,] he invited me to come here [to Canada], right, because he want to marry with me. He want to, but I’m not sure. To be honest, I’m not sure I want to marry him. I don’t want to marry. […] I came here on September last year and we still didn’t… I still… I don’t know what to do. I said, “I don’t know what to do.” I said like, “What am I going to do? I don’t want to marry but…” and then my mom said, “How you going to live like this? You are getting older now. You supposed to have someone to take care of you.” I don’t know. I’m still confused until now.

The pressure Scott faced from her mother about marriage echoes the pressure Neve described in our interview, as featured at the beginning of this chapter. Scott and Neve were independently-oriented and happy with their careers – Neve was working in Canada, and Scott was working for an island outpost of a big real estate company in Thailand – and only considered pursuing romantic relationships at their family members’ urgings.

Their family members’ urgings, undoubtedly borne out of love and idealism, were largely based on preconceived notions that marriage would provide access to material wealth and comfort. For Scott, however, there was stress as a result of coming to Canada and being unable to generate an income independent of her husband while simultaneously watching him spend a lot of money to put together her application for PR status: “$125 [for fingerprints] and then the notary is $40 and then that big company is about $50 and then I have to pay for the consulate, $300 or 400, we have to pay for that process. And then I have to pay for the mail. Have to send the registered mail, right. I just wo-oow, we spend too
much.” Having to wait for her papers has made her feel “lost.” Scott told me how she feels about her current situation:

I still didn’t… cannot have a chance to work here… It’s like my life is like, it seems like it’s disappeared. Because in Thailand I can go to work, I can drive, wherever I want to go, I can go. I have friend. I have many things, right? I don’t know. I still didn’t … like it’s not clear like, how [this] is [a] good life. I mean like you said, you think [it] is a good life in the future but how about now? The people should be live in the present, right, in the now, at the moment, and then… But I says… I says… I don’t know. I keep waiting [for] something. I even like… I don’t know. I still lost, I feel lost, yeah.

Scott’s sense of being alone and lost is all the more sad in light of the fact that she had been in the country without permanent residency status for over a year at the time she started the Pathways to Leadership program, meaning that she had been ineligible for almost every other employment, language, or settlement program. She had gone from a life where she was working, driving, and spending time with her friends – all things and activities she could not do or did not have in Canada. She had spent a year alone with her thoughts while her husband was at work earning the money they needed for the application process and to support them.

Spousal sponsorship applicants reported dealing with this isolation in different ways. Scott told me that she had booked a round-trip ticket with an open return date when she came to Canada the previous fall on a tourist visa, and that the temptation of that one-way ticket back to Thailand plays on her mind, especially on days when she feels so unsure about her life in Vancouver. Always keeping her passport in her purse, she explained how she takes the Skytrain to the airport and sits in the Departures area, staring at the planes scheduled for Thailand on the flight board and thinking what it would mean for her to leave Vancouver and go home:
Heather: So when was it that you went to the airport?

Scott: I don’t know. I cannot remember. Maybe two months or three months ago, something [before the Pathways to Leadership program started].

Heather: And when did you decide that you were going to go home [in Vancouver] instead of getting on the airplane?

Scott: I sit there, like, one hour. I don’t know. I just sit and then I just try and think about it, like the … like, what – because if you go back to Thailand, now it’s hard for me to get a job because it’s like you’re too old and how about your family? How about my family, how they going to look at me, right? You just get married and you just run back to Thailand, what … what I want to do there? It seem like it is maybe, is a shame on me. Is like… you cannot do it… and I really cannot give the reason for them why I come back [to Thailand] because for us, if we are in the Third [World] country, right, it feels like “oh that girl can go to Canada or U.S., like wow.” Some wow for them, but it’s not wow for me when I come here.

And then I just like… I don’t know. I start a family [got married] already, right? And I don’t know. It seem like I just have to… at the moment I can think about it when I’m there [at the airport] and you think. It’s just behind that door, you walk past, [if you go through security to get on the plane back to Thailand] it change your world forever or something like that? But when I came here, I didn’t think about too much like that. But if go back it’s… I think, I think it’s a lot. It’s like… it’s no party. It… for me is… I feel like… sometime I feel like all my life or another people is like they have something that they… how to say? A door, they keep drawing for you. You have to go that way, or that way. And even if you don’t go that way the first time, you have to go around. But normally you have to go back to that place because that is your drawing […]

I just… I think, like, I like to think I can just disappear. I don’t want to hurt him [my husband], right? I don’t want him to think I’m not going to stay here, I’m going to go tomorrow or something, it’s going to hurt him or I … if I start talk with him like that, he going to do something and then I cannot go, and then I just think I should disappear and just go the airport. I just like to know I can get to the airport. Before I didn’t know how to take the Skytrain there.

The vividness with which Scott described her trips to the airport to stare at the flight board and contemplate the implications of what it would mean for her to return to Thailand and her wish to just disappear was one of the most compelling moments of my fieldwork. In journeying to and from the airport, Scott considered her family’s hopes for her, her hopes for
herself, the pain it would cause her husband if she opted to return to her financially and romantically independent life in Thailand, and ultimately, her acceptance of her current situation in light of knowing that the option to leave was always there for her, as long as she did not vocalize that option to her husband. Scott’s comments about the shame it would bring her to return to Thailand given her family and friends’ ideas that to marry someone from Canada and move there is a “wow” experience, although she had not found life in Canada to be “wow.” Scott’s comments about how her immigration experience is like “a door they keep drawing for you” implies that she perceived her challenges to be related to fate, and something she would have to experience even if she tried to avoid it. Scott communicated the depths of her immigration-related struggles in saying “I like to think I can just disappear,” an act that would allow her to escape from her situation and minimize the hurt inflicted on her husband.

Neve and Scott spoke explicitly about their families’ convictions that they could have better lives if they were to marry Canadian men, but Scott’s reflections above and Neve’s at the beginning of the chapter reveal that neither has fared as she hoped: after quickly falling pregnant with her first child because she had no understanding of birth control, Neve discovered that the father of the child was in a relationship with another woman and refused to take responsibility for the child. With assistance and support from a large settlement agency, Neve was able to go to court and claim child support for her son but the father has not been involved in her son’s life. Still, managing these unfamiliar bureaucratic processes when the participants were still just grasping the language and reorienting themselves to the culture as it is, and not what they had dreamed or heard it would be, was challenging, as...
Scott emphasized when I asked her what she thought was the most important thing we had discussed in our interview:

I don’t know. I kind of like want to know the system from them [immigration officials], why they take so long like that. They have a million people that apply for the immigration or…? I just started thinking like that, because a lot of people came here and then, yeah, maybe they have a lot of people [applying], but for me it kind of… doesn’t make sense for me. It’s like you take one year to do application just for one step. For my second step I have to wait for 11 months, too before I get the [open work permit] and then what? And why take so long like that? I mean like, I didn’t do something wrong. I try to be like “They have the rule and I try to follow them,” but sometimes it’s too much for me. Why you just… Who are you? Who they are? Why they just… like, this is my life. How you can… you going to be like a cop? You going to keep me [here] before [you] say “You are not qualified [to be here],” just to kick me out, right? And I think I’m a good girl, right? I try to do something nice. But the thing that I try to respect, is yup, because you have many people [applying for immigration], that’s why they have to set the rule, you have to follow the rule, but why take so long? And like [we are] married. I do understand like some people they just have fake marriage because they want to stay here. Like, you give some money for the guy and the guy take money and then they marry with you, right. Maybe they have lots of people do like that and find out they make it harder and harder. But for me it’s like, love is love. But I don’t know. I just feel like [the process makes] you [feel like you] are evil a lot of time. You know, because it affect too, [if] even you stay together, right, this way because I still worry. Like me, I still worry about my document, my status… I can just upset my husband. Sometime is like [makes an angry noise].

In the passage above, Scott describes her desire to speak with the individuals assessing her application for immigration in order to determine why the process is set up as it is, and why it takes so long. In this period of waiting, Scott ruminates over the possible outcomes of her application: she may receive her open work permit and, eventually, permanent resident status; alternatively, the bureaucrat in charge of processing her “documents” may decide to “just kick [her] out” even after she has done her best to abide by the application requirements and Canadian rules while she has been ‘kept here.’ Scott’s worries about perceptions that her marriage is “fake” cause her frustration and anger, both of which threaten the very relationship that has brought her to Canada in the first place.
Scott’s fears and anxieties exemplify the systemic production of precarious migrant status and the vulnerabilities associated with precarious legal status in Canada (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). The image of a door, a door one may enter or a door that may shut in one’s face, is a powerful symbol of the doors of fate. Yet, it must be remembered that the policies and practices that govern the evaluation of immigration applications are not fixed but are socially constructed and malleable, meaning that they can be adjusted to reduce the gendered and racialized pathways to precarious status in Canada. While policy adjustments may not have necessarily affected Scott’s ambivalence of wanting to both return home and stay in Canada, they may have changed her perception of the impact that “documents” and “status” can have on one’s life:

Scott: Yeah. And I even ask my husband like, “What if this person not approve, they just kick me out because then I have to leave the country, right, then what? And then what?” I said [it would] destroy my life. Yeah, that is the hard part that I [am] scared [about].

Heather: It’s a lot of power in just a few papers, hmm?

Scott: Yeah. And then I say like, I do nothing, let them have power on me, right. I do the right thing and I hope, I…it should be okay, and if I can stay here it means I can stay here. What you can do? […] This can kill you. I mean like, it kill all the confidence that you have, or [every] thing that you believe in yourself before. It can happen, yeah, if you’re … I don’t know. Like, if something attack you and then you cannot find a way to fight back or try to survive, and then you’re just okay – I accept it and then just become like a… the loser of them.

In empathizing with Scott about the textually-mediated ruling relations concretized in a few pieces of paper proclaiming the legality of whether she could work and remain in Canada, I made space for her to share her sense of how the process of waiting and worrying about whether one’s application for permanent residency will be accepted can “kill you.” The image of documents, mailed pieces of paper, as having the power to attack and weaken a person to an extent that she feels she is failing in the fight just to survive, summarizes the
distant and invisible but nonetheless omnipresent power of the Canadian nation-state’s policies and practices in managing immigration. Scott’s frustration and subsequent resignation as a “loser of them” was common among the women who were equally isolated and in limbo as a result of the processing time for spousal sponsorship programs.

In their early- to mid-thirties and marrying for the first time, most of the women were independent risk-takers in marrying someone from another country and culture and relocating to an unfamiliar place. Subsequent to their arrival in Canada, most women found themselves housebound and entirely reliant on their husband’s wages and willingness to submit the documents that would enable them to remain in the country legally. Jennifer (35, Peru) noted that her social life with family and friends had now been reduced to domestic life with her spouse:

My life all changed. I was happy but scared to come here. I always was very close with my family, you know in Peru. And I have a lot of friends there. So here I am – I need to meet people, and with time, to be[come] good friends. So I'm always, I'm social. A social woman. And independent, so I work, I have my money and I go to a coffee shop – but now I cannot do that. Now I need to… my life changed. My life changed. I miss my family and I miss my friends. My social life. But I enjoy my life with my husband.

In the introduction of their thorough policy report on the impact of spousal sponsorship on the right of immigrant women, Andrée Côté, Michèle Kérisit, and Marie-Louise Côté (2001, 1-2) describe how the spousal sponsorship program limits newcomer women’s activities in Canada by creating structural conditions that leave spousal sponsorship applicants almost entirely dependent on their spouses:

In a conjugal context, the power and responsibilities conferred on the husband/sponsor introduce an imbalance in the relationship, often placing the sponsored spouse in a subordinate position in relation to her husband […] Our research revealed that the sponsorship regime has a discriminatory effect on immigrant women who are sponsored by their husbands in that it exacerbates their unequal status within the marriage, diminishes their dignity and degree of
independence, aggravates existing socio-economic disadvantages and violates their most basic human rights.

Based on these findings, Côté et al. (2001, 2) recommend two options for reforming the spousal sponsorship program: 1) “improve the sponsorship regime according to the needs of women sponsored by their husbands;” or 2) eliminate mandatory sponsorship for spouses and grant permanent residence status to women immigrating to Canada to live with their husbands immediately upon arrival at the nation’s border. At the time of writing, neither of these changes has been adopted.

In 2014, however, the Conservative government announced a pilot program to immediately grant open work permits to individuals applying for permanent resident status through the spousal sponsorship program from within Canada. Allowing sponsored spouses to seek employment legally is especially critical for women, as the opportunity to earn one’s own income can help to mitigate vulnerability and at least some risk of abuse. That said, the specific circumstances that provoked the change are worth noting: Despite the fact that that scholars have been publishing papers and advocating changes to address the vulnerabilities facing women with tenuous legal status as a result of migration via spousal sponsorship programs since at least the 1990s (Walton-Roberts 2004; Razack 1999; Narayan 1995), the introduction of the open work permit pilot program was the result of a “Go Public” story by the Canadian Broadcasting Company, where a New Zealand man articulated the hardships that he and his wife were facing as a result of his inability to work (Marchitelli 2014). The feature piece described how the man’s precarious migrant status and inability to seek employment has left “him unable to work and support his family […] Since [he] can't get a job, [his wife] has had to cut her maternity leave short and head back to work. But with two children, a single income isn't enough” (Marchitelli 2014).
The open work permit pilot program was launched the same month as the above story was published and as a reaction to this publicity. The gendered dimension of the news story’s swift impact on Canadian state policy concerning spousal sponsorship and employment eligibility is evident and raises questions about the state’s understanding of gender roles, and why one gender – men – is deserving of redistribution, or the opportunity to engage in parity of economic participation with permanent residents and citizenship while another gender – women – is not, and has not been afforded that same right despite years of research highlighting women’s economic vulnerability due to immigration policies that forbid them from earning an income in Canada while awaiting the approval of an open work permit as part of their application for permanent residency. Gender roles are structurally reproduced by policies that respond to similar vulnerabilities in very different ways.

3.4.2 “My first priority is to get pregnant […] But I can’t”: Barriers to health care and other services

Like Jennifer (35, Peru), Chiyo (34, Japan) was happy and certain about her relationship with her husband but shared similar feelings of being alone and isolated in Canada, once again revealing the high psychological costs of migration for women with precarious status (Massey and España 1987). She described her husband’s long work hours and her inability to participate in high-quality free or low-cost English or employment training programs while she waited for her open work permit. When I asked Chiyo whom she relies on for support, she told me:

If I feel lonely I can talk to my mom and talk to my old friends through Skype but not every day because if I call my mom every day she feels like “Are you okay?” and I don’t want her to worry about me. But I have to tell myself be active or be positive so that – because especially in Vancouver, the winter season, because we don’t have the sun and it’s easy to get depressed.
Participants commonly told me that they avoided sharing details about the more difficult aspects of their lives in Canada with their family members or friends, stating that they did not want to burden them or cause them to worry. Instead, they tried to adopt individual-level coping strategies, like Chiyo’s description of her attempts to embrace positive thinking and exercise. In one of the Pathways to Leadership program session, Alice encouraged the women to be honest with their family members about the hardships they faced settling in a new country, and to be honest about how hard they had to work and their working conditions when they eventually got jobs and started sending money or gifts back home. Alice explained that would help to counter the idealized image of life in Canada by showing family members the difficulties they were encountering as they worked to create a life for themselves in Vancouver. While doing so might help to change popular conceptions of life in Canada as being “wow,” to use Scott’s term, it seemed as though PtL program participants choose to keep these realities buried inside out of worry they would raise family members’ concerns about their well-being in Canada.

In addition to shared feelings of isolation, both Jennifer and Chiyo expressed anxiety about the wait time associated with the approval of their applications for PR status given that they were in their mid-thirties and wished to have biological children. Like most of the other participants who had arrived in Canada on tourist visas before getting married and submitting their applications for PR status, Jennifer and Chiyo were relying on travel insurance to cover any health care costs. Isa’s and Scott’s travel insurance had both expired and they were doing their best to maintain their health and forego any unnecessary medical visits or procedures. Travel insurance, however, does not cover pregnancy-related expenses: without health care coverage, Chiyo and Jennifer would have had to pay out-of-pocket for prenatal care and
childbirth, and they estimated that this could cost anywhere between $6,000 to $20,000 depending on how the procedures were billed and the level of care required. Chiyo and her husband had already experienced some pregnancy-related difficulties while living in Japan, and so she was anxious that every passing day was reducing their chances of having a biological child.

Chiyo described how she had become hopeful about qualifying for the Medical Services Plan (MSP) of British Columbia:

Chiyo: I was taking other classes [at the women’s centre], there are three month courses and we can learn the computer skills and how do we search for a job and we had a chance to volunteer [there]. Anyway I was taking that program and I met several women then they were in a similar situation to me [applying for permanent resident status through the spousal sponsorship program], so they told me even if you are still in process, if you are still waiting for PR, you still can apply to MSP, but I didn’t know that. And then we keep on checking the website and my husband he checked the website but I am not eligible to apply. But they [the women at the program] are saying you can try, you should try one more time. So okay, I can try, and then I look at the internet and found a telephone number, then I called the number and the person speaks pretty fast English. So I tried to explain my situation but they – I think she seems to understand what I am saying but it’s very difficult for me to understand because it’s such a complicated issue so that’s why I gave up. I told the lady “Okay I’m going to call you back, and I will ask my husband to call you back so can you wait?” So I hung up and I asked my husband to call her back and so he called the lady and told exactly the same situation but that time it seems okay.

Heather: And so can you apply for the MSP?

Chiyo: No, I can’t because the lady said once my process, once my document is in the process I can see the stage on the website, [but now] my stage is nothing, they just received my document and we just received a letter from the CIC that my husband’s sponsorship has been approved, that’s it. But they are saying on the website if my document is processing, it is saying it’s processing then I can apply [for MSP]. […]Well, once I get the permanent resident status I want to apply for a job.

Heather: Right away?

Chiyo: Yes. It depends because my first priority is to get pregnant, that is the number one. But I can’t – this is something I cannot make a plan even though I want to get pregnant but we never know. So I am hoping to get pregnant, but at the same time I want to apply for a job if I receive the visa [open work permit]. So
that’s why I am taking the classes [at the Women’s Centre] and courses [Pathways to Leadership], to be ready to get the work.

Chiyo’s remarks on her attempts to apply for health care coverage through the British Columbia Medical Services Plan, and her conflicting desires to seek paid employment and become pregnant when CIC eventually approves her application for permanent residency reveal several interesting aspects of the immigration machinery in which she is enmeshed. First, Chiyo’s attendance of computer skills classes at a local women’s centre, for example, demonstrates how individuals whose immigration applications are “in process” seek out whatever opportunities they can find to prepare for the Canadian labour market, participating in short programs at agencies funded by philanthropic organizations and provincial dollars, and that are therefore able to serve participants who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Second, women awaiting approval of their PR applications are sharing information and resources about institutional regulations and eligibility, as exemplified by Chiyo’s description how the other women encouraged her to seek out and apply for health care coverage. Third, even when a newcomer has relatively strong English, as Chiyo does, communicating by telephone is challenging and she had to rely on her husband for assistance. In addition to these issues that newcomers generally face, Chiyo’s feeling of tension about how to prioritize employment and pregnancy reflects a gender-specific challenge related to the lost time women experience as a direct result of their precarious migrant status as spousal sponsorship applicants.

3.5 Humanitarian class immigration: “I was the victim but I am [the one] who is paying the high price”

What happens when a husband withdraws his offer to sponsor his wife’s application for PR status? Applying as a refugee claimant via the most restrictive category for
immigration to Canada, the humanitarian class, became the only option for Carmen (39, Mexico) when her marriage to a Canadian citizen became violent after the couple arrived in Montreal with their infant son, whom the Canadian state recognized as a Canadian citizen because of his father’s status and the early age at which he arrived in the country. Carmen and her husband had decided to come to Canada in March 2010 because of her husband’s difficulties finding a job in Mexico. As Carmen explained to me, “we decided to come to Canada, [because] for him it would be more easy to find a job. He will sponsor me and when all will be done we can bring the girls [her daughters from a previous relationship] here with us. It was supposed to be ready in six months, [to] one year. But it wasn’t true.” When the relationship dissolved, Carmen was left without legal status in Canada and was forbidden by her husband from leaving Canada with her son – an order that would be protected by the Canadian state, due to the child’s Canadian citizenship.

While Carmen’s story recounts the worst of possible outcomes related to the vulnerability that stems from having to rely on a spouse to obtain the legal status necessary to remain in Canada, she was not the only participant in my study who had made contact with the humanitarian immigration class: Cara (45, Vietnam) had arrived in Canada from a Hong Kong refugee camp as a government-assisted refugee when she was a child, and Gabriela (45, Peru) was applying to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) grounds.

All three participants told me heart-wrenching stories of their experiences of domestic violence and the challenges they faced navigating the Canadian legal system. Gabriela’s abusive ex-partner lives in Peru and she had originally fled for the United States out of fear for her own life and the life of her new husband. Gabriela, her husband, and their children
lived in Florida for a decade before she was caught driving without documents at a police checkpoint. After a journey through the American court system, Gabriela and her family received a deportation order; as a last resort, she and her family flew to Seattle and crossed the Canadian border on foot in order to declare asylum in Canada. Cara, by contrast, told me that her decision to leave home at 20 and marry her now-ex-husband was the result of strict Vietnamese parents who had not integrated into Canadian culture; believing she had found someone who loved her, Cara ended up in a relationship with a man who was so violent toward her that he was incarcerated for attempted murder. The incident was a crescendo of numerous others that had come before it, and it occurred after the law courts and state failed numerous times to protect Cara and her children.

Unlike Gabriela and Cara, who had both entered the country as refugees, Carmen had hoped for a happy marriage and settlement in Canada via the spousal sponsorship program and never thought she would end up applying for refugee status. In light of my emphasis on class and the classification struggles that newcomer women face in attempting to secure permanent residency status through Canada’s various immigration programs, this section of the chapter focuses on the complications that arose in Carmen’s case of failed spousal sponsorship and what it meant for her to simultaneously traverse the refugee claimant process and a child custody case. Toward the end of this discussion, I contrast Carmen’s experiences with the refugee-claimant process to Gabriela’s family’s experiences applying for permanent resident status through the humanitarian and compassionate grounds process.

I interviewed Carmen in her basement-level apartment of a BC Housing complex in Burnaby, BC. Walking through the complex on a sunny day in January 2014, the place was quiet and seemingly well maintained aside from some graffiti painted on a side wall of one of
the buildings. I was carrying a large container of sushi: during the Pathways to Leadership program sessions, I had heard about Carmen’s struggles to make ends meet on her social assistance cheque and remembered that she had celebrated her birthday by eating sushi, a food she declared to be one of her favourites but one she could rarely afford. When I entered her apartment, I noticed that it had nice furniture but basic necessities – hand soap and toilet paper in the bathroom, for example – were either missing or in limited supply. Her four-year-old son was bouncing off the walls, watching cartoons and running around the living room.

At the time of our interview, Carmen and her son had been in Canada for almost four years, living mostly in chaos and poverty. Goldring et al. (2009, 249) describe how a woman may be left without valid residency status if she chooses to leave an abusive relationship before she has become a permanent resident. The likelihood of this situation is recognized by service agencies, as Carmen discovered when she first made contact with a women’s shelter:

And when I start to feel that my security was not good, you know, I say, no, I don’t come here to live bad, you know, I come here to have a family. So I decided to go in another shelter. In that shelter they see my situation and they say “Maybe it is better to [go] back with your husband, you finish your papers, you know, and in that moment we can help,” you know… then everything will be more stable.

For Carmen, the decision to seek assistance from shelters was borne from a perception that it was dangerous to stay with her husband and dangerous to leave. A report by the Latin American Coalition to End Violence Against Women (2000, 19-20), however, documents how immigrant women may remain in abusive relationships out of a fear that to involve the police or any other protective service would result in immigration deportation proceedings. That shelter staff would encourage Carmen to return to her abusive partner in order to complete the spousal sponsorship process rather than seek alternative means of securing legal status in Canada raises serious questions not only about the judgment of the staff at the
shelter but also about the immigration system and popular perceptions of its ability to ensure the security and wellbeing of newcomers. While Carmen’s experience with women’s shelters could be the subject of a dissertation unto itself, she did not opt to return to her husband. Instead, she was asked to leave the shelter after staff claimed to have seen her going to visit her husband, an accusation she told me was unfounded. Without other options, she and her son returned to her husband and tried to make it work by seeking help for his substance abuse problem from a charitable organization.

By this stage in their relationship, the police were frequently intervening in their altercations, meaning that child protective services had also become involved in ensuring their son, who was about two years old at that time, was safe. Carmen and her husband had run out of money and she had taken to reading tarot cards in order to provide her son with diapers and food. Their living situation at that time was very challenging due to poverty and her husband had become increasingly irrational, as Carmen explained:

So [it] was difficult because when we were living there he was extremely jealous with that man in the house [their roommate]. So when he [the roommate] was there, me and my son, we have to be inside of the bedroom. I was… I feel like prisoner, that I cannot do nothing. And without money, without speaking French, without nothing. It was one situation extremely vulnerable in the extreme, in the extreme. Plus, all his threat, you know, the, “If you go back in Mexico, I will kidnap the baby and you will never see him. And I will go to hurt your family and your daughters and…” Oh, no. Was terrible. Terrible, terrible, because I have [to live] with the scare all the time.

One tarot reading session was scheduled a few days after an incident where Carmen had called the police because her husband had locked her out of their home in Montreal while her son was inside. The day after the police came, her husband became very angry with her once again, and, according to Carmen, said: “I want to make the divorce. All your [sponsorship] papers… I burn all the papers of you and [our son] and all.” Carmen was visibly upset when the women arrived for the tarot reading session. Upon hearing what had happened, the
women who had come for the tarot reading told Carmen that she couldn’t stay there and instructed her to pack up her things. Carmen’s husband came home while she was packing and became angry again, at which point the police were called to return to the home and Carmen was moved to a shelter, where she remained for several months while considering her options.

During this time, Carmen discovered that her husband had in fact destroyed her papers, as he had threatened to do before she left for the shelter. She explained to me:

Carmen: All my papers… But it look like he really broke them…
Heather: And when you say your papers, what do you mean?
Carmen: All my documents for my university, my school, all my certificate of all what I studied, all, all, all, all. The papers of my daughters, you know, the paper of one of my daughters, the… all my important paper, all, all, all. Thanks God I had some… one of the advice my mom said to me is, “Keep your passport and son’s paper, the most, most important with you always.” And I did it, that’s why I have with me. But the other disappear.

Carmen’s husband’s violence of burning the text-based documents, such as university transcripts and her daughters’ identity papers, added an additional barrier to Carmen’s attempts to remain legally in Canada. Fortunately, her husband had not burned her or their son’s passports. The documents she did lose, however, meant that Carmen’s status in Canada was made even more precarious since replacing them would cost her money she did not have.

Eventually, Carmen decided to submit an application for permanent residency as a refugee. As she explains, she decided to apply for permanent residency through a refugee program because the refugee application would give her legal status as ‘refugee-claimant’ and access to services and support while the Canadian government reviewed her refugee claim:

Heather: So what’s your status now?
Carmen: I am asking to be refugee.
Heather: And so, right now, are you still on a visitor visa?
Carmen: No, my visitor visa was finished. That's why … that was another [part] of my stress because my visitor visa was almost finished, my husband never finished to sponsor me, I have that risk to go back in Mexico, and I cannot back in Mexico with my son. So I say “What can I do?” So they [an immigration-focused non-profit organization] recommended me two things. One say, “You have to ask for humanitarian and compassion [H&C] thing but it will take a long time… or you can ask to be refugee.” And they say [to] me, “You have to go for be refugee because, in your case, you have chance to stay here with your son.” So I did it. And I start to have some services because, without that [refugee claimant status], I had not access to nothing. I cannot have support of welfare, I cannot have support of medical, I cannot have support for nothing, of nothing, of nothing, of nothing. I cannot have a permits of work, you know. So they think to make me some stable [to give me stability] they said I should apply to be refugee.

After submitting her application for permanent residency through the refugee program,

Carmen was able to access social assistance and settlement services so that she could start building a new life for her and her son. When her husband’s father died, however, he showed up at her apartment and his distress once again caused the neighbours to contact the police. Because of a restraining order, the husband had been forbidden from coming in contact with Carmen and her son and his presence at her apartment when the police arrived was a violation of that order. Fearing that their child would be apprehended, Carmen and her husband left Montreal that night on a Greyhound bus bound for Vancouver.

With the help of a friend from Montreal, Carmen and her husband found a basement suite in Vancouver but his anger flared up again and the upstairs neighbours threatened to call the police. A woman in the home was a social worker and referred Carmen to a grassroots organization for refugees, telling her she had to leave her husband or her son would be taken away. Again, Carmen and her son ended up in a shelter:

Carmen: Mm-hm. They [the refugee organization] support me a lot, they found for me this place. I start to go in therapy. I … [my son] start to go in therapy too. They open again the file of the police of children [Ministry of Children and Family Development] here in Vancouver again. And I say “no, no, please.” And when the social worker came here she was so rough. She say to me, “Do you know
that you [have to go] back in Mexico and we will keep your son?” I said, “What?” For me was [so sad]… I feel so much violence from everybody.

Heather: You feel like you’re receiving a lot of violence from everybody?

Carmen: Yeah. Because was not only my husband, was even the government, you know. I have the support in the shelter but, in the same time, [it] was extremely control[ling] and racist, you know. Like, if you are Canadian they will give to you the brand new clothes. And the children, they will give [you] the toys new, brand new. If you are in Latin, you can go to choose second-hand clothes, you know. And if you’re African, they will give [you] the clothes in one bag, the rest, you know, that nobody choose, [you can] take [those]. And it’s terrible because there are so many women pass there, like, social workers and they make for you the report [of what you can do and when you can do it]. You go to eat at that time, you make that conversation [with a case worker], you… was like, my God, what is happening. They have to write all what I say, what I did, if… I don’t know. It’s… there are many, many, many, many things that’s not good.

Carmen’s comments explain the ways in which she feels she was victimized not only by her husband, but by the Canadian government and the women’s shelters in which she sought refuge. Carmen described examples of victimization in program sessions, such as her observations that the women’s shelter treated “Canadian” women and children better than Latin American and African women and children. As an example of this differential treatment, Carmen explained how she observed Canadian (I take this to mean ‘white,’ for reasons explained in Chapter 5) children receiving new toys and clothing while children like her son, whose father was from the Congo, received the leftover toys and clothes that other families did not want. She provided this example in a PtL program session and in our one-on-one interview. It was challenging to remain calm when she spoke about the various situations she had encountered in her four years in Canada, especially given that I saw her young child at the program sessions each week, and watched him hand her tissues when she started crying during our interview. As someone without expertise in domestic violence, I found it difficult to hear about the ways in which Carmen had repeatedly sought assistance from organizations
and shelters, the ways in which she felt they had failed her, and the moments she felt compelled to return to her husband.

Carmen’s precarious migrant status in Canada entailed living with an expired tourist visa and waiting for years to receive a decision on the child custody case she and her husband had in front of the family courts, which in turn would affect her refugee case. Her situation is revealing of the way in which the immigration processing system fails newcomers, and especially newcomer women with children. Carmen was ineligible to apply for a work permit while her refugee claimant case was being evaluated because the Canadian state has declared Mexico to be a “designated country of origin,” which they openly describe as “places in the world where it is less likely for a person to be persecuted […] yet many people from these places try to claim asylum in Canada, but are later found not to need protection. Too much time and too many resources are spent reviewing these unfounded claims” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2016a). In Carmen’s case, however, the prohibitive cost of childcare and her son’s behavioural issues — a result of the trauma he has witnessed, according to Carmen — would have prevented her from working even if she were legally eligible. Later in our interview, Carmen summarized the tremendous stress she experienced in the five-month period where I saw her in program sessions and at Neighbourhood House events:

I don’t have nothing to let me feel better, you know. All the time is a lot of frustration, in the extreme. Extremely, because it’s never finished. It’s three months, and [in] another three months you have [another] appointment, and another [in three months]… ooh. And in the end, in the end, the police will come in your house, they will take whatever they will have to take, they will put the people in the jail, and [at the end of the day] they [the police] will go to relax in their house. And what happened to you and to your family, they [the police] don’t care, you know. You have to go in the court, [where] the social worker will listen to you [but not care]. The prosecutor the same, the judge the same, the lawyer the same. And then it’s just to be paid for all, [they are just there] to make their salary, [they make their salary] because you are there. Not because they want to really care what is happening with your family, your problems.
Carmen’s feeling of frustration over the legal process is reasonable, considering she had been in the country for almost four years at the time of our interview and had been forced to navigate a complex bureaucratic system in a language in which she was not entirely comfortable. Carmen’s comments express her perception of how the police officers, social workers, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers who participate in the administration of these legal processes are only there “to make their salary,” and not because they “really care what is happening to your family.” Like Scott’s frustration with regard to the processing time associated with her application for permanent residency through the spousal sponsorship program, Carmen felt as though the officials responsible for assessing her eligibility to remain in Canada were indifferent to the trauma and suffering she had experienced as a result of the bureaucratic processes that left her in legal limbo about her future in Canada and whether she would be able to remain with her son.

