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Newcomer Expectations and Experiences: An Evaluation of English Conversation Circles in London, Ontario

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Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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NEWCOMER EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES: AN EVALUATION OF ENGLISH CONVERSATION CIRCLES IN LONDON, ONTARIO

Monograph

by

Lisa Veldman

Graduate Program in Anthropology
and Collaborative Graduate Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

This research looks at conversation circles, hosted by "Community Connections," which is a settlement program in London Ontario. The focus is on how the program has an impact on the experiences and expectations of these individual migrants. The conversation circles are a network that attempts to meet the government's expectations of the "ideal" migrant and prepare newcomers to become part of a larger Canadian society. While it generally succeeds at representing the ideals of the government, it struggles to involve Canadians in the settlement process. Without the openness of a receiving society, migrant will never truly fit in. The conversation circles connects newcomers with volunteers, but the bonds created within this controlled environment do not expand into the larger society. The data was gathered through participant observation, one-on-one interviews and a focus group set up by the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, which hosts the conversation circles.

**Keywords**: migration, migration policy, newcomers, settlement period, settlement services, identity, networks, dependent migrant, language, London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, conversation circles, community connections
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Introduction

On March 1st 2005, my family and I moved to Canada from the Netherlands. Eight years later, I call Canada my home. I have become bilingual, obtained my driver license, graduated from high school and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology. I am writing my master's thesis on the migration process, partly because of my own experiences on that day in March and the period that followed, which has left a big impression on me. Being a migrant and moving to another country at the age of fifteen, made me who I am today. It is part of my identity, and the experience has influenced my decisions that followed, leading me to conduct research on migrants in Canada and volunteering at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) to help other newcomers. I remain fascinated by different places and people around the world.

My own experiences as a newcomer and the experiences of other newcomers at the CCLC left me with many questions: Was my own adaptation to Canada typical? What are some of the problems faced by newcomers? What are the expectations and experiences of newcomers in London Ontario? How does the CCLC provide assistance to newcomers when they first arrive? To answer these questions, I turned to my own connection with the Cross Cultural Learner Centre.

The Cross Cultural Learner Centre is a program established in 1968 and initially affiliated with the University of Western Ontario (CCLC 2013). During its first twelve years, the centre was known as "the first Global Education Centre in Canada" (CCLC 2013). The CCLC was one of the programs that extended its support to assist the Vietnamese refugees, which was the first group of government-sponsored, non-European
refugees. The CCLC used its established network within the London community to provide settlement services. This was the beginning of the settlement services program (CCLC 2013). There are currently over 50 staff members working at the CCLC, and over 500 active volunteers assisting the staff (CCLC 2013). The team members are from diverse backgrounds and speak over 30 different languages (CCLC 2013).

Each branch within the Cross Cultural Learner Centre has its own staff, section in the building, and budget. The Community Connections program, where I volunteered, was previously known as the Host program. "Community, or community relations, implies a set of institutions or organizations within which context social interaction can occur or with which group membership can be identified" (Brettell, 2003:120-1). The goal of the program, therefore, is to involve the local population in activities that assist newcomers with their social needs during settlement. Individual newcomers have the opportunity to meet Canadian born Londoners and migrants who have been in Canada for a long period of time. The programs also provide a safe environment where newcomers have the opportunity to practice their conversational English, and learn about Canadian life (CCLC 2013). Several activities are organized by community connections staff and run by volunteers, such as the one-on-one match program, the youth program, cooking classes, summer camps and the conversation circles (CCLC).

**Method**

The conversation circles are where I conducted participant observation and they became the main focus of my research. My research question, then, became: “What is the role of the conversation circles in the migration process?” Initially, the circles were used
as a tool to meet newcomers in the London area, but over time and upon analyzing my early data, it became clear that this program was so much more than a place to learn and improve language. Between May and November of 2012, I attended seven different conversation circle locations as a volunteer and researcher. I participated in the activities, while taking quick notes on who attends the conversation circles, the way the program functioned. I chose a program that I was already familiar with as a volunteer for the CCLC, that was voluntary to attend, and focused on permanent residents but is non-culture specific. This meant that I would meet migrants from a wide range of backgrounds who all showed an interest in learning or improving conversational English, while interacting socially with other newcomers and local volunteers. Attending the circles also gave me the opportunity to meet local community members. In addition to newcomers, I interviewed volunteers to learn their perspective on the settlement experiences of newcomers who participated in the program and asked them what their role was as volunteers and members of the receiving community. While the conversation circles program was created with certain intentions in mind, the outcome led to a wide range of goals and experiences among both newcomers and volunteers, which will be discussed throughout this thesis. The third method I used to collect data, besides the participant observations and the one-on-one interviews, was a one-time focus group hosted by the Community Connections program. The participants are from the Mutual Assistance Network Group which is made up of migrants associated with the CCLC, who communicate through e-mails about job postings and events.
Since this research relies mostly on data gathered through interviews, it was important to create a bond between the researcher and the participants. By attending the conversation circles for about four to six weeks before scheduling any one-on-one interviews, the migrants involved in the research had a chance to get to know me. The relationships that were formed at the conversation circles eventually led to twenty-two interviews which on average took two hours. The bond between researcher and participant is what sets the data apart from census and questionnaire data which does not require a connection between those involved. The point of these kinds of interviews is to get to know conversation circle participants in a private sphere where they can share their personal experiences and opinions. During this time, the experiences of the newcomers from the moment they arrived in Canada up until the present were discussed. The interviews were semi-structured, which means that some standard questions were asked to all participants, in regards to why they migrated, what the migration process was like, their experiences upon arrival, the connection to the CCLC and the conversation circles, and what goals they have for the future. There was room for other topics to be discussed depending on the interests and experiences of the individual. No participant at the conversation circle was obligated to agree to a one-on-one interview. However, they were all aware of the fact that I was conducting fieldwork, and agreed to having me attend the circle.

Of the twenty-two research participants, four were Canadian-born volunteers, four were migrant volunteers, and fourteen were newcomers. On average, the newcomers have been in Canada for one to three years, three of the newcomers had arrived less than a year
ago and three had been in Canada for more than three years. The migrants who volunteered at the conversation circles have been in Canada for a minimum of fifteen years. Out of all the participants, more females than males were part of the one-on-one interviews (13 females, 9 males). Those who had been in Canada for a longer period of time, generally had Canadian citizenship or dual citizenship. Of all the migrants, both long- and short-term, seven arrived through the economic migrant stream, five as refugees, three through the family class, one was a child when he came to Canada with his mother, and one does not fit in any of the migration streams\(^1\). Also important to note is that of the seven economic migrants, four arrived as dependents of a skilled migrant. The last person interviewed for this research is an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher associated with the CCLC. I interviewed her in order to learn her perspective on language learning. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms instead of real names were used in this research.

**The Conversation Circles**

The conversation circles started 10 years ago and are an alternative to classroom learning since there are no levels, assignments or teachers. One of the volunteers described the conversation circles as "ideally a safe place to interact, practice and communicate in English but where people attend with a wide range of motives" (Interview, 7-6-2012). It is a group where newcomers can practice and improve everyday English conversation skills. The circles take place weekly between 6:30pm and 8pm. The

\(^1\) The different migration streams will be explained in Chapter one, on pg 29-30.
image shows a map of London Ontario, with each conversation circle location identified, alongside the Cross Cultural Learner Centre.

With the exception of the Westmount conversation circle which takes places in a senior citizen community centre inside a shopping mall, all circles take place within a branch of the London public library. However, some of these libraries are located within a shopping mall as well. While the locations of the conversation circles had some impact on accessibility, there was no pattern to be found in regards to geographical background of the newcomers. All conversation circles had newcomers attending from several countries of origin, and different linguistic backgrounds. While Colombians and Chinese participants attended in higher numbers, people from other Latin American and Asian
countries along with Eastern Europeans and Middle Eastern countries could be found at each location. None of the conversation circles had newcomers attending from the African continent or any of the Western European countries. What was a more prevalent pattern in regards to the newcomers attending the conversation circles, is the gender difference. On average, more women than men attended each circle or in some cases like the Beacock location, no men attended at all. Central and Sherwood were the only two locations with a balanced male-female ratio, until the new season started in the fall, at which point only females attended the Sherwood conversation circles. The significance of this gendered pattern is discussed throughout the thesis. The Central and Sherwood circles alongside Cherryhill also had the highest attendance rate, although the turnover at Sherwood was lower than at Central. Beacock, Masonville, Westmount and Crouch hosted a smaller group, while Crouch had the most consistent group of newcomers attending each week. One of the volunteers at the Crouch location also worked for the Youth program in the Crouch library, which gave her access to the kitchen facilities. The Crouch circle was the only location providing tea to all its participants, while people took turn bringing treats occasionally. This had a big impact on the atmosphere of the conversation circle, since Crouch was the most casual, with a living room atmosphere. On the other hand, the room used at the Central library created a classroom atmosphere, due to the straight lines of desks and a white board at the front of the room. The seats were usually re-arranged to create a circle with the tables.

The rooms provided, volunteers and newcomers attending, and the methods used within each conversation circle, has led to a wide range of experiences while I attended
the seven different locations. From day one, each newcomer is told that the conversation circle they were about to participate in did not reflect the way all conversation circles functioned. It was therefore highly recommended by all volunteers to try out several locations, in order to find out which one fits the needs of each individual newcomer. The volunteers do have a large impact on the way the conversation functions, since each individual has their own perspective and attitude. The Sherwood location, for example, has a high number of volunteers spread out around the table so that newcomers had the option to ask for clarifications to a volunteer nearby. Conversation circles with a lower level of English, such as Sherwood, Cherryhill and Beacock, tend to rely on activities, such as prepared assignments and games, in order to get all newcomers involved while learning a new vocabulary and practicing it in a way that does not require too much experience in the English language. The volunteers at conversation circles with a higher English level among the newcomers such as Crouch and Masonville do not rely on prepared assignments and topics. These circles reflect a true conversation. The way a conversation circle functions does not lie solely in the hands of the volunteers; newcomers have the power to take control within the conversation circle and gear it towards their individual needs, as long as the volunteer allows for divergence and does not take control over the conversation circle as if they were teachers. Volunteers are meant to be facilitators, not instructors. This is a fine line however, since the conversation circles are still a learning process, which means that guidance, and especially corrections are required in order for the newcomers to improve their conversational skills.
Migration in Anthropology

Questions in the anthropological study of migration are framed by the assumption that outcomes for people who move are shaped by their social, cultural, and gendered locations and that migrants themselves are agents in their behavior, interpreting and constructing within the constraints of structure (Brettell and Hollifield 2008:5).

Caroline Brettell (2008) has published an historical account that focuses on migration theory in anthropology. Early anthropological research tended to focus on people and places far away from the researchers' own society and it was not until the 1950s and early 1960s that migration studies caught the interest of the discipline (Brettell 2008). The reason it took so long for anthropologists to become interested in migration, is because the main concept of culture was considered something rooted in space. The focus tended to be on "the other" and divided the world in different groups with distinct cultures. Therefore, migration went against the idea of people and cultures being bounded, timeless and homogenous (Brettell 2008). After going through several changes, the concept of culture remained a focus in migration studies conducted by anthropologists, since the emphasis became "the social and cultural changes that result from leaving one context and entering another" (Brettell and Hollifield 2008). Migration studies from an anthropological perspective focus on the social interactions, and how individual migrants go through culture change by adapting to the new place, questioning self-identity (Brettell 2008:114). Identity, social interactions (through networks), and the process of going through change (through language learning for example), are at the centre of my own research. According to Brettell, anthropologists "tend to look at immigration policy from the perspective of the immigrant who acts, adapts, and often
circumvents" (Brettell 2008:116). This perspective has derived from a theoretical shift in the discipline, going from a structuralist view to an emphasis on practice (Brettell 2008:116).

As part of my research, I rely on the stories of individual migrants to get a better understanding of the experience of being a migrant in a particular context. Both Caroline Brettell and George Gmelch discuss the value of oral histories in migration studies. Brettell explains "that a handful of personal narratives can teach us a good deal about pattern, structure, culture, and the role of the individual in the migration process" (Brettell 2003:24). Gmelch agrees that by looking at migration from an individual's point of view "[W]e get a sense of the degree to which migrants are free actors shaping their own destinies, as opposed to pawns merely responding to constraints imposed upon them by their society" (1992:324). I have included multiple oral stories in my thesis that were collected through one-on-one interviews. Each example represents the experience of an individual, not a group, which is why I made sure to identify the person who told me the story and in what context, when using the quote to back up an argument. Therefore, the opinion of Julia for example does not represent all migrants. It does not even represent all Korean women in Canada, since Julia speaks for herself when telling her story and answering the questions. Being a migrant, Korean, and female is only part of Julia's identity and a multitude of other factors influenced her experiences as a newcomer in London. No generalizations will be and should be made based on the data gathered during my fieldwork. The stories in this thesis do not represent the experiences and expectations of all migrants. However, by talking with multiple individuals who have
some aspects in common, comparisons can be made and shared experiences become clear. These patterns allow for a better understanding of the settlement process but leave room for a variety of experiences. It also allowed me to observe the emotions, reactions, ideas and attitudes of individual migrants in a response to the surrounding environment (Gmelch 1992). I chose not to focus on people of a particular country of origin, continent or language group since I am interested in the range of experiences. What connects these participants instead is that they have all settled in London Ontario, and that they are all associated with the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC).

These stories of individual migrants are placed within the larger context, acknowledging the role of power and agency by incorporating government policies and the views of the native-born population. Peter Li has written extensively on the importance of incorporating the views of the receiving society and especially the role of the native-born population. Li wrote:

The imbalance of power between those well entrenched in Canadian society and others who enter Canada as latecomers impinges on every aspect of integrating immigrants. Academic writings on immigrant integration have often ignored this unequal relationship by taking a convenient approach to integration and implicitly endorsing the normative and behavioural standards of the old-timers as the only acceptable standards of integration (Li 2003a:329). He argues that the mistake many migration scholars make is to use standards created by the receiving society as a way to measure the level of integration among newcomers. When migrants are expected to "become" Canadian, where does that leave their identity? Li therefore argues that in order for academics to arrive at a better understanding of the integration process, the level of openness among the receiving population should be taken
into consideration (2003a). I will do this by evaluating settlement services provided to newcomers, especially the conversation circles.

Structure of Thesis

My main question going into this research focused on role the conversation circles have during the migration process. I argue that the conversation circles go beyond language training. They become an extension of a migrant network and are flexible depending on the needs of the individual migrant. Conversation circles are mainly used by dependent migrants who attempt to move away from this status. Through this, the conversation circles become a place to (re-)discover identity within a new environment. By attending the conversation circles I learned which migrants are the most vulnerable and tend to fall between the cracks of the system upon arrival. I also learned about what it takes for newcomers to feel like they are becoming part of the mainstream Canadian society, which requires the involvement of the native-born population. Immigration is a new start. Each individual faces choices that will shape their path to the future. They will grow and develop over time. I argue that, while individuals have a head start based on the opportunities they had before arrival, all migrants have to go through some change in regards to language, identity, and their networks during the settlement process. These three concepts became the main aspects of my chapters:

Chapter one looks at Identity. Who am I, and how do I fit into this new environment? Many of the participants struggled with these questions. The migrants in my research struggled to (re)define their identity which goes through changes throughout the migration process. The different migrant streams have an impact on the migrant status
of individuals, as does the perception of the native-born population towards migrants. At the same time, migration has become an opportunity for some migrants to get a second chance in choosing who they are, to select a different path then the one they left behind.

Chapter two focuses on Networks. All participants mentioned the people that they have met or already knew here in London, and who assisted them through the migration process and upon arrival. Networks came up during the initial settlement, and continues to play an important role when trying to get used to living in a new environment. Settlement services such as the conversation circles are a type of network which tends to be used by a particular group of migrants, when their initial network no longer fulfill the needs.

Chapter three is about Language. Language became a key aspect during the settlement process, whether as a challenge, obstacle, a rite of passage, or a goal. All the participants in this research felt that their experience as a migrant in London was interrelated with their language learning process. During the one-on-one interviews, participants discussed their experiences attending the conversation circles, but also what impact having an accent has in daily life, especially in regards to confidence and being recognized for skills and experience obtained before the migration took place.

**Key Concepts**

The three concepts of identity, networks and language are interrelated and influenced by multiple perspectives. Government policies shape what is expected of migrants upon arrival in Canada. It also shapes the settlement services available and states the official languages that people are expected to speak in order to become part of
Canadian society. I use the term *Identity* as defined by Katherine Pratt Ewing. Older anthropological approaches perceived identity as something fixed and natural. "The fixing of identities is a basic means by which the state contributes to the ordering of the social world. State authorities bestow identities through law, public policy, and routinized practices in everyday arenas" (Pratt Ewing 2004:117). Pratt Ewing does not deny the existence of identity, but defines them as "reified symbols and markers of social position and cultural difference that are embodied in individuals within specific social and political contexts" (2004:118). Identities are assigned, but also taken on. They are multiple, crosscutting, fluid, and can change over time (2004:118-119).

Douglas Massey defines migration networks as "sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin" (1988:396). All the newcomers who participated in the research said that they knew someone in Canada, and particularly Ontario when they selected their migration destination. In other words, networks played a vital role in the initial migration. As I will show in Chapter two, networks continue to be a vital part of the settlement process. While networks play a large part in the movement of people, they function within the larger political system that sets the boundaries on movement. Networks do provide a sense of control and power to migrants, since they can use it as a tool during the migration and settlement process, but within its limits. My research shows that migrant networks tend to fulfil only the initial settlement needs, and that the network does not guarantee employment, especially not in a field that requires high-skills. It also does not guarantee that the social needs and
personal goals of individual migrants are met. While a migrant network has the power to attract newcomers to settle down in a particular geographical location and to assist the newcomer during the initial settlement period, the involvement of the different levels of governance and the native-born population play an active part in the settlement process, and will be discussed in Chapter two.

*Community* is a term that is frequently used, but it tends to lack a clear definition (Williams 1976:76). I refer to *Community* in Chapter two on networks as a sense of belonging to a group or the larger society in line with Benedict Anderson’s definition. Anderson discusses communities as being “imagined” in his work, referring to the idea of belonging and having a shared identity, without actually personally knowing those who share the identity of that community (2006). In order to feel part of a community, the individual should want to be part of it, and actively invest in its membership. At the same time, the receiving community, referring in this research to the native-born Canadians, and particularly those living in London Ontario, should be willing to accept new members and adjust accordingly. Community Connections is also the name of the program at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, hosting the conversation circles.

Hartmut Esser identifies three roles of language in regards to migration and settlement: 1) language as a *resource*, 2) language as a *symbol*, and 3) language as a *medium* for communication (2006:11), which will be discussed in detail throughout Chapter three. A key concept related to language that requires a definition is *language ideology*. Kathryn Woolard discusses how multiple meanings and usages are associated with the concept of ideology, ranging from a broad definition by Rumsey who defines
language ideology as "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world" (1990:346), to a more focused description by Michael Silverstein who wrote that "ideologies about language, or linguistic ideologies, are any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979:193), which is the definition I use in Chapter three.

Language ideology, in non-academic terms, refers to the way language is used, evaluated, and categorized by humans, based on experiences and interpretations. When applying the concept of linguistic ideology to an ethnography, Woolard states that we should be careful not to explain it as an aspect of culture, which naturalizes the concept, while at the same time making it appear timeless and shared (1998:10). Woolard encourages other scholars to acknowledge that ideologies are socially produced and take place within a particular context. They are "partial, interest-laden, contestable, and contested" (Woolard 1998:10).

My research will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of migrants within this system, what sort of effect the immigration laws have on individuals, and what unintentional consequences derive from it. This cannot be done at the federal or provincial level of migration, but instead requires talking to people at the local level who deal with this social landscape on a daily basis. While the participants of this research have emerged into an existing system with rules and regulations, the migrants try to balance the government expectations with their own goals and reasons for moving in the first place. My research incorporates the stories of individual migrants to show that each person has made their own choices which led to a wide range of experiences. Since
settlement requires interactions in order to negotiate a sense of belonging, it is necessary to deal with the expectations, behaviours, and ideals of the receiving society. Native-born Canadians have an impact at each stage of migration and in regards to the three concepts of identity, networks and language. I will look at what it takes to bridge the gap between the migrant space and community space.

