

**Reclaiming Voice: Challenges and Opportunities
for
Immigrant Women Learning English**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many immigrants, both men and women, arrive in Canada fluent in English because this is one of the major factors in the point system upon which acceptance to Canada is based. Nevertheless, many adult women who arrive as dependants or as sponsored family members not only do not speak English upon arrival but also are still unable to speak it during subsequent census enumerations.

Based on data from Citizenship and Immigration's (CIC) Landing of Immigrants Data System, showing language proficiency at point of immigration, and data from Statistics Canada on language proficiency at time of census enumerations, we chose four groups for our case study, namely Mandarin-speaking, Cantonese-speaking, Urdu-speaking, and Punjabi-speaking women in the Greater Toronto Area, most of whom came from Toronto. There were four principal methods of data collection: a review of the literature, focus groups of Key Informants (KIs) (totaling 28 participants), individual interviews with 24 women now fluent in English, and focus groups with 30 women not yet able to speak English.

In our research, we were interested in finding out:

1. Who are the immigrant women who are not proficient in English, and what are the obstacles or challenges they face in acquiring this proficiency?
2. Is there any program or group or individual with a successful way to surmount any of these challenges in a reasonable amount of time? If so, how can these methods best be disseminated and replicated?

Our research uncovered a number of challenges and obstacles which led to recommendations regarding best practices in outreach and pedagogy. Our interviews revealed needs that could be classified as being common to male and female immigrants, namely lack of economic resources, lack of recognition of credentials and experience, racism, accent devaluation, and issues with the processes of assessment, placement, and promotion in classes of English as an additional language. The specific needs of

immigrant women, the focus of this study, were also identified: isolation and lack of information, family obligations, and cultural barriers, including patriarchal practices and the expectation of women that they carry the main responsibility for the cultural socialization of children. English language programming that uses one model of learning simply does not meet the needs of very many immigrant women. We found the obstacles or challenges they face in acquiring proficiency in English to be complex and varied, and even differing one from another. We found the programs that were successful in addressing some of those needs to be the ones that were the most flexible, the most apt to listen carefully to women, and the most likely to adapt to those needs. Not all needs were met, however, and to meet them will require appropriate funding as well as sensitive planning for creative outreach and flexible programming. Our sense is that such adaptations will be cost effective and most productive in terms of supporting the successful and full participation of new Canadians.

To make the work from our research as accessible as possible, a website dedicated to the topic was created at Ryerson University, giving scholars, service providers, policy makers, and the general public access to the most relevant results of our findings, the final research report, publications from the research, and the bibliography. This web site could potentially be used as a supporting platform for courses and projects relating to the acquisition of proficiency in English.

INTRODUCTION

The research sought insight into the (language) learning challenges facing adult immigrant women who arrive in Canada whose fluency in English is limited. Although, as expected, many immigrants arrive fluent in English because this is one of the major factors in the point system upon which acceptance to Canada is based, many adult women who arrive as dependants or as sponsored family members not only do not speak English upon arrival but also are unable to speak it during subsequent census enumerations.

Immigrant women are important contributors to the well-being of their families. We believe that when women's English language proficiency is limited, they cannot fully access and benefit from the available services and resources to address their families' needs in the fundamental areas of health, education, and financial security. Language proficiency is also important for the mental health and well-being of the women themselves. We also believe that from the perspective of Canadian policy, understanding and addressing the challenges women face in learning English might contribute towards being able to prevent the present considerable loss in human and financial capital. It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to discover the varied challenges facing women who want to learn English and to learn the ways best suited to overcoming those challenges.

Challenges related to the acquisition of language skills in Canada differ for immigrant males and females. Males who enter Canada are more likely to have done so as Principal Applicants on the point system that gave credit for their level of proficiency in an official language; hence they are much more likely to be proficient in English than women who enter as spouses or dependents of principal applicants, or as sponsored family class members, refugees, or other categories. In 2004, for example, among permanent residents in Canada, only 18% of principal applicants spoke neither English nor French, whereas 39% of family class immigrants, 50.5% of spouses and dependents, and 80.5% of refugees, most of whom are women, spoke neither English nor French. (CIC Facts and Figures 2004: Immigration Overview Sheet 28.) Thus Canada has a particular challenge

in designing language acquisition policies that are appropriate for women, as they are demonstrably less likely to arrive already proficient in English. Moreover, the numbers of such women are huge: the four groups we chose for this study, in the years between 1996 and 2005 had 71,842 women arriving in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) alone with competence in neither English nor French (see Appendix A). In that same period, female citizens in the CMA speaking neither English nor French from the sending countries of those four language groups (China, India, and Pakistan) totaled 75,089 (see Appendix B). These women will have lived here for a minimum of three years in order to have applied successfully for citizenship. This figure will obviously not include the thousands of women who had not yet taken out citizenship, in part, presumably, because of their lack of English, but will only include the thousands of earlier arrivals who are now citizens.