By contrast, Gabriela and her family had arrived to Canada in October 2012 and had filed applications for PR status on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Gabriela understood that seeking PR status in Canada via the H&C process was a last-ditch attempt to avoid having to return to Peru with her family, and so she expressed her gratitude for all the help she and her family had so far received. My interview transcript with Gabriela is full of exclamations of “thanks god!” after descriptions of the food, blankets, and shelter that she, her husband, and their two children had received. In describing how she had left her favourite bed cover in Miami only to receive a very similar one after arriving in Vancouver, Gabriela told me how she was so moved to have received this gift:

    When I don’t have [a bed] cover [when we moved into our apartment in Vancouver], somebody go to my house and give me a [bed] cover. And [it] exactly was my favourite cover. And I have my [bed] cover and I say oh my God, I’m crying. And
[you might say] ‘what happened it’s only one cover?’ But you don’t know what this cover mean for me. It’s like [it’s] lost over there [in the United States] but you recover [it] in here, you know. It was, oh my God.

This story of the bed cover is only one of many experiences for which Gabriela expressed gratitude during our interview.

Gabriela’s appreciation may be related to her relief at not having had to go back to Peru as a result of landing in Canada. After their failed hearing to stay in the United States, as described at the beginning of this section, Gabriela and her family travelled to New York to see whether it would be possible for the family to seek refugee status across the border in Canada. A lawyer at the refugee organization in New York explained they were ineligible to apply for refugee status in Canada as a result of the Safe Third Country Agreement between the United States and Canada, which was instituted as part of the 2002 changes to the Canadian Immigration Act. Under the Safe Third Country Agreement, Canada and the United States recognize each other as ‘safe countries’ and therefore require refugee claimants to request refugee protection in the first country they arrive in; if the United States rejects an applicant’s claim, as they did in Gabriela’s case, the applicant is forbidden from applying for refugee status in Canada or vice versa (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015f).

According to Goldring et al. (2009, 249), the Safe Third Country Agreement has had a dramatic effect on the number of refugee claims deemed eligible for review by the Canadian state: “In 2003, 42,477 claims were finalized. The figures dipped to 40,408 in 2004, then plummeted to 27,212 in 2005, and 19,828 in 2006.” An average of 40-47% of these finalized were typically accepted or rejected, and 12% were abandoned or withdrawn (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009, 250). In contrast, there are no official statistics for the acceptance rate of H&C applications; Goldring et al. (2009, 252) put the number of
successful applications at 2.5% to 5% of all cases, while an immigration lawyer’s website – someone who has a vested interest in the business of H&C applicants – put the 2011 acceptance rate at 40% (R. Sharma 2012).

In the face of these dismal acceptance rates, applicants do their best to drum up support for their applications. Both Carmen and Gabriela were working with immigration lawyers to process their humanitarian class applications and I wrote letters of support for each of them, outlining their participation in the program and the wonderful contributions they had made to the Neighbourhood Houses and their communities through their civic engagement projects (which will be discussed in Chapter 5). As Carmen described above, her status as a refugee claimant provided her with access to social assistance, housing, and basic health care services, and I believe her fees for the refugee claimant process were being covered by Legal Aid. Gabriela, on the other hand, had likewise received material support from refugee-serving agencies and BC Housing, but she did not have a work permit or childminding support that would allow her to work. She also described her husband’s attempts to work in Canada, and yet it was not clear whether he had a work permit.

These financial struggles are especially relevant in light of the fact that Gabriela and her family have had to pay for the legal costs associated with completing the H&C application, which are $550 per adult and $150 per child under the age of 18. For Gabriela and her family, this means an out-of-pocket cost of at least $1,400 even before lawyers’ fees. Gabriela and her husband have been organizing fundraisers to cover these costs and I have been invited to several since completing my fieldwork. In lieu of attending, I sent Gabriela and her family $50. At the time of writing, I understand that Gabriela and her family are still
waiting for news about their H&C application and are still actively fundraising to cover the legal costs associated with their attempts to remain in Canada.

For Carmen, there has been good news: in May 2014, Carmen sent an email to Neeharika, the program facilitator, and me to let us know that she had been awarded custody of her son. In September 2015, a year after I wrote a letter in support of her refugee claimant application, Carmen emailed again to let us know that her hearing had been successful and she had been granted permanent resident status in Canada. Despite this good news, Carmen’s words of anger at the time of our interview nonetheless echo the frustrations of all those other women who have or will face a situation similar to hers:

For me, like, [I am] very mad and upset because I asked to be refugee but the consequence to ask [is] that if I am not accept[ed], it’s terrible because later I cannot be allowed to back in Canada. And I say, “Why?” you know, I don’t do nothing bad. But the consequences are very difficult, you know. And if you are rejected of all the things [refugee status and H&C grounds], it’s difficult later to ask for the visa for going USA…And I say why? I am the victim of the problem and, in the end, who has to pay the hard price is myself, you know, because I love to travel, I love... I don’t want to lose the things because I really want to do many things in my life, I did many things and I want to still do [many things]. And I don’t want that to be a problem for my daughters later, you know, “Your mom asked to be refugee and she was not accepted.” And to be difficult for them even if they want to be here later in their life, or if my son will be here or not, or if I want to come to see him. I don’t know… thinking of that kind of possibilities. The long term is, like, in the end, I was the victim but I am [the one] who is paying the high price, you know.

Carmen’s fears about the outcome of her refugee claim and how these possibilities might affect her children are based in a reality where the words written on a few pages of paper can dramatically affect one’s mobility across nation-state borders. As a woman who had initially entered Canada with an infant son intending to pursue permanent residency through the spousal sponsorship program, only to find herself unable to leave the country without her son and separated from her daughters in Mexico as a result of her relationship difficulties, Carmen’s feelings of being victimized by the bureaucratic institutions that governed her fate
are understandable. Moreover, these sentiments are linked to the classification struggles that some newcomers, particularly newcomers with precarious legal status in Canada, must negotiate as they seek a route toward permanent residency status.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the changing imperative of Canadian immigration policy since the mid-20th century and, in particular, the nation state’s growing interest in developing economic-focused, non-racially discriminatory immigration programs. This analysis of common programs by which Pathways to Leadership participants migrated to Canada reveals how immigration policy creates pathways or extended periods of precarious status for certain groups of women, and the deleterious consequences that occur as a result. Additionally, examples of how women have pursued permanent residency status in Canada through multiple immigration programs as a result of changing life circumstances reveal how individuals navigate class and classification struggles in their attempts to build lives for themselves and their families. The gap between the lives that participants expected to build in Canada and the pathways they found available to them upon arrival are illustrative of how dreams, love, and the law intersect during the process of immigration.

Discussing the nuances of these experiences is critical to understanding the institutional processes that produce this precarious status, its impacts on mental health and wellbeing, and the long-term economic and interpersonal consequences of the processing times associated with the different immigration programs reviewed in this chapter. As Goldring et al. (2009, 241) highlight, “it is important to recognize the systemic production of illegality as an ongoing process tied to elements of existing policies and/or their implementation, as this shifts responsibility for precarious status and illegality away from
individual failure to the terrain of policy and structural processes.” Precarious migrant status and the gradations of belonging created via policy and structural processes send a clear message to newcomers regarding the state and society’s perception of their place in the Canadian mosaic: without addressing these policy issues, it is much more difficult to achieve the social and civil elements of membership and belonging that are necessary for full membership and integration, as I discuss in Chapter 5. Prior to the discussion of integration and citizenship, however, is Chapter 4, wherein I explicate some of the challenges facing the PtL program participants and family members who migrated through the Federal Skilled Worker program or to pursue educational opportunities.
Chapter 4: “We didn’t come here to have less”: Work, Identity, and Access to English Language Settlement Services

4.1 The impact of immigration experiences on women’s identities

Heather: Can you get the same kind of job in Canada that you had in China?

Cynthia: No, I don't think I could. Even though I thought I could have [before I came], but I think I couldn't work here very well. I think because I was associate professor in China, but I couldn't have the same position here. So I couldn't study, be a teacher in here, [because] in Canada you need to have the teacher's certificate. So I don't think I could be a teacher here.

But maybe I can do some- if it's better for me- it would be better for me to find a job in IT company. That is my profession[al] area. I think also is easy for me to study.

Heather: So even though it's not the same kind of job that you had, it would be in your area? An IT job?

Cynthia: Yeah. IT job, I think. Do website, just make a little bit change, so I think in here [Vancouver or Canada there are], many, many small companies. They're just a one owner, one staff. So they need help doing some website or ecommerce. So I think if I could do this since it would be better. Also I was interested in this. [...] A certificate, I just think… I didn't find a job yet, so maybe it's better for me to study a [for] certificate, even my English is okay for certificate. Because from that [I] can learn some latest technique, because you know the IT area, it change[s] very fast. Even I [was] looking for some IT jobs they also require many, many things. I still have some things I didn’t know. So I think I should more study.

If I have a certificate maybe it's better for me to find a job, maybe. Not just I have such [and such] experience.

Heather: You have so many certificates.

Cynthia: I don't have.

Heather: But you have a Master's degree and a PhD… so many.


By the late 1970s, Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policies articulated non-discriminatory and economically oriented strategies for simultaneously increasing the
nation’s productivity relative to others and preserving internal harmony among diverse ethnic groups. Policies, however, are not enough. As explicitly outlined in the 1966 *White Paper* that informed the removal of overtly racist criteria and reoriented Canadian immigration policy to emphasize economically-oriented immigration programs for the recruitment of skilled newcomers, the support of licensing bodies and professional associations would be required for the successful integration of skilled newcomers:

In parenthesis, it must be recognized that the value to Canada of the skilled immigrant depends in part on how he [sic] is received. Some professional associations, trade unions and provincial licensing associations are not as ready as they might be to recognize qualifications earned in another country. Consequently some immigrants are not able to follow their own occupation on arrival here and must accept alternative employment at least until they are able to meet the applicable Canadian standards […] It must be hoped that this problem will be overcome as the leaders of public opinion come to recognize the economic advantage of more mobility, particularly among professional people and skilled workers, both nationally and internationally (Marchand 1966, 10).

Yet, a background paper prepared for Parliament in 2012 summarized ongoing labour market integration challenges for immigrants:

When asked about their initial experience in Canada, almost half of new immigrants surveyed in 2005 for the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada mentioned having difficulty finding an adequate job […] 50% cited not enough Canadian job experience, 37% cited foreign experience not being accepted, and 35% cited foreign qualifications not being accepted (Elgersma 2012, 1).

Collected by the Canadian government, this data is a demonstration of what newcomers to Canada experienced as a result of the failure to make the adjustments suggested in the 1966 *White Paper*. The academic literature (Augustine 2015; Bauder 2003; Guo 2015; Hawthorne 2007; Man 2004; Aydemir and Skuterud 2005) and the data I present in this chapter indicate that foreign credential recognition and English language training have been settlement and integration issues since the implementation of the points system and Canada’s shift toward economically-focused immigration policies.
This chapter explores the way in which state and organizational policies affect access to settlement programs, and especially English language programs, thereby shaping the labour market opportunities available to the newcomers who must navigate, make use of, and live within these regulations, and the broader identity implications of real or perceived exclusion from the labour market. The first section of this chapter provides insight into the employment, economic, and emotional difficulties endured by the women who immigrated to Canada with open work permits but who have faced difficult trajectories toward employment. These struggles are largely as a result of status inequality or misrecognition related to “institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value” that fail to recognize the education, skills, and employment experiences women accumulated outside of Canada (Fraser 2013, 193).

In the second section of the chapter, I draw from the literature on the relationship between employment and identity, and on the relationship between work, immigration and institutions, to examine how the costs of immigration go beyond economic and social losses, and how these costs are especially high for newcomers who experience challenging settlement processes despite possessing high volumes of human capital. I use the example of ‘the resume,’ a text-based document women produce by translating education and employment experience from abroad into a document to seek employment in the Canadian context, to open into a discussion of how limited access to settlement programs, and especially English language programs, creates a bottleneck in women’s entry to the labour market. This discussion also highlights how the effective translation of human capital is a
deeply cultural skill that is more complex than the conversion of human capital. Interview and fieldnote excerpts illustrate how women who do not find jobs, who face social isolation, and who have difficulty accessing settlement services – especially language training – encounter more difficulties establishing themselves in Canada.

Many of the program participants questioned their sense of self and overall self-worth as a result of alienating experiences. In the third section of the chapter, I explain how the participants came to understand that the challenges they faced in their settlement and integration – economic, social and otherwise – were not exceptionally difficult due to personal failure, but were instead the result of service gaps that systematically channel newcomers into particular social locations. Once the women participating in the PtL program realized that their struggles were not unique, they developed a sense of solidarity with their fellow program participants. This newfound sense of belonging empowered Pathways to Leadershp participants to advocate for change within their communities and seek alternative opportunities for achieving their own personal goals.

4.2 Settlement, in their own words: Skills, suffering, and separation

All of the women who participated in the PtL program were looking to improve their employability and labour market opportunities in Canada. Cynthia’s (China, 46) self-

23 While this section relies on the human capital literature to provide a sense of the economic returns on immigrants’ international education and work experience in comparison to economic returns on the education and work experience of native-born Canadians, I recognize that such a comparison implies that education and work experience can seamlessly cross borders. Such an implication is not my intention – instead, I aim to make use of the human capital data to demonstrate how ‘skilled’ immigrants are not seeing economic returns on the education and experience that allowed them to enter Canada and to argue that labour market exclusion is not purely a result of devalued international education and work experience. Human capital comparisons provide us with a data-rich starting point for untangling the complex social and economic explanations for why some groups of workers in the Canadian labour market are more handsomely compensated than others.
assessment of her Chinese education at the opening of this chapter exemplifies how the entry process is typically, but not always, followed by a subsequent reclassification of one’s personal and professional standing, wherein the very capital that permitted entry – a terminal degree, in Cynthia’s case – is seen as “useless” after arrival. Trina (China, age not disclosed but approximately in her early 40s), another PtL participant, explained it is common knowledge that economic success in Canada, and especially Vancouver, is not easy:

Heather: So why did you choose to come to Vancouver?
Trina: People always seem quite good. The weather is good. Everything is good. But not the economy.
Heather: What do you mean by that?
Trina: Like, [before immigration] we use a lot of internet, there's [a] forum [on the] internet, [where you can learn] what kind of situation you will face when you go to Canada, things like that. There's a lot of chatting, talking. Every kind of information, just come to us, and we just think coming to Vancouver probably is easier because it's closer to China, from here [compared] to Toronto.

That information about the accessibility of employment in Canada, which is how I interpret Trina’s comment about the economy and the situation that newcomers would face in Vancouver, was being shared online as early as 2001, the year Trina and her husband came to Canada, indicates that there is a variety of factors that nonetheless made immigration to Vancouver appealing for her family. Trina explained to me that her husband had wanted to immigrate and encouraged her to apply as the principal applicant with the belief they would each have more economic opportunity in Canada than in China.

Like Cynthia, Trina applied to the Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) program, an economic class immigration program, as the principal applicant. The only other participant in this study who arrived in Canada as a principal applicant on a FSW application was Shirley, a 37-year-old woman who was also from China. The other six program participants who
migrated via the FSW program – Amita (40, Bangladesh), Anna (33, Mexico), Jadira (33, Bangladesh), Nailea (55, Mexico), Nira (39, Mexico), and Patricia (37, Colombia) – were classified as dependent applicants.

It is notable that Cynthia, Trina, and Shirley were principal applicants on their families’ applications for the FSW program: As of 2001, fewer than one in four skilled workers were female as a result of immigration regulations that designate one individual as the principal applicant and skilled worker, while all others on the same application are classified as dependents (Iredale 2005, 156). The FSW program application guidelines advise applicants to select the principal applicant – the skilled worker – based on the individual on the application who has the highest total of points (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015k). Points are allocated on the basis of selection factors – English or French language skills, employment history, and educational achievements – that are more accessible to men than to women as a result of the traditional sexual division of labour (Man 2004, 138; Boyd 1995, 85). Such requirements set up a binary, where the occupations that women are traditionally more likely to perform, including domestic and clerical work, are evaluated as unskilled or less skilled as compared to occupations and opportunities that are traditionally more available to men (Boyd 1995, 85). In turn, these regulations tend to specifically relegate women to the status of dependents, devaluing spouses’ occupations and qualifications (Iredale 2005). Additionally, the designation of ‘dependent’ designates women as “not destined for the labour market” regardless of whether they plan to seek employment in Canada (Man 2004, 140).

As principal applicants, one would expect that Cynthia and Trina would have an easier time seeking work in Canada as compared to women without such designation. This
expectation has clearly not been the case for Cynthia, but Trina did secure employment in her field as a technician in a university-affiliated microbiology lab and worked there until the birth of her first child. Finding work was imperative for Trina, as she and her husband had come to Canada with limited savings and Trina’s husband did not speak English. So, in the time that Trina worked, her husband focused on learning English. Cynthia’s husband, however, remained in China and provided financial support for her and her teenaged daughter to build a life in Canada. When I asked about their separated living situation, Cynthia explained:

Cynthia: No, because if he [her husband] also come with me, and he couldn't find a job here, so we don't have enough income, I think the situation would be worse. [It would] be more stressful with whole family here. You don't have money, every day we [would] worry about that. Also if a man doesn't have a job, what can you do? Can’t be happy. The man, every day, they used to work every day, and now he come here, he don't have job, is he happy? If they aren’t happy, the whole family are[n’t] happy? I don't know. So, this was- I think this is worse, a big problem if they come here and don't have much money and also don't have job, so I know many family even, their whole family move here, but after a couple of years they always argue together and then separate. So this is not very good. So if they can work in China, just keep working, when he retired, just move.

Heather: And come here?

Cynthia: Yeah. Because we are not young. So I think it should be okay, even though [we will be] separated a couple of years, that's okay.

Cynthia and Trina’s explanations highlight several of the many considerations individuals, families, and extended kin networks consider prior to and immediately after they embark on their immigration journey.

Like Cynthia, Nailea (55, Mexico) and her husband were also living apart as a result of their (in)ability to find work in Canada. As English-speaking medical professionals with multiple graduate degrees, Nailea and her husband were perfect candidates for the Federal Skilled Worker program and planned to migrate to Canada so their two sons could attend
university in Vancouver. In our post-program meeting, Nailea described to me how she and her husband had scored the maximum number of points on their application for permanent residency through the FSW. While their education and work experiences had earned them most of those points, Nailea and her husband acknowledged that they would not be eligible to practice their profession in Vancouver as a result of Canadian licensing regulations that did not recognize their qualifications. They expected, however, to be able to work as researchers, consultants, professors, or in some other capacity related to their skills. The couple originally planned for Nailea to accompany their sons to Vancouver and for her husband to continue working in Mexico until Nailea secured stable employment, at which point he would join her and also seek employment in Canada.

At the time of the Pathways to Leadership program in 2013, Nailea had been in Vancouver for over three years and had been unable to find employment related to her extensive training, skills, and/or experience. Originally focused on finding employment as a researcher, Nailea remained jobless despite attending numerous employment programs, volunteering in different organizations to gain ‘Canadian experience,’ and networking as much as possible. Her sons are, however, currently succeeding at university; if it weren’t for their academic commitments in Canada, Nailea says she would have returned to her home country long ago. Nailea’s husband has remained in their home country in order to provide a stable income for Nailea and their sons in Canada, resulting in a prolonged separation that they originally did not anticipate. In our interview, Nailea summarized her immigration and integration process:

It is not so bad because he is working there and supporting us here, but we need to recognize that moving has a suffering process. It’s not easy and I have been here for three years. It’s better now that I have a job but my husband is not here. If we could help these people [immigrants] from the beginning, the suffering could be
diminished. Family separation is common now. We can’t both come because we can’t support ourselves here.

The full-time job Nailea had secured by the time that we met for our post-program meeting was a temporary summer position with a non-profit organization where she was responsible for facilitating art workshops for youth in parks throughout Vancouver. Although this program had her working with young people, something she is passionate about, this role was not related to her medical and technical knowledge or 20+ years of experience, and it did not come with the prestige or status achieved through her previous career. Moreover, it was so short that Nailea’s husband could not give up his high-paid work in Mexico and their separation and suffering continued.

While technically admitted to Canada through the spousal sponsorship program after marrying a Canadian man who had lived his entire adult life in Alicia’s (41, Chile) home country, both Alicia and her husband are highly educated and had worked in Chile as a psychologist and school teacher, respectively. Alicia described how her husband had spent hours on the phone speaking with an uncle in Vancouver about life in Canada prior to their decision to immigrate to Canada. While still in Chile, Alicia could not understand the conversations between her husband and his uncle due to her limited English skills, but after they arrived in Canada she grasped how these conversations had conveyed inaccurate information that set them up for drastic disappointment. As Alicia explains:

Of course, the uncle was talking about the Canada 20 years ago with salary ranges of 20 years ago. […] They have a very, very good economical situation, so all his world is from the eyes of a person that travels to Europe, and [he] has I don’t know how many properties, and he doesn’t really see the family or the family members ever. But Alex didn’t ever realize that. He felt that what he was saying was true.

Despite arriving in Vancouver with an open work permit (Alicia) and as a Canadian citizen (Alicia’s husband, Alex), life in Canada had been vastly different from what Alicia and her
husband had hoped for. Motivated to come to Canada so Alex could pursue a graduate degree that would enhance his career prospects, Alicia explained that on top of the misinformation they had received from his uncle, they arrived just as the economy was crashing in November 2008:

We started losing money because he couldn’t find a job. And all our expenses were growing and we started spending the money and he was going to ask for a student loan for the university. I said ‘Are you coming here to ask for [a] student loan, are you crazy?’ The government said, ‘No, you haven’t been in Canada so you are not eligible for [a] student loan.’ And I was trying to train myself for an interview, learning questions and memorizing the way to answer because I didn’t have enough English to build a sentence. So I memorized the sentences [laughs]. That’s crazy. I didn’t understand what people were talking [about], so I took two or three words and tried to imagine the sentence what they were talking. I was always lost in the conversations. I didn’t understand anything. But I said okay, we didn’t come here for my husband to have survival jobs. I mean, we had a life back home, you know, we were teaching, I had a car. I had a salary, we have friends, we have families, we had a life, you know, and we didn’t come here to have less; I mean, to be in bad conditions and in the basement. Basements don’t exist in my country. I suffer from asthma, but also I didn’t know in that moment about the light, lack of light [in the basement]. It affected me, it was terrible.

Like Nailea’s suffering from not being able to find a job and marital separation, Alicia recounts what was lost in her migration to Canada. Elsewhere in their interviews, Nailea and Alicia both highlight what they have gained by coming to Vancouver but the excerpts included here describe the upheaval they have faced in the settlement process. Not only have both women suffered tremendous economic losses through migration, they have also endured a significant social dislocation that has dramatically affected their perceptions of self-worth.

Nailea and Alicia’s experiences were unfortunately common among the women I interviewed. Nine out of the 31 program participants I interviewed came to Canada through the Federal Skilled Worker program and three of those nine were principal applicants. The remaining six were dependent applicants – in other words, their husband’s education and employment experiences garnered a higher number of points than the women’s education and
employment experiences. Nonetheless, almost all of these women were university educated and/or working as professionals in their home countries (see Appendix B). Most of the women participating in the employment and leadership skills program describe how they had anticipated a disruption in their monetary earnings and social status after immigration, but few expected that the process would take so long or be as difficult as it had been for them so far. As described in the previous chapter, the 12 family class applicants I spoke to reported a more diverse range of expectations but many of those women, like Alicia, also expressed disappointment, isolation, and a feeling of dependence on husbands who were not always adequately prepared for their wives’ struggles in adjusting to life in Canada. Only one participant, Patricia (37, Colombia) seemed well aware of the challenges she would face, and her pre-departure preparations helped her to have a smooth integration experience upon arrival in Canada.24

4.3 Employment after immigration and impacts on identity and self-worth


24 Patricia’s husband had planned to immigrate to Canada for quite a while and his permanent residency application was approved shortly after he and Patricia got married. Her husband secured employment in the information technology sector prior to leaving their home country and travelled to Canada to find them a place to live and to start work six weeks before Patricia joined him. His employment situation, knowledge of the Canadian system prior to arrival, and familiarity with government resources such as English as a Second Language programs helped to expedite Patricia’s settlement experience.
Immigrants are not the only “unrecognized learners” who would benefit from better and more comprehensive learning recognition but they are the largest group of individuals in Canada whose educational achievements are unrecognized or undervalued by employers, professional associations and/or licensing bodies (Bloom and Grant 2001, 2). Using 2006 census Canadian census data, Jeffrey Reitz, Josh Curtis, and Jennifer Elrick (2013, 17-18) put the aggregate annual earning loss for immigrants due to the undervaluation of human capital and resultant unemployment or underemployment at $11.37 billion. Magali Girard and Michael Smith (2013, 235) find that “immigrants educated in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean prove to be much less likely to enter a regulated occupation than either the native born [Canadian] or other immigrants.” Girard and Smith’s finding is especially relevant to this study, in that almost all of the PtL participants were from countries in Asia and Latin America.

Literature on the relationship between identity and immigration tends to focus on the relationship between ethnic or cultural identity and integration into immigrant-receiving countries. This emphasis is largely a result of the American concern with assimilation (Brubaker 2001). Few studies specifically examine how the loss of one’s work-related identity as a result of immigration affects an individual’s conception of self and self-value, particularly in national contexts that stress diversity and cultural autonomy, like Canada (Mandaglio and Maierà 2014; Moorhouse and Cunningham 2010 are exceptions focused on the European context and South Africa, respectively). The relationship between work and identity, and how the immigration process and institutions that one must navigate after arrival in Canada can affect the relationship between work and identity, has been relatively neglected in the academic literature.
Classical sociologists have described the relationship between an individual’s occupation, status, and the social relationships that he or she develops as a result of his or her location in the social structure. In his groundbreaking study of the relationship between work and social identity, Everett C. Hughes (1958, 42) states “a man’s [sic] work is one of the things by which he is judged, and certainly one of the more significant things by which he judges himself.” Hughes (1994, 43) concludes that “a man’s [sic] work is one of the more important parts of his social identity, of his self, indeed, of his fate, in the one life he has to live.” Echoing Hughes’ emphasis on the relationship between one’s work, identity, and social network, Robert Merton (1957, 110) states that family and occupation are among the most important memberships that individuals hold, and he advances the concept of “role-sets” to describe how individuals working in a particular occupation or from a specific family background hold a “complement of role-relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status.” Merton provides examples of teachers working in relationship to school board members, and the relationships that medical students have with other students, physicians, nurses, and medical technicians.

The concept of role-set highlights how a particular occupation puts people who perform the same or similar occupation in contact, and how a range of individuals in related occupations become connected. As Merton (1957, 111) states, “we depart from the simple idea […] that a single status in society involves, not a single role, but an array of associated roles, relating the status-occupant to diverse others.” Taken together, Hughes and Merton establish the importance of one’s occupation in establishing identity and in forming the relationships that develop as a result of this identity. These occupations may also be arranged hierarchically based on the differential distribution of economic and cultural forms of capital,
as argued by Bourdieu (1998, 6). In his discussion of the relational distribution of agents and
groups in social space, Bourdieu states that individuals are distributed according to the
overall volume of the economic and cultural capital they possess and the relative weight of
these two different kinds of capital (1998, 7). In turn, the volume and weight of capital
possessed corresponds to a particular habitus, a “generative and unifying principle which
retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle,
that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices” (Bourdieu 1998, 8).

The close relationship between occupation, identity, and social networks might be
more perceptible for the kinds of work that are socially deemed to be prestigious; for
example, Jack Haas and William Shaffir (1977, 77) describe how reactions of medical
students’ friends, family and other individuals “reinforce in the students’ minds the idea that
they are becoming very special people” from the moment they choose medicine as a career.
Not all occupations incite such extreme social or self-recognition, but most have at least
some impact on one’s self-identification. Kim Weeden and David Grusky (2005, 142) make
the argument for a “new class map” based on occupation, stating that “occupations are better-
suited than big classes for the new micro-level agenda of explaining individual-level
behaviors and attitudes.” Immigration, then, can disrupt one’s economic position as well as
one’s social position among peers and perceived social position by strangers as a result of
disrupting one’s occupational position. This loss of relationships and wider recognition can
greatly affect one’s identity and understandings of self-worth.

Drawing from Weber’s concept of ideal-types, Peter Berger (1964, 218-219) proposes
a three-part typology that ranks occupations in terms of those that provide a primary sense of
self-identification and self-commitment, employment that is neutral in terms of its impact on
identity and fulfillment, and work that threatens one’s dignity, is oppressive and not a source of self-identification. This typology can help us map the impact of occupational shifts on individuals who migrate and who are unable to secure employment in the same or similar field in which they were previously employed. Such shifts are evident among the research participants in the present study who could not obtain employment in the sectors they had intended to enter or had been trained for, as was the case for Nailea and for Alicia’s husband, who worked in survival jobs after his arrival in Canada. For the majority of the women who participated in this project, their ranking in Berger’s employment typology and their income were affected by incongruences between their educational qualifications, personal expectations, and post-arrival experiences.

When asked why they decided to immigrate, many research participants responded that they were seeking a ‘better life’; a ‘better life,’ however, was not always directly related to an improvement in their personal economic earnings. For example, several women defined a ‘better life’ as a life where they did not have to worry about the impact of pollution on their health or gun violence while driving down the street, and where they felt their children would have promising educational and employment trajectories. Pursuing a ‘better life’ requires bravery and resilience, an observation that Ronald Skeldon (2002, 71) acknowledges in his statement that “migrants from any community, and particularly the initial migrants, are among the most innovative and dynamic members of that community.” Skeldon’s assessment is in line with my perception of the women I interviewed, most of whom were well-educated individuals with strong employment prospects in their home countries. He builds on Michael Lipton’s (1980) work in explaining how migration always involves costs – transportation costs, the costs of establishing a new residence, and the costs of lost social networks – and
how, as a result, “the poorest of the poor cannot afford either risk or movement and the majority starves in situ” (Skeldon 2002, 49).

Program participants recognized that their education and experience would not transfer seamlessly into the Canadian context and they did not expect to achieve economic security or success overnight. Upon arrival, however, Nailea and other participants were frustrated by the gap between the government’s role in approving applicants for immigration and the labour market’s devaluation of the same credentials and work experiences that had earned them permanent residency status in the first place. As Jean Augustine (2015, 16) acknowledges, it is difficult to tease out the objective differences in skill and the undervaluation of immigrant education and experience, but research by Jeffrey Reitz (2001) reveals that the underutilization of immigrants’ skills in the Canadian workplace results in lower earning premiums for education and work experience as compared to earning premium enjoyed by native-born Canadians. Moreover, immigrants from outside of Europe earn “between 15 and 25% less than most of the European origin groups earn,” with the deficits being less for immigrant women than for immigrant men because native-born Canadian women – the referent group for immigrant women in the study – tend to earn less than native-born Canadian men (Reitz 2001, 367).

Reitz (2001) and Reitz et al. ’s (2013) ‘brain waste’ findings are in keeping with Harald Bauder’s (2003) observation that many immigrants to Canada “feel that they have been tricked” by “immigration policies and labor-market regulations that do not disclose to immigrants prior to their arrival in Canada that their human capital will be devaluated” (Bauder 2003). Excluding immigrants from occupational entry on the basis of “ideologies of credentialing” is demonstrative of Water and Water’s (2016, 7) argument that Weber
conceived of class inequality as a mechanism that emerged from the Gemeinschaft, whereby positively privileged groups seek to protect their advantaged occupational Stände, or status. The points system gives credit to educational achievements, credentials, and work experience that are not recognized in the Canadian labor market, which confuses and frustrates newcomers to Canada who expect to work in the same upper labor market segments they did in their home countries. Unfortunately, this class and status parity is rarely achieved (Bauder 2003). The Canadian situation points to the conceptual usefulness of distinguishing economic capital from cultural capital, and of unpacking the mechanism by which the “value-laden Gemeinschaft” defines ‘competence’ and how this value is used to allocate positive privileges such as honour, or negative privileges such as discrimination (Waters and Waters 2016, 11).