My goal for this research is to narrow the gap between Canadian citizens and immigrants. My approach for this is to emphasize the similarities between these different categories of people. It is possible to break down the idea of self and “other” because this division is a cultural creation instead of a biological difference. I know what it is like to move to another country, and try to (re)discover my identity. Within the first week I was enrolled in a high school. This meant that I never relied on programs such as the Cross Cultural Learner Centre to learn the language and build a network. However, it did take some time before I gained confidence in my English. I had some basic knowledge of the language before the migration, but spent the first little while in silence, listening to how language was being used by Canadians. Being a migrant means that I can relate to those who participated in my research. At the same time, I learned about a wide range of experiences, and there were many aspects that I could not relate to and had to ask people to expand on in order to get a better understanding. Migration has had a big impact on my life, which is reflected in this research. Going through the process has created an interest in me that I pursued throughout academia. Being a migrant researching migration has had a big impact on the data collected and the way it is being interpreted. The first-hand experiences have shaped the questions I asked during the one-on-one interviews.
Chapter 1: The Canadian Construction of the "Ideal" Migrant

It is especially challenging to push through when your identity as an immigrant overshadows that of a skilled, educated and experienced person. How ironic, since Canada is an immigrant country. - Miguel (Interview, 8-28-2012)

Introduction

The conversation circles hosted by the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) are part of Canada’s settlement program, helping newcomers in the London area, especially during the early period after arrival. Before discussing the settlement process, it is key to understand who enters the country in the first place, and who will therefore be using programs like the conversation circles upon arrival. In this chapter I will argue that the political, historical and social environment have an impact on migrant identity, influencing, but not controlling the self-perception and choices of individual migrants. Upon arrival in Canada, while influenced by the expectations of this native-born population, newcomers are able to negotiate their roles within the larger society. I will discuss how the environment shapes migrant identity in general, while at the same time I will highlight perspectives of individual newcomers who share their stories of what it is like to arrive in a new country and try to (re-) discover themselves. First, I will discuss immigration policy. Then I will turn to the general political context of Canada in regards to migration, which includes a discussion on multiculturalism in particular. In the next section I will look at the native-born population in Canada, followed by some examples of how Canadian federal policies construct migrant identity. I will end the chapter by
discussing how these images and expectations have an impact on the self-identity of newcomers.

**Welcome to Canada**

Peter Li states: "[C]onceptually, the immigrant population may be seen as a product of Canada's immigration policy. However, the immigrants' place in Canadian society is more than just a product of admissions policy, as immigrants interact after arrival with people already residing in Canada, and participating in varying degrees and capacities in the social institutions and social relations of Canadian society" (2003b:53).

The participants in this research were all aware that some actions and developments were expected to take place during the settlement process, such as learning and improving English skills and finding employment. At the same time, each individual migrant approached these expectations from a different angle, trying to find out over time what works for them in particular, whether this was finding any job at all, going back to school, changing paths, investing in the future of their children, or enjoying other aspects of life through volunteering or spending time with family. These choices are not made independently; those within the household and extended social networks provide assistance throughout the settlement process. The patterns only become clear by analyzing the experiences of migrants at the micro scale, since government policies do not represent outcomes, just intentions.

Immigration policy and border control have an impact on which applicants will be accepted into a country, influencing the movement of people. The policies change over time reflecting the perspectives and agendas of individuals and political parties. While
there has been a growing negative attitude towards migrants in many western European countries (see for e.g. data on the Netherlands and France where the governments are taking on anti-immigration, and pro-assimilation policies), Canada continues to see migration as a positive impact on the country, but only certain migrants and only under certain conditions. The Canadian government uses immigration "as a means to address the problems of labour shortages and economic development, and to regulate the social, cultural and symbolic boundary of the nation" (Li 2003b:15). This means that individual migrants are selected through the Canadian federal government policies with specific goals and intentions in mind. Canada is home to 31.6 million people, of which almost 20 percent are migrants. About the same percentage of the population speaks a mother tongue other than French or English\(^2\) (Statistics Canada 2007a). The Canadian government allows the regulated entrance of almost 250 thousand migrants annually, arriving from over 200 countries of origin (CIC 2012). This cap on yearly acceptance is based on a percentage. The immigration levels plan states that around one percent of the total population of Canada is used to determine the yearly inflow of migrants (Gabriel 2006).

The Canadian government is involved with migration on multiple scales, federal, provincial and local, each with their own representatives, responsibilities and agendas. Canada has a Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has the overall responsibility for immigration and refugee

\(^2\) The number of people whose native tongue is other than English or French also includes the native languages, while some immigrants might speak English or French as their native tongue in a different country of origin. This is why the percentage of non-native speakers and immigrants do not always correlate.
matters at the federal level. Some of their responsibilities are to make refugee and immigration policy, determine the eligibility of people to claim refugee protection within and outside of Canada, and to select immigrants, issue visas, permits, security certificates, permanent residence and citizenship (Immigration and Refugee Board 2012). Overall, the federal government selects who is allowed to enter and remain in Canada.

At the provincial level, there is also a Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and each province has its own representative. The goal at the provincial level is to provide services for successful economic and social integration (Ontario government 2012). The provincial level is responsible for migrants upon their arrival. Along with the local level, they are also concerned about ESL, housing and social integration. It appears that the federal and the provincial level perceive the role of immigration differently, which is reflected by their actions. The federal level adjusts policies with economic intentions in mind, and believes that the success rate depends on the skill level of immigrants, which will be discussed in more detail later on in this thesis, while the provincial level is creating settlement programs that will guide immigrants through the process, aware that this also has an impact on the success rate among skilled migrants.

The local level of governance is the main focus of my research, since my fieldwork took place within programs organized by local services aimed to provide assistance to newcomers and long-term migrants. I will provide examples throughout the thesis of local interaction between representatives of government sponsored programs and individual migrants. A lot more social interaction takes place at the local level than at
the provincial level, where the interaction is indirect through forms, websites, mail or phone.

By looking at the different levels of government surrounding migration, it becomes clear that there is a strong hierarchy of power with federal at the top and the local government at the bottom. This also signifies the proximity of people involved in relation to the migrants. Those at the federal level are able to treat migrants as a commodity since they deal more with the regulations than with the actual people. The provincial level representatives are positioned between. They mediate between the federal institutions and the individual migrants by having some say in immigration regulations, while also working together with migrants who have already arrived in Canada and are in the settlement process. The local level of government focuses on the fact that migrants are individuals who have personal interests instead of portraying them as a homogenous entity, a statistic on paper. More people are involved at the local level than at the federal level, creating a wider range of perspectives and experiences regarding migrants. The actions and attitudes of both migrants and the receiving society are a lot more difficult to control, than deciding who is allowed to enter the country in the first place. One such attempt to influence attitudes towards newcomers in the Canadian context is the Multiculturalism Act.

Multiculturalism

"multiculturalism" in Canada refers to the presence and persistence of diverse racial and ethnic minorities who define themselves as different and who wish to remain so. Ideologically, multiculturalism consists of a relatively coherent set of ideas and ideals pertaining to the celebration of Canada's cultural diversity (Dewing 2009:1)
The United States, Australia and Canada are all popular migrant destinations globally. As former British colonies, these countries have a long history of migration and continue to rely on a migrant inflow to boost growth and development, and gain a competitive edge on the global scale. More than ever, Canada attempts to differentiate itself in order to attract newcomers, especially the highly sought after skilled migrants (Biles et al 2011, Li 2003b). But what sets Canada apart from the other countries?

Canada was the first country in the world to pass a national multiculturalism law (Dewing 2009). The Multiculturalism Act was implemented under the Trudeau government in 1971. While the idea of multiculturalism is stated above in the quote, Valerie Knowles argues that the motivation behind implementing the Multiculturalism Act was "intended to persuade non-English and non-French Canadians to accept official bilingualism" (2007:219). The Bilingualism Act was implemented by the federal government two years before the Multiculturalism Act. At this point in history, Canada had opened its doors to migrants from non-French and non-British European countries, and this third population group wanted to be acknowledged as part of the Canadian identity, which the Official Language Act did not do (Knowles 2007). The Multiculturalism Act portrays Canada as an open-minded and welcoming country, where there are no pressures for newcomers to give up part of their identity in order to be considered Canadian. However, having an act that defines the concept of multiculturalism does not guarantee its application. The Multiculturalism Act identifies the meaning of the term and its implications, but there are no guidelines or regulations on how to achieve true multiculturalism within Canadian society in order to have an impact on the settlement of migrants. It takes initiatives,
awareness, and collaboration to achieve such ideas as multiculturalism. The idea of the "two-way-street" expresses these needs. This concept was added to the Multiculturalism Act in 2001, with the introduction of the Immigration and Refugee Act (IRPA). Section 3.1(e) in regards to integration states: "to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society" (Tolley 2011:29). In other words, there is an emphasis that the integration of newcomers within the Canadian society is not just the responsibility of the individual migrant. A successful integration lies in the hand of both the migrant and the host society. The adaptation of a successful two-way street by both migrants and hosts would eventually lead to a multicultural nation-state.

Settlement services such as the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre promote multiculturalism within their programs. Many topics discussed in the conversation circles for example revolved around cultural differences, with the emphasis on learning, understanding, and respecting one another, instead of promoting assimilation to the ideologies found in Canadian society. Conversation circles are also an example of multiculturalism itself, since people from multiple backgrounds gather at the circles to communicate and learn from one another. Learning about the cultures of one another were some of my favourite moments while attending the conversation circles. One day at the Beacock conversation circle, I brought up the topic of the Chinese Moon Festival which just took place, and asked the Chinese participants some questions. Showing interest in the festival motivated the other participants to start asking questions about cultural traditions and differences. The conversation led to a discussion on the different
animals in the Chinese calendar, and the participants from Saudi Arabia and Korea, alongside the Canadian volunteers, tried to calculate their animal, which is based on the year of birth. In return, one of the Chinese participants asked a woman from Saudi Arabia about headscarves, trying to understand the reasons behind wearing them while praising the different fabrics and styles used. There were no judgements throughout this conversation, only an eagerness to learn and try to understand (Conversation circles, 10-24-2012). In this controlled environment, a multicultural atmosphere was created. However, if programs like the conversation circles, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), are the only ones concerned with adopting the Multiculturalism Act, newcomers learn about embracing multiculturalism within these facilities, but do not perceive the same ideologies outside the controlled environment.

**Canadians**

In order for multiculturalism to work, the Canadian-born population must be involved. The success rate of migrant settlement in a multicultural environment heavily relies on the welcoming community (Li 2003b:38). What it means to be considered Canadian, or to be considered a migrant in the Canadian context, shapes the expectations the receiving country has of the newcomers. It is therefore important to identify the Canadian population, and with it the Canadian identity, since this will provide an image of whom and what the migrant population is settling among and the potential factors that may set the migrant apart. Katherine Pratt Ewing suggests that "[T]he fixing of identities is a basic means by which the state contributes to the ordering of the social world. State authorities bestow identities through law, public policy, and routinized practices in
everyday areas..." (2004:117). John Coakley argues that the shaping of a national identity derives from a moment in history where "the nation" was crystallized into its "modern form" (2004:544). Canadian national identity was influenced by western Europeans, in particular the British and the French. It is these early colonizers who shaped the Canadian identity, in the symbolic and cultural sense (Dewing 2009). It was not until the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947 that Canadians were no longer defined as British subjects (Dewing 2009). Coakley agrees with Li that the assigned significance of this moment in history relegates "to a subordinate position the claims both of those who had been there earlier and those who were to arrive later" (Coakley 2004:554), referring to the different groups that formed within the larger Canadian population, separating particular groups of people from the Canadian identity such as the aboriginal population and recent migrants.

If everyone remained in their place of birth, it would indeed be possible to use national identities as a method to organize the human population. In reality however, people move all the time and different migration patterns can be found (permanent, temporary, return, forced, seasonal etc.), leading to multiple (national) identities. Migration blurs the categories of national belonging, and can leave migrants with the question of “who am I?” The long history of migration in Canada would suggest that Canadian identity is shaped by the idea of migration. But even though the majority of Canadians have ancestors who were migrants, there is still a disconnect between “old-timers” and “newcomers,” terms used by Li (2003a, 2003b). The British and French were much more influential in the shaping of Canada as a nation state than any other minority migrant groups arriving in Canada, and their descendants determine who should be
admitted or excluded (Li 2003b). Since 1976, the migrant population in Canada has come from a growing range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but there is still a big power differentiation between first generation migrants and native born Canadians. Peter Li identifies three components within the Canadian population: "the aboriginal peoples, descendants from previous generations of immigrants, and recent immigrants" (2003b:9). The aboriginal peoples make up only 3.6 percent of the total Canadian population and they are the only population truly native to the land (Statistics Canada 2009), which can be used as an identifier of national identity. The Canadian-born gained Canadian citizenship through birth, while those born outside of Canada have to go through an application process in order to be legally acknowledged as Canadian. First generation migrants are therefore those who were born outside Canada, and it is this population group that is the main focus of this paper. The size of this population is significant. 

"[T]he census enumerated 6,186,950 foreign-born in Canada in 2006. They represented virtually one in five (19.8%) of the total population, the highest proportion since 1931" (Statistics Canada 2008).

There is a real concern among the native-born population that each of these newcomers will "fit in", and that the admitted migrant will contribute to Canada both economically and ideologically (Li 2003b), which is quite the opposite of the attitude the Multiculturalism Act promotes. The federal government in Canada has the power to select who gets in, but the way the newcomers are received within Canada lies in the hands of the Canadian-born population. Policies surrounding migration do however influence the perspectives found among the Canadians towards migration. Li states:
"[T]he social construction of immigrants and the biases in benchmarking them produce the unrealistic expectation that immigrants are useful to Canada if only they are similar to Canadians" (2003b:55). This can refer to ethnicity, as Jason, one of the men I interviewed from South Korea experienced (Interview, 7-18-2012) but also other forms of identity such as religion, country of origin, and economic well-being for example. Jason recalls his first visit to London Ontario, and having the feeling that he did not fit in. He told me that "The first two weeks we stayed in Hamilton with the cousin, having to drive to London in the snow. I thought I made a mistake when I saw the white pile of something instead of a big city. Masonville mall was a big mountain of snow. In there we were the only non-white people. Both inside and outside it was all white. We were separated from other people. It looked like a very Caucasian city which did not matter to our cousin who was pretty much Canadian, but we noticed. This was in 2009 and has changed in the last few years" (Interview, 7-18-2012). It was a difference in ethnicity that made Jason feel as if he were not part of mainstream Canadian society. People from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds have been part of the Canadian population for a long time, but they tend to be left out of the Canadian identity image. As Pratt Ewing explains, "Immigrant populations are defined by their collective identities and are referred to overtly as "ethnic minorities"" (2004:118). Furthermore, labeling newcomers with an identity that separates them from the native-born population, naturalizes differences (Pratt Ewing 2004). In other words, arbitrary differences are not questioned, but instead accepted as a true representation of Canadian identity. When differences between Canadians and non-Canadians are accepted within the population, behaviours are adjusted to these
perceptions. I experienced this myself many times, when people tried to tell me that I am not really a migrant, since I supposedly do not fit their personal images of what a migrant is supposed to look and act like. Meanwhile I was born outside of Canada and have only lived here for eight years. On the other hand, a staff member at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), who wears a hijab, told me that she is asked frequently what country she was born in. The people asking this question are surprised when she tells them she was born and raised in Canada (fieldnotes). Keeping the presumptions found among the native-born population in mind, in the next section, I will look at what it means to be a migrant in Canada, both politically and in daily life.

Who Are These Migrants?

The Canadian immigration system at the federal level categorizes migrants into three streams: Economic migrants, family class migrants, and refugees (Fuller and Martin 2012, Li 2003b, Wilson-Forsberg 2012). About 76 percent of newcomers to Canada enter through the economic category (Statistics Canada 2005). This includes the primary applicants and their households who are dependents (Wayland 2010:6). The dependents make up over half of this category alongside skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial and territorial nominees\(^3\) and live-in caregivers (Wayland 2010:6). In order to qualify to even be taken into consideration as an applicant of economic immigration status, which will give the individual and dependents permanent residency in Canada, the individual needs to earn 67 points or more in a system that calculates admission

\(^3\)Provincial and Territorial nominees are selected through the Provincial Nominee Program which is an agreement between the federal and provincial government that "allows employers and investors to attract skilled immigrants to meet their human resource needs" (Queen's printer for Ontario, 2009).
according to points that are awarded for certain attributes of the applicant. These points are divided into six factors: education (up to 25 points), proficiency in English and/or French (up to 24 points), work experience (up to 21 points), age (up to 10 points), arranged employment in Canada (up to 10 points), and adaptability (up to 10 points) (CIC 2013a). Family class migrants make up about 15 percent of migrants (Statistics Canada 2005). This category relies on family members already residing in Canada as permanent residents or citizens to sponsor their migration. For this migration category, it is the person already residing in Canada who applies to sponsor a "spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner, or dependent children to come to Canada as permanent residents" (CIC 2013b). Other family members can be sponsored as well, although this process tends to be more time-consuming and complicated. The sponsor is responsible for the financial well-being of the family migrant, and neither the sponsors nor the newcomers can rely on social assistance. Refugees make up only five percent of all migrants and enter the country based on humanitarian reasons (Statistics Canada 2005). The 1967 Protocol states that a refugee "is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group, or political opinion (UNHCR n.d.). Refugees can be either sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident as in the case of family migrants, or they can be government-sponsored refugees. During my fieldwork, I talked with migrants of each category.

Before the implementation of the point system in 1976, the only criterion for selection was the level of education, with a minimum of eleven years of schooling needed
in order to become eligible. Beyond that, it was up to the judgement of the individual immigration officers (Knowles 2007). The goal of the conservative federal government in the late-1960s, early-1970s was to create a system that would aid in the selection process based on the skills of the primary applicant. The purpose of the point system was to replace any bias against the country of origin or racial designation and reduce the power of the immigration officers (Green and Green 1999). The change in policy happened around the same time that the number of European and American migrants was dwindling while the demand for migrants in Canada continued to exist, which is not coincidental (Li 2003b). As Li explains, the federal government had to broaden the scope geographically in order to maintain the steady migrant inflow that the economy required. During the post-World War II period, Canada had a very low unemployment rate and a growing economy, which relied on a growing workforce to keep up with the demand (2003b). But this economic state could be found in many of the preferred European countries at the end of the Second World War, resulting in a low number of migrant applications. The high demand but low number of applications was one of the factors that led to the implementation of the point system. This opened the doors to a geographically larger area, emphasizing educational and occupational skills as qualification criteria instead of country of origin (Li 2003b).

Ellen Fairclough, the first woman in Canada to be a federal cabinet minister (Forster 2004) was the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship in 1962 when the policy changes began. Fairclough is the one responsible for removing discriminatory practices
from Canadian migration policy and she also made changes to the regulations surrounding family migration (Forster 2004). Fairclough announced that

the key to an immigration policy will be the consistent application of proper selection standards designed to bring the best possible settlers to Canada. I am sure all Canadians agree that once these standards are established they should be applied consistently to all who seek admission to this country, except where admission of the immigrant is based on compassionate grounds or on close relationships (quoted in Green, 1976:37).

Ideally, the point system was implemented to promote equal opportunities for all migrant applicants from different ethnic, linguistic, and geographical backgrounds. In reality, the changes that took place over time in Canadian migration policy are still heavily influenced by the economic well-being of the country and the (global) political circumstances at the time.