The research is important for many reasons. Immigrant women are significant sources of the well-being of their families: to the extent their language proficiency is limited, so too will their abilities be in contributing to meeting their families' needs in the fundamental areas of health, education, and financial security. With regard to education, in the Greater Toronto Area, school boards have had years of admitting young children who were born in Canada but who have no English when they arrive in school. In all cases, the cause seems to be that they were cared for by mothers or grandmothers, or in some cases other caregivers, who spoke only their first language. Thus the children are arriving in school in need of learning English as a second language, yet the funding formulas for such programs rarely includes sufficient funding for such children; rather the funding is calculated on a base that counts only foreign-born children. The children therefore enter a school system that has no appropriate language-learning program for them on the basis that their mothers "ought" to have taught them English.

For immigrants, factors such as the high cost of housing in the large metropolitan areas where they tend to settle, coupled with the difficulty they face in having their credentials recognized so that they can get appropriate jobs, means that immigrants usually need two incomes to make ends meet when they arrive. Language training for married women with

children thus becomes an unaffordable luxury. When their children are small, women are either at home caring for them or, if they are fortunate enough to find childcare they can afford, they are working, often in menial positions unrelated to their level of expertise. (See, for example, research on the de-skilling of female immigrants in Mojab [1999] and Man [2004], and on the devaluing of immigrant skills in general in Finnie, Alboim and Meng [2005].) When the last of their children has finally entered school, women may not be eligible for language instruction for newcomers because they have been in the country too long or have already become citizens. Local classes offered by school boards outside of those that are government-sponsored are not accessible for many because they are offered at night when the women must be cooking, tending to their children, and otherwise preparing for the following day's work.

Language proficiency is also important for the mental and physical health and well-being of the women themselves. Yakushko and Chronister (2005) argue that stress is a significant factor in preventing some entrants from integration. Refugees especially may be in a poor state of physical and mental health. Such individuals may well have faced considerable physical and mental trauma in escaping persecution in their home nations, and this can have a considerable complicating effect in terms of successful resettlement (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). Evidently it is in the earlier stages, according to Kahn and Watson (2005), that the danger is highest, thereby highlighting the need for appropriate ESL instruction shortly after arrival. As women tend to be caregivers to ill family members, it is also imperative that they learn English in order to deal with medical professionals effectively.

This is an extremely urgent matter, as immigrants do not seem to find the opportunities in Canada that they were hoping for. Most immigrants report underemployment and a loss of socio-economic status once in the country (Duff *et al*, 2002; Tyyskä, 2007). Both immigrants and analysts attribute this to systemic xenophobia and racism in Canadian society. Many immigrants report that they were misled by officials at Canadian missions in their home countries as to the local employment prospects for immigrants. These

immigrants are now likely to believe that they are only required in Canada to do the menial work that no one else wants to do (Kahn & Watson, 2005).

Duff *et al.* (2002) noted four core issues with respect to immigrant women in Canada and their integration into the workforce and host society: finding gainful employment; obtaining access to available training programs; acquiring vocational English as a Second Language (ESL) for the workplace; and resolving immigrant settlement and identity issues.

The wage experience for immigrant females echoes that of males in principle, although by and large, immigrant females earn less than immigrant males (Warman & Worswick, 2004). Aydemir and Skuterud (2005) found that the income decline was similar for both male and female immigrants who worked full-time. Notably, however, the returns on foreign work experience for women were similar regardless of point of origin or time of landing, while those for Western European men were better than those for men from South Asia. Warman and Worswick (2004) found that although immigrant women in the biggest Canadian cities (Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) demonstrated higher incomes, these incomes have to be considered relative to the overall deterioration of male and female immigrant incomes in Canada. Across all levels, it appears that female immigrants' earnings mirror males; a slightly less pronounced recent upswing in immigrant earnings for females than males was noted.

Agnew (1998) proposes that immigrant women need to acquire ESL not only for knowledge of available social and health programs, but also for knowledge of their legal rights. Agnew's work centred specifically on the plight of battered immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area. While obviously not all immigrant women are going to be victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), there is some evidence to suggest that the prevalence of IPV is greater for immigrant women who have lived in Canada longer than for more recent arrivals (Hyman *et al.*, 2006). If this is indeed the case, then developing ESL programs that at least touch on some legal rights is important.

From the perspective of Canadian policy, understanding and addressing the challenges women face in learning English might contribute towards preventing the present considerable loss in human and financial capital.

METHODS

To be presented in this section are the research questions addressed, explanations of the population selected, the four phases of this project, the involvement of community partners, and the limitations of the methods. It was assumed that all women entering the country as immigrants without fluency in English would enter one of the many Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes, which are offered at several levels and in many locations. These classes are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, are free to all who are not yet citizens and who have been in the country less than five years. In addition, bus tickets are provided to enable easy access to the classes, and free child care is provided for women whose children are younger than school age.

Research Questions

In our research, we were interested in finding out:

1. Who are the immigrant women who are not proficient in English, and what are the obstacles or challenges they face in acquiring this proficiency?
2. Is there any program or group or individual with a successful way to surmount any of these challenges in a reasonable amount of time? If so, how can these methods best be disseminated and replicated?

Population

The population selected for the study included women from four different language groups who had arrived in Toronto within the past ten years. The reason for the time frame was that we wanted to be able to assess the fairly recent, as opposed to historical, support mechanisms, programs, and difficulties women encounter in their attempts to become proficient in English. The limitation to four language groups was based on what the funding would support. Data in both Appendix A and Appendix B will indicate that

there are many more groups who should be included in similar studies, given their numbers or percentages of non-English-speaking adult women, and given the fact that there are needs specific to each group (see *Findings*, below).