Cierra, a participant who had migrated from Latin America and held a Master’s degree in economics, suggested that the Canadian government publish an annual list of occupations in need of skilled workers. Cierra explained how this list would provide individuals who are applying for permanent residency from outside of Canada with the opportunity to prepare for the Canadian labour market. The Canadian government has recognized that there is greater need to provide immigrants with more information about life in Canada prior to departure from their home country. Pre-arrival services have been a growing area of interest and investment for the government and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2015b) announced a further $24 million in funding for pre-arrival services in April 2015. This funding will be awarded to agencies and organizations with the capacity to provide in-person and online services designed to familiarize newcomers with Canadian laws and culture, and to provide tools and supports for labour market integration. The growing
emphasis on pre-arrival services for incoming permanent residents, and the new Express Entry program that prioritizes the permanent residency applications of individuals who already have a job offer from a Canadian employer, demonstrate that Citizenship and Immigration is listening to feedback on how it can improve economic immigration streams. However, these changes are only relevant to new applicants and do not address the challenges facing immigrants who have already arrived in Canada. No participants in this study reported knowing about or accessing pre-arrival services prior to leaving their home countries.

Addressing the gap between government policy and the labour market is more complex than providing settlement services for newcomers. Professional associations and regulatory bodies, such as those that license doctors and engineers in Canada, play a role in excluding immigrants from the upper segments of the labour market (Girard and Bauder 2007). While there have been some improvements to the assessment of foreign credentials, the changes have been slow and some have been inadequate; Shibao Guo (2010, 161) describes this inaction as the “devaluation and denigration of immigrants’ prior learning and work experience.” Further, Guo (2010, 162) argues that Prior Learning Assessments and other mechanisms for evaluating international education “are deployed as technologies of power and a system of governing in discounting and devaluing immigrants’ prior learning and work experience, reducing lifelong learning to a system of exclusion and a mode of social control.” Ensuring that professionals have skills and experience commensurate with Canadian training is inarguably critical. However, it is important to examine the values that inform these evaluation methods, particularly how these evaluation methods conflate “difference” with “deficiency” and how the professional knowledge of immigrants,
particularly those from the Global South, comes to be constructed as incompatible, inferior, and invalid.

Harald Bauder (2003, 708) reports that his interviewees believe that “the marginalization of immigrants in the Canadian labor market is a systematic effort to reserve the upper segments of the labor market for Canadian-born workers.” This argument, which implies a structural form of race-based discrimination through government policies and licensing bodies, echoes Edna Bonacich’s (1972) description of ethnic antagonism. In 2005, immigrant women earned only $0.53 for each dollar earned by Canadian-born men (Guo 2010); while there is no data specifying the races or ethnicities of the Canadian-born men in these statistics, the category of “immigrant woman” is a manifestly racialized one (Ng 1996). As Bonacich (1972, 553) argues, “if the labour market is split ethnically, the class antagonism takes the form of ethnic antagonism” and the higher-paid groups in the labour market aim to protect their privilege by instituting or maintaining policies, or organizing to ensure reduced competition. The devaluation of professional education and experience occur at least in part as a result of this antagonism, which cannot be traced back to particular individuals but to structural conditions that invite and welcome skilled immigrants to Canada, only to fall short of providing them with the pathways to meaningful and well-compensated work, as experienced by Nailea and Alicia. Examples of useful pathways include settlement services that provide alternative career options for internationally trained professionals and/or English language training for the workplace.

Why are such services lacking? Frances Henry and Carol Tator (1994, 7) propose the concept of “democratic racism” to describe Canadians’ conflict between democratic values of equality, justice and freedom, and “attitudes and behaviours that include negative feelings
about minority groups and the potential for differential treatment or discrimination against them.” Democratic racism describes a lack of public support for race-based state interventions that would challenge the structures currently protecting the interests of the privileged. In turn, democratic racism includes the persistence of licensing regulations and requirements that continue to reproduce the status quo and contribute to immigrant deskillling and downward mobility (Guo 2010; Henry and Tator 1994).

Henry and Tator (1994, 2) note that the “most commonly accepted concept of racism is one that refers to the individual expression of overt feelings.” Yet, individuals do not control government policies and licensing procedures; the documents that mediate these processes circulate as texts authored by associations or agencies, reflective of ideologies that are reproduced by and through institutional contexts. These simple facts resonate in the history of sociology. In his preface to the 1895 second edition of The Rules of the Sociological Method, Emile Durkheim (1982, 45) defines sociology “as the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning,” and he defines “institution” as “all the beliefs and modes of behavior instituted by the collectivity.” Durkheim’s definition bears a similarity to Weber’s argument that the collective values of the Gemeinschaft pre-exist the supposedly value-neutral context of the Gesellschaft, and these values inform the functioning of institutions and, accordingly, the distribution of life chances and Stande (status).

According to Durkheim (1982, 52), it is through interaction that individuals bring forth “certain modes of action and certain ways of judging which are independent of the particular individual will,” and individuals enact these institutionalized modes of action and ways of judging which are external to the individual and “invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him.” As Durkheim conceptualizes them, institutions are
both a reflection of shared norms and values and the means by which these norms are enforced in a society.

Dorothy Smith (1987, 3) uses the term “ruling” to identify this “complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial management, professional organizations, and educational institutions as well as the discourses in texts that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power.” Smith’s conceptualization of “ruling” is distinctive in that it brings together the subjective experience and textual mediation of these institutional practices of power. Accordingly, Smith (1987, 3-4) defines the “relations of ruling” as “a specific interrelation between the dynamic advance of the distinctive forms of organizing and ruling in contemporary capitalist society and the patriarchal forms of our contemporary experience” that make the everyday dynamics of the gendered division of labour and organization of the ruling apparatus invisible. While Durkheim’s (1982) definition of “institution” is concerned with describing the new structures that arose to bring order to industrializing and rapidly growing cities, Smith (1987) is writing a century later and from a standpoint that is critical of classical sociology’s emphasis on abstraction.

Smith (1987, 8, 25) investigates how the textually mediated world, organized through and by individual actors in institutions, has consciously and systematically excluded and silenced women in an effort to make possible a sociology that is capable of “look[ing] at any or all aspects of a society from where we are actually located, embodied, in the local historicity and particularities of our lived worlds.” The emphasis on the ‘standpoint’ of experience allows for the exploration of the everyday lived actualities of women, a group that has historically been absent from discourse and “subordinate to the ruling apparatus.” These arguments are useful in helping to map the relationship between women’s everyday
actualities and the translocal, text-based orders that coordinate the institutional regimes within which we all live, as demonstrated in the following discussion of what Pathways to Leadership program participants experienced writing resumes in the Canadian context.

4.4 Lost in translation: Writing resumes

Since program participants were largely professionals in their home countries, it is not surprising that almost all of the women reported a sense of personal failure or inadequacy as a result of being out of the workforce and unsure of their employment prospects. Many women related this sense of feeling unprepared for the Canadian labour market to inadequate English language skills relative to other working adults, and especially relative to native-born speakers. When Neeharika, the Pathways the Leadership program facilitator, asked the women attending a program session Crystal Pond if their self-esteem had decreased since migrating to Canada, at least six of the ten participants at the table raised their hands. With a sense of deep sadness, Anna (33, Mexico) looked at the other women in the group and said “when I look at my resume, I can’t believe that it’s me who did those things.” Nikki (48, Philippines) agreed: “I don’t have anything for my resume. I haven’t done anything useful here, and things from back there don’t count.” Anna and Nikki’s statements about not recognizing their accomplishments or feeling as though their accomplishments are ‘useless,’ which recall Cynthia’s (46, China) description of her education at the beginning of the chapter, speaks volumes about participants’ sense of self-worth after immigration and perceptions of how and where they might join in the Canadian workplace.

Producing a resume, a text-based document that communicates educational achievements, work experience, skills, and language abilities, is one of the first tasks that job-seeking newcomers must accomplish after arrival in Canada. Resume writing is therefore
a major focus of most settlement programs. In writing a resume, a job applicant intends to translate and summarize her education and experience into a recognizable format so that potential employers can evaluate whether she is a fit for their workplace. Women who have accumulated a range of education and work experience abroad must determine whether these activities should be included on a Canadian resume. Women found this task daunting and required a great deal of support. Not surprisingly, women who attended the program information sessions held at each Neighbourhood House prior to the start of each cycle of the program repeatedly asked Neeharika whether the program would focus on resume writing even if they had participated in other employment programs. Each time, Neeharika responded with some version of the following:

We will talk about resumes a bit, but focus more on other ways to find jobs and develop networks because there are a lot of employment programs that offer those types of skill building. This program will focus more on individual planning, skills assessment, and developing career goals.

In keeping with the program’s learner-driven philosophy, however, Neeharika discussed preparing, formatting, and submitting resumes numerous times during sessions at each of the two Neighbourhood Houses, and I met one-on-one with women to help them revise their resumes and prepare job applications.

These appointments were separate from my in-depth qualitative interviews and they all took place at the Neighbourhood Houses after the PtL program sessions with the exception of one: Isa (31, Peru) and I met at a Starbucks coffee shop one evening to discuss her resume and application for a paid employment skills program that focused on foreign credential recognition, which she wanted to pursue in order to work as an engineer in Canada. These interventions were both a way of demonstrating reciprocity to the women for allowing me to attend and observe their experiences in the PtL program and of gaining
greater insight into the decisions research participants were making when deciding how and what to list on a Canadian resume. As a native English speaker born and raised in Canada with some experience applying for jobs, I recognized that I held cultural capital that I could mobilize to help program participants improve their resumes, and in turn, their chances of being invited for a job interview. While a specific example of a resume-focused one-on-one session is presented later in this section, it is also worth noting that interventions about how women might present volunteer and other experiences in the context of a search for paid employment also occurred during my qualitative interviews, in casual conversations before or after program sessions, and over email.

An interesting example of one such intervention occurred after Nikki described her involvement and leadership in a number of community initiatives during our in-depth qualitative interview. Impressively, she told me she has helped organize a monthly meeting with Live-In Caregivers and their employers at a local community centre for the past 11 years. These monthly meetings are intended to be a forum where employers and nannies can discuss and resolve tensions in their employment relationship before these situations become out-of-control. As Nikki describes this process,

I represent the nanny side of it. Because like I said, this nanny group that I belong to, they don't like to speak for fear that the employer might say something [and the nanny will lose the contract]. So I ask them, ‘What do you want me to say? What do you want to know? What do you want to tell?’ So that's my role.

After Nikki explained the pivotal role that she plays in supporting Live-In Caregivers, I stated that these sorts of experiences would be useful to include on her resume. I was aware that she planned to schedule a meeting with a Neighbourhood House staff member to start building a resume after taking more than a decade out of the paid workforce to raise her children. While Nikki did not vocalize any hesitation about her linguistic skills, the exchange
below demonstrates how she does not perceive her efforts in the community to be work, and therefore not worthy of being included on a resume:

Heather: See, you have to tell [Neighbourhood House staff member] about all these different things when you make the resume. You have to tell her about all the community involvement that you've been doing.

Nikki: You cannot put [these things] on a resume, can you?

Heather: Yeah, [it’s] volunteer experience.

Nikki: Right.

Heather: Yeah, volunteer and committee experience, that's what you put it as.

Nikki: Oh dear, okay.

Heather: Yeah, that's a huge amount of experience.

Nikki: Yeah, I guess.

Heather: And to navigate those kinds of delicate situations, I think, too, takes a lot of different skills. To navigate meetings between employers and their nannies, I think, takes a lot of different skills.

Nikki: You think so?

Heather: Yeah, right? Think about all of those delicate situations.

Nikki: True, that's true.

Heather: And being in the PAC [Parent Advisory Committee] and the school board stuff that you were doing with your kids’ school, those are all skills.

Nikki: Okay.

Heather: You need to put that on your resume.

Nikki: Oh, my goodness, isn't that boasting?

Heather: No, it's called ‘the truth.’

Nikki: What!? In the PAC, so what? Okay skills, those are called ‘skills’?

Heather: That's committee experience.
Nikki: It's like – you're boasting just because you were in the PAC?
Heather: You're not boasting. You're saying these are your skills.
Nikki: Okay, okay.
Heather: Do you think you get skills doing those kinds of things?
Nikki: Well, those are considered skills? I don't know. I always think "skills" as your ability to do your work.
Heather: I'm sure on the PAC you did lots of work. Did you organize events?
Nikki: We organized fundraising.
Heather: How much money did you raise?
Nikki: Ten grand.
Heather: That's work. That's a lot of money.
Nikki: And we are going to do the second half this November. You better come!

Nikki’s perspective is a dramatic example of a program participant who did not recognize the transferable skills that could be accumulated through volunteer work and my use of italics throughout the interview excerpt above is meant to highlight specific moments where she used a mocking tone of voice to devalue her experiences.

While other participants were familiar with the discourse that a lack of Canadian employment experience could be remedied through volunteer work and that volunteer work in Canada is valuable experience to include on a resume, Nikki’s understanding is a paradigmatic example of the uphill battle that some women face in recognizing the value of their own education and experiences. My conversation with Nikki also highlights her incredulity at the suggestion that unpaid experiences or activities that could fall under what it means to fulfill the role of a good mother could be used on a resume. In our conversation, I was drawing specifically on Smith’s (2005, 151) “generous” concept of work, which she
defines as “anything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions, and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about.” As my conversation with Nikki’s illustrates and Smith (2005, 151–152) rightly describes, “there are problems with using the concept of work, in large part because it’s treated as being equivalent to paid employment […] [But] It means much more than what is done on the job.” If Nikki’s experiences were less gendered, would she still see them as unskilled and not worth mentioning? As Smith (2005, 152) notes, a group called ‘Wages for Housework’ argued “that the capitalist economy was sustained by this underground of [housewives’] unpaid and invisible work that people don’t recognize as work nor as a contribution to the economy.” Without this internal recognition of her own ‘diverse skillset,’ the term I would use to summarize the knowledge and experiences she has accumulated in her decade of organizing negotiations between nannies and employers and on the Parent Advisory Committee, it is unlikely that Nikki will pursue the conventional path of submitting a resume in search of paid employment. She had yet to prepare a resume when I last spoke to her at a reunion for PtL participants in May 2015.

With the exception of a resume prepared by Annie (40, China), a PtL participant who had been in Canada since she was ten years old, the resumes that I reviewed in one-on-one appointments outside of program sessions and the in-depth interviews were not ready to be submitted to employers. Like Nikki’s perspective that her experiences in the domestic and gendered context of mothering work could not be bridged to the paid workforce, the difficulties that participants faced in preparing resumes were reflective of larger challenges of importing employment and educational experiences from one national context to another, with the additional obstacle of translating these into English. The exercise of making one’s
experience accountable and presentable in an English, text-based document highlighted other areas where participants were experiencing frustration related to the relationship between their language skills and interactions with institutions. The fieldnote excerpts below illustrate the way in which a participant’s challenge preparing a resume and cover letter exposed a disjuncture between her expectations for employment in Canada and her ability to meet these expectations stemming from what she perceived to be her limited language skills:

Minseo had originally wanted feedback on her resume, but opened our time together with questions about online courses to prepare for the English 12 exam, since this is a requirement for most [local community college] programs and other training programs. Minseo’s comment that her children’s Grade 6 English homework is challenging to her provided me with an indication of her overall language abilities. Recognizing that Minseo had been the participant in today’s session who said that most people in the room didn’t want entry-level jobs, I could see how her expectations of her labor market position do not fit with her language abilities. When we finally got around to discussing her resume, I could see that my comments were being taken with great defensiveness and so I told her that I was only providing suggestions and the final decisions were up to her. Some of my suggestions included things like spelling out the words “East 8th” and “Microsoft,” and coming up with descriptions of skills that went together – e.g. teamwork and fast-paced environments. It took us about 45 minutes to go over her one-page resume, with me explaining why consistency in spacing and italics/bold/underline is important. I got the sense that Minseo was disappointed with my suggested corrections (due to defensiveness) but she really wanted the feedback (she was eager to build a resume that fit what employers expect to receive).

Minseo (41, South Korea) was the first PtL program participant I helped with a resume and cover letter. I felt quite uncomfortable during the interaction: I was torn between a desire to help her find employment and guilt about perpetuating colonial violence by implicitly enforcing English language expectations. By helping Minseo adjust her resume, how was I implicated in the reproduction of the existing social structure and linguistic discrimination? Simultaneously, I wondered whether my guilt was misplaced and whether most people have difficulties putting together a resume and whether resume tips would therefore be useful to most people, newcomers or not. I knew from discussions during program sessions and one-
on-one conversations before and after program sessions that Minseo and her family were desperate for income and so I felt compelled to help her turn her resume into something that would at least help her get a call for an interview. Yet, I was fully aware of how I was perpetuating and upholding language expectations that ought to be challenged. These questions are complex and I never quite resolved them even as I continued to help PtL participants with their resumes.

In addition to resumes, I also provided feedback on cover letters. As my fieldnotes of my interaction with Minseo go on to describe, we discussed her cover letter after we discussed her resume:

After working on the resume we turned to Minseo’s cover letter. In simple terms, it was incoherent. Working with the basic structure that Minseo had drafted, I re-wrote some of the sentences so that they made sense using conventional grammar, contained no spelling mistakes, and had flow (previously, it listed her responsibilities as an administrative assistant then said, “therefore, I am interested in applying for the position Inventory Taker...”). Minseo again became frustrated and remarked how everything requires academic English or English writing skills. She said that this is why she needs a tutor for her kids, because she can’t help them with their homework and she talked about how the ESL teacher is always sick so there is a substitute teacher who ‘pretends’ to teach but the kids’ classes are cancelled or they don’t learn anything. By this time, I had already been at the Neighbourhood House for an extra hour and I really wanted to go home – I was hungry (no lunch) and tired from the morning, and it seemed as though Minseo wanted something from me that I was not equipped to provide. In sum, it seemed as if she was also tired and hungry!

At this point, she got up, telling me that she needed to use the bathroom and call her kids. When she was on the phone I could tell she was speaking to her husband and not her kids. Then, she came back to the table. I had quickly finished marking up her cover letter while she was on the phone, and so I briefly reviewed my suggestions with her. I told her to call the YMCA about tutoring, and to ask her son’s school if they have a peer-tutoring program in place. Our conversation finished with Minseo telling me how it isn’t so easy for her to look up phone numbers or to find information on the Internet. The whole experience left me with a funny taste in my mouth.

My interaction with Minseo highlights her level of frustration with her English language skills and the necessity of these skills for doing even the most basic of tasks. Like many of
the participants profiled in Chapter 3, Minseo and her family had precarious legal status at the time of the PtL program in that they were awaiting the approval of their application for permanent residency and so they did not have access to English language training or other settlement services. Minseo and her husband had left a very comfortable life in South Korea: they wanted to come to Canada because they wished to work less and spend more time with their children, and they entered Canada through the Business Investor program by purchasing a resort in rural British Columbia. Despite their best efforts, however, they could not make the resort profitable and so they ended up leaving it to come to Vancouver. I am not sure how Minseo and her husband were supporting their family while living in Vancouver, but I know they were both eagerly seeking employment.

The fieldnote excerpts above demonstrate Minseo’s perception that her level of English is both preventing her from obtaining a non-survival job and affecting her ability to assist and advocate for her children. Yet, she could not access the formal training opportunities that she believed would improve her situation and, as a result, her self-worth as a productive member of society and as a good mother was being challenged, highlighting the relationship between work and identity I outlined earlier in the chapter. I could empathize with how difficult it must be to learn a new language and to support two school-aged children struggling with the same thing, but at the same time I was not sure how to best support her and I was frustrated by an interaction that left me feeling as if I hadn’t provided Minseo with enough guidance.

Like Minseo, Cierra (37, Mexico) was also awaiting approval of her application for permanent residency status at the time of the Pathways to Leadership program. Throughout
the program Cierra repeatedly expressed the need to improve her English language skills in order to achieve her career goals, and in our post-program interview, she told me:

My English is good, but to be honest, it’s not very, very, very good level. I need to do English, for example, for my career if I am going to teach mathematics, teach physics, or find some work as a financial advisor or something. My English is not enough. I have to learn more English, and practice speaking and writing. I want to apply for these [English as a Second Language] programs [at a University] but I have to get my permanent residency status first. English is the first step to modifying my life.

Cierra and her husband held graduate degrees from Mexico and enjoyed a good standard of living there but they wished to start a family and wanted to raise their children somewhere they felt would be safe and so they came to Canada on tourist visas in 2006. Despite having Master’s degrees, Cierra and her husband worked in the kitchen of a Mexican restaurant for six years. After several failed attempts at applying for permanent residency through other economic class programs, their employer ultimately sponsored them through the Provincial Nominee Program. While they did secure PR status in late 2013, Cierra and her husband incurred tremendous economic, social, and psychological costs in the process: Because their previous PR application been rejected, they were forced to pack up their lives in Canada and return to Mexico with their infant, Canadian-born daughter, to apply for the Provincial Nominee Program from outside the country.

Due to their precarious status as unapproved permanent resident applicants, Cierra and her husband were both unable to access English language training or any form of support to facilitate a sense a belonging and integration into Canada during the six years they worked at the restaurant. Their work permits strictly forbade access to any kind of education or training in Canada, including English language training. Having sacrificed so much to be eligible even to apply for the Provincial Nominee Program, Cierra and her husband chose to abide by the regulation of not pursing English language training, knowing full-well that their
limited English language skills would limit their employment choices if and when they received open work permits. Since receiving PR status, Cierra has been employed as a home visitor in the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters program, working with children and their mothers to help prepare the children for school and involve parents in their education. In spite of these struggles and having to give up her profession as a financial advisor, Cierra declared on multiple occasions that she loved Canada and is so grateful to have the opportunity to work and contribute to Canadian society. While not yet able to pursue English classes, Cierra does hope to do so when her youngest child is slightly older.

The perception that one is no longer capable or that accomplishments in one’s home country are worthless are the result of experiencing deskilling and credential devaluation over the course of the immigration process. These effects are related to text-mediated translocal processes: the Canadian government approves immigration applications based on achievements obtained in one’s home country, but the lack of recognition or reward for these achievements upon arrival in Canada affects newcomers’ perceptions of their skills and abilities and sets up real barriers to labour market participation and a sense of belonging in Canada. While PtL program participants were undoubtedly frustrated with the practical aspect of producing a textual document in their non-native language, the resume is also a symbolic document where one puts forth their experiences and ambitions for assessment relative to other jobseekers. It is therefore not surprising that PtL program participants were constantly seeking ways to ‘improve’ their resumes.

Producing a resume highlighted the institutional barriers that program participants had either not anticipated or had underestimated. The labour market is non-amenable to credentials or experience gained abroad, and research shows that Canadian employers tend to
discriminate – consciously or unconsciously – against individuals with common Chinese, Indian, Pakistani or Greek names (Oreopoulos 2011). In an empirical experiment of 13,000 resumes with varying names (e.g. resumes with ethnic-sounding and non-ethnic sounding first and last names, and resumes with non-ethnic sounding first names and ethnic sounding last names), Canadian or internationally-obtained credentials and Canadian or international work experiences, Philip Oreopoulous (2011, 168) found that employer contact falls from 15.7% to 11.3% when switching only the first and last names on the resume from a common English name to a more ethnic-sounding name. When asked why they would choose an applicant with an English-sounding name over an applicant with a non-English sounding name, recruiters stated that they often refer to the name on the resume “as a signal that an applicant lacks critical language skills for the job” (Oreopoulos 2011, 168). In an email, one recruiter offered the following explanation of why identical resumes with English and foreign names might be evaluated differently: “Name suggests candidate is not fluent in English, is the candidate eligible to work in Canada, will the candidate need extensive time off to return home to visit family/friends, will the employer be required to provide additional time off in recognition of cultural holidays” (Oreopoulos 2011, 166).

As Oreopolous’ (2011) study demonstrates, resumes may be read less as an evaluation of relevant education and experience, and more as an evaluation of an applicant’s ethnic background and assumed cultural fit with an organization. This biased form of screening job applicants highlights the way in which cultural capital is embodied (Bourdieu 1986, 47) and therefore racialized for some newcomer women as they seek employment in Canada. This discrimination of who belongs in which jobs and why is made possible and excused by the resume, a text document that masquerades as a transparent genre for
representing one’s suitability for employment. For participants, then, the preparation and distribution of resumes is not only a barrier in terms of the actual work, time, and skills involved in preparing the document. It is also a test of how they can present themselves in a way that mitigates employers and recruiters’ assumptions.

4.5 The importance of English language training for belonging and employment

The issue of resume-writing and translating experiences and skills into English highlights the relationship between English proficiency and employment opportunities. Louisa (46, Philippines), a PtL program participant who was simultaneously taking English as Second Language classes as a full-time student at a local community college, told me during our interview “English is very essential, because proficiency in English is essential to everybody.” Louisa had come to Canada through the Live-In Caregiver program 17 years ago but hadn’t had the opportunity to improve her English skills for two reasons: 1) her initial work visa restricted her from participating in any sort of language or education training, and 2) by the time she obtained PR status and was able to sponsor her husband in order to join her in Canada, her biological clock was ticking and so she prioritized having a family and seeking paid work over the decision to improve her English. Like Minseo and Cierra, however, Louisa understood the importance of English for employment, and she was committed to improving her English so that she could obtain better-paid work.

Louisa, Minseo and Cierra’s perceptions of the relationship between English and employment are in line with quantitative research findings that demonstrate the importance of English language proficiency for immigrants’ economic achievement in Canada. Abdurrahman Aydemir and Mikal Skuterud (2005, 643) indicate that one-third of the deterioration in entry earnings for both women and men who arrived in Canada between
1965 and 1999 is related to language abilities and region of origin. In other words, changing migration patterns since the 1960s have resulted in fewer immigrants arriving to Canada from countries with English or French as their mother tongue. This shift in country of origin was evident among the women who participated in the employment program where I conducted my research (see Appendix B).

In this light, some of the recruiters’ concerns about language and ‘cultural fit,’ as reported by Oreopolous (2011), are legitimate. At least two of my research participants described coming from home countries where they themselves taught English in local school or colleges, and reported that they still struggled with the way English is spoken in Vancouver, and twelve research participants described arriving in Canada with very little or limited English language skills. Despite knowledge of these migration trends and their implications for immigrants’ successful economic and social integration, formal state-funded opportunities for newcomers to develop English language proficiency are dwindling and becoming more restricted; while this section focuses specifically on English language training courses, there are suspicions circulating in community organizations that the Canadian government’s emphasis on approving immigration applications from individuals with strong English skills is also having an impact on the allocation of settlement service funding in general. As one administrator told me:

So the emphasis on the immigration stream right now is people that are employable, [with] higher levels of English. I'm sure there are other reasons, but I'm going to suggest that one of the reasons that [an organization that works with marginalized immigrant women] maybe did not get funding in this round is because they have traditionally worked with lower levels of English in women who are more vulnerable, and so on.

In addition to changing policies about who is admitted into Canada, the Conservative government restricted the services available to newcomers who had already landed in
Canada, thereby making it more difficult for these individuals to obtain permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship. For example, a policy that came into effect in 2014 required permanent residents between the ages of 14 and 64 (previously 18 to 54) to meet tougher language requirements for citizenship than they would have in the past, and they were no longer allowed to access the services of an interpreter for the knowledge component of the exam (Burkholder and Filion 2014).

These policy changes, some of which have been rolled back or will be rolled back by the newly-elected Liberal government, are reflective of the vulnerability and challenges facing highly educated and/or skilled immigrants, especially those who were admitted specifically because of their human capital and projected contributions to the Canadian economy. Those newcomers who find it difficult to improve their language skills in a timely and affordable manner may be channeled into precarious low-wage work (Chun and Cheong 2011; G. Creese and Wiebe 2012; Warman, Sweetman, and Goldmann 2015).

Participants in my study reported how their limited English language proficiency added an additional challenge to their social and economic integration into Canadian society. Without social and economic integration, it is difficult to imagine how participants could become politically integrated and develop a full sense of belonging and citizenship in Canada. While the PtL program was focused on career planning, Neeharika, the facilitator, also emphasized the development of career-relevant English language skills through exercises that provided participants with the opportunity to practice public speaking, conduct informational interviews, research local education and training programs, identify the employment-relevant skills they already possessed, and translate these skills into descriptions Canadian employers recognize and value. Taken together, these activities – including the one
described below – were intended to support PtL program participants’ real and perceived economic, social, cultural, and political integration.

4.6 Employment English: An exercise in translating skills and rebuilding confidence

Opportunities to develop career-relevant English language skills were especially valuable for the PtL participants who had learned English in their home countries but were unfamiliar with how the language operates differently in the context of Canadian culture, and particularly the culture of Canadian workplaces. Exercises like the one displayed in Figure 4-1 were not only intended to help participants build English resumes, but also to help the women rebuild their sense of self-worth by using English to describe their previous accomplishments in front of a group of peers. In the next few paragraphs, I will describe this exercise and how we came to generate the words presented in Figure 4-1.

To introduce the exercise, Neeharika asked the women to describe an experience they felt good about, work-related or otherwise. She went on to explain how the participants would pair up, and one participant would interview the other participant about her experience at the front of the room while I took notes on the whiteboard that summarized their conversation. Figure 4-1 presents the whiteboard notes I took while observing the interview between Carmen (39, Mexico) and Dorothy (age and country of birth unknown; see Chapter 2), where Carmen was describing a previous employment experience to Dorothy. As described in Chapter 3, Carmen had arrived in Canada intending to be sponsored as the spouse of her Canadian partner and had filed for refugee-claimant status after separating from her spouse. Carmen’s English language skills were limited and her young son spoke only Spanish with a smattering of French (the family had originally arrived in Montreal, and subsequently travelled to Vancouver by bus). Participation in the program and the free child-
minding offered Carmen and her son an opportunity to develop English language skills in a supportive environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>something you’re good at or have</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- good listener</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- negotiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>- friendly &amp; polite, respectful</td>
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<tr>
<td>- relational: want people to be happy</td>
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<tr>
<th>Project stages</th>
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<tr>
<td>- inception</td>
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<tr>
<td>- planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- execution</td>
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<td>(many details…)</td>
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<td>- evaluation</td>
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<td>- systematization</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>a strength you develop professionally becomes a skill</th>
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<tr>
<td>- organized - team player</td>
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<tr>
<td>- detail-oriented - knowledgeable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- intervention skills - delegator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- diverse communication skills: technology and interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- management skills</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- budget management skills</td>
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<td>- entrepreneurial skills</td>
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<tr>
<th>Abilities</th>
<th>“able to do”</th>
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<tr>
<td>- can be developed or learned</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- we all have many abilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- stay calm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- resolve conflict/crisis resolution</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- solve problems</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- ability to connect people</td>
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Figure 4-1 Diagram of actual words written on the whiteboard during a program exercise at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House

Following Neeharika’s instructions for the exercise, Dorothy asked Carmen to describe a previous employment experience that she was particularly proud about and Carmen told Neeharika, myself, and the group of PtL participants about how she had organized a conference about new technology for 1,000 people in Mexico. Carmen explained that she was personally responsible for orienting people to the hotel, organizing the shuttles to and from the airport, and showing people the different amenities available in the different hotels and three restaurants where they could eat. As my fieldnotes describe:

*In between Dorothy’s comments about how Carmen should pronounce words and phrase her experiences, Carmen managed to communicate to us how she had spent*
time with the conference planners for a year before the actual meeting. She described how she had toured them around town to convince them to hold their meeting there, and that she additionally had to plan social events and outings for the wives. These social events and outings include trips to the rodeo (which Carmen had pronounced as ‘ro-DAY-o, and Dorothy corrected with ‘ro-DE-o’), historical monuments, the beach near the hotels, as well as familiarizing the wives with other amenities that might be of interest to them during their visit. Isa interjected “and shopping trips!” Another participant said, “so you were really planning two events – a technology meeting and social for wives.” What was most striking to me about this interaction was not the participants’ feedback on Carmen’s skills, strengths, and abilities, but the way in which Dorothy frequently interrupted her. When I looked around the room to estimate how other observers were interpreting this interaction, I only noticed Serena, the Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House staff member, and Neelharika, the program facilitator, looking uncomfortable with it, which I interpreted from their closed, tight-lipped smiles and tense eyes. The other participants didn’t seem phased.

When asked about what she liked and disliked about this project, Carmen said that she liked interacting with many different cultures, being organized, and doing something for others. She said that doing something for others gave her a nice feeling in her heart. What she disliked was when the people she was collaborating with said that they would do something and then did not do it. She said that this caused her stress because she had to find ways of making things happen when other people didn’t follow through on their commitment. Dorothy interjected, “so you were resourceful, you had to think on your feet!” Carmen said that she enjoyed organizing events like this in order to bring peace to people. In sum, Carmen organized a 4-day event for 1,000 people traveling internationally that included a week of vacation and social events for the wives in attendance. Her official role in this event was as Director of Operations, and while she had an assistant, she mostly used the teams at the hotels and amenities to make sure that everything was done and organized for the meeting.