The association of employment with immigration stands out in the federal migration policies, and becomes especially apparent when looking at the migration flow historically. According to Li, "[T]he Canadian state has constantly tailored the immigration policy to the economic needs of the nation- from using foreign labour to build infrastructure, to recruiting settlers to open up the West, to admitting skilled workers in periods of rapid industrial development" (2003b:15). For example, during the post-war economic boom, funds were provided to encourage migration to Canada due to the need for workers and the government provided loans to cover the travel costs of potential migrants (Vineberg 2012). While on the other hand, the number of applicants slowed down considerably during the great depression of the 1930s (Li 2003b), and again during the late 1970s, when the growing demand for workers was replaced by a high
unemployment rate which influenced the political and social perspective of the receiving country towards the migrants (Kearney 1986). No longer was there a demand for workers from rural areas and less industrialised countries, unless they were highly skilled individuals that could still benefit the economy somehow. This correlation between the rate of migration and the economic well-being lasted until the 1990s, at which point in time the number of annual migrants became standardized (Green and Green 1999). The "ideal" migrant at the federal level, beyond preferred country of origin, continues to be a skilled migrant, to support Canada's economy, as the percentages of the different migrant streams show. Currently, the provincial governments have gained the power to select a certain number of migrants based on provincial demands in the 1990s, which was previously the sole responsibility of the federal government. The federal government is now focusing on flexible skills that allow the newcomer to be incorporated into the Canadian labour market within a short period after arrival (Green and Green 1999). Flexible skills are knowledge and experience that are adaptable to multiple career opportunities, unlike having a trade which refers to training in a specific occupation. The current Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, is a strong advocate for using migration as a tool to improve the economic well-being of Canada, and giving the

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4 In the 1990s, after another economic slowdown, the three prairie provinces (Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan) brought attention to this issue of unequal interests at the federal level. Manitoba argued that "application of the national selection criteria did not select immigrants for Manitoba's needs, especially the skilled and semi-skilled trades" (Vineberg 2011:36). While individual agreements between provincial and federal government already arose in the 1970s with Quebec being the first province (Vineberg 2011), it was not until 1995 that the "provincial/Territorial Nominee" category was developed, allowing each Canadian province/territory to select an assigned number of economic migrants annually based on the needs of each individual region (Vineberg 2011).
country a competitive edge on the global market. As quoted in the Global Montreal newspaper: “We will ensure that, while we respect our humanitarian obligations and family reunification objectives, we make our economic and labour force needs the central goal of our immigration efforts in the future” (March 19, 2012). The conservative party is concerned with the question of what these migrants can do for us. Minister Jason Kenney states “[E]verything that we do and that we plan to do is in the interest of creating a faster, more flexible immigration system that boldly puts Canada’s best interests first” (Kenney 2011), and Kenney’s Parliamentary Secretary, Rick Dykstra, adds "[W]e believe the government's primary focus should be on jobs and growth to drive our economy," (Montreal Gazette March 7, 2012). The fact that the government representatives at the federal level focus on the value of skilled migrants, is reflected in their actions. Policies, funding, and settlement services are all geared towards providing accommodation to skilled newcomers in order for them to join the Canadian workforce in a short period of time. This behaviour has led to a smoother and possibly shorter settlement period for skilled migrants compared to their dependents, family migrants and refugees. Newcomers who did not arrive as skilled migrants receive less attention at the federal level, especially when they are part of the family-sponsored category, since this shifts the settlement responsibility onto the Canadian sponsor instead of the government-sponsored programs. The impact of these government actions in regards to settlement will be discussed in more detail in Chapter two.
Gendered Experiences

There is also a gender pattern found when looking at Statistics Canada data on migration, which was something that stood out in my own data as well when comparing the experiences of male and female newcomers. I believe that this gender pattern is shaped by the system that places migrants into the different categories (dependent or principal applicant, economic migrant, family class migrant or refugee). Men are more likely to arrive in Canada as the primary applicant than women. During the early period after arrival, the focus is on finding employment for the primary applicant while the responsibilities of the household continue to fall in the hands of the spouse who is most likely a women and who has to create a new "home" in a new environment (not just a place to live). Of all the participants in my research, only three individuals arrived in Canada as the principal applicant through the skilled migrant category. Jason, Yousef and Matt are all males and none attended the conversation circles. Matt is actually one of the volunteers who moved from the US a long time ago (Interview, 10-1-2012). I met Yousef at the CCLC main building during a focus group set up for this particular research project (Focus group, 8-9-2012). Jason joined the conversation when I was interviewing his wife Julia who I met at a conversation circle (Interview, 7-18-2012). Julia migrated as Jason’s dependent when they moved together from South Korea. Julia, Sandra, Nina and Laura all came though the skilled migrant stream as well, but they are considered dependents of their spouse, who qualified as the primary applicant. None of their spouses attended the conversation circles.
All the primary skilled migrants fit the image of the "ideal" migrant as discussed so far, while the women seem to be overlooked. This is not because the women lack skills. However, Julia is the only dependent of a skilled migrant who has had the opportunity to put her skills to use. She is a full-time accountant (Interview, 7-18-2012). Sandra, however, is currently retired and has not worked very much since her arrival in Canada (Interview, 7-6-2012). Nina enrolled in a trade school recently after finishing the ESL program (Interview, 7-16-2012). Laura has been in Canada for the shortest period of time and is still trying to figure out what she will do next (Interview, 8-28-2012). On paper, these women are considered dependents alongside their skilled spouses. In reality however, all these women have a higher education themselves, obtained in their country of origin before the migration took place. Julia studied library science in South Korea before studying accounting. Sandra had a degree in social work in England. Nina has a BA in bio-food technology from a university in Estonia, and Laura was a school teacher in Venezuela. Just because a migrant did not arrive in Canada through the preferred stream of skilled migrants as a primary applicant, does not reflect the actual skills of the newcomer, as these examples show. High levels of skills can also be found among both male and female newcomers arriving through one of the other two streams as a refugee or through family reunification. Every single newcomer in this research who arrived in Canada through one of these two categories had at least a BA. They are engineers, doctors, financial or legal administrators, or they studied information technology (IT), business and economics, or English/ literary studies. However, eight of the participants are currently unemployed, two are retired, and only three of the eighteen newcomers I
interviewed are actually using their degrees within their current work positions. The number of migrants who have been able to apply their skills consists mostly of individuals who have been in Canada for a longer period of time. Two-thirds of all working-age migrants arriving in Canada have a university degree, and when looking at skilled-migrants in particular, 87 percent of the principal applicants arrive with a university degree (Statistics Canada 2005). This level of education does not guarantee employment for the newcomers upon arrival, although the odds are higher for primary applicants in the skilled-migrant category. There is a clear catch-22 for skilled migrants: Immigration policies and statements by government representatives emphasizing economic contributions creates the idea among migrants that migrants will be able to put their skills to use upon arrival. Statistics show however that only one in five skilled migrants actually end up working in their area of expertise after being in Canada for at least two years (Statistics Canada 2005). That means that 80 percent of migrants in Canada are not able to put their skills to use, or they are still searching for an opportunity (Frank 2013).

**Negative attitudes**

Even though the unemployment rate is much higher among newcomers than among Canadian-born citizens, the government promotes the value of migrants as economic contributors while a discourse can be found within the Canadian population against newcomers. The interrelation between the economic state and immigrant level influences the concern that “large immigration flows may displace native-born workers in the host economy in the short run” (Green and Green 1999:428). It is the belief that
migrants might form a threat to the native-born population. In 1999 for example, Minister Elinor Caplan suggested raising the cap on the percentage of migrants that Canada welcomes each year to 70 percent, nearly doubling it. This was not received well by other ministers and the public (Knowles 2007), showing that there can be a threat associated with a growing immigrant population.

Another prime example of anti-immigrant attitudes is the website Immigration Watch Canada. According to its website, "[I]mmigration Watch Canada is an organization of Canadians who believe that immigration has to serve the interests of its own citizens. It cannot be turned into a social assistance program for other countries. It should never be a social engineering experiment that is conducted on Canadians" (IWC 2010). On their website, the members express their concerns with the Canadian immigration rate, and believe that it has a negative impact on the Canadian economy and identity:

Our high intake has had major negative economic consequences for Canadians who are looking for work. In fact, it has forced many of Canada’s own unemployed to compete with immigrants for a limited number of jobs and it has impoverished many Canadians. Absurd as it may sound, naive, employed Canadians have actually launched “Hire An Immigrant” campaigns to give immigrants a hiring advantage over unemployed Canadian-born" (IWC 2010:1).

These anti-immigrant claims are not based on any fact, statistics or research, but instead are motivated by the lack of knowledge and job insecurity that the individual members face. One of the participants in this research experienced this negative attitude first-hand at his job: Miguel (Interview, 8-28-2012) arrived in Canada three years ago with his wife Isabel and daughter. They came here as refugees from Colombia. Miguel has a degree in
economics and business management. In Colombia he owned and ran his own company. Here in Canada, he has been working at a factory doing a job for which he is over-qualified. Every time there is an internal posting for a higher position, Miguel is one of the first employees to apply. However, he has never been called for an interview. As Miguel explained, "Some co-workers that I have say it is because I am an immigrant. They tell me to live as an immigrant and that all the good jobs are for Canadians. Other co-workers do realize that I have more years of education than the resource manager" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Is it really likely that immigrants will become competition to the Canadian-born workforce when there is an economic downturn and jobs are scarce? "In 2002, low-income rates among immigrants during their first full year in Canada were 3.5 times higher than those of Canadian-born people. By 2004, they had edged down to 3.2 times higher" (Statistics Canada 2007b). The economic downturn is reflected in the low-income rates of these migrants.

During my fieldwork, it was very clear that migrants are so much more than a commodity. The opposition representative Don Davies tries to remind prime minister Kenney and the other conservative representatives within the Citizenship and Immigration branch to not overlook the other migrant categories. He encourages them to take a more holistic approach to migration, and reminds the representatives that "immigration deals with people, it deals with families and human beings...It's not just treating people like economic widgets in a machine that we can ruthlessly bring into our country" (The Canadian Press March 7, 2012). The Canadian federal government does leave room within the migration application system for humanitarian causes of migration,
but the numbers are dwindling annually. Regardless of the category into which the migrant was placed when he or she was admitted to Canada, the eventual expectations to merge with the mainstream society and become a contributing member to the Canadian economy remain the same. However, it becomes a more complicated process for some individuals than others during the settlement process. All migrants go through a settlement process, but each individual arrives at a different stage.

**Self-perceptions of migrants**

For me, the worst part was being a professional with British qualifications. Being told I qualify but finding out that I don't really, that gives you a reality check. Where does that leave your identity? I wanted to do something where I could use my post-graduate degree. But then there's the obligations of earning a living, putting bread on the table. My main point is that money and language make all the difference (Interview, 7-6-2012).

Sandra told me this when I asked about her experience as a newcomer in Canada. She migrated here with her husband about thirty-six years ago, when she was in her twenties. Sandra currently volunteers at one of the conversation circles, now that she is retired and her children have grown up (Interview, 7-6-2012). Since Sandra grew up in England, it would seem likely that she would fit right in with the native-born Canadians due to the strong ties to a British heritage. However, Sandra still faced a settlement period that included an adjustment process and a rediscovering of her identity. Every migrant has to go through this process. While the duration varies between different migrant categories, the expectations created by government regulations, which is to integrate, find employment, and become Canadian, are always felt by migrants. Many individual migrants might share these same goals and expectations, but how these expectations are accomplished can be interpreted and acted upon differently.
The best example of how the Canadian migration system and its categorization has an impact on the expectations and identities of migrants is the case of Lorena and Emanuel (Interview, 7-11-2012). When I first met them at one of the conversation circles, I assumed they came to Canada as skilled migrants. After all, Lorena is a doctor in Colombia and her husband Emanuel is an engineer. They are a young couple in their early thirties with no children and they fit the image of a skilled migrant. During the one-on-one interview however a whole different story came to the surface. The parents of Emanuel migrated to Canada in 1976. Within a few years after arrival Emanuel was born. While Emanuel's parents are Colombian, Emanuel was born a Canadian. When Emanuel was only a year and a half, his parents decided to move back to Colombia, three and a half years after their arrival in Canada. This means that Emanuel does not remember life in Canada and has always spoken Spanish instead of English. However, within the larger system, Emanuel is still considered a Canadian citizen through birth. This means that he was not required to go through the standard migration application process. "We are immigrants but at the same time not really. It is hard to find information when you do not really fit in any category" (Interview, 7-11-2012). Emanuel returned to Canada in April of 2011, and applied for his wife Lorena to join him through the family reunification process. He had to wait for nine months before Lorena could join him. He told me, "I used my Canadian passport to sponsor Lorena. It was not easy to apply for her since I was new to the country. I lacked a job history and other information which made it more complicated compared to other cases" (Interview, 7-11-2012). Citizenship and Immigration Canada deals with applicants on paper, but never actually meets the
individuals one on one. All they saw on paper was a Canadian citizen applying for his wife to join him in Canada from Colombia. But the person applying for this request lacked a history that could be taken into consideration during the process, which meant that it took a long time before the application was approved. Lorena finally joined Emanuel in January of 2012. Lorena received an orientation and was given useful information upon arrival. Emanuel did not receive the same type of welcome, and had trouble accessing the same information without any government support. He also lacked the English skills to find out information on his own. Since the case of Emanuel did not fit in an existing category, it created a frustrating situation: On paper Emanuel is a Canadian, but in reality he faces the same barriers as any other migrants plus additional obstacles due to the fact that he could not take advantage of the welcoming programs such as ESL classes that are set up specifically for migrants. From this perspective, his wife Lorena had a smoother settlement process since she was recognized by the Canadian government as an immigrant, making her eligible for the services provided. As Lorena told me, "The people maybe understood my situation better" (Interview, 7-11-2012). While Lorena was considered to be a migrant and treated as such (which can be both positive and negative), Emanuel did not really have a clear identity once he arrived in Canada.

Lorena and Emanuel came up with the idea of migrating to Canada about four years ago when they got married. They wanted to start a new life in a new country because they were worried about the economic situation in Colombia. The future there is unpredictable because there is currently no job security. The couple are both
professionals in their country, but here in Canada they have to go through a complicated process in order to be recognized for their skills and education. Neither one is acknowledged as a skilled migrant, since each arrived through a different stream of migration. Ceri Oeppen argues that "[A]ny kind of labeling risks categorizing people very narrowly or inaccurately. Sometimes, these labels place people in categories that do not fairly represent their circumstances" (2010:5). Li noticed the same pattern and explained that migrants tend to apply to select a migration stream during the application process based on practical reasons (paperwork and waiting period for example). "In short, the bureaucratic categories may be useful for understanding how immigrants are processed, but they do not necessarily transpire into logically constituted social groupings that meaningfully reflect the experiences of migrants" (Li 2003b:43).

This case study of Lorena and Emanuel shows that it is not just an issue of gender; the categories through which newcomers arrived in Canada and how they are perceived within the system are factors that add even more complications to the period of settlement. However, people do have some control when it comes to their identity, and all newcomers are left with an important decision: Do I continue trying to be the same person as I was before the migration or do I take this new start as an opportunity to change? Lorena and Emanuel struggled to get their degrees and experience recognized upon arrival in London Ontario. They chose not to give up their careers and decided near the end of the summer to move to Alberta where they had a better chance to continue being a doctor and an engineer.
Katherine Pratt Ewing discusses the role of identity within the migration process, and is aware of the government’s attempt "to organize their populations in terms of discrete groups based on identity" (2004:118). However, she also wants to remind her audience that "individuals take up multiple, crosscutting identities" (2004:118). Identities are not fixed and singular, they are fluid and plural. A person can be a migrant, a woman, a doctor, and whatever other aspects of her life she feels represent her as a person. Within the Canadian Immigration system, this individual might be perceived only as a dependent of a skilled migrant, as a single, fixed identity, which has an influence on the way she is treated and perceived within the surrounding environment. This approach overlooks the fact that the name documented in the system represents a person, a living human being who goes through experiences that have an impact on the self-perception of the individual. Migration itself has a large impact on the changing identities of people. Pratt Ewing predicts that "[A]s the individual moves from one arena to the next and from one set of discursive practices to another, we may expect to see shifting identities, particularly if that individual occupies a radically different structural position within each arena, as is often the case for those who inhabit a minority identity" (2004:119). The social environment has an impact on the identity of the individual, the way a migrant is perceived within the larger society. But at the same time, there is room for change, movement and agency. The migration process comes with certain expectations. But the reasons behind the choice of migrating and who the individual is as a person, not just as a migrant, also have an impact on the goals and choices of the individual made throughout the process. The settlement period is a time of insecurity and facing the
unknown. It is an emotional rollercoaster since the experience continuously shifts from being exciting, to scary, frustrating, surprising and more. It takes a while for migrants to find their ground, and for some the settlement process takes longer than for others. During this period of insecurity, the opportunity is given to the migrants to have a new start in life, to take a chance and try something new, to rediscover themselves. During my fieldwork I also met some people who intentionally chose to change their lifestyle, not because they were forced to do so due to the lack of opportunities, but because they saw immigration as a chance to redefine who they are and start a new beginning.

An example of this is the couple Julia and Jason who moved to Canada from South Korea three years ago with their two children (Interview, 7-18-2012). Jason was the primary applicant and together they arrived through the skilled migrant category. Jason has always been dedicated to his job, working long hours in his office when he was in Korea, and working several years in the United States for a Korean company. He has a major degree in electrical engineering and a minor degree in computer science which would have easily met the requirements for a job in the field of IT. While Jason came to Canada as a Federal Skilled Worker (FSW), he did not apply for a job immediately. Jason has the qualifications to find a career that pays well above average and requires his expertise, but that is not what he wants from the migration experience. He explains: "I did not try to apply for jobs here, I did not like any of the job descriptions. There are not many companies that I could choose from. I tried instead not to get the same job that I worked for previously. I gave up because I got bored with the same job after twenty years. I do not want to work a full-time regular job" (Interview7-18-2012). In South
Korea, there is a very competitive atmosphere both in academia and within the workforce. Jason was tired of this pressure to always go beyond expectations and move up the ladder. He told me, "Many Koreans are tired of living in a competitive society. In Canada, people are less competitive. Here you work maybe once until midnight while back in Korea with my first job, I worked every night until midnight" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Jason wanted to get away from the lifestyle he knew and considered migration as a new beginning. This also became a new opportunity for his wife Julia. While Jason was always the breadwinner in the relationship and Julia the caretaker of their home and children, migration eventually led to a role change within their household. A week after Julia graduated with a major degree in library science, the two were married and she did not have the opportunity to put her skills to use. Now that they are in Canada, Julia has had the chance to join the workforce while Jason took on the responsibilities of a stay at home dad. He also found a niche market as a handyman, something that keeps him busy part-time while his son and daughter are at school. He told me: "I do not want any major jobs anymore. I bought a pick-up truck to do deliveries and I am a handyman. More than half of the Korean families in London do not have a man in the household. The husband usually stays in Korea with a good job while the wife and children come here for schooling. I help these houses to fix things. Half the day I work and the other half I take care of my daughter and do my own things" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Not only does he take care of his own home, Jason also took on the responsibility to be a caretaker for the larger Korean population in London Ontario. Julia now works as a full-time accountant in London. She already studied accounting online while living in South Korea, and even
flew to the United States in order to write the test. This academic background within the American education system was easily recognized within the Canadian education system and Julia had the opportunity to enroll in courses at Fanshawe College in London. In the end, this was not necessary since the firm Julia volunteered at offered her a full-time position (Interview, 7-18-2012). Julia and Jason are very happy at this stage in their lives. They are also fully aware that their experience is the exception, not the norm among migrants. As Julia explains, "Not everyone is that lucky. There are doctors who become taxi drivers and it is not their choice. The popular businesses for Koreans are convenience stores. They have the money to buy a new business but it does not require good English or Canadian experience. They are skilled Koreans as well, because you need to have skills to apply in the first place. They participate in the Canadian economy but it is not as satisfying" (Interview, 7-18-2012). This case study shows how even though migrants are expected to live up to the Canadian image of the “ideal migrant,” they have the power of choice (agency) to decide where they fit within the larger society and what it is they want to become. It does not mean that Jason and Julia do not "fit in" Canadian society, just that they redefined their positions within the space of Canadian society and the power of the Canadian Immigration system.

**Conclusion**

By looking at the historical context and the underlying meanings of policies implemented at the federal level, it becomes clear that while Canada portrays itself as a multicultural society, it indeed encourages assimilation and creates the image of an "ideal" migrant, referring to a primary applicant in the skilled migrant category who will
join the workforce upon arrival, and who "fits in" with the mainstream Canadian-born population. But as Pratt Ewing argues, "despite the power and authority of the state and public culture to impose identity, such identities, even when accepted, may not be fully inhabited" (2004:125). And she suggests that "[R]ecently those studying identity as a political and cultural issue have begun to consider the individual as the subject of identity negotiation and as a locus of multiple, even conflicting identities" (2004:119). This coincides with my own research, since the migration process that the newcomers have gone through is what makes them migrants within the new environment from a political and native-born perspective. According to Jason and Julia, this identity is not fixed, and it is up to the individual migrant to negotiate this identity as part of who they are. The settlement process following the migration is a time for negotiating multiple identities. It is a time where choices are made and the actions that result can have an impact on shaping both self-identity and the way others perceive the migrant over time. This relates to the ideas of assimilation and fitting in, as is often expected by the native-born Canadians of newcomers. The newcomer has some choice in how he or she will adapt and to some extent who they want to be as a person within this new environment. Networks can be used as a tool to shape identities. The people that an individual associates with or strives towards associating with, influence the way he or she is perceived not only by themselves but by the surrounding people. Identities are built on relationships, since people often identify themselves in comparison to those around them. Males can be identified in relation to females, newcomers in relation to native-born, and minorities only exist as part of a majority, just as the "ideal" migrant can only exist based
on the expectations of the established environment that person enters. Pratt Ewing makes it clear that an identity depends on the social context in order to have meaning (2004:128). Networks may facilitate state power and influence behaviour and decision making, and thereby contribute to the shaping of identity. However, networks are also fluid, and used as a tool by the newcomers to meet their individual needs. They require an investment of time and effort, since networks must be established and maintained and they do not occur naturally. Networks can both shape an identity and be used to connect with (new) identities. Chapter two therefore focuses on the multiple roles and different types of networks that newcomers experience during the settlement process, of which the conversation circles are an example.
Chapter 2 Community Connections

Our friends are a mixture between Canadians, Bosnians but also from other countries, including the really close friends. First you find them in your own language group and then it goes. Especially through cancer, I became part of this group. I wish I found a (support) group before, a feeling of belonging. Back in Bosnia you had a group who you went to school with and knew them very well. I know some people who are part of a church and gain that feeling -Maida (Interview, 11-14-2012).

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the conversation circles as they are situated within the larger framework of networks and settlement services. The main focus of the chapter is on the period of time following the initial migration, known as the settlement period. The emphasis will be on the settlement experiences of individual migrants, and the role that networks play during this process. As Susan Hardwick explains,

Analyzing the social connections and networks that immigrants maintain and use through a set of embedded relationships has the potential to help scholars understand more about how social, economic, and cultural processes help shape immigrant patterns, and how these interrelated processes and relationships contribute to the adjustment and adaptation of new immigrants through time and space (2008:173).