In order to identify the 4 target groups based on their need for acquiring proficiency in English, the data from Citizenship and Immigration's (CIC) Landing of Immigrants Data System (Appendix A), showing language proficiency at point of immigration, were compared with the data from Statistics Canada on the language proficiency of each of those groups from their country of origin at the time of census enumeration (Appendix B) five and ten years later. Looking at the data on all adult women by language groups (as represented by country of origin) gave us four language groups in which women were still not proficient in English at least five years after their arrival. The four largest language groups by country of origin arriving in the CMA also contributed the four largest groups of non-English speaking women: between 1996 and 2005, they totaled almost 72,000 women in the CMA alone (and, it may be noted, they also did not speak French). These groups, based on their first language in their countries of origin, were the Mandarin-speaking, Cantonese-speaking, Urdu-speaking, and Punjabi-speaking women. Some other groups had higher percentages of people speaking neither official language, but their numbers were smaller. One other group, women Tagalog speakers from the Philippines, were more numerous than the Punjabi speakers but they included many more who were fluent in English at time of arrival and hence were not included in the 4 groups to be targeted.

Study design

Once the population was identified as described above, we used four methods of data collection including a review of the literature, focus groups of Key Informants (KIs), individual interviews with women who are now fluent in English, and focus groups with women who are not yet able to speak English. The reasons for the three sets of study participants were: 1) the KIs would have a good overview of the situation of the women in each language group; 2) the now-fluent women from each language group would have a clear sense of the obstacles they had faced, and more importantly, how they had overcome them: what worked and what did not; and 3) the women who do not yet speak

English would have the best insights of all into the limitations of the efforts at outreach and programming, which have not worked in their cases, and why this may be so.

Phase 1

An extensive review of the literature was conducted. There is considerable material concerning the impact of immigration upon families and individuals. Much of what is available, however, touches on English language acquisition only incidentally, where language is linked to settlement issues such as looking for employment or accessing community services. Available literature comes from a wide range of academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and economics.

While some available material originates in Canada, we have also relied on international studies. There are some issues that are specific to Canada in this field, for example, those pertaining to government funding for English as a second language (ESL) classes offered by school boards, and federally funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs. There are also many other factors that are shared by immigrant women in English-speaking countries, generally related to women's culturally defined status and roles in families and in the wider society, both of which may limit their access to language classes.

The studies tend to be small scale and qualitative. Though they provide valuable insights into immigrant women's experiences with English language acquisition, there is a serious need for large-scale quantitative and qualitative studies, as the majority of the relevant quantitative material tends to centre more generally on the male or, occasionally, the female immigrant's locational choices and economic experience in the host country. Such material is crucial in providing an accurate context and has been used in this study to reinforce some of the issues and factors that arise from qualitative studies, but neither quantitative nor qualitative studies provide an adequate picture of language acquisition issues for immigrant women, much less for their resolution. Because of the paucity of literature, the search tended to be highly inclusive and multidisciplinary. Databases

searched included ERIC, PsycINFO, SocINDEX, and Social Science Abstracts. Key words included immigrant women, language learning, ESL, best practices, and LINC, each of which brought up large numbers of articles, most of which touched only tangentially on the concerns of this study.

Phase 2

A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was recruited from a variety of local community agencies who are well known to work with immigrant women. This group included representatives from South Asian Women's Centre; Working Skills Centre; Newcomer Women's Services, Toronto; Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Chapter; Urban Alliance on Race Relations; Strategic and Corporate Policy/Healthy City Office of the City of Toronto; Toronto Chinese Community Services Association; COSTI; and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. The CAC assisted in refining the key informant focus group protocol, and in identifying potential key informants. Through the contact information the CAC members and others in the community made available, prospective participants were contacted *via* email and phone calls. Ryerson University's Research Ethics Board reviewed the interview forms and the consent forms and approved them. All participants signed consent forms that were to be stored separately from data sheets, so that their anonymity was preserved. All were given the opportunity to stop the interviews at any point, but none indicated any problem with the interview; rather, many wanted to continue the discussion, either in a group or as individuals. The topic was clearly of considerable interest to them.

While time consuming, the combination of convenience sampling approaches (referral by CAC members) and snowball sampling approaches (referral of additional participants by first interviewees) resulted in a variety of front-line practitioners participating in the KI focus groups (*e.g.*, ESL teachers, settlement workers, counselors who worked with abused women, and so forth). Focus groups were hosted by the project's community

partner, COSTI¹, at one of their downtown Toronto locations. Given the huge range of languages and ethnic groups represented in their GTA clientele, they were a most obvious choice for our principal community partner. The research team chose to hold focus groups in the field, as opposed to a university setting, in order to 'be on the turf' of the participants. These groups were facilitated by co-investigators of the research team along with a research assistant (RA). Refreshments were provided. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed by the team and stored at Ryerson University.