This fieldnote excerpt illuminates two dynamics key to the relationship between employment and English language. First, the opportunity for participants to speak in front of the group about previous employment experiences in English provided the women with the opportunity to reflect on their own accomplishments in a language that they might not be fully comfortable with. The program included a variety of exercises that asked participants speak in front of the group about their proudest experiences and accomplishments or to report back to the group about the experiences and accomplishments of another participant. In turn, the other PtL participants responded with (mostly) positive feedback, fostering interactions
that provided the participant at the front of the room with validation and affirmation. These opportunities for external validation and self-affirmation were critical to rebuilding or starting to rebuild the self-confidence that participants described as having been lost through their migration and settlement experiences, and especially through their loss of their employment-related identity.

Yet, this fieldnote excerpt demonstrates another, less positive, interaction: Dorothy’s interjections while Carmen spoke are demonstrative of the treatment that second-language English speakers can receive from native-English speakers who take issue with their accents and pronounciation. The other participants’ tacit acceptance of Dorothy’s interjections implicitly signals that they found this style of interaction to be familiar and unremarkable.

Citing Bourdieu (1977), Creese (2011, 34) explains:

> linguistic competence has less to do with the use of grammatical structures and more to do with the ability to command the right to speak and the power to be heard […] Thus some people – those from lower social classes, women, and colonized peoples – are perceived to be less competent (or, indeed, to be incompetent) and have more difficulty being heard or having their speech be taken seriously.

Dorothy’s interpretations and corrections of Carmen’s statements and pronunciation peppered the conversation, indicating Dorothy’s assumption that Carmen’s speech would be nonsensical to the rest of the group were it not for Dorothy summarizing Carmen’s talk. Relative to Dorothy’s competence in English as a native speaker, Carmen was made to look incompetent.

Creese (2011, 50) argues that this “erasure of linguistic competence” through language policing – which Dorothy inflicted on Carmen in correcting her pronunciation of the word ‘rodeo’ – both “mark the low social value of the person who utters and the perceived incompetence or unintelligibility of what is uttered.” Serena and Neeharika, the
Neighbourhood House staff member and program facilitator, had both migrated to Canada as adults after growing up in countries where they spoke Spanish and Urdu, respectively. Their own experiences as accented English speakers may explain the tense expressions they demonstrated while observing Carmen and Dorothy’s interaction. However, this tension was not demonstrated by other members of the group – Carmen was not seeming to take offense, and the other participants seemed pleasantly engaged in the conversation – which likely prevented Serena or Neeharika from taking any direct action at that moment in time (though both did intervene at other moments where Dorothy policed the language of other participants, and specifically participants who demonstrated less confidence than Carmen).

Approximately three-quarters of the African immigrants interviewed in Creese’s (2011, 33-34) study reported that they were fluent in English prior to migration. I did not ask my participants whether they perceived themselves to be fluent in English, although most volunteered that they wanted to improve their English language skills and at least 12 participants described how they had arrived in Canada with very little or limited English language skills. This gap in reported English language fluency between Creese’s (2011, 34) participants and my research participants may at least partially explain why Creese’s participants found English language policing so frustrating while the participants in my study did not seem alarmed by the way Dorothy was erasing Carmen’s linguistic capital – defined by Bourdieu (1986, 245) as an embodied form of cultural capital that is typically “unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence” – by rephrasing and summarizing her statements. It is possible that the interaction between Dorothy and Carmen
represented a kinder version of the way in which the study participants’ linguistic capital was received as they traversed public spaces outside of the Pathways to Leadership program.\footnote{25 As I discuss in Chapter 5, participants in my study routinely found themselves on the receiving end of verbal abuse related to their real or perceived lack of English language skills.}

My fieldnotes from later in the same session go on to describe how the program facilitator and Neighbourhood House staff member provided suggestions about how Carmen’s experience could be reframed into skills, strength and abilities that Canadian employers would recognize on a resume or in a job interview:

\begin{quote}
Serena, the staff member from Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, identified “entrepreneurial skills” as being something Carmen developed over the course of planning and executing this conference, highlighting how she has the capacity to see the long term, middle term, and short term steps to accomplish large projects. She also described her as having good “delegation skills.” Neeharika, the PtL program facilitator, highlighted Carmen’s abilities to work across cultures, and also the fact that she wanted her work to make people happy. Neeharika described this desire as making her ‘relational.’ Neeharika asked the group to describe the skills, strengths, and abilities that they heard Carmen describe while telling Dorothy about her experience planning this technology meeting in Mexico. Neeharika called a break after the group had devised the lists pictured above [see Figure 4.1].
\end{quote}

Discussions such as these helped participants develop familiarity with the kind of language that circulates in the context of non-entry-level employment in Canada. Participants described the personalized attention that Neeharika, the Neighbourhood House staff members, Marta, and I offered as a unique feature of this program. Participants reported that most settlement programs did not attend to their unique employment and education experiences to strategize how these could be translated into the Canadian context. From my post-program meetings and casual conversations with program participants, it seemed that most other settlement-related programs were less interactive and driven more from
standardized content than participants’ lived experiences. As Nailea told me in our post-
program meeting:

We learned [during the course] that our personal opinions, being confident, being
friendly, speaking clearly, stating what we want to say, it’s important. No matter our
opinions, our skin color, where we are coming from, etc. So you build upon our
strengths as humans, as professionals, as women […] I mean, you really gave
importance to the important things in a human being, to educate [us], women in our
case. I think that is important. I could see in my fellow participants that they really
built confidence through the course. They were really different than when they
started. So I would say the course really helps. We have people who didn’t speak at
the beginning. So for me, I really noticed a change in the participants from when they
started the course to the end, a lot.

Neeharika and the PtL program’s personalized approach gave participants something tangible
– a list of their skills, strengths, and abilities – that the women could then integrate into their
resumes and cover letters, and could draw on in job interviews.

4.7 “I need to talk in English, this is emergency”: Persistent and gender-specific

barriers to learning English after arrival

According to Casey Warman, Arthur Sweetman, and Gustave Goldmann’s (2015,
S73) analysis of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, English language ability
is the only form of human capital that that has an economic return. In an analysis of
immigrants’ pre-migration employment and education in the context of their intended
occupation in Canada and post-migration employment, Warman et al. (2015, S76) find that
“English language ability interacts with the occupational dynamic since it is highly correlated
with both obtaining employment and matching pre- and post-immigration occupations,” and
that English language skills “appear to be crucial in mediating the use of formal education
credentials in the Canadian labour market.” Warman et al.’s statistical analyses indicate that
language proficiency may be more important for economic success than pre-immigration
education or experience. This finding highlights the importance of addressing the barriers
facing women who wish to access English language training, particularly if they plan to seek living wage employment in Canada.

Research participants recognized how their English language abilities affected their ability to secure employment beyond survival jobs. When I asked Jadira, a 33-year-old university-educated woman from Bangladesh who had entered Canada as a dependent of her principal applicant skilled-worker husband, about the barriers immigrant women face in accessing training and employment in Canada, she emphatically told me:

The first barrier is that [if] I can’t speak, I can’t understand. They [immigrants] won’t come out from their house because the language, they don’t know the language. [If] I can’t speak, I can’t understand, so how can I join a program? But I feel that if anybody joins this program and continues it, after three months she must be able to come out [of] this barrier. She [will] realize that yeah, when she is listening she is understanding something. There is opportunity to speak, there is opportunity to understand. When I realized, yeah I can speak! I can understand! My confidence is double, right?

Despite having taught English at a school in Bangladesh, Jadira’s first job in Canada had been as a sandwich artist at Subway restaurant; since completing the Pathways Program she has been working towards obtaining an Early Childhood Educator license but described the English assessment test required for admission into the local community college as being as difficult as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Jadira’s point about her confidence increasing when she realized she could speak during the PtL sessions as well as understand what other participants were saying is a direct illustration of Bourdieu (1977) and Creese’s (2011) point about linguistic competence. Fear of speaking and not being able to understand what others are saying is a primary cause of isolation, according to Jadira. How many individuals, men and women, have had their linguistic competence so challenged that they are literally afraid to leave their home? How many will have the opportunity to
participate in a program where they are able to rebuild their confidence by having the opportunity to speak and listen to other individuals facing the same challenges?

Like Jadira, other PtL program participants shared similar experiences of being afraid to leave their homes as a result of their limited English language comprehension. Women spoke explicitly about their fear of taking the bus in case people attempted to ask them questions that they would not understand and so they would seem rude for not replying, or about clutching their husbands at the grocery store because they were so afraid of being separated from the one person who could communicate on their behalf. While these women had gathered enough courage to join a multicultural program where they would be expected to understand and communicate in English – a remarkable feat given the feelings of fear they had at some point after their arrival in Canada – they reported that their confidence had increased even more after joining the programs, as they realized that they were not alone in their struggles with English.

Alicia (41, Chile), the woman whose experience migrating from Chile is described at the beginning of this chapter, reported her husband’s uncle telling her “if you call your family and you start talking on the phone in Spanish you will never learn English and you will be out of this society and you will not have a job and you will not earn money.” Alicia explained that she took his advice about the importance of learning English in order to integrate into Canada seriously, saying “because I’m very obedient, I said ‘wow this guy is trying to help me so for sure they are [right].’” The impact of this advice was devastating for Alicia:

The problem is that they didn’t care about emotional issues, nothing. I mean, they were completely out of that. And I was destroyed. But I said to myself wow, sorry, I should, I don’t have time. I have to learn, I have to talk, I have to write, I have to. So the first month I started reading and trying to reading, and reading and talking. I was
in the street talking alone (laughs), really I was talking alone. And I forgot about Spanish. I didn’t talk with my family in two months because I said if I talk [Spanish] I’m never going to get it. I need to talk in English, this is emergency. Because I also saw a lot of people [who couldn’t speak English]. I saw these guys and they look terrible, and people look terrible. So and I said wow these people look terrible and they don’t – they can’t talk a sentence, what am I going to do in an interview, blah, blah, blah. So it was like a campaign, you say, against Spanish in favour of English until I go to [a local community college] and they, in assessment they put me in a [beginners] English course (emphasis mine).

Alicia faced these challenges despite the fact that she and her husband had not yet had their son and she already had permanent resident status. Her description of her decision to launch a campaign against Spanish in favour English, the suffering and isolation this “campaign” caused her, and how she rationalized the importance of English for integration highlights how language is important for so much more than securing employment.

Barriers to learning English and the psychological impact of the isolation and panic that comes from urgently trying to obtain these skills are further compounded for those women who arrived in Canada without permanent residency status, many of whom also had children or familial expectations that they would take care of aging relatives. As Parvati Raghuram and Eleonore Kofman (2004, 97) note, both skilled women and lesser skilled women “never shake off their reproductive responsibilities.” According to immigration researchers Casey Burkholder and Marianne Filion (2014), women are particularly disadvantaged by the language benchmarking test for Canadian citizenship, the next step after permanent residency, due to the uneven distribution of child care responsibilities which often prevent them from being able to consistently attend the classroom component of English language instruction programs.

While this chapter is attentive to the necessity of English for obtaining employment and regaining self-confidence, Burkholder and Filion’s (2014) highlight the importance of
English proficiency for securing legal citizenship in Canada. Burkholder (2014, 10) describes her experience instructing English language classes: there were fewer than 20 child care spaces available and more than 20 women for whom child care was a prerequisite for their participation. While many of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada programs at Vancouver settlement agencies offer spaces for childcare, the demand tends to outstrip the number of spots available. For example, the LINC information brochure from MOSIAC states:

**What can I do about child care?**
Some LINC schools have free child care for pre-school age children. There are not very many spaces. Many LINC students have to make their own child care arrangements. There is a provincial child care subsidy to help families pay for child care. Go to an immigrant settlement agency in your area for more information (MOSAIC 2014).

Over time, the limited availability of child care spaces and difficulty obtaining child care for more than one child or for more than one set of sessions creates a barrier for women’s participation that causes them to leave the classes altogether. As a result, Burkholder (2014, 10) found the majority of women were limited to beginner-level classes while the higher-level classes were disproportionately comprised of men. These struggles were also apparent in the Pathways to Leadership program, where women would miss classes due to childcare responsibilities. If the content of the Pathways to Leadership program had been cumulative, these women would have had difficulty catching up. Like the participants in the Pathways to Leadership program, women in Burkholder and Filion’s (2014) study described the struggle between the need to take care of their children and their desire to participate in language or other training before entering the labour market.

Women’s disadvantage due to the uneven distribution of childcare responsibilities was part of the argument that the professor on the Pathways to Leadership Advisory
Committee had made in favour of the program being open to all self-identified immigrant women, regardless of their legal immigration status or English language abilities. The focus groups that informed the Advisory Committee’s initial proposal to establish the PtL program revealed that many women with permanent residency status who had immigrated to Canada had come with young children or had given birth shortly after arriving in Canada (Chun and Cheong 2011). Like the focus group participants, a number of PtL program participants had not participated in English language or employment training programs within the five-year eligibility period for accessing government-funded programs because they lacked affordable access to childcare support. A lack of childcare supports not only prevented English language training; it also prevented women with English language skills from accessing the labour market and participating in activities that would enhance their cultural and social integration. Many of the women who participated in the PtL program had children under the age of five and were excited to explore their career options based on the knowledge that their children would soon be starting kindergarten.

The women participating in the Pathways to Leadership program reported that the prohibitive cost of day care affected their decision to enter the labour market or to seek programs that would allow them to upgrade their language skills in preparation for the labour market. More than one woman described registering for courses at a community college or technical institute with their husband’s support and being unable to keep pace with the course content due to childcare responsibilities. The women explained that their husbands were able to watch the children while they attended the classes on weekends or evenings, but that their families did not have enough childcare support for the time they need to study the materials outside of the classroom. Their husbands worked — one held a professional and demanding
job, and the other held multiple survival jobs – and, as newcomers to Canada, they lacked extended kin ties or other strong social supports. Anna (33, Mexico), a vibrant young woman with two small children, describes how she attempted to update some skills related to her work in the technology industry while on maternity leave:

I went to [a local technical college] to take some evening courses and weekend courses, and it was too much, it was too much. My girl didn’t sleep at night and I had to go at night to the school and on weekends. I remember that time, just like four hours every day, so it was too much. So I decided to quit.

Despite having worked very successfully as a computer programmer in Mexico, Anna felt as though she had to take these courses because her limited language skills and out-of-date technical skills had prevented her from getting work prior to her daughter’s birth. She described how she attended a year and a half of English classes before her daughter’s birth and was invited to over 20 job interviews between the time her daughter was conceived and turned one: she explained that each of those interviews had been unsuccessful either as a result of her technical skills or her English language skills. Anna went on to describe how these experiences had affected her:

I believed I was not good enough to apply for those coming jobs, so I was like a big ball of bad feelings, I started to be very negative. So I got really stressed, I gained a lot of weight, like a lot, like 30 lbs, a lot, a lot, a lot. And I sat all the time yelling here. My son was like, was scared of me, and say[ing] oh, my mom is going to yell again. So I say to my husband, do you know what? It’s enough. It’s not good for me, it’s not good for the kids and that’s it [that is, I gave up looking for a job]. So my body started to react because of the stress, the weight. And I remember one day, I couldn’t move.

Anna’s description of how she had felt and behaved during this dark time in her life was very different than the bright, positive, and engaged Anna I had come to know through the PtL program. While Anna frames her withdrawal from her studies and the job search as personal decisions due to her own failure to succeed, it is also clear from her account that structural
factors left her few, if any, options. Without kin or strong social ties to provide childcare support, Anna and her husband were left to juggle the challenges of raising young children in a new culture while still trying to provide financially for their family. These multiple pressures collided and resulted in a mental health crisis for Anna, who reported a serious weight gain and mood issues as a result of her struggles to balance these competing pressures.

Anna, like many of the women participating in the Pathways to Leadership program, is highly skilled and was career-driven before coming to Canada. Unsuccessful job interviews and her decision to leave the technical college had a dramatic impact on her self-esteem. In turn, these experiences dampened her career ambitions – by the time Anna registered in the PtL program, she had given up on pursuing well-paying and relatively prestigious jobs in computer engineering in favour of seeking lower-paid and less prestigious positions in family and community programming. Some women regained the confidence during their time in the employment skills and leadership program to write career plans that included returning to higher education. Others, like Anna, had experienced such serious consequences from their post-arrival experiences that they decided to focus instead on alternative options that would not require such extensive educational and linguistic capital.

Another participant and mother of three children, Amita (40, Bangladesh), described how she managed to complete Level 4, Level 5, and Level 6 English at a local community college before her third child was born. She explained that she received financial aid for tuition and childcare for her two daughters, but that she did not do well enough in the course to maintain this funding. Despite this setback, Amita continued attending English classes at the community college and reached Level 6, at which point she was unable to continue due to
the arrival of her son. When I asked why having three children made it more difficult to
continue than when she had only two children, Amita explained:

It’s really hard because if you want to study you have to have time for study at home. If you don’t open the book at home then you’re stuck. I have no time to open the book at home and when I have time I feel like tired. It’s really hard with family to study.

Anna and Amita’s experiences demonstrate how family or institutional supports for the time that mothers are in class are a good start but do not go far enough. Anna’s husband was available to watch their children on evenings and weekends, but Amita’s husband was typically sleeping in preparation for his graveyard shifts at a convenience store and as a security guard. While the community college offered childcare for the time that Amita had to be in the classroom, she was unable to complete the homework it would require for her to succeed.

As a result of adjusting to a new educational system and not having adequate supports to study outside of the classroom, Amita lost her financial aid even though she desperately needed that money to continue participating in the English as Second Language program. Amita’s description of the challenges related to studying while trying to raise small children makes a strong case for providing the additional resources that adult learners require in order to complete the English language training that will contribute to their ability to obtain paid work beyond survival employment. Ideally, appropriate English language training and the supports needed to complete this training will allow newcomer women to obtain employment that aligns with the human capital resources they bring to Canada.

4.8 Funding English language programs for employment

According to Literacy BC (Literacy BC 2008, 13), two-thirds of working age British Columbians with Level 1 literacy are immigrants. Individuals with Level 1 literacy have few
basic skills or strategies for decoding and working with texts of various complexity. Sixty-percent of immigrants with a first language other than English have limited English skills and are only able to read simple and well-laid out material. Yet, despite these statistics and our sociological knowledge that English language proficiency is a strong determinant of whether a newcomer will achieve economic integration, Vancouver Community College was forced to cut back their government-funded English as a Second Language programs (ESL) in December 2014 as a result of the end of the Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement, an arrangement that had devolved responsibility for the design and delivery of settlement and integration programming to the provincial government as of May 1998 (Dickson et al. 2013).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada announced in 2012 that it would not renew Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement in 2014, and that the Government of Canada would instead reassume federal-level management of settlement and integration programming. While the federal government provided $17 million dollars of one-time funding to support ESL training programs at Vancouver educational institutions through this transition period, the money expired in December 2014 and the provincial government did not step up to continue this funding. The new settlement services funding administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now called Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) do not support the advanced English as Second Language training programs that immigrants require in order to succeed in the labour market.

This decision is not due to a lack of need for these services: According to recent data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015), 33.4% of permanent residents have neither English nor French language ability. Rather, this
lack of funding is due to the federal and provincial governments’ disagreement about how and who should fund English as a second language education in British Columbia. As a result, the structure of ESL programs at Vancouver Community College, the largest and most affordable provider of ESL training in western Canada, has shifted dramatically. Approximately 70% of the program’s 2,200 seats have been eliminated and 140 faculty members at the college have been laid off since the funding cuts took effect (Hyslop 2015). The Level 1 to 4 classes remain free for students who are permanent residents, but the institution is now charging $5,202 in tuition and $633 in fees for Level 5 to 7 English, and $3,570 in tuition and $517 in fees for Level 8 to 9 English (Vancouver Community College 2016). These English as a Second Language training programs were previously free for students and had long waitlists (Hyslop 2014).

Many of the women participating in the PtL program spoke about attending English classes at Vancouver Community College as a step toward achieving employment goals. A certain level of English language proficiency is an admission requirement for most vocational and academic programs at post-secondary institutions, and most women planned to take further training in order to obtain living wage work in Vancouver. These plans and goals are now out of sight for most of the PtL participants since they cannot afford to pay for tuition, fees, and childcare. The provincial government has responded to criticisms about these funding cuts by providing some grants to adults who wish to access English Language Training or other adult basic education classes; however, a single applicant with no dependents must earn less than $23,647 per year to qualify (Hyslop 2014). Students who earn more than $26,000 are not eligible for any grants and must pay the full tuition (Hyslop 2014).
The repatriation of settlement funding from management at the provincial level to management at the federal level was only beginning to take effect at the end of my fieldwork in April 2014. The Neighbourhood Houses had submitted their first funding proposals to Citizenship and Immigration Canada in November 2013, and were waiting to hear the result of this call in the spring of 2014. It was clear from the funding criteria, however, that the programming offered by the Neighbourhood Houses would be affected by these changes. For example, the federal funding can only be used to provide services to permanent residents and Canadian citizens so Neighbourhood House staff would be required to ask individuals wishing to register in a federally funded program to verify their legal status in Canada. I have not been involved in programming at the Neighbourhood House since these changes took effect so I am unsure if and how the staff are negotiating program access to individuals with precarious migrant status.

What is important to note in the context of the relationship between the Pathways to Leadership program participants’ employment prospects and English language training detailed in this chapter is how the recent repatriation of settlement funding from the provincial to the federal government has not been followed with an additional transfer from the federal to provincial government to maintain the free English as a Second Language programs that permanent residents and Canadian citizens have been eligible to access since 2012. A news release from the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Advanced Education announcing the BC policy for tuition-free ESL training in 2012 acknowledges that the “sooner someone whose first language is not English can improve their language skills, the sooner they can become full participants in the community and in employment” (Ministry of Advanced Education 2012). The same news release also states that “82 per cent of
respondents said that their ESL courses were very helpful or helpful to them in achieving their most important goal for enrolling” and that 91% of those who pursued further training said their ESL training had prepared them for their subsequent studies.

Cuts to English language training have occurred despite the provincial government’s claims and awareness of the statistical evidence that show the direct benefits of such training for economic integration, as well as social, cultural, and political integration. These benefits accrue for both the ESL program participants and the communities in which they live and work. As a result of this training, non-native English language speakers are able to mobilize the human and educational capital that they accumulated in their home countries and apply these to their community and labour market participation in Canada. Alternatively, the fieldnote and interview data presented in this chapter demonstrate how an inability to access these services can lead to decreased self-worth based on the relationship between an individual’s self-confidence and his or her labour market position.

It is clear that the repatriation of settlement funding has raised questions and conflicting ideas about which level of government and funding stream should be responsible for ESL training in British Columba. What is undeniable, however, is how these decisions are adversely affecting those individuals who want to access these services in order to improve their quality of life and economic achievement. Reinstating tuition-free language programs for permanent residents and Canadian citizens would be a good start to improving immigrant women’s labour market integration, but additional supports need to be put in place to support all individuals who wish to improve their English language skills, including those adults with precarious legal status and those with young children and other familial responsibilities. By investing and supporting English language learning for all newcomers in
Canada, regardless of their legal status and with respect to competing obligations for their time and energy, Canadian society will benefit from the knowledge and contributions that come about when individuals live in welcoming communities. Pathways to Leadership participants’ ideas and experiences with becoming full citizens in Canada are explored in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

4.9 Conclusion

Overall, a majority of the women in the Pathways to Leadership program had been employed in satisfying and personally meaningful occupations prior to immigration but they were willing to make sacrifices in order to improve what they sensed to be a relative deprivation experienced in their home countries (Skeldon 2002). This perception was especially the case for women who migrated through economic and family class immigration programs. It is important, however, to recognize that these decisions have costs, many of which are exacerbated by institutional policies and procedures that prevent newcomers from accessing opportunities that will allow them to mobilize their human capital in the context of Canadian society. English is the primary language of employment and business spoken in Vancouver and, as such, issues of language proficiency must be addressed even before one can think of applying their credentials and previous work experiences in the Canadian economy.

This chapter has highlighted the relationship between one’s employment and self-worth, and how the first challenge to this relationship comes when a newly arrived woman is expected to produce a resume in English that translates her international education and experience into an English-language document with genre-specific expectations. Despite the fact that most participants had attended other employment programs that discussed resumes...
and resume writing, almost all of the resumes that I reviewed during my fieldwork were not ready for serious consideration by Vancouver employers. This textual document is a paradigmatic example of the gap between the Pathways to Leadership program participants’ desire to enter the labour market and their readiness for this challenge. Recognizing that they were not the only ones struggling to overcome these barriers, the women spoke openly in program sessions and the interviews about how they had internalized this gap as a personal failure rather than as a structural problem tied to insufficient English language training programs and support upon arrival in Canada.

Participants described their dreams for coming to Canada, and Vancouver more specifically. Roxanna (40, Mexico) told me how she had expected to spend her summers at Kitsilano Beach and her winters in Whistler; like many of the other participants, Roxanna came to Canada seeking better employment opportunities for herself, and security and educational opportunities for her children. Participants anticipated meeting accepting people who did not harbor racism or discrimination. While these dreams had partially come true for some participants, Alicia stated it best in saying that she and her husband did not come to Canada to have less than they did in their home country. The process of immigration is fraught with transition and change, trauma and grief. Some of the women with whom I spoke described how they felt shame at their inability to manifest their pre-arrival vision of the Canadian dream. Scott (39, Thailand), the participant who takes the Skytrain to the airport so she can watch the flight board and imagine what it would mean to return to Thailand, described how she would end phone calls with friends and family by telling them she is going shopping at the mall even though she did not have the money to go anywhere. As she explained to me, telling them that she had the economic capital to go purchase material
things would lead them to believe that she was doing well in Canada. These widely shared transnational ideas of the ‘Canadian dream’ are incongruous with the reality of life in Canada as a newcomer, and especially life as a non-native English-speaking woman with a precarious legal status, young children, little access to English language and settlement programming, and limited social supports.

How do women overcome these challenges? The next chapter will examine the role of contemporary Neighbourhood Houses in the delivery of settlement service programming and citizenship training. Through unique programs such as the Pathways to Leadership program, Neighbourhood Houses play a role in rebuilding members’ self-esteem by openly discussing the realities and challenges that women and families face settling in Canada while encouraging program participants to engage in leadership activities within their local communities. As I will describe, these activities played an important role in promoting a sense of full membership and belonging among the women participating in the Pathways the Leadership program.
Chapter 5: Immigrants to Citizens: Pathways to Social Citizenship and Engagement in Neighbourhood Houses

5.1 Caring is smart strategy for building a team – and a nation

When I think about the staff that I have, they’re phenomenal. When I think about where they’ve come from, a lot of them are immigrant women who came as moms in the first place to a program [as participants] and I look at what they’re able to do now and who they’re able to connect with and that couldn’t have happened if they were on one-year contracts and I’d let them go. So, I feel it is about—there is a part of it [my job] which is about just caring for them. There’s a part of it, too, which is about smart strategy in terms of building a strong team and keeping a strong team (Shannon).

As the Director of a subset of programs within Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, Shannon worked closely with Francine, one of the external consultants, to submit the grant application that funded the Pathways to Leadership Program. Shannon’s role focuses on grant writing, reporting to funders, managing budgets, and supervising staff. Like the staff members Shannon describes above, her responsibilities as a Director developed over the course of her career in service-provision; after arriving in Canada as an immigrant herself, Shannon did not participate in settlement programs but worked in a variety of community centres and women-focused programs. Shannon completed law school but realized during her training that being a lawyer would not help her to create change she had envisioned it would. In our interview she explained to me how at the end of law school she found herself thinking, “I want to be more on the end of trying to work towards justice on a more grassroots level and a more preventative level.” This goal led her to do outreach work in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside during her early twenties, then to independent consulting, and finally to the Neighbourhood House. As described in the introduction, Neighbourhood Houses operate with a few core staff members and a large number of volunteers, and their work is guided by and responsive to the needs of the community. From newborns to seniors, these organizations
offer free or low-cost programming designed to enhance people’s sense of connectedness, to exchange skills through shared learning, and to strengthen the sense of community in the neighbourhood.

Having been at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House for over a decade, Shannon is experienced in navigating local, provincial, and federal level funders and has experienced first-hand the impact that funding changes and ever-shifting funding requirements have on non-profit community development organizations. At the time of our interview in early 2014, for example, Shannon and her team were preparing for the repatriation of settlement funding from the provincial to the federal level. What distinguishes Shannon as a Director, however, is the way in which she manages and cares for her team, as she describes in comments above. Despite funding-related operational changes, Shannon does her best to ensure that her team remains intact; the three staff members I interviewed at Crystal Pond each raised this point independently, and expressed appreciation for the lengths to which Shannon will go in order to protect their positions.

Shannon’s mandate to recognize and retain staff talent is reflective of the asset-based community development approach that informs the Neighbourhood House model (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; McKnight and Block 2010): “immigrant women” and “moms,” as the Neighbourhood House staff describe the women who participate in programs, go on to become “volunteers,” who then go on to become valued staff and “team members.” My interview with Patricia (37, Colombia) offers an explanation of how and why individuals might go from program participants to program volunteers:

Heather: And now you’ve been involved for many years, like 13 years almost, right? So can you tell me why you stay involved in the Neighbourhood House? What do you find there?
Patricia: It’s that sense of community, being able to give back to the community and do something for the community, make it better. Then I started to work and I kind of stop [going] but I go in the summertime, when they have the program in the park, I take the girls [her daughters] even though they are older. And then I keep in contact with Katherine, with Rebecca, and they said ‘you know we are doing these programs [Pathways to Leadership] and this is the information.’ And it’s a great opportunity that I was able to join the class cause now I’m doing other things as well.

Heather: Like what kind of other things?

Patricia: Like the Small Neighbourhood Grants group, the committee. I am part of that now so I’m going to be helping with that process. So it feels good to be able to support your community and do something. After all this many years that you have been going there and getting something from them.

Heather: So when did you start volunteering there?

Patricia: I did some volunteering first I think in the computer lab when my oldest was four, just before I have [my youngest daughter]. And then in Crystal Pond serious, serious volunteering—

Heather: (laughs) What is serious-serious volunteering?

Patricia: (laughs) No, because I usually used to just go and help around if we have to clean up or something. But then when I was going to the Latin group with Roxanna, she asked me if I would like to join her to work with her setting up and I was more involved.

Patricia’s comment about how helping “feels good” after accessing Neighbourhood House programming herself is interesting and points to the way in which Neighbourhood Houses differ from charitable models that operate in a one-way direction, with service providers giving to clients. Neighbourhood Houses, alternatively, see service as an entry point for participants to access the organization but their mandate is much broader and based on shared learning. Like Patricia, PtL program participants frequently told me how Neighbourhood House programming and volunteer opportunities provided them with a sense of being part of the “community” and actively doing something to “make it better.”
This chapter will explore Neighbourhood House involvement and the activity of volunteering as a form of civic engagement that promotes intercultural understanding at the same time as it promotes what Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950, 11) calls the “social element” of citizenship. Writing after World War II, Marshall (1950, 11) defines the social element of citizenship as “the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.” According to John O’Neill (2004, 73) “citizenship flourishes through social, cultural and political organizations that fulfill public purposes.” Neighbourhood Houses are exactly this kind of organization: they recognize and champion the unique contributions of each member – staff, volunteers, and program participants alike – and work to develop and expand these capacities.

Emphasizing and working from each other’s strengths and assets, rather than dwelling on deficiencies, is a key component of the philosophy that informed the international Settlement House movement, which in turn paved the way for Neighbourhood Houses.

As alluded to above, the asset-based community development philosophy makes Neighbourhood Houses distinctive and uniquely poised to deliver a citizenship model of settlement services (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Mathie and Cunningham 2003). By a ‘citizenship model of settlement services,’ I develop an argument in this chapter that Neighbourhood Houses go beyond service-delivery, and work to holistically engage members so as to promote their social, economic, and political integration in Canada. The first section of this chapter expands on the description and distinctive features of Neighbourhood Houses I raised in the introductory chapter of the dissertation. In the second section of the chapter, I draw on fieldnote and interview transcripts to demonstrate how the
Pathways to Leadership program activities and Neighbourhood House philosophy of community development affected participants in a way that differed from their experiences in other settlement programs. In the third section of the chapter, I describe how the civic engagement projects that PtL program participants completed while in the program were critical in terms of fostering women’s sense of belonging and representation in Canada. I argue that PTL program participants were able to develop early-stage skills for addressing political injustices of misrepresentation through confidence- and skill-building civic engagement projects that positioned them as leaders in their communities and provided opportunities for members of diverse backgrounds to collaborate across ethnic communities, which are typically siloed (Fraser 2013; Weber 1978). On the whole, this chapter demonstrates the role of Neighbourhood Houses and Pathways to Leadership program in fostering individual citizenship.