The discussion will begin with a description of the concepts of settlement, integration and networks. After the main concepts are identified, I will look closer at the different types of networks used by newcomers arriving in Canada, and in London Ontario in particular. Next I will discuss migrant social networks and the settlement service networks of which the conversation circles are part. I will discuss how each type of network has an impact on the migrant experience, especially the conversation circles, and I will emphasize that a shift takes place from the first type of network to the second. Based on the one-on-one
interviews within this research, I found that after the initial period in a new environment, the newcomers tend to expand beyond their initial migrant network, and reach out to other available social and settlement networks. I will end the chapter with a discussion of the role the native-born population plays during the settlement process that all newcomers go through.

The involvement of the native-born population is required not just in regards to settlement services, but in everyday life in order to achieve social inclusion. Social inclusion, according to Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond, is the final goal of the settlement process: "Social inclusion involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition. For immigrants and refugees, social inclusion would be represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of life in their new country" (2003:1). Social inclusion is a type of acculturation that goes beyond mere integration, since it calls for the recognition of diversity and its goal is to close the gap that differentiates migrants from native-born Canadians (2003). A suggestion made by Omidvar and Richmond is that in order to close the social gap that differentiates us and them, the physical gap separating people should be eliminated (2003). The authors refer to sharing physical and social spaces that promote interaction. The conversation circles and the public libraries that host the circles are excellent examples of providing newcomers with opportunities to interact among themselves and Canadians. Beyond the circles and the libraries, newcomers may experience interaction with native-born Canadians in the neighbourhoods where they live, as well as participation in political events and in sports and schools (Omidvar and
Arriving in a new environment at a young age can be a benefit during the settlement process, since young migrants are enrolled in schools that become their settlement network. Jobs provide the same function for the newcomers who do find employment outside their migrant network upon arrival. The conversation circles are used as a way to reduce the distance between themselves and the local native-born population by newcomers who generally lack other opportunities.

Since Ontario has been one of the main migration destinations in Canada historically, there are a lot of established social networks available for migrants from different cultural backgrounds. I am not referring here to government-established networks, but to a network of migrants who aid newcomers during the migration process and at the time of arrival. Examples of these can be found in the form of ethnic enclaves and ethnic social groups. While these do not replace the need for settlement programs and the involvement of a welcoming Canadian community, the initial stages of the settlement process among newcomers tend to have fewer barriers due to the help and advice of these established migrant networks in regards to finding housing, becoming familiar with the new environment and dealing with the initial paperwork and processes, such as health cards, drivers licenses, school enrollment and ESL classes. In this chapter, I will argue that networks play a key role in the experience of migrant settlement, within the boundaries of the state which influences who gets in and what services are provided. In addition to migrant and government-sponsored networks, I want to emphasize the importance of community involvement, since migrant networks are the most effective during the initial period of migration, but tend to reach a limit in the type of assistance
they provide, and require the support of the native-born population to establish a welcoming environment.

**Settlement and Integration**

Once an applicant has been approved to enter Canada and arrives at the airport, he or she begins a complicated process. The moment the individual goes through customs and is referred to the officials from the Canada Border Services Agency, the primary applicant and his or her dependents become migrants. As newcomers, they enter what is called the *settlement period*. "Within policy documents and the academic literature, settlement is typically thought of as lasting from arrival until three years after arrival" (Tolley 2011:10), at which point the integration period begins. During the settlement period, the newcomers must "secure housing, enrol their children in school, seek healthcare providers and make preparations for entry into the labour market" (Tolley 2011:11). I personally prefer using the term *settlement period* to describe the period after arrival in Canada without a time limit associated with it. However, the term *integration* is frequently used in academia to refer to the period after the initial settlement. The term integration implies "a desirable outcome as newcomers become members of the receiving society, by which the success and failure of immigrants can be gauged and by which the efficacy of the immigration policy can be determined" (Li 2003a:316). It is difficult to determine when integration is accomplished since there are no standards or methods to measure the level of success in any consistent way (Li 2003b, Frank 2013). Researchers should therefore question how the integration standards are perceived by the native-born population, since integration varies based on the expectations of the receiving country.
Based on the discussion in Chapter one, integration in the Canadian context would suggest economic integration, the point when the individual migrant becomes a contributor to the Canadian economy instead of a "burden" (Li 2003a). What this means is that newcomers are expected to adapt and eventually integrate into the receiving society both economically and socially until a point is reached when the newcomer no longer identifies or is identified as a migrant and becomes Canadian. As John Berry explains, "[I]ntegration can only be "freely" chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation toward cultural diversity" (1997:10). The native-born (dominant) society has the power to influence the expectations and experiences of newcomers by setting the standards of integration through settlement services for example. Some may never be integrated because Canadians will always define them as outsiders.

John Berry discusses the impact the power differentiation has on the behaviour of individual migrants. In his research, Berry asks "what happen[s] to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context" (1997:6). Berry uses the concept of acculturation to refer to "the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters" (1997:6). Acculturation, in its classical definition, refers to what takes place during these group encounters, specifically the changes either or both groups go through culturally (1997:7). When there is a large power differentiation, creating a dominant group, the acculturation process will have a smaller impact on the dominant group than on the subordinate one. In the Canadian context, it is the native-born population who would be minimally influenced, which supports Li’s
argument that the power differentiation has an impact on integration standards. Berry explains that integration is an aspect of acculturation, along with assimilation, segregation and marginalisation (1997:17). An attempt to expand on the meaning of integration is made by Ceri Oeppen (2010). Oeppen differentiates between *structural integration* and *socio-cultural integration*. The first type refers to the day-to-day adjustments, specifically the economic life. In other words, structural integration refers to migrants in search of, and eventually finding, employment. This aspect of integration is the main focus of government policies in the Canadian context, while the second type is often overlooked. Socio-cultural integration refers to "changes in outlook, social life, and cultural practices" (2010:39). The two aspects of integration as defined by Oeppen are useful concepts, but they do not replace the assumptions that are associated with the concept of integration as identified by Li.

The reason I continue to use *settlement period* within this research to describe the period after arrival without any time constraints, instead of integration, is because it incorporates both types of integration as defined by Oeppen, while at the same time it describes feelings alongside actions, moving away from the emphasis on economic integration. Migration itself is hectic and the period following migration cannot be defined simply by the actions of newcomers when they first arrive. The thought processes, emotions and decision making should all be taken into consideration when trying to gain an understanding of this period. Research also shows that there is no beginning or end to a settlement or integration period, and that programs continue to offer aid to newcomers who have been in Canada for more than three years (Andrews and
Hima 2011, Omidvar and Richmond 2003). I therefore see the settlement period as fluid, flexible and non-linear, representing the physical and emotional processes all migrant go through upon arrival in a new and unfamiliar environment. A settlement period is associated with migration but can take place with any individual entering a new environment.

While I choose not to use the concept of integration or acculturation when discussing the settlement period, there are two main conclusions in the work of John Berry that did have an impact on my research. Berry’s first conclusion is that there are differences in experiences within the migrant population right from the moment of initial contact since "some groups have entered into the acculturation process voluntarily (e.g. immigrants) while others experience acculturation without having sought it out (e.g. refugees)” (1997:8). His second conclusion is that "the basic process of adaptation appears to be common to all these groups. What varies of course, is the level of difficulty, and to some extent the eventual outcome of acculturation” (1997:9). These two points were very apparent in my own data: All participants in the research are newcomers in Canada who settled in London Ontario with the intention of remaining in Canada permanently. However, the newcomers did arrive through different migration streams. I talked with skilled migrants, both primary applicants and dependents, family class migrants and refugees. It became clear that each migrant faced a settlement period, but that they entered at different stages. A common pattern found was that at first newcomers are in a "honeymoon period", which is referring to the early stage when everything is new and exciting. Over time, however, obstacles in relation to acculturation would arise. The
struggles tended to be more frequent, complex and challenging among refugees and dependants than among primary applicants from the skilled migrant category. Because of this, theoretically, the dependence on networks would be more prevalent among the newcomers who struggle during the integration period. This group of migrants would be newcomers who are not considered "ideal" migrants, and therefore tend to be overlooked in government policies and procedures upon arrival. This pattern was visible at the conversation circles, where primary skilled applicants rarely attend the program, while dependents are often brought to the different locations by their spouses to deal with language barriers and possible social isolation. Both in academia and politics, there has been a growing awareness of the role of networks during the settlement period. In particular there is a growing awareness that settlement does not take place spontaneously, but requires government action and community cooperation (Tolley et al 2011:2).

**Networks**

Migration network theorists conceive of migration as embedded in social networks that span continents and decades, and which arise, grow, and ultimately decline. A network approach fits individual decision makers within groups, and it interposes groups between macroscopic social and economic conditions and actual migrations (Light et al 1993:25-26).

Networks appear in migration theory in two different contexts: 1) as social networks of kinship and friendship that provide assistance during the migration process, and 2) as settlement networks that are formed upon arrival in the destination (Brettell 2008:125). Both types of networks will be discussed in this section, although not as two separate forms. Migrant networks contain multiple aspects, being both a social network and a
settlement network that exists during the migration process and expands upon arrival. It is important to look at the different networks at play in migration, since networks connect individual migrants to groups such as households and religious or ethnic affiliations within a larger system. Caroline Brettell explains the theoretical value of research that focuses on networks and households instead of a wider more global approach:

"[H]ouseholds and social networks mediate the relationships between the individual and the world system and provide a more proactive understanding of the migrant than that provided by the historical-structuralist approach" (2008:125). Network analysis started to gain popularity in academia during the 1960s and 1970s, although the emphasis was mostly on quantitative data in British anthropology and on statistical analysis in geography (Hardwick 2008). In the past several years, a more qualitative approach has gained popularity in both anthropology and geography. The participants in my research discussed both how the migrant networks influenced them to come to Canada, and London in the first place, and how the same migrant networks continued to provide assistance during the settlement period. The range of experiences in regards to networks provided a better understanding of the different roles social networks take on, and how this understanding varies for each individual migrant.

Douglas Massey has written extensively on the role of networks in migration. He defines migration networks as "sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin" (1988:396). In his research, Massey specifically analyzes the role of social networks that lead to a growing number of
newcomers in receiving countries. Massey borrows the phrase “cumulative causation” from Gunnar Myrdal (1957) to describe how the influx of migrants in a location has a snowball effect because "each act of migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it. Every new migrant reduces the costs of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are thereby induced to migration, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad" (Massey et al. 1993:449).

Indeed, all the newcomers who participated in my research said they knew someone in Canada, and particularly in Ontario when they selected their migration destination.

The way networks are perceived in my research is influenced by Tamar Wilson who states that "[R]ather than being encapsulating, they are facilitating. Rather than correlating with a metaphor of structure, implying rigidity and boundedness, they must be viewed as permeable, expanding and fluid” (1994:275-276). Networks are a tool that can be used by individuals during a process, but they do not guarantee the wanted outcome and they require an investment of time. Once a migrant has been in a place for a longer period of time, he or she takes on a new role within the migrant network. The migrants’ knowledge and experience is expected to be passed on to aid new prospective migrants. Since this is a continuous cycle, it is important that each individual migrant expands beyond the migrant network in order to develop new opportunities both for themselves and for the next generations. Ethnic enclaves are a prime example of a migrant network that can become limited in its function when not expanding. Sylvia Fuller and Todd Martin explain that "[E]thnic communities engender solidarity, settling in an area with many people of the same background will confer an advantage as well, particularly where
co-ethnics have carved out employment niches" (2012:15). When the enclave remains fairly isolated from the larger society, there is the risk that these niches will "trap" the newcomer in a particular neighbourhood with limited opportunities. While pockets of ethnic clusters can be found in London Ontario, there are no distinct ethnic enclaves to be found in the city such as a little Italy or a China town, as is the case in Toronto. The conversation circles take place in several libraries spread throughout London (see image 1 on page 6), and each location has participants from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. While some members of one ethnic category may tend to outnumber others at these conversation circles, none of the locations has a homogenous group of participants. In the next section, I will look at the migrant networks of the participants outside the conversation circles. I will discuss both the positive and negative aspects of migrant networks, and the factors that may have motivated the individual migrants to step outside of the network for settlement support by attending the conversation circles.

**Migrant Networks**

Migration is rarely the random movement of people. Instead it consists of a large network of individuals who advise and help one another during the migration process, which creates a settlement pattern, as discussed by Massey (1988, et al 1993). There has always been an uneven distribution of migrants in Canada. For example, in 2006 there were more than 250 thousand new permanent residents in Canada, out of which 50 percent settled in Ontario alone (Stasiulis et al 2011). Historically, Ontario is one of the provinces that has never had to worry about finding ways to attract newcomers.

Immigration in Ontario appeared to be something that "happened" not something that
needed to be motivated (Biles et al 2011). This uneven settlement pattern has led to pockets of highly diverse populations throughout Canada (specifically in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal), while in other smaller cities and rural regions, there is less cultural diversity due to the small percentage of newcomers arriving annually. The larger cities continue to be a popular migrant destination because of the opportunities and services available, which provide newcomers with different forms of support (Li 2003b).

All the migrants I talked with during my research chose to settle in London Ontario due to its larger migrant network. These networks are largely based on ties of kinship and friendship, and it is common for prospective migrants to rely on these ties. For example, Brettell noticed in her research that "many individuals decide to move because they have a brother or a sister who is already abroad who can ease their entry, provide them with initial housing and help them to find a first job” (2003:6). Every research participant told me that their current or initial social network, for those who have been in Canada for a longer period of time, consists of friends and family from the same cultural or linguistic background. For example, Olivia came to Canada less than a year ago from Romania as a family-class migrant, to join her husband in London Ontario (Interview, 10-10-2012). Olivia’s husband had already lived in Canada for several years, and is part of a well-established network. Olivia explained that her network consists of people who all came from Romania, even though her husband knows a lot of people from different countries. She says that it is not the same to spend time with people who do not share the same background and language. The Romanian migrant population in London functions as a family for Olivia and her husband: "We have no other family here so we
get together with Romanian friends who are also alone" (Interview, 10-10-2012). Having this migrant network readily available made the transition a lot smoother for Olivia.

Migrant networks can also aid during the initial search for employment since many enclaves have created a niche within a particular market. Two instances of newcomers finding employment through their migrant network came up during the interviews. The story of Lorena and Emanuel from Colombia was discussed in detail during the first chapter (Interview, 7-11-2012). When I met Emanuel for the first time, he was employed at a local Latino restaurant as part-time kitchen staff. Emanuel lacked confidence in his language skills, which prevented him from applying to positions as an engineer. This job allowed Emanuel to make a living while having the chance to attend ESL classes during the daytime (Interview, 7-11-2012). Ana, a participant from China, had a similar experience when she arrived in Toronto before moving to London Ontario. While living in Toronto, she resided in China town, a large ethnic enclave. Within three weeks, Ana found a job. About 80 percent of her coworkers were also Chinese, which again meant that her low-level of English skills did not prevent Ana from earning an income (Interview, 10-23-2012). While working within these ethnic networks is initially beneficial, both Emanuel and Ana have the skills to work in a higher position but their networks were limited. Therefore, they had little choice but to work in the food-industry in a low-status, low-paid position, in order to make a living. Both continue to invest time and effort in developing their skills, especially improving English, while focusing on expanding their networks into other fields of employment.
The third main benefit of migrant networks is the safety net it creates to protect newcomers from making easily preventable mistakes and being taken advantage of. Some of the research participants shared horror stories of scamming companies taking advantage of their lack of knowledge, whether cultural or linguistic. For example, there is the case of Nina and her spouse who arrived in Canada three years ago from Estonia. During the migration process they relied on her brother in law who has been living in Peterborough for about seventeen years. Nina told me: "He was like a contact person. When we came the first time, we lived with him for a month" (Interview, 7-16-2012). While the couple initially settled in the Toronto region, Nina’s husband soon found employment in London. It only took three months before finding a good job that required his expertise. However, during this short period of time before the job, they became the victim of fraud. A fraudulent company offered assistance by providing a Career College Course to earn a Canadian credit equivalent to their education in Estonia, while also offering help with writing a resume. The company provided information that looked reliable but in the end Nina and her spouse lost five thousand dollars to the scam. Nina explained how easy it is for a newcomer to fall victim to such companies: "When you are looking for a job you believe them when you do not speak English very well and just understand the general idea they are getting at. After that experience we became very careful" (Interview, 7-16-2012). The brother in-law assisted the couple during their move, but was not available on a regular basis. He drove truck for a living and was often away on a long-haul trip to the United States (Interview, 7-16-2012).
The advantage of having a migrant network available during the initial settlement period is that it eases the pressure of decision making while reducing the cultural distance (Berry 1997:23). Some newcomers are very comfortable in this safe and supportive environment created by the network, being surrounded by people who have a shared background and experience. For example, two friends who attended one of the conversation circles together arrived in Canada from Poland more than twenty years ago. But it was not until both women were retired that they felt the need to improve their English conversation skills and expand their social network beyond their migrant network in which all members spoke Polish. However, even though it took a long period of time, the two friends did eventually take the step to move beyond the network (Conversation Circle, 9-20-2012 to 10-25-2012). Every single participant in my research had reached a point where they felt the need to move beyond their comfort zone and expand their social network to places and people that are not part of the initial migrant network. They have all outgrown their current social networks and have actively searched for opportunities to expand their networks through social interactions with non-migrants. While it is great to know people who are available and who are willing to help during the immigration and settlement process, there was a shared feeling of concern among the migrants in the research that they did not want to impose on the network of friends and family. After the initial settlement period, the families generally tried to distance themselves from one another physically, while maintaining a close relationship emotionally. Jason from Korea, who is mentioned in Chapter one, discusses this struggle with balance and the changing role of the family’s social network: "Physically our cousin does not help very much but
emotionally it helps to have family close. We chose London because we did not want to lean on him too much, but it is a comfort that he is within reach" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Jason’s experience shows the flexibility of settlement networks over time.

The next story shows how settlement networks may actually decrease a newcomer’s autonomy. About a year ago, Laura came to Canada with her husband and children from Venezuela. They now live two blocks from her brother in law, who she says has been a great help during the moving process and continues to assist after they have been in Canada for a few months. "My in-laws, they are people who would help anyone who wants to immigrate to Canada. They know every step. They looked for a place for us, called when they found a lot and put them in contact with us. It would be really different if you do not know anyone" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Once Laura and her household arrived in Canada, they became part of a larger social network that the in-laws had established during the past five years. While it takes time to get used to a new place, and to truly become settled, the social network of Laura’s in-laws in Canada gave their family a head start in the process.

While Laura appreciates everything her brother in law has done for them, sometimes she wonders what her experience would have been if they did not know anyone. She wonders if she and her husband would have made the same choices: "I do not know which one is better though. [The in-laws] arrived without family and friends here but they eventually got it all. We get help all the time and if we were on our own we might have made a few different decisions. We ask them all the time how they did it. When you do not have family, you have to try the best all the time but when you have
help you do as you are told. There are good things and bad things when you have family. You need more time to understand the ways in your new city. If you have it all the time that someone is telling you, you do not have to do the job. We realised this and decided to separate a little. To live our lives here without asking all the time but it is good to know that if you need help that they are here" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Laura and her husband became dependent on their social network to the extent that they were not required to make any decisions or take any risks. This experience of trial and error, of finding one’s own way is actually a form of settlement, of adjusting to a new and unfamiliar environment. Trying things out is a way to become familiar with how things work.

Lately, Laura and her husband have decided to slowly create some distance from his brother, and make decisions on their own without the advice that is offered with good intentions. Laura and her husband want to find their own path from now on, and see what works for them. The thought of trying new things and meeting new people on their own is speaking to them.

Olivia, a participant from Romania who arrived with the help of her husband and became part of his migrant network as discussed above, describes this experience as being a passenger in a car instead of the driver: "Because you learn through experience, or else you just remember some of the directions" (Interview, 10-10-2012). Oftentimes Olivia wonders how she got to this point since her husband had been living in Canada before they met and married. Olivia joined him only a few months ago. She compared herself to a car passenger since she feels like she has been going along for the ride, on a path that her husband the driver is already familiar with. Like Laura, Olivia has wondered
a few times whether she would have chosen the same paths if she were on her own, while not underestimating the great help her husband’s network has been. She told me, "It is good to come like this because it is not stressful. If you arrive alone you have to struggle more. I did not have to call for things, but just be a dependent. Because he was already here, my experience was easier. It has good and bad things. I am not so far with my experience. It was good but not always helpful. Not forced to learn, to fight for what you want. You need to live that experience" (Interview, 10-10-2012). Laura and Olivia are not unappreciative; they are thankful for everything their relatives have done for them during the migration and settlement process. However, as time goes on both women are starting to look for their own paths and they are trying to decide what it is they want for themselves now that they have settled in a new country.