Phase 3

Interviews with 24 women who had immigrated to Canada and learned English only after their arrival made up the study sample for this phase (Phase 3). The interview questions were drawn from the data from Phase 2 and the review of the scholarly literature. The participants were identified principally by the Key Informants and other service providers with whom the Principal Investigator had worked with in the past. All participants were interviewed in locations of their own choice. A few chose coffee shops in the downtown area of Toronto but most chose coffee shops or McDonalds' restaurants in suburban malls quite distant from the downtown core; this represents the distribution of immigrants arriving in the CMA during the period at issue, namely the years since 1996 when the study participants entered Canada: most have not been able to afford housing in the city core and increasingly they find housing on the outskirts, or in large high-rise complexes in the city. Two of the co-investigators conducted the interviews. Similar to the participants in Phase 2, Phase 3 participants consented in writing both to be interviewed and to be tape-recorded.

Phase 4

Women from the four language groups were sought who could serve as community researchers and facilitate in their first language the focus groups to be held with immigrant women who did not speak English. Both key informants from Phase 2, interviewees from Phase 3, and members of the research team and their contacts provided

¹ COSTI is the largest immigrant aid organization in Ontario, and one of the oldest. While its name was originally an acronym for its first purpose as an agency serving Italians (Centro Organizzativo Scuole Tecniche Italiane), COSTI is now no longer an acronym, but its official name.

names of potential study participants for Phase 4. Four women, one from each language group, agreed to take on this role of facilitator. They subsequently attended a two-hour training session at Ryerson University on focus group facilitation, where they were provided with the focus group protocol, based on data from the individual interviews.

Both before and after the training, the four facilitators recruited participants. One of the four focus groups was held in a private room in a local library, a second in the home of a "host" from the community who was neither a participant nor the facilitator but who signed a confidentiality agreement, a third in the "party room" of her apartment building where her participants lived, and a fourth, in a facilitator's apartment. Initially, the team sought to host these groups at COSTI, as was done with the key informant groups; however, independently of each other, two of the facilitators quickly made it clear to members of the research team that the women in their communities would not be comfortable taking public transit, given the language barrier. This reflected what had been reported in the previous individual interviews: places that are comfortable and familiar to these non-English speaking participants and that do not require them to take public transit would serve them best, and this received approval from the Ryerson Research Ethics Board. An RA was present at all four groups to offer technical and moral support to each of the four facilitators. The facilitators were given an honorarium for their time and energy and any costs incurred while putting together the focus groups, translating the consent forms and protocols, facilitating the groups, transcribing the tapes, and translating the interviews upon their completion.²

Involvement of Community-Based Partners in the Methodology

In the planning for the project's proposal, COSTI Education Director Robert Gazzola was most helpful not only in providing advice but also in offering the resources of COSTI whenever they were needed for meetings, etc. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) composed of people active and knowledgeable in the field of immigrant women's

² The team is grateful to them for all this work, as they enabled the voices of the non-English speaking women to be heard and presented to a broader public, specifically to policy makers and service providers.

needs, in general, and English language needs, in particular, was most conscientious. CAC helped to identify Key Informants for Phase 2, and the focus groups were designed and implemented with the support and advice of CAC. They reviewed the interview protocols and suggested important revisions. In Phase 3, potential individual interviewees were identified partly by recommendations from community members as to good places of recruitment. Again, the CAC reviewed the interview instrument and contributed to its revision. In Phase 4 of the project, there was less involvement by the CAC because of time constraints; however, other community members were vital to the recruitment process. The final draft of the report was sent to the CAC for their comments, and they will be involved in planning the dissemination of the findings via both website and public presentations to a diverse group of community stakeholders that they think appropriate.

Study Limitations

A qualitative approach was selected for this project because there is currently very little research done in this area, particularly in Canada. There are clear limitations to the findings based upon this methodology. The purpose of a qualitative approach is to generate new conceptual categories and/or to establish new links among already known or new concepts. Qualitative studies are not designed to generalize findings. While the findings cannot be generalized even to the four particular ethno-linguistic groups studied, this work makes it possible for other researchers to check out whether the knowledge claims in this study hold true for other subpopulations. The conceptual categories identified in this study can be confirmed, elaborated, or challenged by research that follows this work.

To make the work as accessible as possible, a website dedicated to the topic was created at Ryerson University. Service providers, policy makers, and the general public will have access to findings from this website. Findings from groups, individual interviews, key informants and focus groups have been stored in a database framework using Apollo. Apollo is a new automated system designed specifically for the project's needs. Apollo

has been developed at the Distributed Applications and Broadband Networks Laboratory (DABNEL), Department of Computer Science, Ryerson University. Specially designed for use in Intranets and Internet, Apollo provides a powerful assembly of tools to develop and maintain the project's database framework and web site. It is anticipated that the users of the Web site, through its search function and comments options, would be able to extract, filter, assemble, maintain, generate, or exchange some useful information that would help their understanding of: (1) methods and programs considered successful in outreach, and with which groups of women they are successful, (2) methods and programs considered successful in teaching ESL, and with which groups of women they are successful, (3) policies that facilitate the acquisition of proficiency in English for immigrant women, and (4) obstacles, including policies, to the acquisition of proficiency in English for immigrant women. This web site could potentially be used as a supporting platform for courses/projects such as ESL and Language acquisitions. This final research report and others generated from on-going analysis will be posted here, including the extensive bibliography.