The act of fostering individual citizenship was a first step in supporting the women participating in the Pathways to Leadership programs to challenge the political dimension of injustice that Fraser (2013, 196) describes as “misrepresentation.” According to Fraser (2013, 196), “misrepresentation occurs when political boundaries and/or decision rules function to wrongly deny some people the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction – including, but not only, in political arenas.” Misrepresentation, then, is precisely what is happening to PtL program participants when they are targeted and harassed as racial minorities and/or foreigners in Canada. For Fraser (2013, 195) “representation” has two levels: “at one level, which pertains to the boundary-setting aspect of the political, representation is a matter of social belonging; what is at issue here is inclusion in, or exclusion from, the community of those entitled to make justice claims on one another.” In
addition to decreased economic standing and lowered self-worth as a result of legal status and employment situations, the PtL participants did not perceive themselves as members of the Canadian community, political or otherwise. As described later in this chapter, the women were instead more accustomed to being marked and perceived of as outsiders, largely as a result of hurtful inquiries from those around them about why they are here and instructions to “go back” to where they came from.

At another level, “representation concerns the procedures that structure public processes of contestation,” which Fraser (2013, 195) describes as “the terms on which those included in the political community air their claims and adjudicate their disputes.” Without representation, the PtL program participants have a diminished ability to make justice claims related to the economic injustice they experienced by way of precarious legal statuses that blocked pathways to the labour market, and/or the cultural injustice they suffered as a result of the non-recognition of their international credentials and experience. As Fraser (2013, 199) states, “representation is always already inherent in all claims for redistribution [economic justice] and recognition [cultural justice]. The political dimension is implicit in, indeed required by, the grammar of the concept of justice. Thus, no redistribution or recognition without representation.” Fraser’s (2013, 199) articulation of this three-dimensional theory of justice and her argument that “struggles against maldistribution and misrecognition cannot succeed unless they are joined with struggles against misrepresentation – and vice-versa” underscore the Pathways to Leadership program’s emphasis on fostering citizenship through the development of “leadership skills” as much as it emphasized the development of employment skills. Without the development of both skill sets, women faced a much more difficult battle in securing economic, cultural, and political
justice in Canada. This chapter provides some sense of the PtL program activities that Neeharika facilitated to develop these “leadership skills.” These activities and skills might also be defined as stepping stones on the way to fostering participants’ sense of “social citizenship” in Canada (Marshall 1950).

5.2 **Who visits Neighbourhood Houses and why?**

While the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted my fieldwork are open to and accessed by people from across the gender spectrum, the emphasis for programming tends to be on women, children, and youth. When I asked research participants how they became aware of Neighbourhood Houses, many women reported that community health nurses informed them about the StrongStart program while they were receiving post-natal care and had encouraged them to take their children to the drop-in program. As a play-based early learning intervention open to all new parents and not just immigrants, StrongStart helps children develop skills that will prepare them for kindergarten (Province of British Columbia 2015). At the same time, parents – typically mothers or grandparents, and very rarely fathers – have the opportunity to meet other parents and learn about how to support children’s learning. By virtue of attending StrongStart, many of my participants – or “moms,” as the Neighbourhood House staff members refer to them – had become aware of the free family-oriented programming and English language conversation groups offered at Neighbourhood Houses. Participants told me how much they appreciated these programs, explaining how opportunities to meet with other new parents helped to reduce their anxieties about childrearing in the Canadian context, and helped connect them to other women and resources that could provide support in the absence of extended kin networks.
The Neighbourhood House programs also kept women connected to the community. Research participants described how Neighbourhood House staff would reach out to invite them to participate in upcoming programs or one-off events such as cultural dinners. These invitations would either be delivered in person while the women were at the Neighbourhood House or by phone if they had been absent for a while. For example, a participant who struggled with serious clinical depression told me in our interview about how the staff at the Neighbourhood House proved to be a crucial lifeline in providing her with food from the Neighbourhood House food bank and in helping her to register her child in daycare. This participant was so grateful for the support she had received from the Neighbourhood House and, in turn, has become an exceptionally active volunteer.

This gendered and family-orientation could be related to Neighbourhood Houses’ hours of operation, as they tend to be open business hours with some after-school programming for children and youth. As described in the previous chapter, the women who participated in my study stated that a lack of affordable childcare influenced their decision to stay home and care for children. Put more bluntly, a lack of affordable childcare made it nearly impossible for families with two children who were not in school full-time to even consider having both parents in the workforce. Because of biological processes related to breastfeeding and sociological processes related to the gender wage gap, whereby their male partners earned more money than the women would earn if they were the ones to enter the workforce, the women tended to take on more care responsibilities than the men. In turn, women were more available than men to participate in daytime Neighbourhood House programming. As Nira (39, Mexico) explained to me when I was asked about her career plan during our interview:
In my case, in the beginning, because I was breastfeeding, I stayed with my daughter for one year and went to VCC to complete my Grade 12 and I got my childcare license. I started doing things because I had my husband’s support. We could manage to work out our schedule. I went to study at night. But definitely yes, I would say for most of the women, immigrant or not immigrant, [childcare] can be challenging. Right now, I know a woman who is really struggling with this – she needs childcare for little cost, and she is really struggling with this because she is a single woman now, she’s getting divorced. I know it can be really hard, for financial reasons. In my case, it was financial [to stay home]. Because when the children are less than 18 months it [childcare] costs more, so we have to wait until they are 2 [years old] so it cost less. For me, thinking about work, money was an issue deciding to work or not work. I can’t get more than minimum wage or $15, and it is $900 [for childcare per month]. With the subsidy, it is still $600.

Nira explicates the financial reasons why she and her husband decided that she should stay home and care for their two children while pursuing training opportunities that will allow her to care for her children and earn an income providing childcare for other families. Structural factors related to the cost of childcare and the wages women can expect to receive affect childbearing women’s participation in the labour force and help to explain the amount of daytime community programming geared toward women. These factors also explain why women like Nira seek out education and training opportunities that will allow them to build careers where they can combine their childrearing responsibilities with income-generating activities.

Several research participants, however, commented on the lack of services available to newcomer men and referred to their husbands as examples for why services are needed. Gabriela (45, Peru) explained how she is able to access support services, but her husband has not been able to find programs where he can debrief about his experience supporting his school-aged daughter after she was sexually assaulted and the trauma of the refugee-claimant process:

The other problem is that I receive a lot of support, a lot. I don’t have time to go to all the places to keep receiving it. But my husband doesn’t have many options for
support. My husband don’t have – he needs therapy. He needs it because he [isn’t recovering from the trauma of dealing with the bad things that happened to our daughter], he needs support about that. And when he was reminded about it [during our refugee application], it affected his life and [affects him] now in the present. But the programs are limited for men. This is the reason I say I say we need to group for men.

Minseo (41, South Korea) shared Gabriela’s concerns about programming for men and identified this lack of support for men as a service gap. One of the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted my research offered a support program for men but this program was focused on substance abuse issues and not settlement, according to Gabriela. Moreover, a female staff member facilitated this men’s group largely because there were no male staff members available in the evenings. Although several of the Latin American PtL participants reported that their husbands established new friendships as a result of the connections they developed with other PtL program participants, these friendships were centred around casual activities like family picnics and celebrations, and were not support services. Such services would likely be valuable.

Despite the geographic connotation of the name ‘Neighbourhood House,’ the organizations do not limit their membership to residents of the particular neighbourhood in which they are situated. For example, Neighbourhood House members would occasionally invite a friend who lived elsewhere in the Metro Vancouver area to join a Neighbourhood House activity or program. Thus, Neighbourhood Houses are physically bounded in a particular place and space but porous in terms of who participates in programming. In the case of the Pathways to Leadership program, women travelled from Point Grey, Burnaby, Richmond, and New Westminster to attend the weekly sessions largely because it was the only program that many of the participants could register for as a result of their non-
permanent resident status in Canada or the fact that they had been here for five years or more and were therefore ineligible for many government-funded employment programs.

The term ‘Neighbourhood House’ is therefore a limited and inaccurate description of the organization’s scope as members, volunteers, staff, and researchers travel from all areas to participate in activities at the organization. The use of the term ‘neighbourhood’ was even of concern to Jane Addams (1929, 141) who stated that ‘neighborhood’ is not an accurate description of the Settlement’s scope of work:

And you know, I have always been a little of a heretic on the neighbourhood idea. It has always seemed to me that a Settlement drew from various parts of town the people who were attracted to the particular thing which the Settlement at that moment was offering. You meet in the kingdom of the mind very much more than you meet in the special neighbourhood in which you happen to be living […] So it seems to me that a Settlement develops from a nucleus in various directions, and the spirit comes back to you from those different points, whether it happens to be within two blocks or whether it happens to be within twenty miles. And you don’t want to cast off your children, your spiritual resources, whether they are near or far.

The member-to-staff relationships that Addams describes in this passage ring true even today; participants in my research study tended to remain affiliated with the Neighbourhood House even if they and their families had relocated to other areas of the city as a result of the relationships they had developed at the Neighbourhood House.

In addition to observing more women than men at the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted my fieldwork, I also observed how most of the individuals participating in Neighbourhood House programs and events spoke with accented English and/or openly described having arrived in Vancouver from another country. Why, then, did ‘Settlement Houses’ become ‘Neighbourhood Houses’ when most program users at least appear to be newcomers? It is not exactly clear when the name change from Settlement House to
Neighbourhood House occurred, although Addams (1910, 41–42) describes a possible rationale for the change as early as 1910:

The word "settlement," which we have borrowed from London, is apt to grate a little upon American ears. It is not, after all, so long ago that Americans who settled were those who had adventured into a new country, where they were pioneers in the midst of difficult surroundings. The word still implies migrating from one condition of life to another totally unlike it, and against this implication the resident of an American settlement takes alarm.

We do not like to acknowledge that Americans are divided into two nations, as her prime minister once admitted of England. We are not willing, openly and professedly, to assume that American citizens are broken up into classes, even if we make that assumption the preface to a plea that the superior class has duties to the inferior. Our democracy is still our most precious possession, and we do well to resent any inroads upon it, even though they may be made in the name of philanthropy.

Here, Addams points to the class and status distinctions highlighted by the term ‘Settlement House’ as compared to the more contemporary term of ‘Neighbourhood House.’ The American history of pioneering and settlement is not reflected in the original meaning of the term ‘Settlement House,’ and the term itself implies a hierarchy in those offering and those participating in settlement services. The term ‘Neighbourhood House,’ by contrast, does not imply a status distinction in terms of who is offering and receiving services and instead reflects the philosophical orientation of the asset-based approach that all participants in the organization have something valuable to contribute and to gain by participating in the activities of the Neighbourhood House (McKnight and Block 2010). Again, this philosophy distinguishes the style and delivery of settlement services at Neighbourhood Houses from settlement services offered at other agencies.

The colonial tensions inherent in the term “settlement” are different but similarly present in the Canadian context. Philanthropists and social reformers who were eager to assist newcomers to Canada formed Canadian Neighbourhood Houses. Canada was and
remains a nation with three distinct groups: First Nations, European settlers, and more recent waves of newcomers from around the globe. Thus, the act of ‘settlement’ is associated with tensions and difficulties: In the documentary film *Where Strangers Become Neighbours* (Attili 2007), longtime residents of the Collingwood neighbourhood in Vancouver, BC, describe how the arrival of newcomers in the 1980s led to fear and hostility among the neighbourhood’s largely white population. According to the longtime neighbourhood residents who were interviewed for the film, the rapid arrival of individuals with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds led the most xenophobic of residents to sell their homes and move further east to neighbourhoods with less racial and ethnic diversity. By 2009, 73% of Collingwood residents spoke English as their second language – a drastic change for a neighbourhood that had been predominantly English as a first language prior to the arrival of the Skytrain station (Sandercock 2009, 126). In other words, the English-speaking descendants of settlers who had been living in the area were now unsettled as the area became attractive to new waves of newcomers.

The ‘white flight’ from Collingwood does not to imply that the remaining longtime residents were happy about the arrival of their new neighbours. In fact, tensions and oppositions between the previous residents and newcomers continued to exist, and provided one rationale for the development of a new Neighbourhood House in the area (Attili 2007). The opening of Collingwood Neighbourhood House in 1985 provided a place where individuals from different cultural backgrounds and mutual interests could gather and participate in activities. Like the socially engineered situation at Toynbee Hall in the late 19th century, these intercultural interactions organized around shared interests served to highlight the commonalities between different cultural groups. In turn, these activities allowed
participants to see past their assumptions about different groups, thereby promoting mutual respect and understanding.

5.3 “They look like real Canadians”: Language and race as defining features of citizenship

The 2007 film about Collingwood Neighbourhood House provides a glossy look at how longtime area residents and newcomers were positively affected by intercultural interactions facilitated via the Neighbourhood House model. Because my research project focuses primarily on the experiences of women participating in an employment and leadership skills program limited to immigrant women, I do not have a lot of data on the general interactions between native-born Canadians and newcomers at the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted my fieldwork. Rather, my observations of such interactions are limited to my attendance at intercultural dinners, and my time spent in the kitchens and hallways of the Neighbourhood Houses on the days that I attended the program sessions.

From these experiences, however, I can confidently state that I did not typically observe meaningful interactions between Neighbourhood House members who spoke English as a first language and members who spoke English as a second or additional language. What I most commonly observed were the people whom the Pathways to Leadership program participants described as “real Canadians” dropping their children off at the daycare programs that operated out of both Neighbourhood Houses. As I was entering the Neighbourhood Houses or helping to prepare coffee and snacks for the PtL sessions at Forest Lawn, I would see these parents pulling up in their vehicles, exiting the car (usually some mid-priced hatchback, like a Subaru or Mazda), unbuckling the child/children, and walking them into the Neighbourhood House. There, they would deposit the children in the room
labeled ‘Daycare’ and briefly speak to the other parents dropping off their children at daycare before promptly leaving the Neighbourhood House, presumably to go to work. In one instance, I observed two of these “real Canadian” mothers sitting at the bistro table in the lobby of Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House discussing Miele and Dyson vacuum cleaners. This conversation about $500 or more brand-name vacuum cleaners was novel enough to go into my fieldnotes because the topic of discussion highlighted the economic disparities between the different groups who make use of Neighbourhood House space and programs. I could hardly imagine any of the PtL program participants owning vacuums in that price-range, although I did not ask them specifically about it.

Informal conversations with Neighbourhood House staff indicated that the daycares provide a source of revenue, although it is important to note that sharing space is not the same as interacting. The Pathways to Leadership participants spoke about wanting more “Canadians” to participate in the Neighbourhood House programs that they themselves attended. One participant stated to the rest of the group that this was unlikely to happen, explaining that there are more programs at the Neighbourhood House for immigrants and that Canadians already know the information immigrants are still trying to learn. Holding the attention of the other program participants, this woman confidently explained how “Canadians come for daycare – I see them, and they look like real Canadians. We use the place to gather information, to do research, for networking. Canadians don’t use it for networking, they use it for services” (emphasis added). The remark “they look like real Canadians” highlights how the women participating in the Pathways to Leadership program perceived themselves as different from these other users of the Neighbourhood House who they saw as being ‘real Canadians.’
After the clarification about who uses the Neighbourhood House space and why, the participants shifted their attention to me and described me as a “real Canadian.” They were asking if the man I was dating at the time was also a “real Canadian” and whether he might be available to attend a Neighbourhood House event with me that weekend. Neeharika interrupted the women to state that we need to stop using the term “real Canadians.” She explained that the term is flawed because it suggests that the distinction between Canadians and immigrants is based on degrees of authenticity, realness and belonging, when in fact we are all immigrants because the land originally, truly belongs to the First Nations people who were here long before the Europeans arrived and called it ‘Canada.’ Neeharika’s point is well taken but I am not sure if it resonated with the women. As I will describe shortly, another tactic related to the payment of income taxes seemed to work as a definition of what it means to be a real Canadian and the terms that define the politics of belonging.

When Neeharika asked the PtL participants whom they perceived to be “real Canadians,” the women participating in the program described “real Canadians” as “Caucasians who speak without accents.” While this perception might be related to Canada’s history as a nation settled by the British and French, it may also reflect phenotypical notions of the relationship between race and citizenship that exist here and elsewhere in the world. For example, Sunhe (35, South Korea) described how her assumptions about race, immigration and citizenship status have changed since she migrated to Canada from Korea; particularly, Sunhe describes how she came to untangle her understanding of “Canadian” as meaning “Caucasian,” and to question her assumption that all non-“Caucasians” are newly-arrived or here temporarily as students:

Lots of people [of] different colours, they’re born here. But when I see just their appearance [when I first arrived], I only think, “Oh, you’re like immigrant, right? Or
you’re like students?” First when I got here I felt that way, right? When I talk to them they’re perfectly Canadian. They’re just Canadian, but [their skin] colour is different. That means their parents are born here, right? They’re educated here. So that was a very fresh experience for me because I realized oh, they’re like different people, different colour, but they still live together as Canadians. And like, yeah. That was actually a great experience. And then I thought, “Oh, okay. My mind is so narrow.” You know? I shouldn’t think that way. They’re the same people, right? Canadians. I shouldn’t narrow them out like you’re a Caucasian [so you are] Canadian. You don’t have to, right? We’re the same people.

Sunhe’s follow up statement about her experience returning to her home country of Korea after immigrating to Canada reflects why she may have held the notion that appearance reflects citizenship:

And it was so funny when I came back to Korea. It was so funny because everybody is Asian. Everybody is like me, right? Like here, it is so natural when I walk down the street and like I don’t really care – like their colour, their looks. I don’t really care because it’s just people on the street. And then I went away – when I went back to Korea, like everybody looks the same. That actually was weird. Same colour, hair colour, like, you know. That looks weird there. It was so funny.

Sunhe’s reflections highlight how her experience in South Korea led her to presume that Canadians would share a particular phenotypical profile but that over time she came to understand that people of “different colours” were as much “Canadian” as the “Caucasians” she saw on the streets. Coming from Korea, which has been a traditionally racially homogenous society, Sunhe assumed that “Caucasian” was the default definition of “Canadian” and that all others were temporary residents or newcomers.

While Neighbourhood Houses do provide a context for people from different groups to come together and participate in shared activities, language is once again critical. Some programs, such as the Spanish and Mandarin family drop-in programs, are language-specific in order to provide opportunities for non-English speakers to participate in community life. These programs can be comfortable places for “moms,” as the Neighbourhood House staff members describe them, to meet other women who speak their first language and to
encourage their children to learn their parents’ first language. As such, discussions within these programs tend to focus on parenting and childrearing. The Pathways to Leadership program was drastically different: instead of encouraging intracultural contact like the language-specific family drop-in programs, the PtL program encouraged participants to interact with women from different racial and ethnic groups, and to reflect on any pre-conceived notions they may hold about other ethnic or cultural groups. Then, participants were asked to consider how these stereotypes circulate in the broader context of Canadian society. Such discussions were important in demonstrating that stereotypes and discrimination do not exist ‘somewhere out there’ in society, but within each and every member of society. In turn, everyone is responsible for challenging her or his beliefs and encouraging others to do the same.

Through these discussions, women came to understand that their interest in interacting with “real Canadians” was based on pre-conceived ideas that “real Canadians” hold the cultural capital that PtL program participants desired for their own families, including, for example, access to higher paying jobs and insider knowledge about how to obtain these jobs, or information about how their children can gain admission and succeed in Canadian universities. And, even though they were eager to meet “real Canadians,” many of the PtL program participants had not previously attended multicultural programs. Instead, they had tended to participate in language-specific programs. As Nailea (55, Mexico) explained,

So for me, the first thing, and the [Pathways to Leadership] course helped me to do that, is to be aware of our own assumptions and our own behaviors. And to be able to accept the person that looks different than us. See the centre of them, and discover that we are exactly, exactly the same. So, it’s just to be brave and greet the person that looks so different and discover they are the same. But it’s not easy. We need to start from children and not make any kind of comments about Chinese, or Arabs or
Mexican. Sometimes we are laughing but those jokes are not good. Separating people. Continuously. So the course helped me to think, to reflect, to be aware that sometimes we feel comfortable with people that look like us and we don’t try enough. And when we try, we get the surprise that we are exactly the same!

Nailea’s openness about how the Pathways to Leadership program challenged her previous assumptions and behaviours toward people who “look different” demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach that asks participants to look inward and then outward to the broader society.

Similarly, Nira’s (32, Mexico) description of how she has changed since joining the Neighbourhood House and the Pathways to Leadership program is a direct illustration of Leonie Sandercock’s (2009, 119) explanation that newcomers’ involvement in Neighbourhood House activities promotes intercultural understanding:

I’m learning not to judge people before knowing them – ‘he’s from wherever, he’s like…’ and trying to get rid of that nationalism that can be really bad. I am at least working on myself and not talking in front of my daughter, like ‘oh because he’s from blank, he’s like this.’ Now, I don’t believe that there is a ‘good’ country with ‘good’ people because it doesn’t matter where people are from. I’m doing this with my daughter and family and hopefully other families are also working on their own thoughts. And being exposed, knowing more people – getting involved in more activities, that is what I am trying to do. I am not paying attention to where they are from or how they look.

Having been born and raised in Canada, where popular discourse tends to avoid explicitly discriminatory statements in favour of a façade that promotes a cautious form of inclusion under the umbrella of multiculturalism, I was surprised by program participants’ openness discussing the racist attitudes that they had both perpetuated and experienced. Like Nira, many of the women who spoke openly about challenging their race-based assumptions told me they were encouraging their husbands, children, and members of their extended families to reflect on their assumptions as well. These comments indicate that the PtL program
exercises that focused on challenging notions about who qualifies as a ‘real Canadian’ had profound and lasting effects on the program participants and their social networks.

Neighbourhood House staff also expressed surprise at PtL program participants’ open discussions about race and race-based discrimination. For example, Katherine, a Neighbourhood House staff member, described how attending the PtL program helped to develop her own political awareness:

I felt like I was one of the participants! I was listening, ‘Wow, it didn't occur to me that it was so severe.’ The systemic barriers – I didn't realize how very transparent they are. It's right there but I didn't see it […] I didn't realize there was so much segregation or racism or discrimination among workplaces with immigrant families. I did not realize. Lalala, [I was in] flower land, like ‘we're all one and we love each other’ and this and that. I didn't realize that people were still looking at people with colored skin. Do you know what I mean? I just didn't.

Katherine’s acknowledgement of her own personal growth came up after I asked her what she thought about a program activity focused on discussing and breaking down stereotypes. This exercise occurred about halfway through the program, when the participants were familiar with one another and trust had been established among the group. The discussion held during this session is illustrative of a number of issues, including: the importance of openly addressing race-based stereotypes and assumptions, especially among newcomers for whom multiculturalism and living in a diverse country might be a new experience; the strengths and weaknesses of the Neighbourhood House organization in relation to addressing racism and discrimination; and, finally, the ways in which these discussions promote leadership and a sense of citizenship among settlement program participants.

These three points are addressed in the following excerpts from my fieldnotes below, which I intersperse with my analysis of issues related to stereotypes, discrimination, and citizenship. The first excerpt introduces the exercise and the statements it generated:
During the mid-morning break, Neelika put flipchart paper up on the walls of the room where the program took place, and called the group back. She announced that we were going to discuss racism and stereotypes for the rest of the session. Neelika asked the women, “What is a stereotype?” Naomi answered, “It’s something you think about people.” Neelika pointed to the posters on the walls, and told the women “Write what you have heard about different groups on the posters.” Bea, a social work practicum student who had recently joined the program as a volunteer, told the women, “Just because you have heard it doesn’t mean you believe what you just heard,” which I assume was intended to give women the permission to be as honest as possible in writing down stereotypes on the walls.

The Pathways to Leadership participants took the few markers that we had in the room and went around writing things on the posters. The stereotypes that the women recorded on the flipchart posters were mostly the typical ones we see in the media and popular culture – blacks are good dancers, drug dealers, like to fight and are always high... First Nations are always drunk, rude, lazy, take money from the government, and like to fight... Asians are bad drivers, have clean houses, are family-oriented, and business people... women are beautiful, wives, dramatic, emotional, and caring... and so forth.

As someone born and raised in Canada, a nation that considers itself to be multicultural and inclusive even despite evidence to the contrary (as documented by Henry and Tator 2002), I found that this exercise made me uncomfortable because I was not familiar with being open about these mostly destructive and/or limiting stereotypes. Yet, I knew the value of the exercise; having been a volunteer and researcher in the Pathways to Leadership program for over a year and a half at the time it took place, I had spoken with enough participants like Sunhe to recognize that official multiculturalism and the experience of living among people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds was unfamiliar for many of the program participants.

Breaking down stereotypes of all varieties was critical to encouraging PtL program participants to blow open the ‘real Canadian’ stereotype, and to expand the conceptualization of who meets the definition of a Canadian citizen. One of the most shocking – but in retrospect unsurprising – experiences I had during the PtL program was when Neelika asked the participants at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House to put their hand in the air if
they considered themselves to be a Canadian citizen. Not a single woman – not even those women with legal Canadian citizenship status – put a hand up in the air. According to Neeharika, she repeated this exercise during each of the four cycles of the Pathways to Leadership program in order to begin a conversation that would encourage women to begin to view themselves as citizens of Canada. I was present for three out of four of these conversations – two at Forest Lawn and one at Crystal Pond. When asking this question in the context of the program that I observed at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, Neeharika followed-up by asking how many of the women and their families paid taxes in Canada. Despite not having put up their hands for the first question, nearly all of the women put up their hands in response to the second question.

Neeharika told the women that they are citizens if they are paying taxes and investing in Canada’s ability to operate as a nation-state. Such a definition of citizenship is reflective of Bourdieu’s (1998, 42) definition of the state as “the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital.” The payment of taxes is integral to the state’s ability to assert its sovereignty, in that “the institution of the tax […] stands in a relation of circular causality with the development of the armed forces necessary for the expansion and defense of the territory under control, and thus for the levying of tributes and taxes as well as for imposing via constraint the payment of that tax” (Bourdieu 1998, 43). Taxation supports the state’s monopoly over the use of physical force by generating the economic capital necessary for defense spending, and the symbolic capital gives rise to the populace’s perception of belonging to a larger collectivity.

Neeharika’s comment about how paying about taxes makes you a Canadian citizen led the
women to laugh and view their belonging and role in the nation-state and Canadian society from a different perspective. More specifically, it was lighthearted comment that highlighted the serious relationship between the legitimacy of official taxation and the rise of a form of national feeling among taxpayers, in that the collection of taxes is precisely what has allowed for the state’s construction and representation as a “unitary territory” (Bourdieu 1998, 45).

The statement that paying taxes makes you a Canadian citizen was particularly provocative for those women who, as described in the previous chapter, felt depressed about their inability to find work and serve as ‘productive’ members of society. The payment of taxes is one manner of submitting oneself and one’s family to the established order and to the state institutions that are vested with the physical and symbolic capital to both protect and punish. It is through this submission to the state, “the holder of a sort of metacapital granting power,” that individuals come to belong and gain access to forms of economic capital through employment and cultural capital through education (Bourdieu 1998, 42). From Neeharika’s framing of the notions of state and citizenship, the women could see how their households were contributing to the nation’s financial existence, therefore making them ‘shareholders’ to whom the government needed to be accountable even if they were not eligible to vote. Moreover, the program participants could see how their contributions allowed the Canadian government to provide “welfare” in the broad sense of being “a compound of material means and immaterial ends” as defined by Marshall (1965, 83). As Marshall (1965, 93) explains:

Welfare is only to a very limited extent the product of social services or of social policy. Its roots lie deep in the social and economic system as a whole […] The national wealth is produced and distributed by men [sic] exercising these rights within the framework of national institutions and national wealth is the material source of national welfare.
While this economic formulation of citizenship is not all-inclusive, as it does not speak to those participants who were receiving income assistance, it did serve to shift the meaning of “Canadian” from a definition based on skin tone, linguistic ability, and shared tradition to a definition based on a notion of shared rights, responsibilities, and government accountability for the management of national wealth.

John O’Neill (2004, 71) goes further in his discussion of the relationship between the civic welfare state and the household economy, stating that women in particular have been disadvantaged by the current configuration of the welfare regime in the nation state as a result of “unpaid family work [that] has trapped them in reduced welfare, based on the male breadwinner’s wage.” This relationship between the welfare state and the household economy is apparent in the fact that most women responded that their households were paying taxes even though only one or two of the women had part-time jobs; their husbands or partners were members of the paid workforce, while the women were largely working (to use Smith’s [2005] generous conception of the term) in the private and unpaid domestic sphere. Nonetheless, the tax-based economic relationship between their household and the state was one that most participants seemed to be able to identify with.

Shifting the definition of citizenship from racial to economic terms does not, however, challenge assumptions about the membership of different racial groups in Canada. Neeharika’s explanation of the relationship between taxes and citizenship helped participants reframe their understanding in order to begin viewing themselves and others as Canadians but it did not necessarily challenge the women’s assumptions about the racial and ethnic groups they encountered in their daily lives within and around Vancouver. The stereotype exercise was thus the next step in unpacking race-based notions of belonging and behaviour.
Taken together, these two exercises help to explain how participants like Nailea (55, Mexico), Nira (39, Mexico), and Katherine (Crystal Pond NH staff member) came to have a more expansive understanding of the race-based assumptions and systemic barriers that exist in multicultural Canada and the significant impact that their thoughts and behaviours can have on reproducing or challenging these ideas. Chiyo (34, Japan) explained in our interview how the program challenged her perspectives of who is and is not Canadian, and described how her new identity as Canadian has positively affected her assessment of her possibility of success in Canada:

I used to always say that I am not Canadian, they are Canadian. Like kind of divided myself. But now, I’m Canadian as well! Like Neelhaika told us, you are Canadian as well. Everybody is an immigrant! So, I stopped saying ‘Canadian’ and just saying ‘people’ like ‘those people who has racism’ or… yeah, so. I don’t know when I changed, but all of a sudden I changed. I keep coming to the courses and all of a sudden I saw – oh, there’s not much different between us. Yeah, just because we are immigrants doesn’t mean we can’t succeed or something. Lots of people also, yeah, succeed, as well. You just have to believe in yourself and focus on what you want to do and what you want to be.

Chiyo’s remarks and the stereotypes generated during the program exercise demonstrate the importance of recognizing that discourses of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusivity may be new for individuals migrating from countries that are more racially homogenous than Canada. Avoiding open discussions of issues related to race, ethnicity, and citizenship is to avoid challenging preconceived notions that may not be born out of learned discriminatory attitudes but that originate, at least in part, from a lack of awareness.

Yet, it can be challenging to participate in these discussions, as demonstrated by Katherine’s reaction to the stereotypes exercise:

*Katherine wasn’t in the room for the beginning of the stereotypes exercise. She joined us after the women had written the stereotypes on the flipchart paper and Neelhaika read out the stereotypes about Asians. Because Katherine was at the back of the room, Neelhaika asked her to read the ones about black people. Katherine started*
reading them, only to become all flustered and to start to walk out the door because she became so upset by the words she saw written on the sheets of paper posted on the wall. The women looked confused at her reaction. Katherine seemed horrified at the exercise and at being asked to read out these words, which were largely negative and harmful stereotypes. Katherine stopped before fully exiting the room and Neeharika asked the women, “Are these true?” Nikki answered, “Yes, some.” Surprised, Neeharika said, “Really?! Show me one!” Nikki read off of one poster, “Women are beautiful.” Everyone laughed and Neeharika said “Yes, women are beautiful!” Returning to the point she had intended to make, however, Neeharika asked the women: “Where do you hear these stereotypes?” Alice said she heard them on the bus, and other women said they heard them at work, on Facebook, and from our families.

Neeharika asked the women, “what’s surprising to you about these things on the wall?” Katherine, still unclear about the purpose of the exercise and uncomfortable, asked, “Were the instructions to write good or bad stereotypes?” Neeharika replied by stating that she had asked the women “just to write stereotypes.” Katherine said that she was surprised that most of the stereotypes are negative. Estelle said that it was probably because the positive is always there but we focus on the negative. Estelle went on to explain how “First Nations are occasionally drunk on the bus so we [my daughter and I] avoid them. But sometimes they are friendly and we talk to them on the bus even when they are drunk but my daughter can smell the alcohol and asks me what it is.” Neeharika asked the group: “What happens when you see something two or three times?” The group didn’t say anything, so she answered her own question by saying “It reinforces your assumptions [about a group of people].”