A network has a large impact on the experience of newcomers during the settlement period, but it is up to the individual migrant to decide how much of an impact the network has, and to what extent they choose to rely on this source. Julia and Jason explained that Korean networks generally consist of church communities. Julia said: "I do not go to the Korean community, the church. But most of Jason his customers are Korean. Korean churches are a tight community. They exchange information about people, activities and business. It can be exclusive. Either you are part of it or not, they expect a certain level of commitment. Some people do not believe in God but go for the networking" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Not everyone has a desire to be part of a network that consists exclusively of people from the same country of origin, and there are other places to meet people. Julia said: We have half and half Canadian and Korean friends.
We meet them through our jobs, soccer, the CCLC" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Maida, another participant in my research, became part of a network unintentionally through the shared experience of battling cancer. This experience brought her closer to people from multiple nationalities who were all fighting the same disease and who provided support to one another through the shared experience, as her quote at the beginning of this chapter explains. Networks are therefore fluid and flexible; they adjust to the needs of the individuals.

**Settlement Programs**

In addition to help from family and friends, migrants may also qualify for help from government sponsored programs that provide similar services. Settlement programs are a great first step towards creating connections beyond the migrant network, while still meeting the needs that arise during the settlement period. Settlement programs share similar functions with social networks. The difference between migrant social networks and government-sponsored settlement networks, is that migrants are already connected to a migrant social network before the migration takes place. Migrant social networks also consists of friends, family and other acquaintances familiar with the migration process who provide assistance throughout the migration process and upon arrival. On the other hand, there are generally no previous connections between the individual migrant and the staff or volunteers providing assistance in the case of settlement networks such as the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, which can be beneficial to newcomers like Laura and Olivia who no longer want to be dependent solely on their family-based migrant network and are in search of some independence. The benefit of using settlement services outside
of the initial migrant network is that it provides aid based on particular demands an individual newcomer has; needs that the initial social network might not be able to fulfill.

It was not until the 1970s that the provinces and territories became involved in creating settlement services. And it was not until the 1990s that the municipalities had the chance to participate in settlement services (Vineberg 2012). The eventual involvement of individual provinces, territories, and municipalities has led to an expanding settlement pattern with a growing number of newcomers settling in smaller cities. Recent government policies have been promoting such settlement outside of the three main cities through provincial nominee programs\(^5\) and the placement of government-sponsored refugees in smaller cities. These relatively new settlement patterns have led to a higher demand for settlement programs, since there is no established migrant network available in these areas for newcomers to rely on during the settlement process. The 1980s was the first time that settlement services were funded in large part by the government instead of religious and charitable or community organizations (Biles et al 2011). It is the people at the municipal level of governance who interact with the local migrant population on a daily basis and who observe the interactions between newcomers and the native-born population and identify issues overlooked at the federal level. The best way to identify the needs of individual migrants it through interaction. At the municipal level there is the opportunity to talk \textit{with} the migrant population instead of \textit{about} the migrants.

\(^5\) See footnote #3 and #4 in Chapter one on an explanation of the Provincial Nominee Program.
**Conversation Circles**

The conversation circles hosted by Community Connections, a program within the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), were the site of my participant observation that took place between May to October of 2012. Participant observation meant that I was not only observing those who attended the conversation circles and listening to what the participants talked about, I was also a volunteer at the different gatherings and I participated directly in the conversations. At first I was reluctant to do so, afraid to interfere with the way a conversation circle functions. Over time, I became more comfortable and made suggestions for different conversation topics, asked questions of the participants, and really tried to get to know the people attending. Before my research, I had already volunteered with the Community Connections for two years, which created an understanding and connection with the other volunteers. Being a migrant myself also meant that I had something in common with the newcomers, and I could relate to many of their experiences. I knew that the conversation circles were a form of settlement services, but it took several weeks of attendance before I saw the value of this program in the form of a network.

In order to gain a better understanding of the different roles settlement programs such as the conversation circles play in the lives of participants, I would like to share the story told to me by Cristian, one of the participants in this research. Cristian benefited from the conversation circle in multiple ways. I met him at the Central Library location, where he stopped by to chat with one of the facilitators. Cristian began attending the circles two months after he arrived in London. During our conversation, he told me
about some of his initial experiences as a participant in the circles: "I started with only listening, only understanding one or two sentences every hour. The conversation circle was a wonderful opportunity for me, speaking English. I have talked to a lot of Colombian people who do not like it. They see it as a waste of time. But with every meeting or situation you have to talk. When we came here we knew about the CCLC through settlement services. They introduced us to the conversation circles" (Interview, 10-10-2012). For Cristian, attending the conversation circles started out as a place to learn English, to improve his language skills. Once his communication skills improved, his next goal was to prepare for employment. Cristian was a licensed engineer in Colombia and planned to put these skills to use here in Canada. He said: "Sometimes I introduced topics that influenced me like job interviews. And then we would talk about that if I had questions" (Interview, 10-10-2012). While Cristian was very goal oriented and decided ahead of time what he wanted to gain from the conversation circle, he realised after attending for a while that there was another, unintentional, benefit to attending the circles: "I made friends in the conversation circle and took it as a social event. I had nothing to do so the conversation circle was my social meeting. I like to talk with people. People go there at the beginning but after a few months they stop" (Interview, 10-10-2012). While other newcomers stopped attending after a while, Cristian continued to attend the conversation circle. It became his social network, while he also used it as a place to learn English and prepare for employment. The volunteers also assisted him with resumes and presentations. After two and a half years, Cristian secured a job as a structural engineer (Interview, 10-10-2012).
The goal of the conversation circles is to aid newcomers in London with their conversational English by providing an environment that allows them to practice with English-speaking volunteers. This space however also provides unintentional purposes like creating an opportunity for newcomers to meet other migrants and Canadians, to leave the house and talk to non-family members. The conversation circles are a support system, a resource centre, a social network, a classroom, a safe environment, a meeting place, a break, a challenge, and many more things to different people.

There is a shared idea among the migrants who participated in this research, that in order to find employment, they must have an English-speaking network. Another participant, Yousef, is an engineer like Cristian and has been in Canada for five years. Yousef is struggling to find a job opportunity that allows him to use his experience. He told me: "Because we are new here we do not have very many links. We have links with Iranians but they are not very much help with finding professional jobs. I have met people provincially who have provided help and information" (Interview, 9-14-2012). Yousef has outgrown his migrant network. While the Iranian community was very helpful during the migration process, the network does not reach far enough to aid in his search for an engineering opportunity. Yousef has been attending conferences and workshops, and he has contacted the engineering department at Western University in order to meet Canadians from the field who he believes could provide him access to an engineering position. This networking process can be time consuming and discouraging at first, but as the story of Cristian shows, it can also be very rewarding at the end. Both Cristian and Yousef are older men in their early sixties who had to create a new network.
in an unfamiliar country. They both found that leaving an established network and a developed career is a tough experience. Compared to them, the younger generation of migrants and children of migrants face fewer obstacles even though they lack the work experience that Cristian and Yousef brought with them upon arrival. Yousef was aware of this benefit for the younger migrants since he has young sons of his own. Both sons are attending the engineering program at Western University, which also functions as a network. Yousef believes that his sons will succeed in finding employment through their academic network while he is still insecure about his own future (Interview, 9-14-2012).

The conversation circles are not an attractive option for all newcomers. Geographically, the majority of the newcomers arrived from Asia and Latin America, with a smaller number from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, while none of the participants in the circles I attended were European or African. There is no clear explanation for this. It also appears that there is not necessarily a connection between migrants from different backgrounds, simply because they are both new to the country. The conversation circles provide an opportunity for migrants to talk with people who were born in Canada or who have migrated from other countries, while improving their conversational English. At the same time, the newcomers attending the conversation circles still tended to remain partially within their comfort zone, by connecting with other participants of a shared background. For example, one day at the Sherwood conversation circle, there was a high number of attendants. As always at this location, all the participants in the circle introduced themselves. Since the group continued to grow, it eventually split up in two smaller groups because it became challenging to hear the
people on the other side of the large table. I noticed that the split took place between two continents, South-America and Asia. There is no assigned seating at the conversation circles, which meant that the newcomers found people from a shared geographical background to sit beside (Conversation Circles, 5-24-2012). It should therefore not be assumed that all migrants automatically share a bond because of their shared experiences. A few times I even witnessed some irritation among participants who spoke different languages. Disagreements of this sort can change the dynamics of the conversation circles, while they also show that migrants should not be considered a homogenous category. There is a wide range of differentiations to be found among a room full of migrants, as was clear during the conversation circles. The negative attitude was not shared by all participants and newcomer participants who do feel this way tend to not return to the circles the following week. The migrants who try to move away from their social network of people who share a native language are the main participants at the conversation circles, where speaking English is not an option, it is a requirement.

The majority of both volunteers and newcomers attending the conversation circles are female. Of the men who did attend the conversation circles, a large percentage spend time travelling between Canada and their country of origin for business reasons, which meant that they are absent for long periods of time. Because of this irregular schedule, they are also not able to dedicate time to the ESL courses offered to newcomers. The flexibility of the conversation circles, which can cause some frustration among the volunteers, is what attracts these men to participate since they can come and go as they please. Most men and women attending the conversation circles are married, or were
married when they migrated, but none of them bring their spouses to the circles with the exception of one couple at the Crouch location and another couple at the Westmount location. Through the one-on-one interviews it became clear that the majority of newcomers attending the conversation circles are dependents according to the different migration streams in Canada. The women who attended were dependents of economic migrants, meaning the spouse of a primary applicant, family-class migrants who are dependent on family already residing in Canada, and government sponsored refugees who were selected by the government based on humanitarian reasons. This suggests that women who enter Canada as dependents of male primary applicants continue to be dependents during the settlement process. The spouses who came as primary applicants through the skilled migrant network, such as Jason, did not feel the need to attend the conversation circles, while his wife Julia did. As Julia explained to me, "I went to the CCLC where I met the staff and my host. I wanted to talk. When we landed, some part of the year Jason was in Korea. I was alone with the children and wanted to speak with adults, whether in English or Korean" (Interview, 7-18-2012). Primary applicants from the economic migrant categories have other social networks available such as co-workers at their job site or class mates at their school. This category of migrants is also required to already have an existing social network within Canada according to the point system. However, the dependents attending the conversation circles were not expected to meet the same requirements and lacked these options. These female migrants relied on the conversation circles to help them navigate an unfamiliar environment and to gain some
independence from the migrant network initiated by their spouse, which is why I believe couples rarely attend the conversation circles together.

**Community Involvement**

As I explained above, London Ontario is a city with a growing migrant population. Based on the city’s community profile which outlines the Statistics Canada data of 2006, London is a city of about 350 thousand people. Of that number, 22 percent are foreign born and 20 percent speak a native language other than English or French\(^6\). The largest percentage of recently arrived migrants in London (46%) comes from Asia (London Community profile n.d.) while the long-term migrants in London are mostly from a European background. This geographical shift in sending countries has led to a higher demand for settlement services and a greater involvement of the native-born population in London, due to the lack of established migrant networks. According to John Tolley et al, "the role Canadians play in the integration process includes an openness to immigration in general, hiring newcomers and recognizing credentials, working with them as colleagues and classmates, acknowledging immigrants on the streets and in supermarkets, and encountering immigrants as doctors, caregivers, neighbours, and friends" (2011:2). Without the involvement of the native-born population, there is no settlement.

What is so beneficial about programs such as the conversation circles is that they connect newcomers with the native-born population, promoting interaction and the sharing of cultural knowledge to create an understanding of each other and a positive

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\(^6\) The top three languages are Spanish, Arabic and Polish.
experience. An orientation session is hosted by the Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) on a monthly basis to discuss the different volunteer opportunities available within the different branches of the CCLC. Those interested can submit an application identifying their experiences and interests, which will then be forwarded to a representative of each branch. In order to qualify as a volunteer for community connections, a meeting is set up with the program leader who will conduct an interview to assess the personality, communication skills, and cultural knowledge of the potential volunteer. The general responsibilities of Community Connections volunteers are "To provide support, mentoring, social and professional contacts, remedial skills development or conversational opportunities for newly arrived permanent residents or those who the government of Canada intends to land" (CCLC Community Connections 2011). All participants have certain goals and expectations, and each brings his or her own personality, which guides the conversation. I learned early in my research that by attending only one conversation circle location, a volunteer does not fully understand the possibilities this program has and the role it can play in the lives of newcomers. Of course, none of the conversation circles are perfect, but every location has at least a few newcomers who attend for a relatively long period of time on a frequent basis which means that their personal needs are being addressed. The volunteers are there to guide, encourage and in some cases correct while not taking the spotlight. It is about talking with people not talking to them.

During my research, I interviewed seven of the volunteers to learn about their perspectives on the conversation circles. Three of the volunteers migrated to Canada over
twenty years ago, while four of the volunteers were born and raised in Canada. Three of these volunteers are men, and four women. Four were retired when they started volunteering at the conversation circles. Overall, the volunteers at the conversation circles are very dedicated. They all attend on a weekly basis, while the newcomers are not required to attend every session. Biniam is one of the volunteers who came to Canada as a child along with his parents. Having seen his mother struggle with speaking English and lacking confidence he was motivated to become involved with the conversation circles. Biniam finds volunteering at the circles a rewarding experience, an attitude that is shared by all volunteers (Interview, 10-05-2012). Shannon, another volunteer, wanted to "give back to the community through volunteering" (Interview, 10-11-2012), but realised soon that the conversation circles gave her much in return. She told me that "It created a different perspective, to learn from other people from different cultures. At the end I felt I got more out of it than the newcomers" (Interview, 10-11-2012). I asked the volunteers what they thought newcomers get out of the conversation circles. Joanna believes that it all depends on the individual. She says: "I find some people are much more interested and ask questions. Showing up with an agenda like Emanuel. For others it is just a reason to get out of the house, they are not as motivated. Some newcomers want to speak to "real" Canadians, for some that is important" (Interview, 10-24-2012). The findings of my research agree with Joanna’s suggestion. I have observed a greater interest by newcomers in Canadian-born volunteers than those who migrated a long time ago and still have a slight accent. It appears that many of the newcomers attending the conversation circles do not know themselves what exactly it is they want from the
experience. At the beginning of a new season, volunteers generally ask the newcomers what they would like to discuss during the conversation, and there is rarely an answer. However, over time, the newcomers find out what they like and dislike about the conversation circles. This leads the newcomers to either ask questions and put in requests to guide the conversation or to try out different locations, since each conversation circle is unique. When I asked Matt, a volunteer at the Central library conversation circle, what draws people to the conversation circles, he replied: "In my own experience with Spanish I have a warmer or cooler feeling based on the different personalities attending. There is not much we can do about that except for remaining open. There are a lot of tools providing English language like the internet and radio, but at the circle we provide an interaction which is a way to see what level you are at. It can be a confidence booster or builder to participate in the conversation circles" (Interview, 10-1-2012). Newcomers arriving in Canada enter an environment where the English or French language dominates their surroundings. Language is present on billboards, in television and radio, and in surrounding conversations. It is therefore possible to learn some of the language without attending any language services. But as Matt pointed out, it is not only about learning the language, it is about putting it to use and being understood by others, which requires again the involvement of the native-born population. Olivia, one of the newcomers, explained during the interview that she was searching for this acknowledgement during her language learning process, which is what led her to the conversation circles. She told me "I never spoke English. I studied it a bit in school but it was not my favourite. When I came here I did not even speak a word. I did understand but I could not speak it. This was
more because of the movies which had subtitles, so after years you start to recognize. I was so afraid and ashamed. After I was here visiting I thought about moving to Canada. I started to study alone but did not have somebody to talk to. The second time I came here I was much better at understanding but the same problem, I could not speak" (Interview, 10-10-2012). Olivia wanted to connect with native-speakers in a non-judgemental environment, since she lacked the confidence but wanted to improve her English. The openness to learn about different cultures among both volunteers and newcomers is a perfect example of the “two-way street” approach to settlement discussed in Chapter one. All the volunteers at the conversation circles shared this interest in non-Canadian cultural aspects which are incorporated into the conversations alongside discussions on topics associated with Canada, such as the weather here, holidays, idioms, and so on.

Social inclusion can offer a lot of opportunities for newcomers and the achievement of social inclusion could be considered a measurement of success in regards to settlement. Once a newcomer feels socially included in the new environment, he or she becomes part of the receiving society and this reduces the feeling of wanting to return to a country of origin. The conversation circles create a controlled environment, where all participants are included in the conversation, regardless of cultural, linguistic or geographical background, gender, ethnicity and level of English. Social inclusion in public spaces is more challenging to achieve, since the attitudes of the native born population influence their behaviour towards newcomers, whether positive or negative. Therefore, the level of social inclusion that these newcomers face depends on the willingness of the native-born population to allow newcomers into their social networks.
Ana’s story illustrates this point. Ana arrived in Canada as a refugee and found employment soon after her arrival through her ethnic enclave as discussed earlier in this chapter. But after years of getting by, Ana thinks she wants to go after her dreams, and do things that she has always wanted to do but has put on hold while taking care of her daughter. She explains that "For me, it has always been for my daughter. But this year I turned 50 and I want to chase my own dreams now. I want to join a political party because in China I do not have this right. After the divorce I worried about my job and my daughter. Right now my job is safe as a full-time employee. I do worry about the money. I am not young and doing physical work. I like the co-workers but feel lonely. If I want to do something I would have to go back to college and my English is not that good. Here, right now, I always have to ask people to help me" (Interview, 10-23-2012). Ana gets along with her native-born co-workers, but there is still a distance between them. She interacts with the others while at work, but this network does not go beyond the workplace. Once at home, she feels isolated from the larger community. In China, Ana was a poet and at heart she continues to be. In Canada she has not had the opportunity to continue with her passion, since having a steady income to support the future of her daughter became the priority. This meant that for the past twelve years she has put her own identity as a writer on hold and focused on supporting her daughter’s dreams and future. Now that her daughter has been admitted to university, Ana has the opportunity to discover a new lifestyle. It is important for her to do things in Canada that she was not able to do in China. She says "I love Canada but the culture is very different. I want to do something here, but now I am just active in the church. I want to get involved in politics."
I always had a dream to do something for my country, but it is not democratic in China. Here I am free to write, while back there I received an e-mail saying that my poems were no good for Chinese culture. They hacked my computer!" (Interview, 10-23-2012). By joining a political party, Ana is reaching out beyond her migrant network. By becoming involved in politics, she is taking a step towards social inclusion, since her involvement does not depend on her migrant status, but on a different aspect of her identity, her political interests and being a poet. Ana began her life in Canada in an ethnic enclave in Toronto. After being in Canada for twelve years, she is taking action to expand her network, and focus on becoming part of the larger Canadian community. Settlement is a process of collaboration, since newcomers need to be willing and ready to reach out and expand their individual networks to connect to the larger community; while at the same time the native-born members of that community need to take on an open and accepting attitude towards the newcomers and aid them during the settlement process. If neither side is willing to adapt, by attempting to create a mutual understanding as in a two-way street approach, a disconnect will continue to exist among both newcomers and native-born individuals.

**Conclusion**

This chapter on community connections shows that networks and identity are closely interrelated. The type of network newcomers rely on during the migration process and throughout the settlement period, shapes their experiences in the long run. Government-sponsored networks and migrant family and social networks both play a role in the lives of individual migrants, and one can never replace the other. Therefore,
collaboration between the different networks is highly encouraged. Collaboration also requires an emphasis on social inclusion instead of integration to emphasize the importance of the involvement of the native-born population.

Ceri Oeppen wrote that "[C]ultural integration is the process by which migrants and the local population, or members of the mainstream culture, gradually adapt to each other" (2010:39). This idea of a two-way-street, with both sides adjusting to one another is an ideology encouraged through multiculturalism, while in reality it is seldom achieved. The hierarchy of power within Canadian society has created an environment that encourages migrants to assimilate and transform in accordance with the culture and expectations of the larger society (Li 2003b). Settlement programs can change this process by taking into consideration the needs of migrants beyond finding employment and by providing assistance for both short- and long-term needs. The conversation circles is such a program that reaches out to both newcomers and the native-born population to attend and participate in the conversation, to get to know and learn from one another. However, settlement programs should not replace the responsibilities of the local populations. Unless the mainstream population within Canada agrees to take on the responsibility to aid newcomers during their settlement period, settlement programs like the conversation circles can only partially accomplish their goal of connecting newcomers with local individuals. A welcoming native population is required to take on this responsibility. This simple fact is often overlooked with the availability of settlement programs to which newcomers are referred.
The conversation circles function as a network to a certain extent, particularly in the case of dependent migrants who are searching for a place that provides help with the settlement process beyond the initial migrant network. The main function of the conversation circles continues to be the learning and improvement of conversational English. Newcomers residing within their own migrant network often lack the opportunity to practice English, since the conversation at home and among friends from the same country of origin tends to be in a native language. For many of the newcomers participating in this research, the conversation circles were a network that provided this opportunity to practice English. In some cases, the circles were the only time they spoke English. Laura admits that the classes and circles are sometimes the only time of the week when she speaks English. "When I do not have class at Fanshawe College, all the time I speak in Spanish. This is no good for me, because this way it is really difficult. I need more opportunities to practice. If I would have a job I could practice but I do not know here to begin or how to begin. The only way that I improve my English is find a job" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Laura has limited opportunities to practice English since her network does not expand beyond her initial migrant network. Language is therefore the focus of the next chapter where it will be connected to language networks as in the case of conversation circles. Language also has an impact on individual identity, both from a native-born and self-perspective and these characteristics will be explored as well.
Chapter 3- Language, More than Words

When someone has a problem communicating in English he has trouble meeting others. Our cousin is very charismatic and has great social skills. He tells a lot of jokes and people relax with him. Therefore, communication skills matter, not just being foreign - Jason (Interview, 7-18-2012)

Introduction

The implementation of the Official Languages Act in 1969 promoted equality of both French- and English- Canadians through official bilingualism (Knowles 2007). From this moment on, both the English and French language would be treated as equal in the government policies. Almost forty years later, Statistics Canada states that 2006 was the first recorded year that one-fifth of the Canadian population at large consisted of allophones, meaning that the first language is neither French nor English (2007a).