FINDINGS

The original research questions were:

1. Who are the immigrant women who are not proficient in English, and what are the obstacles or challenges they face in acquiring this proficiency?
2. Is there any program or group or individual with a successful way to surmount any of these challenges in a reasonable amount of time? If so, how can these methods best be disseminated and replicated?

In response to the first question, we identified the first four language groups to study, and framed the questions to answer the second half of it: what are the obstacles women experience in seeking proficiency in English? In response to the second, we developed the website to assist in dissemination, and planned a program of knowledge transfer; and we included in our questionnaires for all participants requests for “best practices” in outreach and teaching, or what they would hope to see in the future regarding publicizing and teaching ESL to immigrant women, to include on the website.

Obstacles to Proficiency in English

From the Review of the Literature (see Appendix C), as reinforced by all types of interviews, a major obstacle, perhaps the primary one, to immigrant women's acquisition of proficiency in English is programming that attempts to serve broad categories of people in the same way. Adult male immigrants, who are usually heads of households, receive the major advantages of Canada's language training programs so that they can enter the workforce quickly. These advantages include such options as free English language training, professionally linked language training, and job counseling. Programs for female immigrants who are not heads of households have a focus on "practical" rather than advanced or professional English, and even those are too frequently inaccessible to women who have primary childcare responsibilities (Boyd, 1992), in that there is insufficient or inappropriate child care available. (See below for a more detailed discussion of this inaccessibility, and see Appendix D for a demographical statistical summary of the ages, level of English, number of children, age at arrival, and educational attainment of the 24 women interviewed individually and the 30 women interviewed in focus groups.)

While many similarities exist across the types of groups responding, there were also striking differences. Both similarities and differences under each of the major kinds of obstacles addressed now follow. These topics are: finances, lack of information, child care, location of classes, cultural barriers, scheduling of classes, teachers' types of instruction and accents, racism, and the assessment, placement, and promotion of students.

Finances.

All groups (Key Informants, individual immigrant women, and immigrant women interviewed in first language [L1] focus groups) spoke longingly of the desire of immigrant women to become fluent in English but for the financial obstacles that stood in their way: the need to contribute to the family's financial support, the high cost of

housing, and the cost of childcare either where LINC childminders were not available or they needed ESL classes, which did not provide childcare.

While all agreed on the centrality of finances as an obstacle, one difference stood out: the fear of debt experienced by Chinese participants, especially those from mainland China. As an example, within the L1 Mandarin focus group, the word “survive” appeared ten times in the translation of the transcription, in reference to their needing to work to survive and hence having little time or energy for English classes. Yet it did not appear once in the transcription of the Cantonese, Punjabi, or Urdu focus groups.

Lack of information.

Some of the Key Informants mentioned the difficulty of obtaining funding for outreach to the communities in the GTA which represent so many languages. Certainly the interviews with both the English-speaking and non-English-speaking women support the need for more outreach work. Even those who are now relatively fluent spoke of finding out about free LINC classes by accident, or of not finding out about them and taking private instruction instead, or of finding out about them only after they were here so long they were no longer eligible to take them.

Besides this absence of information about the existence of the classes, there is also a significant lack around the support such classes can offer: free child care and free bus tickets, so that women can attend classes beyond walking distance, and even if they have young children. Some women heard of them for the first time in these interviews; some of them had waited some years till their children were in school so that they could attend classes. Despite the smallness of the number of interviews (6 per language group of the English speaking, 8 or 9 per group of the non-English speaking), no one language group seemed to have a better source of information than the other; their stories were largely the same.

Child care.

The picture that emerged in the two types of interviews of immigrant women, which had also been mentioned in the Key Informant interviews, was of a shortage of child care for

LINC students, so that some classes had none, others had long waiting lists, and still others only took children after a certain age. ESL classes did not offer it at all, leaving women who would otherwise be well served by ESL classes without an opportunity to learn English.

Location.

Analogous to the discussions of child care, ease of access of the location of classes loomed as a very large issue in both types of interviews with immigrant women, whereas it did not arise among the Key Informants. For all four language groups among those who do and do not speak English, public transit for those who do not understand English is a virtual impossibility. All immigrant women were articulate about the inappropriateness of expecting those who do not speak English to master the public transit system and use it to attend classes. Traveling long distances when you cannot speak or understand the language poses too much of a threat to peace of mind. Doing so when you have small children poses an insurmountable obstacle: strollers on buses and subways are a challenge but maneuvering them without being able to speak the language of all around you is very daunting.

All immigrant women mentioned that ease of access is critical, and particularly in winter and for those with children. If the children are young enough to take with them and there is child care provided, this is to the good, but if there are other children, then classes need to be near home so they can be home for lunch and after school to mind the children. For some, picking up and dropping off the children is also a responsibility, so proximity of the classes to the school as well as to the residence is critical. Given that so many immigrants live in high rise buildings in or near Toronto, with extra space available for rental, several groups suggested offering the classes there.

Cultural challenges.

Adult female immigrants can undergo a shift in their own gender roles and career expectations once the move has been made. As suggested by Ho (2006), immigrant women can fall into a more traditional gender role almost by default. The reasons include: lack of economic opportunity; high cost of local daycare; greater dependence on

their husbands; expectations to pass on their original culture and language to their children; and a sense that their presence at home is needed to help their children deal with the stresses of the move. Kouritzin (2000) argues that each female immigrant will most likely be subject to any number of forces, factors or constraints that will impact her decision-making process. These influences may range from the need to care for family members and maintain a household, to being subject, culturally, to the decisions of their husbands.