Katherine’s discomfort and reaction to this exercise surprised both Neeharika and the women participating in the program. The disconnection between Neeharika’s facilitation of this session and Katherine’s reaction to the exercise is representative of their different backgrounds and roles within the Neighbourhood House. Neeharika, an independent consultant who migrated to Canada in her twenties and facilitated the Pathways to Leadership program as a self-employed consultant on an extended contract, is very outspoken about the reality of racism and discrimination in Canada. She credits her outspokenness about the systemic barriers facing immigrant women to her own lived experience in Canada as a woman of colour. In our one-on-one interview, I asked her what bothers her the most about traditional settlement programs:
I think when people are asked to fit in, that bothers me the most. Like when people are asked to change because either they are not sufficiently English, or whatever word you want to use, or sufficiently integrated. I sometimes used to think – I've moved away from that thought – that this is all organized, like strategic, to have immigrants who are highly educated to do the low-paid jobs because there's an assumption that if you're educated you'll be less likely to be doing crime [at the job]. I think there's a strong assumption […] and I really got fed up. I said, ‘This is just a game of either protecting an agency, or an association, or a licensing body.’ I don't think there's any authenticity in wanting this to change, because it would be done by now.

Neeharika had worked for the United Nations in India and migrated to Canada in her mid-twenties with a Master’s degree. Despite her experiences and credentials, she was unable to find more than survival employment in Canada. Her first job in Canada was in a warehouse for a women’s fashion retailer, an experience that she summarized in our one-on-one interview by stating: “In that eight months—I think it was probably my biggest learning curve because I saw everything I thought I would never see [in Canada]—humiliation, disrespect, exploitation, and there was no heat—and it was my first winter [in Canada].” In response to this treatment by their employer, Neeharika and another employee called the Employment Standards branch of the Ministry of Labour. Officers from the Employment Standards branch conducted an inspection of the warehouse that resulted in a number of recommendations that improved the working conditions for the mostly non-English speaking women employed at the warehouse. This activism is particularly impressive in that it was Neeharika’s first job in Canada. However, it is only one of many impressive actions and initiatives she has led since then.

Katherine, on the other hand, migrated to Canada as a child and could very easily pass for what the program participants described as a “real Canadian.” Like many of the staff I interviewed at the Neighbourhood House, Katherine was less politically-oriented than Neeharika. Neeharika aimed to raise women’s awareness of the systemic barriers, such as
linguistic discrimination and the licensing regulations instituted by professional associations, that were affecting their labour market prospects. Neighbourhood House staff were less likely to use terms like “women of colour” and more likely to draw on individual-level discourses of self-empowerment and resiliency. That said, however, staff participation in the Pathways to Leadership program better equipped them to deal with observed instances of racism and discrimination. As Rebecca, a staff member at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House, explained:

“...I will not tolerate anything in this house when any family comes up to me and speaks of another family because of their race, I will shut it down immediately. It does happen within the House as well. I try to help people see their own words and try to reflect it back to them so they can understand what they’ve just said is harmful.

When I asked whether this stance was new for her, she stated, “It’s not new, but just hearing it more casually, that’s the impact it has had on me, the political aspect [of telling people it is not acceptable and why]. Yeah.” Rebecca’s statement can be understood in conjunction with Katherine’s newfound awareness of the impact of systemic barriers and how racist and discriminatory attitudes can be perpetuated unintentionally but with effects that are nonetheless harmful. Each highlights the transformative impact of the Pathways to Leadership program for Neighbourhood House staff as well as the Neighbourhood House members who participated in the program.

That said, a staff member at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House was frustrated with Neetharika’s politicized discussions of the structural barriers facing the women who were participating in the program. As Serena explained to me in our interview:

“I think that it's okay to talk to women about women of color. I think that it's okay to talk to women about your rights and that people will discriminate. But to me that conversation has a limit. I think that we've also got to tell women that it's okay. Even though you're a woman of color, you're still beautiful, and you still can do it. [...] Some people are so critical of that [the system] and they'll say ‘Well, maybe they're
[the Executive Directors] in a position of power because they're white. They're in a position of power because they were born here and they're white and they have no accent. You know they are privileged?’ Yes, and hey, I'm also privileged. I am privileged. How many women like me have had the chance to go to university to do a Master's degree, now to have a job? That even though I'm not the Director, I get paid well. I have good hours. I get some great benefits by being here.

Serena acknowledged that discrimination exists in Canada but she did not share Neeharika’s interest in searching for structural solutions. Rather than focusing on the privileges of others, Serena chose to focus on being grateful for the privileges she has enjoyed and accomplishments she has achieved since arriving in Canada from South America. Serena dismissed structural changes in favour of ongoing self-improvement, and the use of love instead of anger:

I've seen people angry, frustrated, ‘Oh, I'm never going to do this.’ Or ‘Because of my color, because –’ It's like, okay, stop, stop, stop. You can't change this. I can't change it. I cannot change the way I look. I can only change the way I feel. I can only change my skills. I can build my skills. I could be better. I can improve on what I am doing, never ending improvement in life, never ending improvement. I think it’s about teaching, about helping people open their minds about those possibilities. But if they start with ‘Oh, because of the way you look, or because of your accent, or because of this, people will treat you like that.’

How long do you think I want to deal with these problems? What do you think will be my state of mind when I've got to challenge somebody being this discriminatory or racist towards me? What about if you believe that we are all equal, and that I have the equal assets as you, and they're really because of simple ambition, then you know what I'm going to tell you? I'm going to tell you: 'We live in an equal society here. I should have equal access. There is no reason why you should be acting like this.' You know what I mean? When we act angry, doors close, your mind shuts down, even your enemy goes like, ‘Ah, can't hear her.’ You can't hear me, you automatically shut down. You can't hear me. I can't hear you. That's what I tell my kids too.

But if you come in from love, you're more likely to go and maybe even just listen, just for the heck of it. Maybe she has something here that I could learn from. And I'm coming from ‘You know what? I'm not your enemy. You are not my enemy. The system is my enemy. The system is your enemy because the system is making you continue to believe that you're privileged, that you're this, that you're that and continue to make me believe that I'm not privileged. That I am a woman of color and that I am blah, blah, blah.’ So to me, anger divides us and does not let us collaborate for the greater good.
The idea that the “system” and discrimination within the current social structure can be challenged by a change in personal perspective and through the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal communication relies on a worldview that posits the “system” as existing independently of individually-held beliefs and attitudes. This perspective is counter to the internal reflection and change that Neeharika encouraged participants to engage in throughout the course, as described above.

Serena’s distinction between micro-level interactions and the macro-level system is an example of what Smith (2005, 58) describes as the “perennial problem in sociological thinking”: the gap between the “individuated subject” and the “reification of the social in an externalized society or social system.” The “missing sociological piece,” as Smith (2005, 59) terms it, can be addressed by researchers who aim to explicate and map out how “people’s activities or practices are co-ordinated” (emphasis in original). The exercise of naming stereotypes, discussing where they come from, and why they circulate is one example of explicating and mapping how these practices are co-ordinated and what can be done to prevent them from circulating further. Challenging institutionalized discrimination almost always includes challenging individually held beliefs and attitudes. Bypassing uncomfortable discussions about stereotypes, privilege and oppression, however, allows for conversations that do not introduce conflict into interpersonal relationships.

As upbeat spaces oriented towards building welcoming communities and embracing members’ strengths, Neighbourhood Houses generally offer a respite from politically charged discussions, resistance to which is observable in both Katherine and Serena’s comments. While Katherine came to see the value of conversations that openly address racist and discriminatory beliefs, Serena did not shift her position. To some extent, I could
understand Serena’s resistance: she has been in Canada and engaging in these conversations for a number of years. From this perspective it made sense when she explained “I get tired just to think about it. If I think about it, I'm tired.” It is also worth noting that Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House is located in an area with higher levels of poverty and disadvantage as compared to Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House. As a frontline staff member who works closely with women and families, many of whom are in crisis (as I observed during my fieldwork), it is not surprising that Serena is less interested in structural issues and more inclined to discuss the power of positive thinking and personal ambition.

Geared towards finding shared interests and common ground, and often limited by funding agreements that explicitly forbid advocacy work, Neighbourhood House staff members do not typically wade into waters of activism. However, my interview transcripts and fieldnotes indicate that most participants found these discussions to be eye-opening and valuable, particularly if they had internalized their difficulties in Canada as the result of personal failure. For example, Jennifer (35, Peru), a woman married to a Canadian man that she met while he was working in her country, told me at the end of our interview:

I enjoyed it [the program]. Because I learned something new. I like to meet more people. And I feel better, because sometimes I think, oh, I am the only one feeling this is hard, this does not happen to other people, but now I know this is not true, no? My experience is the same one as it is for other women. And sometimes women who have a lot of years here, but [are still] feeling lost here. So I am not in that situation [after taking the program].

The fact that Jennifer described her integration process as challenging and isolating despite being married to a Canadian man highlights the extent to which the settlement process is likely exacerbated for families where both adults are newcomers. One of the most surprising themes to emerge from the program evaluation was the number of participants who expressed how the program helped them to understand that they were not alone in the
difficulties they had faced since arriving to Canada. Open discussions about institutional gaps and barriers demonstrably helped participants to better understand what they were feeling and why they were feeling that way.

It must be acknowledged, however, that these discussions were at times difficult for some of the participants, as my interview with Katherine revealed:

Heather: As someone who works so closely with families and with women, what have you seen as being the impact of Pathways with women that participate in the program?

Katherine: I think the closer relationships between the women. And because it's so multicultural, it was good for women to see other women from different countries and what was happening and understanding – publically realizing – that they are not alone. As women, all women are going through the same thing. Women spoke about their husbands or whatever limits, or maybe issues from back home or whatever barriers they're facing now. It's not necessarily about being them coming from a specific culture or background but because they're women of color and learning that we're all doing this.

Heather: When you spoke a little bit earlier about how for some women it's a real mind awakening for them, and they're struggling with the new content that they're learning. Has that been something that you've actually had conversations about with women?

Katherine: Yeah. There are some women that cannot handle the situation. They just pull out because it was overwhelming. It was too much. They might be going through some kind of trauma in their lives and they can't handle the intensity. It's too much. I think they want to be with other women but not at this level. So we've had a couple women pull out. They just want to cook. They just want to focus on their baby and their family, not necessarily get into that level of a thought-provoking program. Maybe they don't want to, because they don't want to know.

Katherine’s description of the thought-provoking and challenging nature of the course content emphasizes how revolutionary these kinds of interactions and ideas could be for some of the women who were more accustomed to coming to the Neighbourhood House to learn about parenting or cooking. Program participants who had been coming to the Neighbourhood House before registering for the PtL program had more established
relationships with Katherine and the other Neighbourhood House staff members than they did with Neelarika, Marta (the UBC Social Work student), or myself, so it makes sense that they would be more comfortable discussing program-related issues with the Neighbourhood House staff.

In turn, it makes sense that Neighbourhood House staff spoke less about the importance of making political change and more about the importance of supporting women where they are at, and being sensitive to the personal challenges they may be facing. As Katherine explained in our interview (emphasis mine):

For the women, I can see that there are all kinds of levels of readiness. With the first round of Pathways, there were some women very much ready to go forward and make change, but for some women it's a very scary thing to do. [...] They're not alone. They too are going through a series of thoughts. I'm sure it's going a million miles a minute, their thoughts about their family, their background, their land that they've left, their current situation, their husbands. Lots is running through their heads. Some, it might just be enough to move them to go forward while they're in the program, but for others they might need a little bit of contemplation about what has just happened [in their lives]. We don't know everything. We just know what it is that they share [with us]. What we don't know is so much more than what we do know. It's none of our business to know unless they want to share. While they're receiving and going through the program, many things are happening to them internally. It's very personal.

The emphasis I have added to Katherine’s statement demonstrates Neighbourhood House staff members’ inclination to protect the women participating the program. Katherine’s discussion about women’s varying levels of readiness for the program content and the need for program facilitators, researchers, and other stakeholders to be cognizant of personal issues and situations that women may not necessarily share provides a sense of the delicacy with which Neighbourhood House staff may treat members. Neighbourhood House staff members’ empathy demonstrated the extent to which they cared about participants’ holistic sense of wellbeing. The women participating in the PtL program remarked that the
Neighbourhood House staff, program facilitators, Marta, and I treated them with more individualized attention than they had received in other settlement service agencies or government offices.

Neighbourhood House staff members’ sense of caution about women’s readiness to participate in the program and the possibility of unearthing trauma was apparent to me even before the first cycle of the program began. After conducting the first pre-program evaluation interview at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House in 2012, I received a cautionary email from Serena that was addressed to me but carbon copied to all members of the Pathways to Leadership project Advisory Committee. The email read:

Heather: All the best. Only hope that the interviews are not so intense that it is overwhelming to them [the PtL program participants] at a personal level – particularly because you have not so much rapport yet with them. Please make sure to leave them on a positive note as you wrap up the interview session. We need them to feel that this program will help them get stronger and clear about “how to” achieve their goal. Take care.

I followed up with Serena to ask whether the woman I had interviewed had approached her with feedback or concerns and she said that the program participant had not approached her but that she had her own concerns about the tone of the discussion after reading through the list of questions that had been approved by the Advisory Committee prior to that first interview. Despite being sent the questions in advance, Serena had not discussed these concerns prior to the interview.

While this email had bothered me deeply at the time – largely because all of the members of the Advisory Committee were included on it and it seemed as though it was directly in response to the first interview that had been conducted – my prolonged immersion at the Neighbourhood Houses exposed me to the narratives of trauma, domestic violence, and suffering that the staff bore witness to on a daily basis. I came to understand why
Neighbourhood House staff were so sensitive to what they may not know about program participants, and why they wished to avoid adding even more challenges to their lives. The protective comments from staff at both Neighbourhood Houses also indicated that the political orientation and content of the Pathways to Leadership program was unlike most other programs at the Neighbourhood House.

Yet, participants spoke openly about the discrimination they faced in Canada and while travelling in the United States, and seemed to welcome the opportunity to debrief with other participants about the ways in which they had been made to feel they were not citizens as a result of their phenotypical profiles. The stereotype exercise described above began as an activity to interrogate their own race- and gender-based assumptions but quickly transformed into a conversation about the race-based assaults they had experienced. This long fieldnote excerpt shows (rather than tells) how this conversation unfolded:

Next, Neeharika asked the women, “What do you do when you hear a stereotype?” Neve said, “People think that because we are nannies, our homes are clean.” Neeharika replied, “Yes, and people think that because I am South Asian, I can make samosas, but I can’t!!” and the group laughed. Alice said, “Now I understand stereotypes, after this exercise! People think that all Filipinas are nannies. I live with my boyfriend, and when I am in the elevator people ask me, ‘Do you work here?’ and I say, ‘No! I live here!’”

Neeharika passed around the handout and asked the women to read it at home. She said that she uses a lot of the language from this handout and that it will be common in other non-government organizations. Neeharika read the definition of stereotype from the handout and then went to the flipchart and drew the iceberg. Neeharika said, “This is an iceberg... Well what an iceberg looks like, but we know they are rapidly melting [because of climate change] and if you want to see a good documentary on climate change, watch Chasing Ice.” Everyone laughed, and I laughed the hardest, appreciating her precocious personality. Neeharika looked at Sunhe and said, “When I see Sunhe, I see black hair and I might think she looks Asian. But what can we not see when we look at someone?” The women called out things like feelings, values, personality, skills, education, beliefs, race, culture, faith, and religion, and Neeharika wrote these words below the ‘water line’ on her drawing of the iceberg floating the ocean. Neeharika nodded and said, “When we stop at the person’s appearance with stereotypes, we never go below the surface of the iceberg.” She asked the women,
“How often do you see relationships between First Nations and immigrants, or Caucasians and First Nations? Why do we hardly see these relationships?” No one said anything, so Neeharika went on to say, “But when we build these relationships, we see oh my god, this is amazing!”

Folding the flipchart paper to a blank page, Neeharika said we would work through an example. At the top of the page, she wrote: “youth are irresponsible.” Underneath, she wrote out the six steps that lead people to believe stereotypes: “1) You hear a stereotype; 2) This stereotype leads you to a generalized assumption about a group of people; 3) This stereotype heightens your awareness of new experiences that reinforce the experiences you’ve already had; 4) These experiences justify your belief that this group of people deserves different treatment; 5) These beliefs and treatments lead to excluding people; and 6) This treatment ultimately results in institutionalized rules and regulations.”

The women didn’t seem so engaged in the diagram outlining how stereotypes come to exist but instead offered interesting examples throughout the discussion. Alice told a story about working at Kingsgate Mall when two First Nations women came into the store. She said that the store was messy and so she was tidying things around the women, and overheard the customers say, “She is following us around because she thinks we are stealing.” Alice said that before the women left the store, she called them over and said, “I was treating you that way because it is how I treat all of my customers, not because I thought you were stealing, you understand?” Neeharika said that it was because many stores do have policies of following around First Nations and watching them for stealing. Alice said that her store definitely did not have that policy. Estelle told us about a trip to Las Vegas to visit her husband’s family and her experience staying at a fancy, expensive hotel. She explained that even though she hated wearing a bathing suit, she told herself that she would “be normal,” put on a bathing suit, and go to the pool. She said that when she got there she felt as though all of the Americans, by which I assume she meant white people, were staring at her in her bathing suit. She described them as “freaky people all staring at me, thinking that I should be cleaning or serving them, and that Mexicans are only cooking, cleaning or serving, not swimming at the pool.” She said that her uncle worked at the hotel and he could see the people staring at her and so he brought her over some drinks “to relax the tension.” She said that she doesn’t usually drink but because she felt so self-conscious she started drinking. Estelle explained that this helped her feel more relaxed but she could still “feel the Americans staring” at her. She said that she never told her husband, who is Middle Eastern, what had happened and that when he came to meet her at the pool she told him she just wanted to go. She joked that she told her husband that the next time they vacationed in Las Vegas “I didn’t want to stay at the fancy hotel but at a different hotel where everyone is brown!”

Neeharika went on to talk about how when people get in power they can sometimes internalize racism, and think “They [recent immigrants] need to work hard for 20 years because that’s what I had to do,” or “I’m only going to talk to brown people
because those are the only people I feel comfortable talking to.” Neeharika described these thoughts as “buying into what the system wants to teach.” Neeharika talked about how there are rules that execute this exclusion, going back to Alice’s example of the First Nations women and store policies aimed toward specific racial groups. Neeharika said that the scariest thing is that when these stereotypes become institutionalized and even the smartest people start believing them. She concluded by stating that change only comes when people organize and advocate for it, saying, “It takes collective work to change these categories.”

Estelle’s (44, Mexico) experience had occurred in the United States, a country with a distinct discourse about “illegal aliens” and undocumented Mexican workers (Nevins 2002; Sundberg 2008). Yet, the guests’ perception Estelle reports observing – that is, her sense that the other guests thought she should be working in the tourism and hospitality sector instead of enjoying it – reflect broader assumptions about occupational siloes for ethnic groups. Nira (39, Mexico) and Roxanna (40, Mexico) also described how occupational stereotypes about Mexicans affected their employment in Canada. As Nira told me:

And the stereotype – especially because my first job was to take care of a senior couple and clean their house, and my husband is doing renovation, painting their house. And I can say Mexican or Latino peoples are like, stereotypes, in those kinds of fields. And, when I said, “Oh we have an education back home,” it was not a big deal. I didn’t know how to present in a better or proper way our back-home educations. I learned from Pathways that I could say “I have international education” or “international experience.” You know, to change some words to make it sound more strong. I learned that in the program. [English] Language and stereotypes are for me some kind of barriers to getting what I want.

Like Nira and Estelle, Alice’s (38, Philippines) example about being asked in her own apartment building about whether she works there – the assumption being that she is a domestic worker of some variety – show that occupational stereotypes based on race and ethnicity are not isolated to one group, but persist across different groups.

Participants also reported more explicit forms of race-based aggression in Canada. For example, Neve (39, Philippines) told the group at Crystal Pond about how she had been at a bus stop to take her son to swimming lessons when a white woman approached and
asked her if she was her son’s nanny or mother. Neve said that she told the woman that she was his mom, and the woman replied by asking Neve multiple times why her son was white and telling her that she should have married someone from her own race. Neve said the woman was becoming increasingly angry towards her and her son and starting to yell at them and that she had to cover her son’s ears because he was becoming upset as well. Neve described how the woman told her to “take her son from here” and “go back to where she came from.” Neve reported that she was dumbfounded and completely shocked at this level of anger from a stranger, and that she asked the woman, “What’s your problem?” to which the woman replied, “Asian women are taking white men’s money.” This accusation, as awful as it is on the surface, was even more disturbing to Neve, since the men who had fathered her two children were white but had caused her nothing but financial and emotional grief as a result of abuse that required the intervention of the Ministry of Family and Children Development.

Neve stated that the bus arrived at that point and she urged her son to board. The woman followed them on and continued to yell at them, stating “Asian people are taking all of our men,” and telling Neve that her son was ugly. Neve’s son had started to cry, saying he did not want to go to the pool and that he just wanted to go home. According to Neve, the bus driver and passengers intervened by telling the woman that her behaviour was unacceptable. The bus driver pulled over and told the woman that she had to leave the bus. After the woman left the bus, the other passengers told Neve that her children were gorgeous and how they were sorry she had to experience that woman’s behaviour. Neve’s son, however, told Neve, “I hate that lady,” to which Neve had to explain how she and her son would meet new people everyday, including racist people, and how “we need to respect the woman because
she is old and we do not know what is happening for her at the moment. Instead of hating her, we need to pray for her because there is something bad in her heart.” Neve told the group that she also instructed her son about what to do if they saw the woman again, telling him not to look at her and to smile, but explained how she felt so much anger inside of herself about how she and her son had been treated. Sadly, however, Neve told the group, “This is the real world for us Asians,” and the other participants, including Estelle, Naomi, Cara, Alice, Shirley nodded, indicating that they had experienced similar attacks while in public. It is telling that when I asked Naomi (38, Japan) in our one-on-one interview about her experience with racism, she looked down very uncomfortably and quietly said to me, “Those kind of things really – it’s not easy to talk about,” prompting us to move on to the next question.

Neeharika drew from Neve’s situation to describe overt and covert forms of racism, explaining that Neve’s experience had been an example of overt racism since the woman was explicit in saying race-based discriminatory remarks. Neeharika noted that a case like Neve’s could be a human rights case and encouraged the PtL participants to collect witness information and to write down the details if they experience something similar. Neeharika praised Neve’s ability to see beyond her hurt to feel compassion for the woman and turn what happened into a learning experience for her son. Neeharika also explained how such a situation could be used to teach children about colonialism and racism in the history of Canada by providing an example of when a man got mad at her in a parking lot and told Neeharika to “go back to where she came from,” to which she replied by asking the man “come back here, sir – what country are you from? This land only belongs to the First
Nations,” to which he replied, “What?!” Neelharika said that she finished by telling him “You are old but not wise… and you are close to the grave, so learn fast!”

While the last bit of Neelharika’s story lightened the mood, she was also making the point to the women that they did not need to tolerate abuse because they should respect their elders, as Neve had instructed her son. Neelharika was also making the point that the women were as much citizens of Canada as the settlers who tell racialized, visible minority immigrants to ‘go back to where they came from.’ The conversation did not end there, however. Anna (33, Mexico), asked Neelharika and the group:

What do you do when aggressive people use bad words? One woman called me a ‘b’ [bitch] and almost hit me in front of my kids after I honked at her to move her van so that I could get by her, because she was blocking the lane front of the rink to talk to another parent. She came up to me in the rink, yelling at me and telling me to go back to my place [country]. I was scared to go back to the ice rink without my husband after that.

Naomi echoed Anna’s question, and explained how she had experienced a similar incident when her neighbours banged on her door while yelling racial remarks. Naomi explained how she had to call the police and that the neighbours did not leave her doorstep until the police came and told them to leave. Cara (45, Vietnam) followed up by saying that she had experienced racist remarks from First Nations youth on Commercial Drive, who she said yelled at her “you ugly Chinese, go back and get off my land!” Complicating the issue even further, Cara described witnessing other children’s racist behaviour towards her children in the schoolyard. Neelharika stated that the expression of racist remarks by First Nations’ people needs to be dealt with separately from racist behaviour from white people in that First Nations face “internalized oppression” and “different politics because of history.”

Moving the focus away from aggressions PtL program participants had experienced and back to their own sense of belonging, foreignness, and citizenship, Neelharika again
asked the group how many people identified as Canadian citizens. Again, not a single woman put up her hand. Neeharika told the women “you have to claim your Canadian citizenship because until you do, you cannot make changes to the fabric of society. You have to see this place as your home.” In response to Neeharika’s question about citizenship, Sunhe had asked the group which nation they cheer for in the Olympics and the women mostly answered that they cheered for a mix between their home countries and Canada, with Sunhe saying that “I don’t feel I belong in Canada, even though I am a citizen.” Neeharika replied that feeling like a citizen requires “a partnership from the other side in your relationship with Canada – when you feel valued, your alliance will come,” explaining how it took her 12 years to feel like a citizen. By stating that women needed to claim their Canadian citizenship in order to make claims on Canadian society, Neeharika was offering an argument in support of Nancy Fraser’s (2013, 192–193) three-dimensional theory of justice that incorporates “the political dimension of representation, alongside the economic dimension of distribution and the cultural dimension of recognition.”

5.4 “They’re not alone across communities”: Fostering a sense of representation and belonging through ‘civic engagement projects’

The Pathways to Leadership program participants’ reactions to questions about citizenship and their definitions of what it means to be Canadian demonstrate that feeling a sense of citizenship is not automatic and may not occur even if someone has been in Canada for two decades, as Estelle (44, Mexico) had been. It is clear that this process is deeply personal and extends beyond the legal dimension of citizenship as the right to vote in Canada: several participants told me that they do not believe they will ever feel ‘Canadian’ and that they justify their decision to accept this outsider status of non-belonging based on
hope that their children will enjoy a “better life” in Canada. How do newcomers become citizens in a way that goes beyond legal definitions and extends into a shared sense of belonging to the nation? How can settlement services and the receiving society enhance newcomers’ sense of belonging so that the process can occur at all and occur more quickly?

Alternatively, is citizenship in the fullest sense – defined here as social, political, and economic belonging – required for newcomers to experience wellbeing in the country? One of the most intriguing questions I heard during my fieldwork came from a participant at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House. Early into the program at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, Isa (31, Peru) asked, “Is it important that we feel Canadian if we were raised somewhere else?” Most of the other participants did not pay much heed to the question and the facilitator’s answer – that having a sense of Canadian identity is a sign that you feel welcome and integrated – only provoked more questions for me. Can one feel welcomed and integrated without identifying as Canadian? Is true multiculturalism accepting that people will not always come to feel Canadian? That most of the other participants largely dismissed her question seemed to indicate that feeling Canadian was important to most of the women participating in the program and something they either aspired to or wished they felt. From a broader perspective, Fraser’s (2013, 199) three-dimensional theory of justice shows the tremendous value of political representation in terms of challenging economic and cultural injustices, in that individuals without a political voice “are unable to articulate and defend their interests with respect to distribution and recognition, which in turn exacerbates their misrepresentation.”

The Pathways to Leadership Advisory Committee recognized the importance of fostering a sense of belonging among PtL program participants, even if the women were not
eligible for legal citizenship and representation as voting subjects. By focusing on the social element of citizenship, defined as being an active participant in one’s neighbourhood and city, the Pathways to Leadership program highlighted alternative forms of civic engagement and representation in Canada. In my interview with Tamara, herself an immigrant from England and an accomplished consultant on foreign credential recognition and the workplace integration of internationally trained professionals in Vancouver, she highlighted how the Pathways Program intended to contribute to the development of participants’ sense of citizenship in Canada (emphasis hers):

I'd say Pathways, to me, is settlement, because it connects people to resources and knowledge about resources and sets up a network and builds a sense of belonging and connects to community. It steps into citizenship building because of that engagement in community. It's not just connection to community. It's *engagement*. Then it's also about employment. It's saying, "Let's assess what your strengths and weaknesses are, what your skills are. Let's marry that with what you want to do and can do. What are the steps to get there?" That's employment.

Tamara’s definition of settlement as building a sense of belonging and connection to community is noteworthy: such a definition goes beyond the basic sense of settlement as the ability to secure housing and a job, and to open a bank account or navigate other institutional structures. Tamara, Francine, and Neeharika had worked together on projects and issues related to immigration, employment, race, and gender for almost two decades. With Francine, Tamara volunteered her time to help with planning and evaluating the program that Neeharika was delivering. Together, their experience and expertise helped the Advisory Committee to keep in mind the larger political and social justice goals of the Pathways to Leadership program, as alluded to in Tamara’s comment about citizenship building through community engagement and how these activities connect to meaningful employment. For Francine, Tamara, and Neeharika, citizenship-building and “participatory parity” are key to
challenging the misrepresentation that viewed the concept of citizenship-building in the context of the Pathways to Leadership program as one that began at the level of the neighbourhood, then the city, and, finally, at the level of the nation-state. Grasping the idea of ‘Canadian’ citizenship at the level of the nation-state is more nebulous than grasping the idea of citizenship at the level of the local community, where participants could see the tangible outcomes of their efforts to engage with their neighbours. Becoming active in the local community, then, can be seen as a starting point for greater participation in other institutions of civic life.

Tamara’s emphasis on engagement highlights how the Pathways to Leadership program connects participants’ community involvement to employment by way of supporting their development of leadership skills through ‘civic engagement’ projects. Throughout this dissertation, I have provided examples of how the women who immigrated to Canada and participated in the PtL program experienced injustice in the three dimensions of justice Fraser (2009, 16-18) outlines: the women experienced maldistribution through policy structures that impeded their economic standing by barring them from the labour market; they experienced misrecognition, through “institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing” of status related to their international education and work experience; and finally, they experienced misrepresentation, defined as the political dimension of justice that denies some people “the possibility of participating on par with others in social interaction.” For the purposes of conceptual clarity, Fraser (2013, 199) defines these dimensions as distinct ideal-types but acknowledges that they are intertwined in the practice of everyday life, as Tamara’s comment demonstrates.
Program participants’ experiences of maldistribution and misrecognition, the dimensions of injustice related to gendered immigration policies and professional licensing requirements that have prevented the women from participating in the labour market to the extent they anticipated prior to immigration, are linked above all to the dimension of misrepresentation in the political sphere. This injustice is especially relevant for those women who were not yet permanent residents and who were therefore diminished in terms of their economic earning power, social and legal status, and political participation in Canada. “Engagement,” on the other hand, offers one possibility for relaunching and reclaiming these dimensions, as Tamara explained to me (emphasis hers):

“This is where we used to have...in early settlement stuff, there was a lot of stuff about citizenship. There was a lot about engaging people in community, engaging people in the political discourse and all this stuff. But I think we lost ground on that. It’s shifted away from engagement and community, being a part of community. I think that’s why people have become more balkanized and connect only with their community. The power of Pathways and similar programs has been in connecting people across cultures for people to see that they’re not alone. Not that they’re not just alone in their own community, but they’re not alone across communities. In the past it was about not just connecting people to community but engaging them... Really, Neighborhood Houses have been carrying that banner much more than immigrant-serving agencies have. I’m not saying this is either/or, but I think Neighborhood Houses have engaged individuals more in community successfully and continue to do so. To me, they are citizenship programs in the old sense of the word.

Developing ‘citizenship’ by encouraging participants to recast their perception of belonging in Canada by supporting them to take on leadership roles was a key objective of the Pathways to Leadership program and its physical and philosophical location in Neighborhood Houses. The distinguishing feature between immigrant-serving agencies and Neighborhood Houses, as Tamara highlights, is the depth of engagement the respective organizations offer. While immigrant-serving agencies are more focused on helping newcomers to secure basic needs such as shelter and access to economic resources, either
through employment or navigating the requisite government processes for obtaining social assistance, Neighbourhood Houses view service provision as an entry-point rather than an ultimate objective. Newcomers, and particularly mothers, tend to frequent Neighbourhood Houses after their immediate needs have been met.