Chapter one includes a discussion on the Multiculturalism Act, which celebrates cultural diversity within the Canadian context. The Multiculturalism Act would therefore support the inclusion of allophones as part of the Canadian national identity, promoting cultural plurality as part of the larger Canadian population. However, a language ideology continues to exist in Canada, especially among the native-born population, who are the native speakers of the two official languages. There is an emphasis on the importance of the English and French language as part of the Canadian identity through schooling, employment, and other aspects of daily life, creating a pressure among newcomers to adjust their language skills to the surrounding environment in order to "fit in". A shared languages creates a bond, making it easier to form a network, as discussed in Chapter two. Migrant networks tend to have a non-official language in common, while the
expanding of social networks over time requires learning or improving an official language. The main function of the conversation circles is to provide a space where such language learning takes place through conversational English. What is unique about the circles is that the learning process is created by connecting native-speakers with the learners, focusing on everyday conversational English instead of textbook English. The implications of learning this aspect of an official language is discussed later on in this chapter.

Hartmut Esser identifies three roles of language in regards to migration and settlement: 1) language as a resource, 2) language as a symbol, and 3) language as a medium for communication (2006:11). Language as a resource refers to the economic value associated with it. It refers to language as a tool to gain access to information and other resources which can be used as an investment. Language as a symbol focuses on identity, the way a person is perceived based on language. Lastly, language as a medium of communication refers to securing and understanding a language and the learning process. These three aspects of language are the focus of Chapter three. In this chapter I will tie together the major themes of identity, networks, labour market integration, and settlement. The topic of language will be discussed from a government, native-born and migrant perspective. I will argue that language learning is a key aspect during the settlement period of migrants in Canada, but that the language learning process is complex due to several factors including the role of language in society, its association with employment, the attitude of the native-speakers towards learners, and the impact it has on the self-identity of language learners. Each section of this chapter addresses the
different aspects of language as defined by Esser. When discussing language as a symbol, I will expand on the ideas of accents and language ideology. The chapter ends with a comparison between the conversation circles and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to show the different aspects of language learning, especially the gendered pattern that can be found in both programs.

Language as a Resource

Jason Kenney Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada argues that the high unemployment rate of newcomers can be lowered by having language proficiency take precedence: "[T]he number one factor for success in immigrants is language proficiency. No point bringing folks here if they don't have language proficiency" (The National Post, March 19, 2012). As discussed in previous chapters, at the federal level of the Canadian government, migration is considered an economic investment by selecting individuals with the right skills who can contribute to the Canadian market within a short period of time. Language is emphasized as one of the main factors to guarantee a high success rate for economic integration. While at the same time, the insufficient knowledge of an official language is given as a reason for negative aspects, such as the high unemployment rate among recent migrants. From a government perspective, language is a resource, a valuable asset that sets an applicant apart from others. This perspective on language is discussed by Esser who states that language is a "more or less- valuable resource, through which other resources can be obtained and in which one can choose to invest (or not)" (2006:11). This perspective on language would suggest that migrants with high language skills, among other resources, are more likely to succeed upon arrival in
the country. This would also explain why such a high value is assigned to language within the point system used to select skilled migrant applicants. However, during the last several years there has been a growing awareness at the federal level that there is a gap between selecting skilled migrants, and actually putting the skills to use.

According to Statistics Canada, while the education level among migrants has been rising over the past several decades, only one in three working age, skilled migrants ends up finding employment in their intended occupation after two years of being in Canada (Statistics Canada 2005). Knowledge of an official language does not guarantee a success rate economically, although a connection does exist between language and employment. The longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada from 2003 shows that 71 percent of working-age newcomers, who have been in Canada for up to two years, encountered at least one problem while in search of employment. After the lack of Canadian work experience and the lack of recognition of foreign credentials, language barriers were given as the main reason for not finding employment, (2005). This means that it is not only the Canadian federal government that perceives language as a resource, migrants themselves also connect lower success-rates to their lack of language proficiency according to the Statistics Canada data.

By adding the role of networks to the link between language and employment, new patterns appear within the migrant experience. When language proficiency increases, so does the rate of employment among migrants, especially in the case of finding employment that requires the particular skills of the newcomer. Monica Boyd warns that "[N]ot knowing the language of business and social discourse means that many jobs in
which English or French are the language of work are forfeit" (1986:50). However, proficiency in the English or French language is not a requirement for finding all types of employment. Boyd continues to say that "as a consequence the worker [who] is not familiar with one of the two official languages is most likely to participate in an ethnic-linguistic labor market or to hold menial positions...in which extensive verbal instruction is not necessary to accomplish the task (1986:50). Working in an ethnic niche market is a good opportunity for newcomers to earn a living while becoming settled in the new environment and not speaking the official language (fluently). In 2006, for example, about 16 percent of migrants used a non-official language at the workplace (Statistics Canada 2011).

The number of migrants using a language other than English or French does decrease with the length of residence in Canada. This shift is a reflection of newcomers moving beyond their migrant network after a period of time, as was discussed in Chapter two. It also shows that newcomers often invest in improving their language skills while continuing to search for better employment opportunities. Language can indeed be a resource for improving economic well-being. Immigrants who continue to work in a field that does not require the use of an official language, generally earn less per year on average than those who are required to speak English or French (Statistics Canada 2011). However, this pattern is not just influenced by language skills; working within an ethnic niche leaves no room for upward mobility. Skilled migrants continue to have trouble accessing the well-paid positions within their field of expertise because the lack of language skills prevents the migrant network from extending beyond the low-paying jobs
that do not require language proficiency due to their liminal positions within the larger Canadian context. The networks of migrants upon arrival in Canada should therefore not be overlooked since they are also a type of resource. An expanding network outside of the migrant connections is required to find higher positioned jobs.

Sylvia Fuller and Todd Martin argue that having a well rounded knowledge of either English or French as a skilled newcomer can also have the reverse effect when trying to join the workforce: "[W]ithout strong host-country language skills, higher education may actually decrease the odds of quick integration. While less educated immigrants without strong language skills may be content with lower-level jobs that do not require fluency, their more educated counterparts may go long periods without work because they are loath to accept such positions" (2012:147). Yousef (Interview, 9-14-2012), the engineer from Iran discussed in Chapter two, is a skilled migrant who was not required to enroll in ESL classes due to his language proficiency. During the last several years, Yousef has reached out to Canadian engineers for advice and sent out resumes, since his language skills were not developed enough to gain a job as an engineer and his network did not include connections in the field. In some cases these efforts of networking among Canadians led to an interview, only to find out that someone else had already been hired to fill the position (Interview, 9-14-2012). Yousef has multiple resources (experience, education, language skills) that should aid him in his search for employment. So why does Yousef struggle to get work as an engineer in Canada? Due to his high qualifications, Yousef is not open to finding a different type of employment that
does not require his skills and experience. Right now, he told me, "I am doing a full-time job search" (Interview, 9-14-2012).

Language can be considered a resource, but only within the right network and environment. As the examples show, language barriers are often given as a reason among migrants who struggle to find employment. However, English proficiency does not carry the same value within a migrant network that shares a non-English native language. If the migrant chooses to expand his or her network beyond the ethnic community, English proficiency gains value and becomes a resource. Expanding a network and expanding the knowledge of a language go hand in hand, since one requires the other. The conversation circles, then, are practice sessions which help to expand a social network while also improving the accompanying language. Since Yousef already spoke English, he had the opportunity to expand his social network outside of the Iranian community in London. This is a time-consuming process; new connections are not made overnight, and language adaptation may take a long time because it also includes an adjustment to local dialects and idioms. The conversation circles dedicate a lot of time to these aspects of learning a new language, a goal which will be discussed in more detail, later on in this chapter.

**Language as a Symbol**

Language as a symbol "can describe things, express internal states, convey requests and (through this) "define" situations, including the activation of stereotypes about the speaker and the potentially associated prejudices, for example relating to an accent" (Esser 2006:11).

In Chapter one, I discussed what it meant to be considered Canadian versus being a migrant. Peter Li differentiated these two identities as old migrants and new migrants
Chapter one also includes a discussion of how Canadian identity is a form of national identity. The reason I am returning to Canadian national identity again in this chapter is because a national identity is based on symbols such as flags, foods, and language that become a representation of the nation. National symbols are used to support a national identity and to set the nation and its population apart from "the other". But the movement of people blurs such differentiations and challenges the existence of these national identities and their boundaries by crossing the borders. Multiculturalism promotes embracing cultural diversity as part of the national identity, but in reality, the differences between old and new migrants are emphasised to create a distinction. Language is one such symbol that sets Canadians apart from non-Canadians.

Eve Haque explains that "[T]he usefulness of language as a way to define a nation lies in the fact that it can address the tension between authenticity and modernity. The myth of common origin and history can be reified through language, and language can also be invested with a sense of a common destiny, which gives rise to the subsequent idea of equitable access to participation in the nation" (2004:61). To become part of the larger Canadian community, a migrant must have or gain proficiency in one of the official languages; without language proficiency, it would be impossible to be acknowledged as an insider by the native-born population. Not Just Numbers is a report commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC 1997) discussing the 2001 immigration act. In the "Core Values and Principles" section of the report, the author states that "[L]anguage is also a defining value of Canada; some rudimentary knowledge of at least one of the official languages is seen as necessary for integration into Canadian
society" (1997:8). Lack of fluency in either English or French is used to set people apart from the mainstream society at the federal level of governance as well as among the native-born population. Language is a symbol because it is used as a standard for defining national identity. It allows native-speakers to justify the social hierarchy within the nation, since English and French have a high value assigned to them compared to other languages and their speakers.

Language is something that can be learned and it is expected of newcomers to adjust accordingly by attending ESL classes. But is language proficiency always obtainable for newcomers? Not everyone is privileged enough to have the opportunity to prepare for speaking a new language. For some people, migration was not necessarily a matter of choice. Here I am referring to refugees. As a refugee, one does not have the chance to practice one of the official languages before the migration takes place, or to search for a social network that can help during the migration and settlement process. The Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) has a branch that works specifically with refugees and their needs, since this group of migrants is a step behind in the migration process compared to those who choose to move. While the conversation circles are not specifically aimed at refugees, some of the participants in this research I met through the conversation circles did arrive in Canada through this stream. Miguel, Isabel, Cristian, Ana and Maida did not have the opportunity to prepare for a new life in Canada, and only Maida was fluent in English before arrival. Every migration pattern comes with exceptions, but it is for refugees especially that language is considered a barrier, preventing them from moving forward, finding employment, expanding their social
network, and becoming settled. The CCLC has a multi-lingual staff, and they print flyers in multiple languages. While this is very helpful to newcomers who are not fluent in English or French, once they leave the building language becomes a bigger challenge.

Miguel and Isabel are an example of a refugee family who came to Canada without knowing English (Interview 8-28-2012). They did not plan to emigrate from Colombia, but the growing political turmoil left them no choice. Isabel began to learn English at level one and two in the ESL program. Unintentionally, Miguel had learned some English while in Colombia. Their daughter attended an international school while there, and the majority of her classes were in English. She took this knowledge back home by using the skills and watching television in English for example or listening to English music. Miguel believes that he absorbed some of this because when they arrived in Canada he was allowed to start at level four and five for his ESL classes. The couple was very motivated to improve their language skills and worked hard to graduate from ESL, but the experiences each individual had varied. Isabel continued to attend ESL classes, and eventually graduated from the program after going through all the levels. She continues to practice English in her own time. Isabel has not found a job yet, and believes that her English level is still holding her back. At the moment she volunteers at LUSO community services, a non-for profit organization sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration Canada as a way to gain both work experience and language experience (Interview, 8-28-2012).

Her husband Miguel did not finish his ESL lessons in a linear fashion, but instead took advantage of a job opportunity, which put his classes on hold. He strongly believes
that any type of employment actually provides a better training than ESL classes. First he participated in a training program that provided a placement at Home Depot. After that he went back to school, but to take business English at a high school level. School was not really his thing because he preferred to work instead of being in a classroom. He told me that "In September of 2009 I got this job in the automotive industry. I was overqualified but I felt like the people always ask for Canadian experience. Obviously you do not have experience. Nobody hires you without it. I have to do what I have to do for $10.45 an hour. It is nothing but it is still something: language training. I was on the night shift and learned more vocabulary. I started to feel more comfortable. It is the price you have to pay" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Miguel sees the settlement period as a linear process in which he had to start at the bottom and work his way up. The knowledge and experience Miguel obtained in Colombia does not seem to count in Canada. Miguel has a lot of experience as a business owner with a degree in economics and management, but he was not discouraged when he found a minimum wage job. Language is one of the main skills that must be acquired in order to have a successful settlement.

For Miguel it took less than a year to find employment, and since then he has had several jobs, slowly working his way toward the career he had in Colombia. Miguel is currently still handing out resumes and applying for higher positions. He is not satisfied at his current position and strives to put his skills to use. However, he believes that his accent is still holding him back and preventing Canadian employers from taking him into consideration as a serious candidate. This does not stop Miguel from trying but instead it challenges him to convince those around him that he is capable of more and full of
potential (Interview, 8-28-2012). His wife Isabel has still not found employment after three years. She is looking for that opportunity to get her foot in the door. Her process is taking longer and she is considering changing directions by going back to school here in Canada. She hopes that a Canadian college degree will help her in her search for employment (Interview, 8-28-2012). Together they agree that language is key and that their lack of English upon arrival has made the settlement a longer process compared to those who could speak English when they arrived. As Isabel told me, "If you have good English you have better chances" (Interview 8-28-2012).

It is not only refugees who did not have the chance to prepare to speak another language in a new country. In the case of Nina, political circumstances had a large impact on the way she viewed language (Interview, 7-16-2012). Nina was born and raised in Estonia, but her family is Russian. In Estonia, Russians are considered to be almost second-class citizens. All citizens of Estonia are expected to speak Estonian. Being monolingual is encouraged both politically and in the education system. Nina's family spoke Russian at home. Even though it was her grandparents who moved to Estonia, Nina was still considered Russian. In Estonia, there is constant pressure to give up your language and assimilate, while this is not truly possible as long as the Russian speaking population is treated differently. Nina said that she did not want to be identified as Russian in Estonia because "they are the ones who lose their jobs first. If you want to move up as a Russian, you can try by working hard, but you will always be competing against Estonians. You feel like you can do better but you have no entitlement" (Interview, 7-16-2012).
This experience of how powerful language can be, has made Nina sceptical about learning English. "They always said, you must learn Estonian very well, which made us not want to learn” (Interview, 7-16-2012). In Estonia, Nina felt the constant pressure of social and political expectations in regards to language. But she said “Here in Canada I listen a lot and it took me half a year before wanting to learn English. Here there is no such pressure" (Interview, 7-16-2012). When her family decided to migrate to Canada, Nina's goal was to have freedom from this pressure to assimilate, and she believes she found it. Nina has attended the conversation circles for over a year now. While Nina struggled with the English language based on her previous experiences in Estonia, her husband did not share this experience. As a primary applicant in the skilled migrant category, his English skills were tested. Nina's husband has a degree in information technology (IT) and he was able to find employment in his field within a short period of time. He did not need to take ESL courses, and he is confident in his language (Interview, 7-16-2012). The two case studies show that language is more than a resource. Language is symbolic because it represents an identity, the way non-native speakers are perceived and treated by native-speakers of the official language. This can affect the search for employment as in the case of Miguel and Isabel, or the way a person perceives and identifies oneself, as in the case of Nina.

**Language Ideology**

Language learning is a process, which is easier for some than others, as the last section shows. So, how do newcomers know when they have reached their goal, and learned the language? The way linguistic competence is perceived and defined, depends
on the perception of a person or group in a particular context. The ideas surrounding what it means to be considered fluent in standard English is an example of language ideology. Multiple definitions can be found for this concept, but I use the popular definition by Michael Silverstein (1979), who wrote that "ideologies about language, or linguistic ideologies, are any set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use (p193). In other words, language ideology refers to the process in which ways of speaking are being associated with categories of people. People assign value to linguistic features (i.e. certain pronunciations, word choice, grammatical structures) and judge the speech of others based upon those associations. These judgements are based on experiences and interpretation, and can be either positive or negative. Language ideology comes in different forms with a wide range of presuppositions. I will discuss a few of these assumptions in this section.

When a language ideology surrounding language proficiency is shared within a society, methods to measure linguistic competence can be implemented. What is being taught in English as Second Language (ESL) classes is guided by the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), which provides "a framework of reference for learning, teaching, programming and assessing adult ESL in Canada. They are a national standard" (TVDSB n.d.). The different levels as defined by the CLB are the foundation of language assessment and testing and the recent legislation requires immigrants to prove a certain level of English competence in order to become citizens. The legislation makes the ideology explicit by equating linguistic competence with citizenship. The belief is that to
be identified as fully Canadian, citizens must be proficient in one of the official languages.

While a system is in place to measure English language proficiency, Judith Irvine and Susan Gal argue that there is no national homogenous language to be found among speakers in a nation. National language can be considered imagined just like communities (2009:425). Believing there is such a distinct entity as Canadian English is in itself also a language ideology. There are different kinds of Standard English which can be used comparatively to mark a person as a foreigner. Irvine and Gal suggest that "[B]y focusing on linguistic differences, we intend to draw attention to some semiotic properties of those processes of identity formation that depend on defining the self as against some imagined "Other." This is a familiar kind of process, one by now well known in the literature. Anthropologists, at least, are now well acquainted with the ways in which the Other, or simply the other side of a contrast, is often essentialized and imagined as homogeneous" (2009:404). Kathryn Woolard argues that it is not just individuals who associate distinct languages with places and people, state policies also reflect such language ideologies (1998:17). The connections made between language, regions and identity show why language is considered a symbol of a nation. The Canadian Language Benchmarks represent language ideology from a state perspective, by explicitly outlining the requirements surrounding language proficiency in order to become a Canadian citizen.

Unless individuals encounter experiences where their language ideologies, the assumptions and categorizations made based on language usage, are proven to be wrong, the ideologies are true for those believing in such values. Settlement services like the
conversation circles can provide a space for people with different language usages and different language ideologies to interact. The most effective way to change the negative attitudes towards non-native speakers is to promote social interaction which ideally will have a positive influence on the way non-native speakers are perceived. There is a fine line between adjusting one’s speech to make it easier to understand for the non-native speaker, and dumbing down the language as if condescending to talk to a person who is not considered equal to the speaker. When newcomers use their language skills outside of these controlled environments, negative experiences tend to be more common. The newcomers in this research all recalled being in a situation where the other person lacked the willingness to put effort into comprehending what the newcomer was trying to communicate.

The idea that being a native-speaker of the regional language confers superior status compared to non-native speakers is also language ideology. Language is therefore used to exert power. Native speakers have the power to either involve or exclude those who have an accent or who have trouble comprehending. For example, when a scholar uses academic terminology outside of academia, part of the audience is excluded from the conversation due to the unfamiliarity with the form of language used at that moment. This incomprehension derives from the speaker’s choice to exclude and marginalize, not necessarily from the lack of willingness by the audience to learn.

**Accents**

Improving one’s language skills and reducing an accent is almost impossible to achieve without the help and guidance of native speakers. Taking on "Canadian
expressions" in speech is easier than adjusting pronunciation, and it shows that the individual migrant is putting effort into adapting to the larger Canadian society. Idioms and pronunciation can be considered a way to evaluate linguistic competence, even though there are multiple varieties of Canadian English. Everyone has an accent, which is based on variables such as age, region, and social class. There are even multiple "Canadian" accents based on these factors. What does it mean then when accents are being identified? Lippi-Green conducted research on the topic of accents and language ideology (2009). She explains that accents have a different meaning for linguists than they do for the general public. Linguistically, "accents" refer to pitch or stress or specific phonetic variables (2009:436). While the term "accent" is generally used by lay people to describe distinctive differences in speech, "[I]n the case of second language learning, accent may refer to the carryover of native language phonology and intonation into a target language (2009:436). The presence of an accent does not represent whether the speaker has a communicative competence in the language...when people reject an accent, they also reject the identity of the person speaking; his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class" (2009:436). Identifying accents, the usage of linguistic features that are not considered standard, triggers a response by the listener who identifies him or herself as a native speaker. What is considered an accent is therefore also part of language ideology.