It is clear that immigrant women can be subject to contradictory forces with respect to the issue of learning English. These forces would appear to be rooted in the cultural or familial expectation that the female be the primary person to pass on the language and culture of their home countries to their children. As a result, concern arises that Canadian integration will inhibit their ability to do so and that their mother tongue and culture will be forgotten in the process. Abu-Rabia (1997) notes that this can cause particular tensions along gender lines if the new (Canadian) culture is seen as clashing with the ideals and traditions of the old.

All interview groups claimed that a patriarchal culture impedes learning, but indicated the individual and group differences within their own community. The Chinese, for example, stated that there is basically an equality of the sexes in their marriages, but not an equality in the division of household labour, leaving women with the domestic responsibilities of children and housework that can impede their studies, especially when they are working long shifts and often more than one job. In this vein they expressed surprise and disappointment in the lack of support from the schools:

Canadian schools did not teach children to help their parents with their chores in the house. I have to do all the housework by myself. If I have to take the English classes I still have to go home to do all the chores (Cantonese speaker in L1 focus group).

For the Mandarin-speaking, for whom a sense of financial insecurity was so strong, this was an oft-repeated theme: they were too tired to think of English classes at the end of the day.

The Key Informants working with Urdu- and Punjabi-speaking women identified patriarchy as an obstacle for women in various South Asian communities: the women must put husband, children, and home before all else. The women gave specific examples. They mentioned difficulties in differential status, for instance, stating not only that the men are the focus of the household but also that daughters take precedence over daughters-in-law, and overall, there is therefore little support within their families for many women experiencing such situations to learn English. The women are expected to be home when anyone else might need them:

It's really difficult for me to go for English classes. I have four children, parents-in-law, brother, and sister-in-law also to take care of. If I go to English classes my house is just a mess. Everyone looks at me in a mood. I am criticized even if I try to speak a word of English. My family does not support me (Punjabi speaker in L1 focus group).

Sometimes kids say, "We are doing everything for you; why do you have to go to such classes? We want you to be home when we come back from school" (Urdu speaker in L1 focus group).

Three women in the Punjabi L1 focus group agreed on this statement, explaining why English class could never be their priority:

Our in-laws want more children and also close [in age]. If the gap between children increases more than a year or two, we are discussed in the family gatherings. People have the point of view that we do not have a healthy relationship with our husband or we have some serious health problems or we are not respecting our family by not contributing in numbers. We had to face different looks from parents-in-law.

Scheduling of classes.

Similarities occurred between Key Informants and the groups of immigrant women; both reported on the need for classes to be scheduled at different times to accommodate the very full lives of immigrant women, as indicated in some of the quotations above. But there were differences across the language groups. South Asian women in our case study argued for two-hour classes to be held in the mornings and afternoons, when their older children were in school, as this was the only time available to them. Chinese women in the case study argued for weekend classes, since so many worked shift work and such long hours that night classes proved impossible; they had neither time nor energy for them.

Teachers' types of instruction and accents.

Several factors arose here. All immigrant women we interviewed, whether experienced in LINC or public school ESL or private classes, argued for instruction that would give them competence in conversational English, so that they could hold their own in Canadian society: deal with teachers, health professionals, government and bank officials, *etc.* Those who were interviewed in English tended to want advanced English as well, for employment reasons. Those who were interviewed in their first language focused on instruction that would acknowledge where they were when they started class. A common complaint was that when they started, they were placed with others who were much more proficient; this was intimidating, and the teacher did not acknowledge their need to “catch up:”

They kept to their schedule no matter [our] level of understanding.

The learning is not from the beginning, when we came, we went to the class, others had already learned quite a lot, we could only follow them, and we could hardly catch up with them (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

The teaching method in LINC is like a circle: they finish one round, then start another round, no matter when you go there, even in September when the school just starts (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

A common pedagogical method is to have students bring an English-language newspaper to class, read it, and use its contents for discussion. This may well be a useful method for those able to do so, but the beginning non-English speakers were particularly critical of it:

I did not know English so I did not know how to read the English newspaper (Cantonese speaker in L1 focus group).

The teacher gave you an article; in two hours, everyone should read once. We don't know the words and pronunciation, so how do we read? (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

Racism.

While the Key Informants had raised the topic of immigrant women having experienced racism, they had stated that this was not something that the women could discuss easily. In interviews with the immigrant women, a few mentioned that some teachers did not like them, or preferred the European students; another stated that Canadians do not like Asian people. None mentioned this as a reason for not attending class; they were making the point that sometimes difficulties in learning have additional challenges linked to racism.

In a discussion on practicing English with volunteers, one South Asian remarked:

Canadians don't like to mix with Asian people.

Assessment, placement, and promotion of students.