Understanding the trajectory of how newcomers access settlement services helps to explain why the PtL program was conceptualized and delivered as a more intensive and demanding employment skills programs compared to those offered at the larger immigrant-serving agencies. For example, program participants were told upon registration that they would be expected to attend all of the 16 three-hour classroom sessions of the program and complete an additional three hours of independent work per week. Participants had to sign off on this commitment to spend six hours per week for 16 weeks on PtL program tasks before the Neighbourhood House employee would finalize their registration. While there were no penalties for not completing assignments, participants reported that the additional work contributed to their transformation and success in the program. As Akira (38, Japan), a participant who had completed another employment and leadership skills program prior to the PtL program, explained to me, “it [Pathways to Leadership] was different. It’s more up to you – you do homework, and you research and you think about yourself and you gain more. I think the answer – it is in you. Facing myself is sometimes tough. But it was a very good opportunity for me.” Advisory Committee members expected PtL participants to have completed other employment or training programs, to be ready for a curriculum that pushed them to identify their skills, strengths, and interests that could be mobilized in the labour market, and to apply these personal assets to volunteer and employment-related projects in the community.
Belonging and participation cannot be taught in the same way that a facilitator might share techniques for conducting an informational interview. Therefore, in addition to exercises related to planning and seeking employment, a large component of the Pathways to Leadership program involved supporting participants to plan and develop ‘civic engagement’ projects that would see them leading change in their own communities. My fieldnotes from the first program session at Forest Lawn illustrate how the concept of civic engagement was new to the participants:

*Neeharika also discussed the public speaking aspect of the course, and introduced the civic engagement piece. Nobody could define civic engagement as a concept, but could define the words separately and put the concept together. We provided examples of previous civic engagement projects that women had completed, and Neeharika discussed how it is an opportunity to be involved as a citizen, and as an opportunity to do something that ‘benefits you and benefits others at the same time.’*

The civic engagement component of the program was a fit with Neighbourhood Houses as organizations that engage members’ assets and strengths in order to expand members’ leadership skills. As mentioned above, Neighbourhood Houses do not simply provide services and programming to members. Rather, they actively encourage participants to become leaders in the community by volunteering in Neighbourhood House programs and events with the support of paid staff members and more experienced volunteers. If an individual approaches a staff member with an idea for an event, staff are willing to support the individual by helping them to coordinate logistics such as helping the Neighbourhood House member to find a date and space for the event, devising how to fund the event (i.e. through Neighbourhood House funding or by a small admission fee), assisting with the recruitment of other volunteers, and helping to promote the event within the Neighbourhood House and through their external networks.
Such events were what the PtL program defined as ‘civic engagement projects,’ and the organization and execution of such events were built directly into the PtL program curriculum. The Advisory Committee’s decision to include civic engagement projects as a key cornerstone of the PtL curriculum was reflective of the third and fourth goals listed in the original grant application (see Chapter 1, Section 1), which were: 3) “Immigrant women develop leadership & speaking skills to facilitate participation in public dialogues/forums to address systemic barriers & other key employment issues;” and 4) “Immigrant women develop the problem solving, networking & assertiveness skills needed to address personal and systemic barriers.” What distinguished the civic engagement projects from other events and project organized by Neighbourhood House members was the way in which all PtL program participants were encouraged to brainstorm about issues or topics that were important to them and, following this activity, to think of a project or event that they could organize to raise awareness or share knowledge on a select issue or topic. By supporting and encouraging women who may not otherwise approach staff members with ideas for community-based events, the program aimed to build all program participants’ capacity and confidence to take on issues or topics of direct relevance to their own interests. In this way, the civic engagement projects were not only about engaging in community, but also about program participants engaging as leaders on social issues about which they were passionate.

Examples of the civic engagement projects completed by the women participating in the Pathways to Leadership program included facilitating a computer skills workshop at the Neighbourhood House, applying for a Neighbourhood Small Grant to organize an art event promoting cultural inclusivity at a local park, and organizing dinner events that showcased the culture of their home country. A number of women from both cycles of the PtL program
at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House presented their civic engagement projects in workshops at an annual parents’ conference that focused on issues such as parenting tweens and teenagers, how to prepare healthy lunches for your family, education about waste management and recycling, the environmental and health benefits of growing and eating organic food, and how to identify situations of domestic abuse and access support from local non-profit organizations. I attended most of the civic engagement project events that took place during my fieldwork or in the months that followed, including the annual parents’ conferences in 2013 and 2014. At Forest Lawn, I attended a ‘Peruvian dinner,’ a ‘Bangladeshi night,’ and ‘Community Action Circles night,’ each of which was coordinated by a group of Neighbourhood House members with Serena’s support. These dinners and events would typically take place in the larger multipurpose room at the Neighbourhood House, with round tables on one side and a stage and display of traditional goods set up on the other side. The evening would start with a dinner of traditional ethnic dishes served by volunteers while the attendees sat at tables, or buffet-style at the back of the multipurpose room.

The kitchen, immediately adjacent to the multipurpose room, would be bustling with activity as the volunteers organizing the event rushed to prepare massive amounts of food for up to 100 people. Located in a neighbourhood with a number of low-income residents, anyone could attend these dinners at a cost of $5 per adult, $3 per child over four, and free for children under four; that said, no family would be turned away if they could not afford to pay. As a result, a lot of individuals who were not necessarily interested in learning about different cultures attended these dinners in order to access wholesome and nutritious meals for their families. At one dinner, I sat at a table with a mother and her three children and
watched as the oldest child quickly ate all of the food on his plate before asking for more. Volunteers had served this dinner to us on pre-portioned plates and I didn’t plan to eat the chicken I had received. I asked the child if he wanted it; he quickly said yes, and devoured mine as well as his mother’s chicken. It was evident he was hungry in a way that made my heart ache for him and his mother, who was foregoing her own dinner to feed her children. This experience speaks to the different motivations that people may have for attending these events. Regardless of motivation, however, everyone in attendance was nonetheless exposed to intercultural communication as a result of participating in a shared meal that included receiving food from volunteers, clearing plates together, and joining in the evening entertainment.

For volunteers, this intercultural learning was even deeper. My field notes from a PtL program session a few days following a Peruvian dinner and cultural showcase describe how Jennifer (35, Peru) coordinated the event with volunteer assistance from several other program participants, and what the women learned:

After welcoming Dorothy, Neelarika asks Jennifer about her role at the Peruvian dinner. Jennifer explains that she was the coordinator for the event and organized about 20 volunteers. Dorothy joins the conversation, saying that she was one of the volunteers and describing how she helped with set-up and decoration, saying how delicious the food was and how it wasn’t “Canadian portions” but the plates were overflowing and stacked with rice, and talking about the Peruvian dancing and how it “had a story in it.” She got up and gestured how the woman would throw the napkin at the man saying ‘I’m not yours’ and the man would throw the napkin at the woman saying ‘I’m not yours’ and then they would dance. Her gestures were so funny and everyone in the group was laughing. Dorothy explained that the dancing and gestures were “expressive” and everyone was encouraged to dance. Isa arrived at this point, smiling and happy. Dorothy was telling the group how wonderful it was to participate in the event, and to learn so much about Peru – about its food, and its resources besides potatoes, including coal. Dorothy described the beautiful jewelry from Peru, and Isa and Jennifer jumped in to describe how gold and silver are other famous resources from Peru. Jennifer was smiling ear to ear and laughing for the duration of Dorothy’s description of the event and everything she had learned about Peruvian culture.
Neeharika asked the women what skills they had used in organizing the event, saying that these could be included on their resume. Dorothy described how she had set the tables, and identified skills including merchandising, organizing, and maintaining hygiene through an examination of the cutlery to ensure it was clean. Jennifer described her responsibilities as including activities before, during and after the event. Dorothy interjected “yes, I saw your face A LOT” to which everyone laughed. Jennifer described her role as being the coordinator, supervisor, and giving instructions. Neeharika rephrased some of these things as having skills in time management, networking, and communication skills. Others from the group also suggested dancing skills, multitasking skills, problem-solving skills, and being self-motivated. Neeharika rephrased some of these things as having skills in time management, networking, and communication skills. Others from the group also suggested dancing skills, multitasking skills, problem-solving skills, and being self-motivated. Neeharika again mentioned the need for transparency as the event organizer, saying that it was important to find out where the money went so that the women could provide a good answer to members of the community who ask about it. Neeharika asked the group if they knew the meaning of “transparent” – they offered “see through, upfront, accountable” as definitions. Neeharika also followed up on the skill of being self-motivated, described how Jennifer had suggested the event and used her own effort/initiative to organize the event for no pay, because she was truly enthusiastic about it. Neeharika also described Jennifer as using a number of transferable skills, referring to the handout from last week: she listed these skills as conflict resolution, teamwork, working across cultures and working with diverse language abilities.

The connection between the development of leadership skills and employment skills is clear, as Neeharika asks Jennifer, the event organizer, and some of the program participants who had volunteered in the event to identify employment-relevant skills they used during the event. Neeharika goes on to provide ideas about how the experience planning and executing the event could be translated into skills that could be listed on a resume (see Chapter 4 for a more extended discussion on resumes and resume building).

Discussions about the PtL program participants’ employment interests in the first few sessions of the program also provided Neeharika and the Neighbourhood House staff members with some background for helping the women to conceptualize and execute a civic engagement project that would align with their individual employment goals. In fact, Neeharika emphasized throughout the PtL program that participants ought to be strategic in pursuing volunteer opportunities that align with their goals for employment, explaining how
participating in a broad range of volunteer work is “good experience when you first arrive in the country, but as you develop your career plan you want to be more selective about your volunteer experience so that you can use it to build your resume.” Again, it is important to remember that while the program did have several participants who had only recently immigrated to Canada, almost all of the participants had participated in employment programs at the larger immigrant-serving agencies, most of which suggest volunteering as an activity to help promote settlement and integration. Volunteering is also popularly conceptualized as a way of gaining ‘Canadian experience’ for the purposes of employment, as many research participants told me. By the point of their registration in the Pathways to Leadership program, most of the women had completed volunteer work in the community but had yet to connect this volunteer work with their employment goals.

Encouraging participants to pursue strategic volunteer opportunities, particularly through their own civic engagement projects, is a key method by which the Pathways to Leadership program helped to rebuild the confidence and self-worth that participants had often lost in attempting to enter a non-amenable Canadian labour market. Completing these projects provided program participants with a sense of accomplishment and recognition that they have valuable skills to contribute to their communities and Canadian society. For newcomers who may feel as though they have been shut out of the labour market and experiencing the loss of their professional identity (see Chapter 4), this sense of contribution at the local level may be enough to start rebuilding the confidence and selfhood that has was erased during and after the migration process. While native-born Canadians may experience this sense of belonging without having to think too much about their place, newcomers may require opportunities such as these self-directed but staff-supported projects that promote
interaction within and beyond their cultural communities to establish a sense of being ‘at home’ in Vancouver and Canada.

5.5 Conclusion: Settlement as citizenship, and citizenship as settlement

I’ll conclude this chapter with an excerpt from my post-program interview with Minseo (41, South Korea). Minseo’s comments summarize the main themes of this chapter and namely how the program fostered a sense of belonging and integration in participants by way of providing opportunities for them to rebuild a sense of confidence after migrating to Canada:

I would say, through the Pathways Program, it is more like a tutoring program compared to other programs I have taken. The other program, they just look at the first steps. The Pathways Program is about [going] deeper.

Doing the [Healthy Lunchboxes] workshop [for the civic engagement project] gave me more confidence. At first, I didn’t have confidence. And I only decided one week before the conference that I would give the workshop so I only had three days to prepare. I don’t have a coworker, I don’t have confidence at that time. I finish my workshop and get confidence. And if I have the chance again, I can do it [another workshop]. I change my thought. If the people didn’t encourage me, maybe I wouldn’t have had the chance to have that experience. The Pathways Program workers, they help me a lot individually. So, this program focuses more individually, personally. So that is more important I think. In other programs we get a lot of information, but we can’t do it by ourselves. This program, we get help to do it. More one-on-one, and that is a more precious value than other programs.

As Minseo’s comparison between the Pathways to Leadership program and other employment programs for immigrants illustrates, the one-on-one support of this employment and leadership skills program seems to be a unique feature of Neighbourhood House programming and is, to a large extent, the work of tireless staff members whose contributions are more valuable than the meager wages they are paid for the skilled work that they do.26

26 Shannon explained during our interview that some of her staff members worked multiple jobs because the low-wages were not enough to keep themselves and/or their families afloat:
Minseo’s use of the word “coworker” in describing how she independently facilitated the workshop signals how the civic engagement projects supported the development of both employment and leadership skills. Minseo, for example, wrote a career action plan for obtaining paid employment as a community-based employee working in the area of food preparation and security, and so the development of her Healthy Lunchboxes workshop fit with her employment goals and the skillset it would require. At the same time, the opportunity to showcase their skills and knowledge in front of peers and Neighbourhood House staff provided women with a concrete sense of social citizenship, in that leading these projects demonstrated that they had something meaningful to contribute to their local community. That each woman was supported to identify and bring a project to completion highlights the value of Neighbourhood Houses’ asset-based approach to programming, as exemplified by Minseo’s discussion of the “precious value” of this programming as compared to other programs she has completed.

With their ‘citizenship model of settlement services,’ Neighbourhood Houses go beyond service-delivery, and work to holistically engage members so as to promote their social, economic, and political integration in Canada. While programs like Pathways to Leadership encourage the social element of citizenship, as defined by Marshall (1950) and O’Neill (2004), they cannot provide Neighbourhood House members with the right to

It’s been very challenging for me knowing that staff who work here full time have to have second jobs to manage […] I also feel the problem with the passion and the enthusiasm and the generosity is that that is often taken advantage of. So, it’s very difficult, then, to kind of assert our value monetarily. I don’t think it’s right that people should be working here and having to work a second job at the same time. We should be able to make sure that you can live reasonably, the whole living wage thing. If you are a single person who’s trying to raise kids, it’s not a living wage.
participate in first-level political activities such as the right to parity of participating on par with others in the political arena through voting (Fraser 2013), as voting is limited to individuals with legal citizenship status in Canada. Yet, the PtL program was successful in raising participants’ awareness of political issues related to their exclusion from the democratic space of decision-making, and the necessity of civic engagement for the purpose of challenging the economic and social injustices that stem from their perceived status as “immigrant women” and thus as non-members in Canada. Such engagement requires ongoing support, thereby raising the issue of how settlement services are funded and delivered in Canada. The concluding chapter will discuss the current structure of settlement service funding and offer suggestions for future policy and research directions.
Chapter 6: The Multidimensional Character of Integration and Citizenship: Summary of Findings and Future Directions

[If] the Neighbourhood House is somewhere in the [2014 CIC] settlement money … [it] would be better, but even if they aren't, the next round of settlement, which is still three years from now, would be trying to get some of this model incorporated right into the settlement training. The argument [is] that if you have an integrated personal development, citizenship development, and career development focus, that you're going to get people further along, right? And some of that will depend on the federal context. If you have a more progressive-center government, federally… and who knows where a Liberal government would end up on that… Settlement programming can allow immigrants to think about careers instead of, you know, being a service to the low-wage sector (Francine, Advisory Committee member)

Francine’s comments about the impact of the federal-level political context on the allocation of settlement service funding are critical: this interview was conducted in early 2014, at which point the Conservative government had been in office for eight years under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. My conversations with Neighbourhood House staff and other individuals involved in the settlement sector indicated that the federal government’s decision not to renew the Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement in 2014 came as a surprise. The first of three bilateral agreements that devolved responsibility for the design and delivery of settlement and integration services from the federal to the provincial government came into effect in May 1998 and, by most accounts, the government-service provider working relationships established between 1998 and 2013 were highly functional and had given rise to a diverse range of innovative programming. In light of the return to federally administered settlement funding contribution agreements taking effect in April 2014, Francine’s comments reflected a palpable concern that was shared among settlement service providers about how the funding proposals that were submitted in the fall of 2013 would roll out and affect Neighbourhood House programming, especially given the Conservative party’s emphasis on ‘labour market-ready’ economic class immigrants.
The election of a Liberal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in November 2015 opened up new possibilities for organizations dedicated to supporting vulnerable groups of newcomers. The Liberal government’s action to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees and restore the Interim Federal Health Program that provides limited and temporary health benefits to refugees and refugee claimants was the first major signal that Canada’s immigration policy would shift away from an economic-oriented perspective and return to a more balanced immigration policy platform (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015h). These efforts, which occurred almost immediately after the Liberals took office in November 2015, are evidence of a government that will be more amenable to humanitarian and compassionate immigration cases. This sea change may bode well for Gabriela (45, Peru), the one participant in this study whose application for permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate grounds was still under review as of April 2016.

Also of direct relevance to this research project is Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (the Liberal government’s new name for Citizenship and Immigration Canada) announcement in December 2015 that all spousal sponsorship applicants applying for permanent residency and open work permits from within Canada will receive open work permits within four months of submitting the necessary paperwork (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015j). For the four women in my study who were waiting for approval of their open work permits and permanent residency applications at the time of the Pathways to Leadership program, this policy change could have made a positive impact in their financial security and social integration in Canada.

As Francine hints at in the interview above, the level of flexibility that Neighbourhood Houses demonstrate in whom they serve and the programming they offer is
complicated by an ever-changing funding climate that does not always share the Pathways to Leadership program’s holistic approach to asset-based community development and its overall philosophy of meeting people where they are at. Rather, the distribution of funding is aligned with the political will of the funder and increasingly onerous evaluation procedures that require organizations to provide detailed reports on expenditures and how programs achieved the outcomes outlined in the original funding proposal. The first section of this concluding chapter will provide a short summary of the relationship between settlement program funding and evaluation, followed by a brief look toward the funding of settlement programs in Canada under the newly elected Liberal government. The second section focuses on the key findings of this research project in light of recent political developments and anticipated policy changes at the federal level, while the third section explores the study limitations and directions for future research. The chapter concludes with a set of policy recommendations that emphasize the links between federal, provincial, and neighbourhood level support for newcomers.

6.1 “It was all their ideas. We just tried to see if we could find the funding”

Rebecca from Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House described in our interview how her current workload and reporting requirements limited her engagement in frontline work:

Funding streams means that almost all our programs have different funding sources. Shannon usually writes the grant proposals and does all the visioning stuff, and then my job is to see how that rolls out on the ground. So, like, this morning, I just finished writing a big security grant for [a large charitable organization]. So, that funds 17 of our programs, but none of our programs are usually funded by just one program, so it's how we weave that all in. So, we have programs funded by different [large charitable organization] streams, federal government, provincial government, and municipal governments, private funders. So, yeah, keeping track of that, as well […] it can take up a third to a half of my job. Which is kind of frustrating, because it takes away from actual online or frontline or support work.
Time spent preparing interim and final reports for funders is time that Rebecca would prefer to spend delivering programs, a task that had been reduced to about one-fifth or a quarter of her workload at the time of our interview. Interim reports must be completed in order for the Neighbourhood House to receive the next phase of funding, while final reporting maintains the organization’s standing with the funder and helps to ensure the possibility of future funding opportunities. While multiple funding streams allow Neighbourhood Houses to cobble together program funding so as to respond to community demand and be less restricted in who is eligible to participate in programs, the level of financial management required to maintain this funding is time and labour-intensive. Drawing from multiple funding streams is a workaround to ensure that every Neighbourhood House member who wishes to participate in a program can attend without violating the conditions of the funding contribution(s) that make the program possible.

In the case of government settlement funding, individuals interested in participating in a program typically must be permanent residents or Canadian citizens, and some programs have further restrictions related to the number of years the individuals have been in Canada. By seeking some program funding from a non-profit charitable foundation or organization, Neighbourhood Houses can ensure that individuals with precarious legal status in Canada, for example, can nonetheless participate in programs that are primarily funded through these more restrictive funding packages. In the case of the Pathways to Leadership program, the full funding came from a non-profit charitable foundation so there were no restrictions on participant eligibility. Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House is fortunate in having Shannon, whom Rebecca describes as a “master grant writer.” As Rebecca explained to me:

*When I first started, we had 18 families in the drop-in. And now, I know … for the drop-in program, we touched at least 400 families [last year], and that's not counting*
all the other programs that we run. So, we have a thousand, I think, over a thousand families that we touch every year. It's pretty amazing when we look back. It just grew, and it's great because it's organic. It grew organically. It grew from families starting to come in and say, "Wow, this is a pretty cool place to be. This is what we want to happen." And then, trying to find the funding that we can put in place. All the first language programs were initiatives from the parents. It was community connections or initiatives from the parents… It was all their ideas. We just tried to see if we could find the funding for it.

Shannon’s skills have played a large part in helping the Neighbourhood House to secure the funding to grow these member-initiated programs during Rebecca’s time at the organization.

The emphasis Neighbourhood Houses place on community-driven programming is distinctive, and the value of this approach in terms of facilitating newcomer integration cannot be overstated. The Neighbourhood Houses’ asset-based approach to community development was integral in facilitating the citizenship-training and integration-oriented elements of the Pathways to Leadership program, which achieved tremendous success in terms of engaging participants in meaningful career planning and civic engagement projects based on skills and strengths they identified in themselves and in each other. The participants I interviewed described how much clarity they gained around their employment goals and the importance of community involvement as a result of completing the PtL program. They compared this experience to their participation in other settlement programs that left them feeling as though they were just ‘numbers’ for the organization’s reports rather than whole people with diverse skills, strengths, and needs. By asking participants to define their own employment and community engagement goals, and to support them in the steps needed to achieve these objectives, the Neighbourhood House staff, volunteers, and students supporting the PtL program helped facilitate the “getting people further along” that Francine described above.
Not all non-profit organizations have the human resources to seek and apply for funding that is as responsive to community-identified needs, or to complete the funder-specific reporting and evaluation components for multiple funders contributing to a single program. For example, a 2001 telephone survey of 1,965 non-profit organizations and 322 funders in Canada led by researchers at Carleton University revealed that evaluation expectations had increased since the mid-1990s but “less than half of the funders provided funding for evaluation activities” (Carman and Fredericks 2008, 53). A quick look at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Program Funding Guidelines for the National Call for Proposals 2015 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015i) reveals that evaluation is one of seven key sections of a funding proposal but the funding for evaluation must be budgeted under ‘Overhead Costs,’ which are defined as “incremental costs directly related to project activities/delivery.” In accounting terms, an incremental cost is an additional cost associated with production – but if evaluation is a project activity itself, should it not be funded as a core deliverable, rather than as a cost commensurate with plaques for volunteer recognition awards or the other similar costs listed in the category of eligible overhead expenses?

In addition to the costs associated with program evaluation activities, it is complicated to provide succinct quantitative reports about the impacts of community-driven programs that provide outreach and support to vulnerable groups. When I asked Sherry, the Executive Director at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House, to tell me what percentage of work at the Neighbourhood House was related to settlement, she told me:

That is actually quite difficult. I can say two things. In terms of the proportion of the funding I would say … we’re probably looking at maybe about... Sorry. I'm just going to have to do quick little calculation [pause]. Okay. So I think approximately, with the funding that is coming directly for settlement services, it's about 13%. But that doesn't mean that we're only doing 13%. I would say that the services we offer for immigrants, which is also very much about social inclusion, intercultural work, some
first language programming, et cetera, that do not fall in the settlement portfolio, I would say probably 50% to 60% of our work is really very much about immigrants. Maybe even more. It's really hard to say…. It's hard to quantify, because really, everything is embedded. And the reality is, one of the other things that we do very well is we have some partnerships that bring those services here as well. So we've had a long-term relationship with [an immigration agency that serves women], where they have had ESL [English as a Second Language programs] and childminding care for 23 years…. This last year they also brought in their settlement counselor for the vulnerable immigrant populations. Basically, that has also enhanced our capacity as an agency to provide settlement services. So I'm not even counting those partnerships as well, right? So that's the other piece around that. So by counting other partnerships I would say probably, maybe, 70% of our work somehow touches immigrants.

Reporting the complexity of Neighbourhood House programming and the outcomes they achieve in neat categories is all but impossible, as revealed in Sherry’s response to my question of how much funding is allocated for the Neighbourhood House’s settlement-related work and the actual amount of settlement- and integration-related work that takes place within the organization. The burden and complexity of reporting has not improved since I completed my fieldwork in 2014; instead, CIC’s launch of the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) system in the spring of 2014 has added to the reporting responsibilities of frontline staff in settlement organizations.

Capturing program activities, challenges, outcomes, and successes are among the main purposes for completing detailed program evaluations. A commonsense perspective would lead one to believe that a thorough evaluation demonstrating the successes and positive impacts of a program would help to secure ongoing funding so that the program could continue but this is not necessarily a reality. The Pathways Out of Poverty project was initially funded as a pilot project that included four cycles of the employment and leadership skills program that came to be known as ‘Pathways to Leadership.’ Despite the program’s tremendous impact on participants and the detailed evaluation findings that capture these successes, the Advisory Committee has been unable to secure subsequent funding for direct
service program delivery to immigrant women. The project did, however, receive some additional funding from a separate source to produce a PtL program curriculum that has been used to train program graduates and staff from non-profit settlement service organizations in the Pathways to Leadership program’s intersectional philosophy and its asset-based, holistic approach to employment training for immigrants.

As a relative newcomer to settlement service programming, I was surprised at how difficult it has been to secure ongoing funding for a thoroughly evaluated program that demonstrated success in helping to promote newcomer integration. In my interview with Nina, a staff member at the philanthropic foundation that funded the Pathways to Leadership program, I asked for her thoughts about pilot projects. I noted that funded pilot projects typically demonstrate great success, but have difficulty securing future funding and asked her how she made sense of that reality given her experience with granting. Nina responded by turning the focus away from the private sector of charitable donations. In the age of neoliberal government austerity, it is no surprise that philanthropic foundations have been increasingly called upon to fund programs that were previously financed by the provincial and federal government. Nina provided the following suggestions for securing settlement services for newcomers:

The big things that I think about are people going and speaking to their elected officials. People often think that it's not effective, but if you have enough people going to speak to an elected official it usually is the most effective [way], and developing a relationship with that individual as well over time. I think more and more people need to exercise their vote, and get out and vote. And I also think that for those who aren't in a position to participate in our democracy, that they need to find a way to have their voices heard as well; whether that is through some kind of public awareness campaign, or through rallying, or whether having people who do have those privileges act as allies to them. […] People [need] to be more active in their own civic lives to call for the kinds of changes they want to see. So if it's a priority for people to have funding for these programs then people in the community need to raise their voices to those that are in the position to [create] shift[s at the] federal and
provincial level. Because that's the big chunks of money that are out there in our society. There is the odd philanthropic organization in Canada that has a lot of money and a lot of flexibility. They're out there. They can do whatever they'd like to do as long as it's within the charitable mandate. They don't have the same restrictions we have but their money compared to federal and provincial dollars is still not of the same magnitude. And that's where I think people need to become more politically motivated and educated, and get out and engage in that matter.

Nina’s focus on the power of political participation and civic advocacy reiterates the role of public participation in addressing issues of economic and status injustices (Fraser 2013), an argument supported by a key finding from this study (see below, and Chapter 5). Nina’s comments acknowledge that some members of Canadian society – those with citizenship status – are eligible to participate in the democratic process, and that those who are not citizens in the legal sense of the term must also find ways to advocate for their rights and raise awareness of their needs.

The Pathways to Leadership program Advisory Committee initially approached the philanthropic foundation for funding in order to offer a program with as few barriers to participation as possible. Had the organizers sought funding from the provincial government (the PtL program was funded prior to the federal repatriation of settlement funding), the program would have been restricted to permanent residents or Canadian citizens and entirely off-limits to women with precarious legal status. John McCallum, the current Liberal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, did not announce any new funding streams or settlement program measures for economic class immigrants in his Report on Plans and Priorities 2016-2017 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2016c). The Liberal government has, however, added funding streams through Status of Women Canada to increase women’s participation in civic and political life. According to settlement sector workers and individuals involved in the local women’s movement, these calls for proposals
are a sign that Status of Women Canada is being revived after suffering a 40% budget cut in 2006 under the leadership of the Conservative government (O’Grady 2006, 79). The cuts to Status of Women Canada resulted in the closure of 12 out of 16 regional offices across the country, as part of then-Treasury Board Secretary John Baird’s reductions to programs that he disturbingly described as “wasteful” and “ineffective” (Government of Canada 2006). Yet, the Conservative government’s 2006 modification of Status of Women Canada’s mandate to prevent funding for advocacy work, lobbying of the government, or general research has not been reversed by the recently-elected Liberal government, nor has the Conservative government’s decision to drop the word ‘equality’ from the agency’s goals (The Canadian Press 2006).

While these new funding opportunities for women’s programs, and particularly for programs that aim to engage women in political and civic life, are promising, only time will reveal whether this increased funding is able to respond to the needs identified by women themselves and the organizations with which they are affiliated. The federal government’s recognition that there are barriers to women’s participation in civic and political life, however, is a strong first step in making it possible for immigrant women and their allies to do the exact kind of work that Nina recommends. As part of my ongoing commitment to doing community-based research in a manner that is as ethical and reciprocal as possible, I am currently strategizing with the Pathways to Leadership Advisory Committee members and staff from settlement agencies about submitting a proposal for Status of Women Canada funding to form an independent association of immigrant and refugee women that will be supported by local leaders and activists to take up civic and political issues in their
communities. Such an initiative is aligned with the key findings from this research project, which I describe below.

### 6.2 Significance of the study

The new government’s focus on the settlement and integration of refugees in Canada, its decision to grant open work permits to spousal sponsorship applicants, and the allocation of funding to support programs for increasing women’s participation in political life are promising steps for addressing the issues raised in the three research questions that guided this study. These federal-level decisions are aligned with the key research findings presented in this section, while the policy recommendations that I conclude with provide some suggestions for additional changes to improve the settlement and integration experiences of newcomer women in similar class, status, and legal positions to the Pathways to Leadership participants observed and interviewed for this study.

#### 6.2.1 Revisiting the research questions

This research project was guided by three research questions, as described in the introductory chapter:

1) **What is the role and value of small-to-midsized organizations like Neighbourhood Houses in facilitating newcomer integration in the context of federally regulated immigration processes?**

2) **How do the experiences of participants in the Pathways to Leadership program illuminate ways that gender, as a social construction with significant structural power, intersects with immigration status and race in the Canadian labour market?**

3) **How do the women participating in an employment and leadership skills program at a local non-profit organization make sense of their social location in Canadian society**
and in the Canadian labour market in light of their employment experiences and immigrant status?

The first question, on the role and value of small-to-midsized organizations like Neighbourhood Houses in facilitating newcomer integration, finds some answers in Chapters 2 and 5. These chapters described why Neighbourhood Houses were chosen as sites for the low-barrier, asset-based Pathways to Leadership program that provided individualized employment and citizenship training for immigrant women. As place-based non-profit organizations, Neighbourhood Houses engage a diverse group of regional, provincial, and federal funders, local stakeholders, and neighbourhood residents to respond to community-identified needs, making these sites especially suitable for a program that aimed to foster leadership experience among participants. As volunteer-driven organizations, Neighbourhood Houses provide newcomers and other individuals with the opportunity to lead or join local initiatives. Staff members are committed to and excel at supporting participants’ leadership in community-focused activities, and this support increases participants’ capacity as leaders, fosters their sense of belonging in Canada, and (re)builds the self-confidence lost as a result of class and status disruptions related to immigration.

The size of the organizations seemed critical to the approach of the Neighbourhood Houses where I conducted this research: both organizations were small enough to facilitate close connections between Neighbourhood House members and Neighbourhood House staff, but large enough that the organizations were well-networked in the community and therefore able to put Neighbourhood House members in touch with opportunities and events at other organizations.
The second question, concerning the relationship between gender, immigration status, race, and access to the Canadian labour market, was the focus of Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, I discussed Canada’s history of immigration policy and the three streams or classes – economic, family, and humanitarian – of immigration programs that permit entry and/or permanent immigration to Canada today. As part of this analysis, I examined the “differential gendered effects of immigration policy” (Walton-Roberts 2004, 268) and the relevance of the recent literature on precarious migratory status (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009) by tacking between the experiences of the women and the gendered ideologies that inform Canadian immigration policy. Examining the most common programs by which Pathways to Leadership participants migrated to Canada revealed the way in which immigration policy creates pathways or extended periods of precarious legal status for certain groups of women and the deleterious consequences that occur as a result. Discussing the nuances of these experiences is critical to understanding the institutional processes that produce this precarious status, its impact on women’s mental health and physical wellbeing, and the long-term economic and interpersonal consequences of the processing times associated with the various economic, family, and humanitarian class immigration programs that govern newcomers’ legal status in Canada (see Goldring and Landolt 2011 for a discussion of the long-term effects of precarious legal status on a particular group of Toronto immigrants).