Miguel and Isabel both faced negative experiences in regards to their accents. Miguel told me that "People who use the F-word get help faster than me with my accent. Language can be discriminating, alongside your culture. There are negative stereotypes
of South Americans, and certain jobs are associated with it" (Interview, 8-28-2012). Isabel experienced discrimination based on language. She told me that "One day at the volunteer job I was in the office and nobody answered the phone so I did. The manager told me she preferred if I did not do that and rather had the call go to voicemail. I was so mad! Nothing wrong happened. I confronted her that it was rude. These kind of people associate the level of English with other things. They should see what I can accomplish in my own language. It does not mean that if you are slow speaking you are slow thinking. Some people think they have to talk louder" (Interview, 8-28-2012). The people Miguel and Isabel interacted with, shared a negative perception towards non-native English speakers. It influenced the way they perceived and acted towards the newcomers, since the hearing of an accent triggered a particular response.

"[P]rejudiced listeners cannot hear what a person has to say, because accent, as a mirror of social identity and a litmus test for exclusion, is more important (Lippi-Green 2009:436). It is therefore easy for the symbolic value of language, the way language is perceived, and categorized, to overshadow its function as a resource. It takes time to learn a new language, and when discrimination takes place based on the level of the migrant’s English it can be influenced by a lack of understanding and simple ignorance of the fact that learning a new language is a time-consuming and almost never-ending process. Such negative experiences can cause frustration, anger and most of all, insecurity for the individual migrant. It is easy to become insecure, and to second guess skills when being treated like a child: The native speaker will slow down, use basic words, not taking the speaker seriously and not seeing the non-native speaker as an equal. Ana from China did
not enjoy attending ESL classes for this exact reason (Interview, 10-23-2012). She felt that some of the teachers looked down on her. After trying three different ESL schools in the Toronto and London area, she stopped attending. Ana found it difficult to improve in this environment, where instructors or group leaders relied on good textbooks but did not provide the opportunity to practice speaking English. This left Ana insecure, since she never gained confidence in the classes. Ana told me that some teachers encouraged students but "ESL, when stuck on a level, becomes repetitive. They treat you as a pupil and this is not a good way. " (Interview, 10-23-2012). In China, Ana had a masters degree, and as a poet, she has a love for language and the power of words. To go from being an academic and writer to being treated as a child was unacceptable for her.

If an individual Canadian assigns a high value to what he or she considers standard English, ESL speakers will be categorized by this person as inferior due to their "lack" of language proficiency. These beliefs will have an impact on the way the ESL speaker is perceived and on the relationship between the two individuals, and their behaviour towards one another, as the example Ana gave indicates. Language ideologies are fluid, multiple and in most cases subconscious, perceived and acted upon as reality instead of as a creation. This does, however, also mean that language ideologies of individuals can change over time. If a native English speaker had the opportunity to interact with newcomer ESL speakers, his or her perception might change when the experiences do not support the preconceived notion. Everyone has language ideologies, ideas that reflect our beliefs. It is not possible to be neutral, to not be influenced by region, age and other factors. However, language ideologies surrounding the ideas of
native speakers in contrast to non-native speakers have a big impact on the experiences and expectations of newcomers, both positively and negatively.

**Language as a Medium for Communication**

[Language] is a *medium* of communication and the transactions that proceed through it and therefore assumes the special function of the communicative securing of conversation and "understanding" (Esser 2006:11 -original emphasis).

Language is learned and cultural, since humans are born with the tools to communicate but not the knowledge of how to use a specific form of speech and gestures in a meaningful manner. A native language is learned early in life when the speaker is exposed to different sounds made by family and the surrounding community. In Canada, this early informal learning is followed by a formalized education system that requires basic understanding of the language in order to expand knowledge. Esser identifies four parameters that come into play in the process of language acquisition: "*motivations*, experienced or expected in the form of association with (primary) reinforcers; *opportunities* for learning, which can be quantified on the basis of the frequency of access to corresponding environmental reinforcements; basic *capability*, which is a prerequisite for certain forms of learning; and the *cost* associated with learning" (Esser 2006:16). Being in an environment that requires a different language in order to accomplish everyday tasks pushes the newcomer to gain some knowledge of one of the official languages. The language ideology of the native-born population alongside the goals of individual migrants, whether they want to be able to go grocery shopping, pursue a career, or be able to express themselves in a debate for example, sets the standard for when language learning has been achieved. Miya, a participant from Japan told me that
her goal will be reached when she starts to think and dream in English "Right now I have to switch in my brain. It is a bad habit to keep the two languages separate. I still get tired after a long day of talking in English" (Interview, 8-16-2012). Being married to a Canadian, Miya communicates in English on a daily basis, but stores memories and formulates answers in her head in Japanese, which is common for anyone learning a second language. The participants in this research have been actively looking for opportunities to learn English by attending the conversation circles, and enrolling in ESL classes. However, the newcomers who were also actively involved in their migrant network admitted to having limited opportunities to practice English. Laura (Interview, 8-28-2012) and Olivia (Interview, 10-10-2012) both told me that the conversation circles are the only opportunity they have to speak English and learn from the experience, since new vocabulary is introduced and corrections are made every time they take part in the conversations.

Sylvia Fuller and Todd Martin argue that "[H]igher proficiency in Canada's official languages does reduce the odds of exclusion for both men and women, as well as the odds of delayed entry for men with a university education" (2012:157). However, these expectations to have a higher proficiency also reflect language ideology, and the idea that migrants with a lower level of proficiency are not capable of entering the workforce. There is a definite need for language training programs, but the way the importance of language is portrayed during the application process and the settlement period, can actually cause newcomers to put their lives on hold and slow down the settlement process while trying to achieve the desired level of language proficiency.
Every migrant with whom I talked for my research this summer could tell me exactly what English as a Second Language (ESL) level they were at upon arrival in Canada. The ESL levels show each individual where they are, and where they need to be in order to achieve their language goals. This shows that the language benchmarks have implications on the experiences of migrants. By making English proficiency a requirement for skilled migrants in particular, and for all migrants who want to become a Canadian citizen, a high value is assigned to the language. The language ideology expressed in such regulations is shared with the newcomers upon arrival. ESL programs start at level one and students graduate after finishing level seven. One of the participants in my research pointed out that this is strange because the Canadian education system provides English classes that go up to level twelve (Interview, 7-18-2012). This means that for migrants who arrive with a more advanced English level, there is no program that takes them to the upper level required to obtain a job in Canada, unless they want to pay for the specialized course. Some migrants slip in between the cracks of the system, either because they are not required to know a certain level of the official language, or because they are not eligible for the ESL programs offered to migrants.

Emanuel, whose story was discussed in Chapter one is one of the migrants who fell between the cracks of the system: his Canadian citizenship worked against him during the settlement period. Because he was considered Canadian, Emanuel was not eligible for the standard settlement services such as ESL. This is a service offered for non-Canadians only if they qualify. Emanuel still had the option to take ESL classes, but they would cost him 450 dollars for each level. He told me that this put him in a cycle:
"You need English for a job, but I needed money to learn English, but English to find the information" (Interview, 7-11-2012). Others would judge him and question why he was not attending school to learn English, since this is what the people around him expected him to do. In Colombia Emanuel is an engineer, but here in Canada he could not even get into college since he lacked level seven in ESL. During his first year in Canada, Emanuel found out about the conversation circle, which became the only place accessible to him that provided a way to learn and improve English. After being persistent for months, and having to go through the ministry of education at the provincial level, Emanuel received permission to enroll in the ESL program free of charge. He and his wife Lorena continued to attend the conversation circles once a week, and they found that the program went beyond simply helping them learn English. For Emanuel, the conversation circles were also a source of information and a social place where people would listen to him and provide support during a tough time (Interview, 7-11-2012).

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes**

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are the standard method for newcomers to learn English upon arrival in Canada. In London where my research took place, the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) is responsible for providing English as a Second Language Programs (TVDSB n.d.). The courses offered are available at no cost for adult ESL learners who are permanent residents, citizens, and temporary residents who are refugee claimants, or convention refugees (TVDSB n.d.). Other programs, such as the local college in London and the local YMCA, offer the same services, but these are not necessarily government sponsored and some of them require
students to pay in order to attend. The ESL courses offered by the TVDSB revolve around four themes of language proficiency: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The course content of these classes is guided by the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), as discussed in a previous section.

All the participants in this research talked about their experiences in the ESL classes. In order to learn more about these programs, I approached an ESL teacher associated with the CCLC and asked about the experiences of migrants from an instructor perspective. Refugees are more likely to attend classes offered by the Thames Valley District School Board, while skilled migrants tend to look for the programs that cost money to enroll, since they have a larger budget to work with. This creates a higher status for private programs. If students withdraw from an ESL class, they will no longer receive welfare (Interview, 3-5-2013). Therefore, the ESL teachers try to discourage students from dropping out of the ESL program. Kristen, an ESL teacher, realises that some might feel pressured to join the workforce, but then she explains to them that the classes will help them find a better position in the future and without an ESL certificate, they will be restricted to the lower paying jobs. There is also no time limit on how long it should take for a newcomer to graduate from the program, however, on average it takes a newcomer five years to progress from level one to seven. The length of the program therefore depends on the four factors mentioned above, motivation, opportunity, capability and cost.

Cost in terms of money should not be a factor since the TVDSB ESL classes are government sponsored, although attending on a daily basis requires an investment of
time. Due to the several locations throughout London, access or opportunities should not be an issue either. However, motivation and capability do have an impact on the duration of attendance. Kristen mentioned one student who was in the United States for twelve years before coming to Canada and has been at one of the TVDSB schools for eight years, while receiving financial support from family members still residing in the country of origin. On the other hand, Kristen has also witnessed students completing all levels within three years. Most students attend the ESL program full-time, while some, especially men, have jobs after class. The women have the job of taking care of the household after classes which can be just as time consuming as having a paid job, or even more so. This means that many students do not have a lot of time for homework during the evenings and weekends. For example, after the March break, lower marks are expected in ESL classes because the students are taking a break from English. They will be spending nine days with friends and family speaking a different language. It takes time for the students to get back into learning English when they return the following Monday. Kristen explained that "Part of it is that they do not want their kids to lose their language and therefore force them to speak it instead of English. But this means that the parents do not get to practice" (Interview, 3-5-2013).

The drawback of teaching an ESL class sponsored by the government is that instructors must follow the curriculum. A new system has been implemented recently that does not allow the instructors to revise topics based on questions asked by students. The tight curriculum leaves no room to expand on topics that students struggle with, leaving the responsibility with the student to spend time outside the classroom to improve
individual weaknesses (Interview, 3-5-2013). Each semester, the ESL instructors are given five topics that must be covered by the end of the term. All the terms have also recently been shortened from 14 to 12 weeks. If students have the need or interest to work on something that is not part of the curriculum, they must reach out to other programs, such as those offered by the CCLC, and dedicate more of their own time to the learning process. When ESL students transfer to different programs, the government funding is also transferred. ESL program facilitators are therefore reluctant to refer students to other settlement services. But then again, it simply is not possible to teach everything newcomers need to know. The focus is therefore mostly on "everyday language and situations with a focus on grammar and punctuations" (Interview, 3-5-2013). No such pressure exists within the conversation circles. While the Cross Cultural Learner Centre is sponsored by the Canadian government, the people running the circle are all volunteers. Funding does not go towards instructor wages in the case of the circles, but government inspections do take place in order to monitor how the money is being used. While I attended the Sherwood conversation circle for the second time during my research, there was also a representative of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the settlement services branch, to inspect how their money is invested. The representative made it very clear in her speech that the CIC was the one providing this service and she promoted other settlement services that have received funding in London. The representative took note of who attended and how the circles functioned. There was a lot of pressure among the volunteers to emphasize the importance of the conversation circles, since settlement services have been facing budget cuts during the past several
years (Conversation circle, 5-24-2012). Unfortunately, the limited funding has led to a competitive attitude among settlement services such as the conversation circles and the ESL classes, instead of collaboration.

The ESL instructor Kristen noticed similar benefits in the ESL classes as I noticed during the conversation circles. For example, the importance of networks and the tendency to connect with those sharing the same native language as seen at the conversation circles and discussed in interviews, can also be found at the ESL classes. While the main focus is on language learning, the students in the ESL program meet a lot of people. "Even if they do not become close friends, they move up in the different levels close together and create a network of contacts. At least one person in the class will have someone's phone number. They are parents and employees and sometimes miss class and need to know the homework. They will help each other for a job if they know someone. They refer to one another and tell what is available" (Interview, 3-5-2013). At the same time, students do tend to form groups of people with a shared native language. These people are not necessarily from the same country of origin but they still connect based on the shared language. As Kristen noted, "Very few are brave enough to venture outside of their language groups. A few of them do but they are the type that makes friends anywhere" (Interview, 3-5-2013). Kristen also noticed that for some students, the ESL program is used as a reason to leave the house and talk with other adults, people who would otherwise be very sheltered. These observations are very similar to those discussed in Chapter two.
One more aspect that is apparent in both the ESL classes and the conversation circles is a gender differentiation in the experiences (Interview, 3-5-2013). As just mentioned, the women attending the ESL classes still continued to meet their household responsibilities. Even if these women are educated and had employment experience before the migration took place, the settlement period for women tends to take longer than it does for men, since the well-being of others in the household tends to be prioritized. Donkor explains that "[W]hile their children pick up English very fast in schools and spouses establish a network of friends beyond the ethnic community, women usually interact in their own small groups. If they live away from ethnic enclaves, immigrant women's isolation and dependence on other members of the family can be frustrating" (2004:49). Those who are mothers, are all concerned with the settlement process of their children. The Westmount conversation circles had two large Iraqi families attending. Both families arrived in Canada as refugees, and were in the early stages of the settlement process (Conversation circles, 5-22-2012). The mother of the first family still has younger children and she wants to be there for them as much as possible. She wants to make their lunches, and be there when they get home. She wants to help them with their homework and learn English with them. This mother is giving up her own career, her identity as a successful doctor and business owner, to be a full-time mother. Her goal since her arrival in Canada is to improve the future of her children, making their needs her own. The choices this mother made placed the future of her children as a priority above all else. The mother of the second family felt the same way. While her children are already older, she wants to be there for them and support their dreams.
During the conversation circle this mother loved talking about how talented her children are and what great things they could accomplish. Later on in the conversation, one of the children turned it around by pointing out that their mother was very creative herself, and that she used to produce her own clothing as a store owner (Conversation circles, 5-22-2012).

A similar experience of women prioritizing their children while setting aside their own lives is that of Ana, the poet mentioned earlier. Ana fled China ten years ago with her husband and daughter (Interview, 10-23-2012). Her own life was in danger due to political circumstances. Even though living in Canada would mean a safer environment for herself, she still felt guilt for taking her daughter away from what she knew. "I wanted to change the future of my daughter. I told her after three months that she could go back to China if she wanted. She said, you can if you want but I am staying here. She was only ten!" (Interview, 10-23-2012). Knowing that her daughter wanted to be in Canada comforted Ana and she knew she made the right decision. Within a short period of time, her daughter was settled, while Ana herself is still trying to find her new identity, and a community that she can feel part of. The children were all enrolled in schools, learning and improving English and becoming familiar with the new environment. On the other hand, the women themselves chose to remain at home and provide a welcoming environment for their children once they returned from school. Starting at a new school is always a big change, but especially when living in a different country. To counteract the unfamiliarity in the public space, the two Iraqi women, Ana and other mothers who participated in this research made sure to create a private space where things remained
relatively the same as before the migration. Ethnic foods are being prepared, native languages are spoken, rituals remain the same, and in the case of the migrants who had a chance to prepare for the migration, familiar items such as furniture and images are placed throughout the new home. This puts the settlement process of the adult women on hold, since they spend most of their time within this private sphere. It can be comforting to be surrounded by the familiar, but in the case of language learning, it can become challenging to miss the same exposure to a new language as the other members of the household. The children learn to speak English at their schools, while employed spouses communicate in English at work. There is a conscience choice being made here of what the priorities should be. However, it is these same women who end up attending the conversation circles to find new ways of learning and improving English to connect to a network outside of the private sphere, as discussed in the last chapter. Olivia, for example, encourages her two daughters to speak Russian at home. "The younger one tries to speak English to me but I said no way. The older one helps me with that" (Interview, 10-10-2012). The switching of languages between public and private space is more than creating a familiar environment. Olivia's youngest daughter was only three when they moved and prefers speaking English. However, Olivia believes it is important to preserve the native language, and together they attend Russian class every Saturday (Interview, 10-10-2012).

Confidence

In some instances I had the opportunity to interview the spouse of a participant personally or the participant discussed the experiences of his or her spouse during the
one-on-one interview. These spouses chose not to attend either ESL courses or the conversation circles. It was during the conversation on language and the comparison between spouses that a distinct gender differences became clear in the experiences, which also helped explain the gendered pattern found at some of the conversation circles. One major aspect that stood out in regards to language learning was the level of confidence among the migrants. As a primary applicant, a certain level of English is expected in order to be able to function in the workforce. These men found employment early upon arrival or already had a job commitment before they arrived in Canada. They had no need to attend either ESL courses or the conversation circles; they only had to write a language test to demonstrate their knowledge. The process confirmed for these men that they knew English well enough. The women who migrated with these men did not gain the same type of reassurance during the migration process. Some of the women did not have the opportunity to study English and were not required to have a certain level of competency, while others did study English throughout their schooling but still questioned their skills once they arrived in Canada. This observation should not be generalized to all couples, but there was a distinct pattern among the sample of participants within my research.

Of the seventeen migrant research participants who agreed to an interview, ten had the opportunity to learn English before moving to Canada. Six of those ten however still chose to attend the conversation circles to practice and improve their English. They all attended ESL courses at the same time. Even though the participants had previous knowledge of the English language, they still felt the need to improve these skills before searching for employment. The story that stood out to me the most was that of Miya who
came to Canada less than a year ago to live with her Canadian husband whom she met while attending Fanshawe College to improve her English (Interview, 8-16-2012). Before coming to Canada for the first time, Miya attended university in Japan, where she earned a Bachelor degree in English. She told me that in Japan, they start teaching English in grade seven. When I asked about her level of English, Miya responded "In Japan I feel more confident in my English but not here" (Interview, 8-16-2012). In Japan, her English degree is significant and sets her apart from other Japanese, but in Canada, everyone speaks English, and it is almost impossible for a Japanese migrant to compete with Canadians for a position even though both have an English degree. Since Miya arrived through the family migrant stream, with her husband as a sponsor, her English level was never evaluated throughout the migration process. This means that the Canadian government never confirmed and acknowledged her English language skills. During the conversation circles, Miya is one of the quieter participants which is partly because of her shy personality but also because she feels insecure about her English. She told me, "In the future I am thinking of getting a part-time job. I am both nervous and exciting to search for a job. But the biggest matter is my English skills. I know I am ready when I can understand jokes and understand people on the telephone" (Interview, 8-16-2012).

Between July and August, there was a break in the meetings of the conversation circles. Once September came around and children were back at school, a new season of circles began. The majority of the participants who attended in September were new to the conversation circles, and only a few returned from the previous season. During this time I attended some of the same circles as the previous season, but I also attended a few
new locations in order to have a comparison. The Sherwood location was very popular before the summer break. At this location there was a large number of participants and volunteers. There was also a balance between men and women, and the people came from a variety of backgrounds (Conversation circles, 5-17-2012 to 6-21-2012). By September, these dynamics had changed completely. The Sherwood location had only women attending the circle and what was noticeable about the attendants was that many immigrated at least 10-13 years ago, and chose to spend time improving their English now (Conversation circles, 9-20-2012 to 10-25-2012). Last season, it was mostly migrants attending the circles who had been in the country for less than a year. These new participants were mostly Eastern-European women who had reached the age of retirement. This pattern also appeared at Cherryhill mall which was a new location for my research ( Conversation circle, 9-18-2012 to 10-9-2012). I was not surprised about the number of women attending the circles, because this was a pattern that became clear before the summer break. I did want to know however, how it was possible for people to live in a country for a long period of time without knowing either of Canada's official language. Many of these women knew basic English but were hesitant to speak the language and were full of questions.

While I usually avoided asking specific questions for my research during the conversation circles, I had to know the reasons behind this pattern of women learning English at a later age and after having been in the country for over ten years. The main response to my questioning was that they simply never needed to become fluent in the English language since they were part of an ethnic community. The two women from
Poland for example, always spoke Polish to their spouses and children. There is a large established Polish community in London of which they were part. This meant that all their friends were Polish as well. Beyond that, the women were employed within the same community. One of them worked at a Polish butcher shop, where the majority of customers spoke Polish. Now that they were retired, they chose to attend the conversation circle together and work on improving their English. While it was often tempting for them to quietly whisper to one another in Polish, the two were very interested in learning everyday conversational English. After all these years, they chose to step out of their comfort level and the environment they are familiar with, in order to learn something new. Now they had the time and interest since they were retired (Conversation circles, 9-20-2012 to 10-25-2012). Learning and improving English would become a social aspect of their lives and an interest instead of a necessity.