While there was some agreement between women who were proficient in English and those who were not, there was more disagreement on the subject of teachers. They were in agreement about the need for accurate assessment and placement, but those fluent in English had had many good, committed teachers. Those who were not, had often tried out

an English class and left because they could not understand any of it; their assessment and placement seemed to them to be erroneous:

I went to the ESL exam. I didn't know whether it's because the Level 4 class had very few people, [but] I was assigned to Level 4. It was a teacher from Russia; I couldn't understand what she said at all, it's just like I was listening to someone from another planet. I lost interest in learning. Later I changed to Level 1-2; most of the participants there were retired seniors, most spoke Cantonese, and the teacher taught very, very slowly. I lost my interest again, then I stopped and went to do labour work, and because I had to work very late, after working I don't have time and energy to study (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

Since there is no attempt that they were aware of to match the language of the instructors with the language of the students, they felt handicapped as beginning students:

We don't understand and we could not speak, so we don't open our mouth to speak (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

Have a teacher who can speak Cantonese so it will be easier for us to learn. An English-speaking teacher is not helpful. *It is like having a chicken talking to a duck:* they cannot communicate with us. When a woman faces such difficulties in the first class she will not continue attending those classes (Cantonese speaker in L1 focus group).

It would be helpful if the teacher speaks Cantonese so we can match the English words with the Chinese words we know. It will be easier for us; we will pick up English faster as well (Cantonese speaker in L1 focus group).

Yet the overwhelming majority among the English speakers and a majority even among the non-English speakers wanted to be taught by people with a “Canadian” accent. They found other accents harder to understand, they claimed:

If all the LINC Teachers are native English speaking, [it] will be better, but sometimes teachers are from Russia, India, and Pakistan, and their accents are quite difficult to understand (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

Canadians’ pronunciation is a little easier to understand. For instance, my husband went to take a Driver’s License Test; the examiner was an Indian –his accent was so hard to understand! Like a simple word, “Left”, he pronounced quite strange. My husband could not understand and failed the test (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

I cannot understand what the teacher says, [so] I lost confidence [and left] (Mandarin speaker in L1 focus group).

The point about some of these women wanting instruction by someone speaking unaccented English requires comment. In Kahn and Watson’s 2005 study of Pakistani women, they believed that their accents and fluency in English could be a barrier to their ability to advance their socio-economic status in Canada. The relation of accent to stereotyping or stigmatizing is further examined by Creese and Kambere (2003) in their study of African immigrant women in Canada. What is especially interesting about this study is the high level of education at English-speaking institutions reported by the participant women. Nonetheless, the participants still reported a measure of discrimination and stigmatization because of speaking English with an African accent.

Most commonly, the participants in Creese and Kambere’s (2003) study reported that they found it at best distracting to have their pronunciation continually corrected, and they questioned the inference that their ‘African’ English pronunciation was any more or less correct than the Canadian pronunciation. The subject of accent raises the further

issue that speaking to be understood requires not only effort on the part of the speaker but a genuine attempt on the part of the listener. Other studies concerning women from Africa in Canada have raised similar concerns (Dossa, 2004). This perhaps stresses the need to ensure that the local vernacular is used for ESL purposes, even if ESL was not directly relevant to the African women in Creese and Kambere's (2003) study.

In our study, another difference between those interviewed in English and those interviewed in their first language was the lack of confidence the latter had in the ability of the classes to make them truly proficient:

LINC doesn't give proper levels. Even if you complete all levels, (we have seen people who have) they still cannot speak properly (Urdu speaker in L1 focus group).

I have seen people who have finished LINC, but still their English is so poor. The LINC certificate is of no use (Urdu speaker in L1 focus group).

Yet some cynicism seemed to exist as to whether the classes existed for the students or for the teachers:

One more thing which has been observed in LINC schools is that they don't promote students to the next level even though they have qualified for that level, just for the sake of the teachers who are teaching there, so they can show their full attendance so they can continue the LINC classes (Urdu speaker in L1 focus group).

There is suspicion, therefore, that some of the LINC classes may not be worth the effort they take in that advancement toward proficiency will be hindered. Since this is voiced by one of the women who does not speak English and is not in any class, this may work to reduce their motivation to attempt to join a class.

"Best practices" in Overcoming Obstacles

In addressing the findings regarding the "best practices" to overcome the obstacles identified above, the same headings will be used for clarity's sake.

Finances.

Key Informants stated the best thing to do is, during outreach efforts, to provide the financial motivation to attend classes:

When [one woman] came over here she met someone, ...who told her, “If you want to stay around in Chinatown to be a sewing machine operator, you may only get like 5...to 7 dollars an hour, the most, maybe worse. But if you learn English, then you can go to bigger factory and...get much better benefits and you can get advancement.” And so she did.

Community workers can provide the same information, which is motivating. Success stories are critical. The KIs say it is important, both in ESL and LINC classes and in service agencies, to have people telling their own stories of success to encourage the newcomers.

A second source of financial motivation for attending class would be links from those classes to specific jobs, wherever this is possible. This view of the KIs is strongly echoed by both the immigrant women interviewed in English and those interviewed in their own language. English-speaking interviewees claimed that immigrant women really want to work, so ideally there should be part-time and full-time government jobs that would include opportunities for people to take classes according to what they can afford in terms of time away from work and time for study.

Women interviewed in English stated:

Language classes linked to job preparation and training with employment at the end would be best, especially for older women and others who don't want to go back to school, to college or university, and just want English for work and conversation.