Chapter 4 investigated research participants’ migration experiences in terms of their occupational status and economic achievement in Canada, with a particular emphasis on participants who arrived in Canada via the Federal Skilled Worker program as principal applicants or, more commonly, as dependents (Bauder 2003). This discussion highlighted the
relationship between employment and self-worth, and how the first challenge to this relationship comes when a newly arrived woman is expected to produce a resume in English that translates her international education and experience into an English-language document with genre-specific expectations. The resume is a paradigmatic text-based example of the gap between the Pathways to Leadership program participants’ desire to enter the labour market and their readiness for this challenge. The difficulties PtL program participants faced in producing resumes for the Canadian context highlights the limitations of the human capital discourse: the act of producing a resume is an apt metaphor for the struggles that newcomers face when trying to convert cultural or linguistic capital gained abroad into economic capital earned via the Canadian labour market (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1977). The Canadian immigration system has flattened the cultural complexity of the labour market by awarding points for human capital that may or may not be recognized by Canadian licensing bodies and employers. Participants’ challenges with producing resumes also demonstrated the need for accessible, affordable, English-language programs that are accessible to individuals with caregiver responsibilities. Such programs would help to alleviate some of the language-based challenges newcomers face in their attempts to participate in the Canadian labour market. More generally, the data presented in Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated how the process of immigration is fraught with transition, change, trauma, grief, and, at least in some cases, shame related to participants’ inability to manifest their pre-arrival vision of the Canadian dream.

The third research question focused on Pathways to Leadership program participants’ efforts to make sense of their social location in Canada given their precarious legal status and/or employment experiences, a discussion taken up in Chapters 4 and 5. While Chapters 3
and 4 described the gendered and institutional mechanisms by which some of the women who participated in this study found themselves vulnerable and isolated, Chapter 5 illuminated how the Pathways to Leadership program helped to rebuild participants’ self-esteem by openly discussing the realities and challenges that women and families face when settling in Canada, and by encouraging program participants to engage in leadership activities within their local communities. The PtL program participants spoke freely about how they had internalized the gap between their hopes for successful careers and social lives in Canada and the realities of their post-immigration situation as the result of a personal failure rather than as a structural problem tied to bureaucratic procedures of administering immigration applications, or insufficient English language training and support programs in Canada. That Neighbourhood Houses see service-delivery as an entry-point for engaging and involving newcomers in community life played an important role in promoting a sense of full membership and belonging among the women participating in the Pathways the Leadership program. These experiences raised PtL program participants’ awareness of the systemic barriers that had influenced their post-immigration social and economic location in Canada at the same time as they helped participants to reconceive their current social location in Canada and provided them with more realistic hope for achieving their future goals.

This study of immigrant women’s immigration and integration experiences in Canada is sociologically significant in terms of two key contributions to the literature: 1) it is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the first in-depth, empirical studies of a diverse range of women’s experiences with precarious legal status in Canada (Goldring and Landolt 2013; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009), and 2) it provides an empirical example of Nancy
Fraser’s (2013, 199) three-dimensional theory of justice, with findings that demonstrate the importance of her slogan, “no redistribution or recognition without representation.”

As an empirical study that contributes to knowledge about what it means to live with precarious legal status in Canada, the research findings presented here open up possibilities for future, more focused, studies of women’s experiences with precarious legal status and suggestions for how the ruling relations of policy and process might be adjusted to mitigate some of the vulnerabilities associated with women’s precarious legal status in Canada. I highlight some of these vulnerabilities throughout the dissertation by drawing on the three dimensions of injustice Fraser (2013, 193-196) outlines and applying them to the experiences of the women who participated in the Pathways to Leadership program: the women experienced maldistribution through policy structures that impeded their economic standing by barring them from participation in the labour market; they experienced misrecognition by way of “institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value” that denied them status in the labour market as a result of devalued international education and work experience; and finally, they were supported to spearhead projects in their communities as a way of challenging the misrepresentation they had experienced as a result of being denied participation in the political community. As leaders of projects they initiated, the women who participated in the PtL program recognized that they could advocate for themselves and their peers, and engage in forms of political action. The program’s emphasis on fostering belonging through community-based leadership activities provides an example of how groups can mobilize to challenge conditions that prevent parity of political participation even in the face of limited formal citizenship rights.
These contributions are useful for scholarly understandings of what it means to live with precarious legal status in Canada, for informing advocacy work related to immigration policy, and for groups and individuals interested in pursuing diverse forms of political participation.

**6.3 Limitations of the study and directions for future research**

The study findings presented above are specific to the embedded ethnographic approach that informed the data generation and analysis of this research project. The dissertation provides an in-depth discussion of newcomer women’s immigration experiences, and particularly their attempts to enter the Canadian labour market, and the embedded nature of the research raises questions about how the findings could be useful in other contexts. Sadly, the PtL program has not received further funding, and the cycle where I conducted fieldwork from January to April 2014 was the last iteration of the PtL program so further study of this program is not possible.

Limitations related to the data collection component of the project include: 1) the missed interview opportunities; 2) outstanding questions about income and household earnings; and 3) a limited period of fieldwork. As described in Chapter 2, I was unable to conduct interviews with Estelle (44, Mexico), Mimi (33, China), Dorothy (age and country of birth unknown), and Sarah (36, Canada), although my fieldnotes do provide data about their participation and presence in the Pathways to Leadership program sessions. My inability to interview Estelle and Mimi due to language issues hints at how the experiences of newcomer women in Canada who speak languages other than English may be inadequately represented in research conducted by English-language speakers in Canada. This limitation points to a need for further investigation into whether the experiences of individuals such as Estelle and
Mimi are adequately studied by researchers, and, if not, the need for such studies. Dorothy and Sarah’s registration in the PtL program, however, raise a different set of questions, as Dorothy was employed in a unionized job and Sarah was born in Canada. Their participation in a program for self-identified immigrant women and disclosure about how they felt they could gain from the program as a result of holding a racialized status in Canada (Dorothy) and decreased self-confidence as a result of leaving the workforce to raise a child (Sarah) point to future areas of research for intersectionality scholars.

Future research projects also ought to include questions about women’s personal annual income and annual household earnings since arriving to Canada. In the context of this study, income-related data would have provided a clearer sense of participants’ actual economic situation in Canada. However, my ongoing relationships with participants as a result of my participant-observation activities in the Pathways to Leadership program and at Neighbourhood House events seemed to give these relationships a quality of personal intimacy that I sensed would be violated by asking such intensely personal and sensitive questions. Researchers with less intimate relationships would be well-suited to glean more detailed information about the economic situation of women and families with precarious legal status in Canada, and the economic situation of those who transitioned to permanent resident status after arriving with precarious legal status. Such information would provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between precarious legal status and economic standing in Canada.

Another limitation of this fieldwork is the short period of time in which I officially conducted participant-observation, and my decision to schedule the interviews simultaneously with the Pathways to Leadership program. As I analyzed the data, I realized
that it would have been valuable to know what the women who completed the Pathways to Leadership program have done since the PtL program: Have they achieved the goals they set forth in their career action plans? What leadership roles and/or positions have they taken up since 2014? Have the women who were in the process of applying for permanent residency obtained legal status in Canada? How have their lives changed since becoming permanent residents and securing work permits? What personal and systemic barriers to employment and integration have they encountered since completing the program, and did the program give them tools to effectively address these barriers? While I have some information about what several of the participants have gone on to achieve based on intermittent emails I have received from the women themselves or Neighbourhood House staff members who have been champions of their success, I do not have systematically-collected data about participant outcomes.

Tracking participant outcomes using the questions listed above could inform a future research project. It would be especially interesting to conduct further research with women who had precarious legal status at the time of their participation in the PtL program. Assessing this group of PtL program participants’ longer-term settlement outcomes in Canada as compared to the PtL program participants who arrived in Canada with permanent residency status would be useful for deepening our scholarly understanding of whether and how immigration classes and immigration categories (e.g. the Federal Skilled Worker program and the spousal sponsorship program) impact settlement and integration trajectories, if they do so at all. In addition to these very specific ideas for future research projects, there is a need for more general research that contributes to knowledge about people’s experiences with precarious legal status in Canada, and the transnational contexts that propel people into
such forms of migration. This information would better equip researchers, policy-makers, and settlement practitioners to develop and disseminate best practices related to two-way relationships of settlement and integration at all levels of Canadian society.

6.4 Policy recommendations and final words

As Goldring et al. (2009, 241) highlight, “it is important to recognize the systemic production of illegality as an ongoing process tied to elements of existing policies and/or their implementation, as this shifts responsibility for precarious status and illegality away from individual failure to the terrain of policy and structural processes.” Precarious migrant status and the gradations of belonging created via policy and structural processes send a clear message to newcomers regarding the state and society’s perception of their place in the Canadian mosaic. As the findings from this study indicate, it is difficult for newcomers to achieve the social and civil elements of membership and belonging necessary for full membership and integration in Canada in the context of immigration policies that contribute to social and economic stratification.

The findings from this research support the following policy recommendations for reducing newcomers’ immigration-related stratification in Canada: 1) more efficient federal-level procedures for quicker processing of immigration applications and issuing work permits; 2) improved access to provincially-funded healthcare services and English language for employment training programs; 3) affordable, employer-recognized programs for the assessment of foreign credentials; and 4) greater outreach and education about multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity and inclusivity at the local level of settlement service agencies and neighbourhood-based community organizations. These policy recommendations stem from the main barriers to social and economic integration identified by the women
participating in the Pathways to Leadership program. The need for these policy and process changes are evident in the interview and fieldnote excerpts presented in this dissertation, which also speak to the ways in which these four recommendations are connected despite being targeted at four different levels and governance structures of Canadian society. If the federal-level procedures for processing immigration applications were made more efficient, especially for individuals with precarious legal status in Canada, women would be able to access healthcare services, English language training, and settlement services more quickly. Quicker access to provincially funded and locally delivered services may expedite their attempts to enter the local Vancouver labour market.

The labour market has its own set of barriers, however: even after the 1966 White Paper (Marchand 1966) and 1974 Green Paper (Gotlieb 1974), both of which warned policymakers to be aware of Canada’s labour market demands and to apply these to the selection process, the process of converting human capital earned abroad into economic and cultural capital in Canada remains a significant issue. The third policy recommendation regarding foreign credential recognition reiterates a commonly identified and well-known challenge related to the labour market integration of newcomers in Canada. The call for improved programs for foreign credential recognition is by no means novel to this study but was a significant issue for study participants and therefore bears repeating. While foreign credential recognition programs that are affordable and recognized as legitimate by Canadian employers will help to improve employment prospects for some newcomers in Canada, the larger issue of translating skills, experience, and education obtained in one national context into another national context is more complicated and fraught with power imbalances at the international level.
These imbalances, and the suggestion that employers be directly involved in the approval and legitimization of foreign credential recognition programs (see the third policy recommendation above), are directly related to the fourth and last policy recommendation, which suggests the need for greater outreach and education about multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity. Increased dialogue and understanding between different ethnic and cultural groups will help to breakdown the stereotypes and misconceptions that divide “immigrants” and “real Canadians,” to borrow from the language of the research participants who described how their experiences interacting with women from a diverse range of backgrounds in the PtL program helped to shift their perspectives on who is an immigrant and what it means to be an immigrant.

The fourth policy recommendation is the most original recommendation stemming from this research, and it aims to address the larger question of integration: what, precisely, is integration, and how can we create conditions for inclusion within our neighbourhoods, cities, and provinces? As I learned in conducting this research project, citizenship is multidimensional in that it goes beyond legal citizenship status and extends to a sense of social belonging that can be felt without government-sanctioned citizenship status, and that may be absent even if one has legal citizenship status. The social dimension of integration, namely the creation of civic capital, requires greater academic, policy, and settlement programming attention. While programs like Pathways to Leadership encourage the social element of citizenship, as defined by Marshall (1950) and O’Neill (2004), they cannot provide Neighbourhood House members with the right to participate in first-level political activities such as the right to parity of participating on par with others in the political arena through voting (Fraser 2013), as voting is limited to individuals with legal citizenship status.
in Canada. If integration is a priority, individuals without permanent residency and/or legal citizenship status must have alternative opportunities to contribute and participate in Canadian civic life, and those individuals with legal citizenship status ought to help facilitate such opportunities.

In order to ensure that all individuals in Canada experience the possibility of social inclusion even in the absence of the right to political participation, individuals from all levels of community and government must collaborate in order to promote the two-way integration of newcomers in Canada. The onus for promoting inclusion and acceptance should not be placed solely on immigrants themselves. With the election of the Liberal government in 2015, we are standing at a promising moment for immigration policy in Canada. At the same time, anti-immigration and xenophobic rhetoric dominates the public discourse of other Western nations, and these sentiments are shared by some Canadians. It is only through intercultural dialogue and a shared commitment to reducing systemic barriers to social, economic, and political participation that this nation will be able challenge discrimination in order to achieve and maintain the objectives of multiculturalism and diversity that distinguish Canada from other immigrant-receiving nations.
References


Literacy BC. 2008. Learning without Borders: An Introduction to Community-Based Adult Literacy in British Columbia. Vancouver, BC: Literacy BC.


Appendices

Appendix A  Timeline of Pathways project and dissertation research activities

Forest Lawn
- Pre-program meetings with Pathways to Leadership participants from Cycle 1 (December 2012-January 2013)
- Pathways to Leadership Program Cycle 1 (January 2013-May 2013)
- Pathways to Leadership Program Cycle 2 (September 2013-January 2014)
- In-depth research interviews (September 2013-January 2014)

Both sites
- Public presentation of civic engagement projects from Cycle 1 (June 22, 2013)
- Post-program meetings with Pathways to Leadership participants from Cycle 1 (June 2013-August 2013)
- Public presentation of civic engagement projects from Cycle 2 (June 22, 2014)
- Pathways Advisory Committee (ongoing)

Crystal Pond
- Pre-program meetings with Pathways to Leadership participants from Cycle 1 (December 2012-January 2013)
- Pathways to Leadership Program Cycle 1 (January 2013-May 2013)
- Pathways to Leadership Program Cycle 2 (January 2014-May 2014)
- In-depth research interviews (January 2014-April 2014)

Boxes shaded in light blue denote Pathways projects activities where I conducted participant observation, while boxes shaded in darker blue are activities that I organized specifically for the purposes of this dissertation project.
Appendix B  Research participants

B.1  Pathways to Leadership program participants

Light green: Cycle 2 participants at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House
Turquoise: Cycle 1 participants at Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House who participated in post-program meetings
Light purple: Cycle 1 participants at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House who participated in post-program meetings
Light pink: Cycle 2 participants at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House

Note: I did not interview Dorothy, Sarah, Estelle, or Mimi (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4), but their program participation is recorded in my fieldnotes from PtL program sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age at time program</th>
<th>Home Country</th>
<th>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</th>
<th>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</th>
<th>Home Country Occupation</th>
<th>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</th>
<th>Number of Children (Ages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>University instructor</td>
<td>Freelance computer programmer; was a SAMH until August 2013</td>
<td>1 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>Office coordinator in a law office; was a stay at home mom (SAHM) until October 2013. Would really like to become a settlement worker.</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiyo</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Applying for PR; no work permit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Applying for PR; no work permit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
<td>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</td>
<td>Home Country Occupation</td>
<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Refugee claimant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher, event planner, art gallery owner</td>
<td>Refugee claimant; no work permit; receiving social assistance</td>
<td>3 (15, 11, 3); 2 children in Mexico, 1 child in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Applying for PR; no work permit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
<td>Applying for PR; no work permit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amita</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>High school teacher</td>
<td>SAHM to three children; would like to work but can't afford childcare</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trina</td>
<td>Not provided</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Government employee</td>
<td>Small home-based business; recovering from a serious illness; interested in part-time work in the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program; concerned about cost of childcare</td>
<td>2 (2, first child passed away)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
<td>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</td>
<td>Home Country Occupation</td>
<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Refugee claimant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Refugee claimant; no work permit</td>
<td>3 (19, 8, 3); oldest child married &amp; living in USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Not provided</td>
<td>In Canada for 42 years</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Unionized employee at a housing complex</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>News reporter</td>
<td>SAHM; struggles with English and not currently seeking employment</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akira</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
<td>Waitress at a Japanese restaurant before maternity leave; restaurant administrative worker in Fall 2013; wants to become an accountant</td>
<td>2 (3, infant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jadira</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Elementary school teacher</td>
<td>Previously employed at Subway as a sandwich artist; now a SAHM</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisa</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>N/A; Went abroad after graduation</td>
<td>SAHM; was working on Early Childhood Educator recertification in Fall 2013</td>
<td>3 (13, 9, 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
<td>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</td>
<td>Home Country Occupation</td>
<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nailea</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Medical doctor (pediatrician)</td>
<td>SAHM to university-aged sons; as of Summer 2014, was facilitating a youth program at a large non-profit organization</td>
<td>2 (23, 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minseo</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Husband's business partner &amp; homemaker</td>
<td>SAHM; seeking employment in NHs or with a home-based catering business</td>
<td>2 (12, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negar</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>SAHM; taking ESL classes at Vancouver Community College</td>
<td>2 (12, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nira</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>SAHM interested in opening a home-based daycare</td>
<td>2 (4, infant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cierra</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Financial advisor</td>
<td>Cook in a Mexican restaurant; brief maternity leave in Winter 2013; working in the HIPPY program as of September 2013</td>
<td>2 (4, infant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxanna</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Travel agent</td>
<td>SAHM; Started volunteering at Battered Women's Support Services after the PtL program</td>
<td>2 (9, 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
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<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neve</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>N/A: Went abroad after graduation</td>
<td>SAHM; would like to seek employment but cannot afford childcare</td>
<td>2 (5, 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Immigration consultant</td>
<td>SAHM until March 2014; now working in the HIPPY program</td>
<td>2 (4, 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasha</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hotel employee</td>
<td>Homemaker (stay at home wife)</td>
<td>1 (18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Government-assisted refugee</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Came as a child</td>
<td>Stay-at-home mom; seeking employment but not sure where to start</td>
<td>5 (23-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Computer programmer</td>
<td>Stay-at-home mom; seeking employment; applied to HIPPY program in Spring 2014</td>
<td>2 (4, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preschool teacher</td>
<td>Formerly a Live-In Caregiver; now a live-out childcare worker</td>
<td>3 (unknown: all live in the Philippines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nail technician</td>
<td>SAHM; interested in becoming a certified esthetician</td>
<td>2 (4, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
<td>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</td>
<td>Home Country Occupation</td>
<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Economic Class</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N/A; Went abroad as a teenager</td>
<td>Live-in Caregiver, then worked as a cook; now a SAHM and undecided between registering for school or seeking employment now that her children are teens</td>
<td>2 (13, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunhe</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
<td>Completed an immigration consultant diploma; worked as an advisor at an ESL school; now a SAHM</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Immigrated at the age of 10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N/A; Property manager in Canada</td>
<td>SAHM; considering seeking employment but interested in switching sectors</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A; Immigrated after studying computer science</td>
<td>Part-time administrative &amp; information technology employee at a non-profit health clinic</td>
<td>2 (12, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Born in Canada</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>SAHM; interested in employment opportunities but was unsure how to re-enter the labour market</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age at time program</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Refugee</td>
<td>Years in Canada as of Program Registration</td>
<td>Home Country Occupation</td>
<td>Occupation in Canada at time of interview, or by the end of the program</td>
<td>Number of Children (Ages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Ice cream scooper</td>
<td>Previously employed as a hotel housekeeper; SAHM since her daughter was born</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimi</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Insurance underwriter</td>
<td>SAHM since arriving in Canada</td>
<td>2 (4, 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B.2 Pathways to Leadership program funder and organizers I interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
<th>Home Country</th>
<th>Immigration Program: Economic, Family or Humanitarian</th>
<th>Connection to PtL program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neeharika</td>
<td>My home</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>Program facilitator &amp; self-employed consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>Her home</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Government-assisted refugee</td>
<td>UBC practicum student; hired at CPNH after first cycle of PtL program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>My home</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Consultant; assisted with the original grant application &amp; program evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>Her home</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>Consultant; assisted with the original grant application &amp; program evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry</td>
<td>Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>FLNH Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serena</td>
<td>Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>FLNH staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Economic class</td>
<td>CPNH staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>CPNH staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>CPNH staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Her office</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Staff member at funder organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C  Letter of introduction

The following letter was provided to all women participating the Cycle 2 of the Pathways to Leadership program at Crystal Pond Neighbourhood House and Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House as a way of introducing the research:

Dear Pathways Participant,

My name is Heather Holroyd and I am a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. I am interested in learning more about the different experiences of women and families after they immigrate to Canada, and especially their experiences finding jobs and establishing themselves in Vancouver. The purpose of learning about your experiences is so that I can write a doctoral dissertation that makes real recommendations, based on the actual experiences of women such as yourself, about how to improve immigration policy and settlement program.

Participant-observation: As part of my research, I will be observing the 16 sessions of the Pathways Program, and taking written notes to include in my research. All of my notes will be kept confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous in any published work, including my dissertation and journal articles. I have received permission from Neelarika and the staff at [Crystal Pond/Forest Lawn Neighbourhood House] to observe the Pathways Program from the purposes of my research, but you have the right to request that your participation in the program sessions not be recorded for research purposes. If you would like your participation in the program to be kept out of my notes and research, please let me know in person, by phone or by email. If you are okay with having your participation recorded, but one day you feel uncomfortable about it, please let me know and I will keep you out of my notes for that day.

Interviews: In [October/February] I would like to meet with each participant in order to learn more about your individual experience, for the purposes I discuss above. Each meeting will take about an hour and a half, and your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. I will be in touch with you over the next few weeks to discuss the interview and whether or not you are interested in participating.

Please feel free to ask me any questions or tell me what you think about this project.
Appendix D  Email message to have post-program meetings included in research

Hi [program participant’s name],

How have you been? I hope your 2014 is off to a great start! I am writing to you about my research. I am conducting interviews right now and learning so much about the experiences of women who immigrate to Canada. Do you remember the one-hour meeting we had last summer to discuss your experiences in the Pathways to Leadership program? I reviewed the information collected during these meetings over the December holidays, and some of the statements from these meetings are very powerful. I would like to include some information from our meeting in my PhD research, and I am wondering if you are willing to provide your consent for me to include some of your comments from this meeting in my research. Please see the attached consent form for more information.

I will not include any information from our meeting in my study without your written consent; if you would not like to have your information included in the study please let me know and I will not ask you about it again. If you have any questions about what it means to have your comments included in my research project, please feel free to contact me by phone or by email.

If you are willing to provide consent to have your comments from our meeting last summer included in my PhD research, you can do it in the following two ways:

1) You can print off the attached consent form, sign it, scan it and email it back to me.

OR

2) You can email me your home address, and I will send you a copy of the form to sign, as well as an addressed and stamped envelope for you to mail the form back to me.

Thank you so much, [program participant’s name], and I look forward to hearing from you!

Cheers,

Heather
Appendix E  Consent form for interviews – program participants

Project title:  
Investigating Intersections of Gender, Race and Immigration Status in an Employment and Leadership Skills Program

Graduate Student:  Heather Holroyd, PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology

Principal Investigator:  Dr. Thomas Kemple, Professor in the Department of Sociology

Purpose:  The purpose of this doctoral research study is to learn about the experiences of women who immigrate to Canada and participate in employment-related settlement programs at local community organizations. You are being asked to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences with immigration and work, your current living situation and your involvement in community organizations. This information will allow me to better understand the lived experiences of immigrant women and their families in Vancouver, and to make recommendations about how community organizations and the Canadian government can better support immigrants to Canada. You are being invited to participate in this research because you have immigrated to Canada and are participating in an employment and leadership skills program at a local community organization.

This study is being conducted in two community organizations in Vancouver, British Columbia. I (Heather Holroyd) will be interviewing about 20 individuals who are involved with a particular leadership and employment skills program, as well as approximately 10 individuals, including community organization staff, program funders, consultants and politicians, who are involved in making these programs possible.

Study Procedures:  You will be asked to give approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time to participate in this interview. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can represent what you have told me as accurately as possible. I may also jot down words throughout the interview to remember to ask you about specific points. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the procedures at any time. There are no known risks associated with you in participating in this study and the information you share will help me to make recommendations based on people’s actual experiences with immigration and settlement programs.
**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. All interview audio-recordings and documents will be assigned and identified by a code number, and all documents, including the transcript of the interview, will be kept on my password-protected computer. I am the only person who will have access to the identities of study participants. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study and I will change all revealing details in order to protect your identity.

**Withdrawal of consent:** You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time during the interview, and for up to a month after the interview has been completed. If you decide that you do not want to participate in this study I will delete the audio-recording and any information you have already given.

**Payment:** You will not receive any money for participating in this interview.

**Study results:** The findings of this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may also be published in academic journals. If you would like to receive a copy of the findings, please indicate your email address below and I will send you the findings when the research is complete (approximately one year from now).

**Contact for information about the study:** If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, you may contact me via email or by phone.

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:** If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a research subject or your experience while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598 or via email at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

**Consent:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any impact on your life.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

________________________________________   __________________________
Printed (legal) name of participant                                                                 Date
________________________________________
Signature of participant
________________________________________
Email of participant (if you wish to receive a copy of the study findings)
Appendix F  Consent form for interviews – program organizers and funder

Project title:
Investigating Intersections of Gender, Race and Immigration Status in an Employment and Leadership Skills Program

Graduate Student: Heather Holroyd, PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Thomas Kemple, Professor in the Department of Sociology

Purpose: The purpose of this doctoral research study is to learn about the experiences of women who immigrate to Canada and participate in employment-related settlement programs at local community organizations. You are being asked to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences working with individuals who have immigrated to Canada, and/or your involvement with community organizations and settlement programs. This information will allow me to better understand the lived experiences of immigrant women and their families in Vancouver, and to make recommendations about how community organizations and the Canadian government can effectively support immigrants to Canada. You are being invited to participate in this research because you are involved in organizing, facilitating, funding or advocating for settlement programs for immigrants to Canada.

This study is being conducted in two community organizations in Vancouver, British Columbia. I (Heather Holroyd) will be interviewing about 20 individuals who are involved with a particular leadership and employment skills program, and I will also be interviewing about 10 individuals, including community organization staff, program funders, consultants and politicians, who are involved in making these programs possible.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to give approximately 60 minutes of your time to participate in this interview. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can represent what you have told me as accurately as possible. I may also jot down words throughout the interview to remember to ask you about specific points. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the procedures at any time. There are no known risks associated with you in participating in this study and the information you share will help me to make recommendations based on people’s actual experiences with immigration policy, settlement programs and the organizational processes involved in making such programs happen.
Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. All interview audio-recordings and documents will be assigned and identified by a code number, and all documents, including the transcript of the interview, will be kept on my password-protected computer. I am the only person who will have access to the identities of study participants. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study and I will change all revealing details in order to protect your identity.

Withdrawal of consent: You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time during the interview, and for up to a month after the interview has been completed. If you decide that you do not want to participate in this study I will delete the audio-recording and any information you have already given.

Payment: You will not receive any money for participating in this interview.

Study results: The findings of this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may also be published in academic journals. If you would like to receive a copy of the findings, please indicate your email address below and I will send you the findings when the research is complete (approximately one year from now).

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, you may contact me via email or by phone.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a research subject or your experience while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598 or via email at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any impact on your life.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Printed (legal) name of participant ____________________________ Date __________

Signature of participant ____________________________

Email of participant (if you wish to receive a copy of the study findings) ____________________________
Appendix G  Questions for the Cycle 1 post-program meetings

1. What did you hope to get out of the Pathways Program?

2. To what extent did the course meet your needs and hopes?

3. What aspects of the course stand out for you?

4. What have you learned from the course about the barriers that immigrant women face in accessing training and employment?

5. As a participant in the Pathways Program, did you learn strategies for overcoming these barriers? If yes, can you give me an example of something that has helped you?

6. How did your understanding of racism change during this program?

7. After completing the Pathways Program, do you feel more clear about your career plan?

8. What did you learn about yourself when doing the civic engagement project? What skills or strengths did you use in your civic engagement project?

9. In what ways has your confidence increased in the past few months? (prompt: in terms of your concerns you might have, self-worth, participation…)

10. Did your participation in the course increase your comfort speaking in front of groups?

11. How has your participation in the program affected your everyday life?

12. How has the Pathways Program helped you deal with the difficulties you have faced adjusting to life in Canada? (Probes: language barriers, cultural norms and practices, lack of social networks, lack of resources, isolation, childcare, taking care of children, etc.)

13. What kind of supports have you developed as a result of the course?

14. I’m going to ask you questions about the structure of the program.
   How did you feel the morning of the program? Why these feelings?
   How can we support participants to arrive on time and ready to participate?
   Do you feel that each session should be longer than two and a half hours?
   Was the three week/one week break in classes helpful?
   What did you think about the length of the program?

15. What aspects of the course could be improved?

16. What other areas of content would you like to include?

17. In your opinion, who do you think would benefit most from this program?
Appendix H  Interview schedule for program participant interviews

A. Personal History
Where did you live before you came to Canada?
What were you doing before you made the decision to leave [place]? (Probes: paid work, care work, education/training, etc.)
Can you tell me about why you decided to move to Canada and to Vancouver, more specifically?
Can you tell me about the process of entering Canada?
a. When did you first apply to the Canadian government for documents?
b. What kind of documents did you apply for?
c. When was your application approved?
d. When did you move?
Where did you find information about living in Canada? (Probes: the Internet, contacts already in Canada [who, where, are you still in contact?)
Who came with you to Canada? (Probes: spouse/partner, children)
How were you hoping that your life would change after moving to Canada?

B. Life in Canada
What do you remember about your experiences after first moving to Vancouver?
a. What do you remember about your first month in Vancouver?
b. What do you remember about your first year in Vancouver?
c. What did you know about organizations like Immigration Settlement Services (ISS) and MOSAIC? (Probe: access/use of these organizations)
What challenges did you face adjusting to life in Canada?
a. What challenges did your family face in adjusting to life in Canada? (Probes: spouse/partner, children)
b. In what ways is it different to raise your children in Canada than in [home country]?
How did you manage these challenges?
For example, how did you try to deal with language barriers?

C. Employment
What was your first job in Canada?
How did this job relate to your previous education or skills?
What kinds of things did you do to try to get a different job?
a. Have you done any training or courses that you thought would help you find a job? If yes, can you tell me more about this/these experience(s)?
b. Have you done any employment programs that you thought would help you find a job? If yes, can you tell me more about this/these experience(s)?
How did your legal status in Canada affect the jobs you were able to apply for?
What kind of job did you expect to get in Canada?
[if applicable] What was your partner/spouse’s first job in Canada?
[if applicable] What kind of job did your partner/spouse expect to get in Canada?
Have you been able to get the kind of job that you expected? Why?
Has your partner/spouse been able to get the kind of job he/she expected? Why?
How do you make sense of your experiences working in Canada?
How do you make sense of your partner/spouses experiences working in Canada?

D. Social Situation
Who do you depend on for help?
What kinds of places do you go to for help?
What places have you found the most helpful? Why?
How did you become involved with the Neighbourhood House?
Can you tell me about why you come to the Neighbourhood House?
In your home country, who were your friends?
In Canada, who are your friends?
How did you meet your friends in Canada?
How has migrating to Canada affected your relationship with your spouse/partner?
How has migrating to Canada affected how you raise your children?

E. Issues Related to Race and Immigration
What does the word “racism” mean to you?
Have you experienced racism in Canada? If yes, can you tell me about your experience?
What does the word “multiculturalism” mean to you?
How is your life in Canada different than your life in your home country?
What advice would you give to other women immigrating to Canada?

F. Concluding Questions
Of everything we have talked about today, what is the most important thing to you?
Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you would like to discuss?
Appendix I  Interview schedule for program organizer and funder interviews

A. Personal Background
1. Can you tell me about your role at [organization]?
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. What other tasks or jobs do you do at [organization]?
4. How did you become involved in organizations such as [name]?
5. What did you do before you started working at [organization]?
6. Can you tell me about what you do during a typical workday, starting with what you do to get ready to come to work and finishing with what you do after you leave work?
7. What inspires you about your work?
8. What do you wish you could change about your work?
9. How would these changes affect what you could accomplish?

B. Involvement in the Pathways Out of Poverty Project
8. Can you tell me about the history of the Pathways Out of Poverty project?
9. When and in what capacity did you become involved in the project?
10. What kind of previous experience do you have with projects like the Pathways Out of Poverty project?
11. What do you see as the potential of the Pathways Out of Poverty project?
12. To what extent do you think the Pathways Out of Poverty project manifests this potential?

C. Institutional Relations
13. What kinds of collaborations make the Pathways Out of Poverty project possible?
14. How do you fit into this collaboration?
15. What are the benefits of this collaboration?
16. What are the limitations of this collaboration?
17. What kind of vision do you have for collaborations such as this one?
18. Is it possible for your vision to become reality? Why or why not?
19. What makes it possible for you to do the kind of work that you?