Many participants in my research believed that a network of people who speak English is required in order to find the type of employment that requires their skills and catches their interests. However, it was mostly the women I talked with who struggled to make new connections outside of their migrant network which consisted of people with a shared language. These women were unemployed and uncertain about what their next step would be. This situation creates a cycle that is hard to break, since language is used as a resource to access information leading to new network opportunities and the best way to learn and improve language is by participating in a network of which the members are fluent. Laura, a participant in my research who migrated from Venezuela is one of these women who is stuck in a cycle, wanting to expand her network and improve her
English. Even though she is taking ESL classes and attending the conversation circles, she feels insecure about her language skills and is considering work in a field where Spanish is required instead of English (Interview, 8-28-2012).

There was a high level of insecurity about the English skills of individuals participating in this research. Because of this, I chose not to record any interview since the participants were uncomfortable with the idea of having their voice recorded while speaking a language that they are still learning. However, the quotes in this research paper show that the migrants did speak English, at least to the point that they were capable of sharing their experiences with me. My favourite quote was from Jason who told me: "I am still not confident in my English. I can do everyday activities and even hold a presentation but when I have a personal conversation that involves slang or cultural expressions like "have a good one", or when they ask "wet enough for you?", I struggle" (Interview, 7-18-2012). He looked very surprised with himself when I pointed out the fact that we have been having a personal conversation for the past forty minutes and that he was doing great. In other words, many times the migrants underestimate their own abilities and they have set very high standards for themselves regarding their English proficiency. This pattern was especially common among the women attending the conversation circles, which led them to attend the program in the first place. At the Sherwood conversation circle for example, there is a wide range of English levels among the participants. One day, we went over a list of words related to employment. There were two different work sheets with different vocabulary (easy and more advanced) since the volunteers wanted to make sure that all participants could understand the activity but
still be challenged a bit. This activity showed that many participants were not confident in their English, since participants were reluctant to join the more advanced group. Some of them have been attending the circle for a while and their level of English appears to be good or has at least improved over time. However, the participants themselves did not seem to share this belief, and lacked the confidence (Conversation circle, 06-07-2012).

**Conclusion**

While this chapter focuses on language, the examples show that all different aspects surrounding the settlement period are interconnected. The official languages carry a high value within the Canadian context and newcomers are expected to not only comprehend, but become adequate users of either English or French in order to be considered part of the mainstream society. The goals of the individual migrants tend to be similar, since all the participants in this research were actively learning English and searching for opportunities to improve their language skills. This however, came with a pressure to succeed in a short period of time and the belief that settlement is not possible until language proficiency is achieved. Language learning is not equally attainable for all newcomers. My research showed that migrants arriving as dependents, struggled the most with the language learning process during the settlement period. This created a gender pattern, since women are more likely to be a dependent during the migration than men. Boyd explains that "[B]ecause they are labeled as dependents, many immigrant women experience extreme difficulty in gaining access to government-sponsored and -subsidized language training programs. As a result, these women are likely to share some of the difficulties of isolation and increased dependency on husbands "(1986:45). This has led
to a higher attendance of women at the conversation circles, which are available to all permanent newcomers in the London area and are taking place daily at different locations throughout the city. Since the conversation circles take place at different library locations for only an hour and a half, mothers can easily bring their children who either join them in the room or entertain themselves in the library. The downside of the conversation circles is that the lack of structure also means that a participant never knows when he or she has reached their language goal if this means they need confirmation by native-speakers. It is up to the individual to move beyond the language learning process, and start participating within the larger Canadian society, while at the same time the native-speakers should acknowledge the efforts put into language learning and assist instead of judge non-native speakers during their learning process.
Conclusion

I would never tell anyone to come, because it has to be your own decision and it is not easy to say goodbye to everyone. If we had the money during the first year here, we would have went back...It is very, very hard at the beginning. It is devastating emotionally, but now I am over all of that - Maida (Interview, 11-14-2012)

Throughout the whole migration process, from being a prospective migrant, to arriving as a newcomer, and even throughout the long-term settlement that follows, the experiences and identity of migrants are diverse, multiple and influenced through different perspectives. The way migrants perceive themselves has been the main focus of my research, which has been expressed through different stories shared by migrants living in London Ontario. At the same time, the everyday interactions with the different levels of government and the native-born population play a big part throughout the process, since each migrant is working within the limits of a larger environment, filled with power differentiations and a wide range of expectations and experiences. Migrant experiences cannot be isolated from their larger surroundings since others have an impact.

Canadian immigration policy determines who gets to enter Canada and under what circumstances. Both government regulations and the attitudes of native-born Canadians towards migrants contribute to the Canadian construction of the “ideal” migrant. This “ideal” person speaks English or French fluently, becomes employed immediately upon arrival and embodies all the characteristics of a perfect citizen. However, my research shows that newcomers do not always choose to fit into the "ideal" model. The story of Jason and Julia in Chapter one is an example of newcomers who did
not simply adjust to the expectations, but instead made choices upon arrival in Canada that led them to new opportunities.

Throughout my thesis, I focused on different forms of networks. Networks aid during the migration process, since previous migrants provide assistance to applicants and newcomers. However, I argue that all migrants in my research have reached a point where they have outgrown their initial migrant network. This led them to join programs like the conversation circles as part of an attempt to move away from the dependency they experienced in their initial network. Networks are fluid and adjust to the needs of individual migrants. The Canadian federal government plays a role by providing funding to settlement services, but, as I have argued, governments always have their own interests in mind, shaping the types of services provided.

Settlement is more successful when Canadian born citizens are involved. The involvement will benefit both the native-born population and the migrants: The Canadian born population can aid newcomers in the expansion of a social network and they have the power to create a feeling of belonging among the newcomers. It will also benefit those born in Canada, especially in areas where there is a low migrant population, since negative perceptions towards migrants are generally based on a lack of knowledge and understanding. The conversation circles program is one that connects newcomers with the Canadian-born population and provides a space where interaction can take place. I would like to see high schools promoting programs such as the conversation circles as a volunteer opportunity for Canadian-born students. Social interaction is a form of learning, and can prove that stereotypes of migrants should be questioned.
Promoting social interaction between Canadian-born citizens and migrants will also have an impact on language ideology. The main focus of the conversation circles is language learning. The conversation circles are set up to learn and improve conversational English, which is one of the everyday languages used by Canadians and includes slang, idioms and other expressions. It is also a way to show that language proficiency is not necessarily a reflection of knowledge, a common misconception. Language usage influences the way migrants are perceived and categorized. It is also a resource, a symbol, and a medium for communication (Esser 2006), and arguably the most important factor in a newcomer’s adjustment to Canada. Therefore, government sponsored language programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and the conversation circles play a crucial role.

Going into my fieldwork, I thought of the conversation circles as a tool to meet migrants in the London area. However, as I continued to attend the different circles, it became clear that this program is so much more. When I looked at the migrant selection process and the different streams in which migrants were placed, a pattern appeared, showing that dependent migrants were more likely to attended the conversation circles, while primary applicants in the skilled migrant category rarely used the program. When I thought of the conversation circles as a type of network I could explain why the dependent newcomers chose to attend them. The circles allow newcomers to gain independence, especially when individuals have limited opportunities to become familiar with life in Canada and the Canadian population. However, language learning continued
to be the main focus of the conversation circles, and the main motivation for migrants to attend the program.

All three chapters of this thesis revolve around the expectations and experiences of both migrants and the Canadian-born population, which are conditioned to some extent by government attitudes. I argue early in the thesis that the categorizations created by the different migrant streams during the selection process, have an impact on the expectations and experiences that follow. Primary applicants in the skilled migrant category are the most desired and the views expressed in the media, and government policies and programs are geared towards this group of migrants. This sets the experiences of this group of migrants apart from all the other categories. I found in my research that men continue to be these primary skilled applicants, which has led to a gendered experience. The participants at the conversation circles are mostly women. Men who do attend the conversation circles are more likely to have arrived in Canada under the family migration or refugee stream. Primary skilled applicants have better access to settlement services, employment opportunities, and social networks. The women who arrived in Canada as dependents, as well as family class migrants and refugees, lack acknowledgement by the government, and are less desired by the Canadian-born population. My data shows that these migrants fall behind in the settlement process, and face more obstacles than the primary applicant. The conversation circles are used by the migrants in my research to gain some independence and confidence. It is their way to reach out towards the Canadian-born population and show their interest in settling in, making Canada their new home. The migrants attending the conversation circles tended
to have a high education, and their level of English allowed them to participate in this research without any difficulties. But many underestimated their own skills, and had to remind themselves that their knowledge and experience from before the migration still had value. Language proficiency does not reflect who someone is as a person, but it can prevent a person from expressing their knowledge and having it recognized.

Can a Migrant Become Canadian?

The line between being a migrant and becoming a Canadian is blurred and varies based on different circumstances and perspectives. While Maida and her family struggled at first, after having been in Canada for fifteen years she has made it her home, as expressed in the quote that opens this chapter. When I asked Maida if she felt Canadian, she responded "Yes, especially after the last time I went back to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Because of all the experiences I had here, being in the hospital with cancer but also my son’s success in school. Here I apparently got the best doctor, without the connections or having to pay extra. Maybe this is the reason why we came here" (Interview 11-14-2012). What about migrants who have not been in Canada as long as Maida? Will Miguel, for example, ever be considered a Canadian by his co-workers, or will he always remain a migrant in their eyes? And how will Miguel see himself in time? Will he be Colombian, Canadian or both? When discussing his experience in Canada he told me that "Our feelings depend on the day. Sometimes I am really discouraged. I have a job that many Canadians would want and many Canadians apply for this position. I make eighteen dollars while some make only twelve. In the colleague's perspective it is unfair. You feel lucky sometimes to have a job that others want. But here I am waiting for a chance to
show my skills, a job interview that allows me to show my knowledge" (Interview, 8-28-2012). In other words, Miguel's future is full of insecurity about where he will be and what he will do. What Maida and Miguel have in common is that both believe that their personal struggles during the settlement process will eventually lead to a better future. Maida and Miguel arrived as refugees, and while missing the people and place they left behind, they both told me that they are happy their children are growing up in Canada.

Going through the application process to gain Canadian citizenship is like an initiation, a process of becoming someone new. The Canadian passport becomes evidence of this transformation, the new identity that the individual has taken on. It is a symbol of the Canadian government’s acknowledgement of a person as Canadian and their own perception of identity. However, having a passport does not affect the way the Canadian-born population sees these individuals. The migrants with whom I have spoken and who have been in the country for a longer period of time, have put a lot of thought into their initial choice to apply for Canadian citizenship. What is it that they gain and what is it that they are required to give up? Will this little piece of paper really make a difference? While the small blue book seems unimpressive, it is a form of identification.

When Lorena and Emanuel crossed the border from the United States together, Lorena was taken inside the building where she faced a lot of questions. Emanuel joined her inside but was not questioned because of his Canadian passport (Interview, 7-11-2012). Of the two, Emanuel was the one who did not know any English but who had the right passport. Lorena had to provide all the information to the border security officers in English and was treated as an outsider while Emanuel was considered a Canadian. In this
case, the citizenship on the passport was the only identity that mattered (Interview, 7-11-2012). While there have been days when Lorena questioned if migrating to Canada was the right thing to do, the experience at the border influenced her decision to at least remain here long enough to get Canadian citizenship, which would allow an easier process of moving back and forth between two countries (Interview, 7-11-2012). And what about Sandra who struggled with her identity upon arrival in Canada from England? She currently has a dual citizenship, since England allows migrants to keep their British identity when taking on a second citizenship. The option of having two citizenships had an influence on her choice more so than the need to become Canadian. Her husband on the other hand really wanted to take on a Canadian identity but had to give up his Indian identity in return. Talking about her husband's experience, she said: "It is a source of identity and a security blanket. It is hard to go back to your country of origin and being treated as almost an alien" (Interview, 7-6-2012).

In my research, the newcomers wanted to become the "ideal" migrant by learning and improving their English, and finding employment while becoming part of a network that contained native-born Canadians. By attending the conversation circles, an interest in accomplishing these goals was shown and the first steps of the process were taken by the newcomers. Some migrants will always feel and be perceived as migrants, no matter how long they have been in Canada for. For others, the settlement process is shorter. No matter what, I would argue that a migrant will never stop being a migrant. One identity never replaces another; instead, the meaning of the multiple identities are negotiated and influenced throughout one's life based on the experiences a person goes through. I
consider myself to be both Dutch and Canadian. I was born in the Netherlands, but have been a Canadian citizen for the past two years. When I am in Canada I am considered a migrant, while back in the Netherlands I do not fully fit in either. Both identities are part of who I am as a person, and neither aspect will replace the other, although more identities will likely be added on in the future.

The participants in this research, especially those who have been in the country for a shorter period of time, were insecure about their future and where they stood as persons within the larger society. I therefore highly encourage all Canadian-born and long-term migrants to reach out. Do not expect migrants to simply adjust, but take any opportunity to interact with a person of a different cultural background and see it as a learning opportunity.

The conversation circles are an ideal space, where efforts are made to create a multicultural environment. Outside of this controlled environment migrants will never fit in, no matter how hard they try, unless the receiving society is willing to accept the newcomers. It is possible to change the minds and attitudes of others, but this is a time-consuming and slow process. However, when the people in the networks of individual newcomers have a positive attitude towards migration and a willingness to adapt to one another, it is possible for migrants to become part of the larger Canadian society. This is the main point that stood out the most when talking to the migrants in the interviews. Cristian from Colombia for example told me that "sometimes people try to find an excuse. But I think it is an attitude. When people see your attitude, they also feel it. There are a lot of opportunities here and you have to be determined and persistent" (Interview
Having arrived as a refugee eight years ago, leaving everything behind and having to start at the bottom again upon arrival in Canada, Cristian said "Canada is my country now. I have no problems. I can go everywhere and can do everything. I am working as a engineering project manager. I think I have reached my goal. It is not like in my country, where I had a higher position. But for the time it is good, good enough. I do not want to be competitive with everybody. For my age, I feel good" (Interview, 10-10-2012). It was very inspiring to talk to Cristian and ideally every person is capable of achieving their hopes and dreams. However, it takes time to feel a sense of belonging, and some migrants will reach this point sooner than others. But it is only possible when being surrounded by people who want you to belong.

**Where Do We Go from Here?**

Wilson-Forsberg came to a similar conclusion in her work and wrote that:

Receiving communities play a critical role in determining whether immigrants will become full participating members of society or whether they will remain on the margins, where they are unable to share the society's resources or contribute to community development to the fullest extent possible. Cultivating relationships with local residents may assist in anchoring immigrants in the new community and forming their identity as part of that community (2012:7).

I strongly believe that both politicians and the general native-born population must look beyond the economic contributions of migrants, by expanding settlement services to other needs and having individuals take an active role during the settlement process beyond employment preparation. If given the opportunity to expand on what I have learned in this research, I would follow Omidvar and Richmond’s advice and conduct fieldwork among the Canadian-born population in London Ontario, through participant-observation.
in public spaces "such as parks and libraries; mixed income neighbourhoods and housing; and integrated schools and classrooms" (Omidvar and Richmond 2003:xii), to observe the social interactions outside of a controlled environment like the conversation circles. Are the social spaces used to connect or to create boundaries? This would be a time-consuming and long-term project, but it would expand on this idea of belonging, and the power differentiations that have an impact on the feelings of individuals, both migrants and the Canadian-born population. There needs to be a better understanding of such social interactions if Canadians are ever to meet the goals expressed in the Multiculturalism Act.
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Kenney, Jason

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### Appendix A: INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>7-6-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorena</td>
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<td>Nina</td>
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<td>Julia</td>
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<td>Jason</td>
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<td>Miya</td>
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<td>Avery</td>
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<td>Maida</td>
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<td>Kristen</td>
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Appendix B: CONVERSATION CIRCLES

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<th>Location</th>
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<td>Westmount</td>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>(5-15-2012 to 6-19-2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crouch</td>
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<td>(5-16-2012 to 6-20-2012) and (9-19-2012 to 10-3-2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sherwood</td>
<td>Thursdays</td>
<td>(5-17-2012 to 6-21-2012) and (9-20-2012 to 10-25-2012)</td>
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<td>Central</td>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>(5-28-2012 to 6-25-2012) and (9-17-2012 to 10-29-2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherryhill</td>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>(9-18-2012 to 10-9-2012)</td>
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<td>Beacock</td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
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<td>Masonville</td>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>(10-16-2012 to 10-30-2012)</td>
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FOCUS GROUP (8-9-2012)
Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sharla Latkin
Review Number: 18894S
Review Level: Full Board
Approved Local Adult Participants: 40
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: Finally Arrived, but now what? Expectations and Experiences of the Migration Process
Department & Institution: Social Science, Anthropology, University of Western Ontario
Sponsor: Ontario Graduate Scholarship

Ethics Approval Date: April 05, 2012 Expiry Date: August 31, 2013

Documents Reviewed & Approved and Documents Received for Information:

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<tr>
<td>Letter of Information &amp; Consent</td>
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<td>2012/03/27</td>
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This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000041.

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)  Janice Sutherland (johntel@uwo.ca)

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

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Office of Research Ethics
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PH: 519-661-3036 • F: 519-850-2466 • ethics@uwo.ca • www.uwo.ca/research/ethics
CV

NAME:
Lisa Veldman

CITIZENSHIP:
Canadian Citizen since August 2011
Previously Dutch citizen

EDUCATION:
Graduate studies:
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Completion June 2013
University of Western Ontario, London Ontario
Masters in Anthropology
Collaborative Graduate program Migration and Ethnic Relations

Undergraduate:
Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree Sep 2008- April 2011
University of Western Ontario, London Ontario
Anthropology Honours Specialization
Spanish Studies Minor

Undergraduate Student Sep 2007- May 2008
University of Nipissing
General Social Science

STATUS/POSITION:
Graduate student (MA student)
Teaching Assistant (TA)

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Socio-Cultural Anthropology, specifically:
- Migration and Ethnic relations - Identity
- displacement/ resettlement - Language
- gender studies - Space & Place

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:
Teaching Assistant Jan 2013-Apr 2013
Anthropology 1025G Sociocultural anthropology
Introduction course

Teaching Assistant Jan 2012- Apr 2012
Anthropology 2282G Anthropology of Migration
Upper level course
Included giving a lecture on gender and migration

Teaching Assistant Sep 2011-Dec 2011
Anthropology 1020E Many Ways of Being Human
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Presenter at Migration and Ethnic Relations Symposium April 2013
Symposium held by the interdisciplinary program to share migration-related research
Part of a panel on Canada & Community

Teaching Mentor Program January 2013 - March 2013
A component of the Certificate in University teaching and learning
The opportunity to present and attend lectures by grad students
Provide and receive feedback on presentation style

Future Professor Workshop Series November 2012
Formative Evaluations to Assess Student Understanding
Preparing Your Teaching Dossier
Using Social Media Effectively in the University Classroom

Future Professor Workshop Series October 2012
Making the Most out of Office Hours
Writing Effective Learning Outcomes
Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement
Strategies for Marking Essays

Fieldwork (Research Assistant) Sep 2012 - Dec 2012
Conducted fieldwork for Dr. Pennesi, from the Linguistic Anthropology department at Western University.
Includes semi-structured interviews on working with or having a non-English name

Fieldwork (Thesis) May 2012 - Nov 2012
Conducted fieldwork for my own research on immigration and employment.
Includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews.
About the personal experiences of migrants in London Ontario

Teaching Assistant Training Program June 2012
3 day course on being an effective teaching assistant.
Includes multiple seminars and a lecture component.
Personal teaching style is analyzed, recorded and improved

Completion of Professionalization Course Sep 2011-Dec 2011
Attended a course developed around professionalization.
Learned how to create a CV, budget outline, conflict resolutions, abstracts, outreach lessons, teaching philosophy.

Graduate Student Conference on Teaching (TA day) September 2011
Attended orientation on being a TA at University.
Daylong event with guest speakers and 3 seminars
**Student -2- Business Networking Conference**  
Connecting University students with London businesses  
January 2011

**Put It Into Practice Conference**  
Applying academic knowledge to the local and global community  
Working with non-for-profit organizations  
November 2010

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:**

**Life as a Refugee (LaaR) board member**  
Annual event hosted by the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC)  
Brings awareness to the London community about refugees  
Focuses on issues/obstacles they face, but also the role of the community to improve their well-being  
Some of my responsibilities are attend meetings, organize panel, arrange keynote speaker, select award winners  
September 2012-June 2013

**Conversation Circles Volunteer**  
London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC)  
The centre helps recently landed immigrants and refugees during settlement in London Ontario.  
The conversation circles are an informal way to improve English conversation skills  
As a volunteer I guided the conversation, helped newcomers in their learning process.  
May 2012-Dec 2012

**Host Program Volunteer**  
London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC)  
The Host program matches newcomers with volunteers.  
I helped individuals with their English, translation, showing the area, answer any questions  
Sep 2010- Present