A third source of remedy for financial obstacles to learning English is government subsidies for language students, on the grounds that the subsidies would be well repaid by the taxes they would pay once they were able to get better jobs and spend more money on

their families' needs. KIs mention it as missing or insufficient for transportation. Immigrant women in both English and L1 mention it as needed to prevent their having to work such long hours that they cannot attend classes. In support of this argument, both groups state that the government pays refugees to learn the language, and immigrants should be included in this type of financial support too.

Lack of information.

First language materials are critical. If they do not know English, how are they to read the promotional material about classes in their area? Both women's groups made this point.

The women also stated that immigrants arriving at the airport could easily be met by immigration or community officials who speak their language so that the information provided (about local community centres, for example) is provided in a language they can understand.

For women already in Canada who do not have adequate information, the women said it should be provided in their first language through mass media, flyers in community centres, supermarkets, laundry rooms in high rises, and laundromats, but most especially in schools and places of worship. The women interviewed in English said that outreach:

could be done via the internet, and at local cultural events. It's important to make known that the classes offer Canadian history for culture to women, so they can learn more about the country. Outreach should include using television (e.g. OMNI-TV) and should always include broadcasting success stories.

The Key Informants also supported this, but added that they needed more money to be able to do this outreach.

Note, however, that in a WORD search, the word "internet" did not appear even once in any of the translations of the transcriptions of the four focus groups held in the first languages. While the numbers do not support any definitive conclusion from this, it suggests that further research needs to be done on the characteristics, including

familiarity with computers, that distinguish women who do and who do not learn English upon arrival. Many of those in all four language groups who were interviewed in English mentioned learning via the computer; none did who were interviewed in L1 groups. Given that the recruitment of immigrants is based on their education and skills levels, and that participants were immigrants, not refugees, it is not surprising that their educational levels were not low. This, obviously, differs from levels of computer literacy. Unfortunately, demographic data for the focus group participants were not gathered to the extent that those of the individual interviews were gathered, so we cannot make what should be an important comparison between those women who learned English after their arrival and those who did not; the focus of the data was on their experiences rather than their background, a significant flaw in the design, as noted in the section on limitations of the methods.

Child care.

After financial obstacles, this is the most important to address. The “best language classes are in those schools that have daycare,” for the students’ children is a sentiment echoed by all women’s groups, as it keeps the women close to their children and eliminates the need for long travel and hence early departure from class. Key Informants were very sensitive to the needs of mothers to tend to their children, and subsume their own learning needs to those of the children. Good after-school care would be helpful for its potential for lengthening the time women have available for learning.

Location.

Since taking public transportation without being able to speak English was a significant barrier to attending classes especially in the winter, ideally classes should be within walking distance of women’s homes, using local schools, public libraries, the high rises that newcomers live in that serve large numbers in the surrounding neighbourhood, and community centres. Where numbers prohibit classes being offered in, for example, large, sprawling suburban areas, the women interviewed in English advocated supplementing with technology:

Use the internet, and hold conversations on the telephone. Remember: if we don't know English, how can we go far?

Cultural challenges.

Since the challenges that emerged differed from one group to another, their recommendations for “best practices” differed. The Mandarin and Cantonese speakers urged a focus on funding policies that would include subsidies to enable them to study English when they first come to Canada, before having to plunge into the world of work. It would seem that explanations of credit-based financing (for home mortgages, cars, credit cards, *etc.*), a new practice for many of these women, should be included in the packages of information about Canada that are given to immigrants when they enter Canada, and in the information provided by embassies and consulates abroad.

Urdu and Punjabi speakers, however, had a need not experienced by the others: they clearly consider same-sex classes as most useful and most likely to enable the largest numbers of learners to attend class. They also are uncomfortable traveling alone, so English classes should be close to home, and where this is not possible, group travel arrangements should be in place. Night outings for other than family reasons are also not part of their culture, so daytime-only classes should replace them for this group.

Urdu and Punjabi speakers interviewed in English, however, said that one of the most helpful best practices would be to ensure that all members of their communities would have the value of English classes for women explained to them, to increase the likelihood of family support for the women.

Scheduling of classes.

While the immigrant women themselves, in all groups, identified the time of classes as critical to address, what constituted “best practices” across the language groups differed. Cantonese and Mandarin speakers specified weekend classes as most helpful, so as not to interfere with their need to work long hours; Urdu and Punjabi speakers wanted no night

or weekend classes, but rather morning and afternoon classes, with a lunch break in between, to enable them to tend to domestic responsibilities.

Key Informants, based on their experience, pointed out that

[Various] types of flexibility help, like mixing home study with class attendance, and flexible scheduling so that people can go to day or evening or weekend classes when they have shift work, or change days of the week for similar reasons.

Teachers' types of instruction and accents.

Instruction should focus on increasing vocabulary, said the women interviewed in English:

Good, diverse programs, where people talk about their own cultures and share info are best.

Students, however, should not be allowed just to chat without building vocabulary. The discussions should incorporate how to find a job, how to succeed in job interviews, and provide vocabulary for everyday life, shopping, schools, other daily needs. They said:

The best programs teach about Canada, the local educational system, and other things that are important for new immigrants to [learn about in order to] fit in and feel successful in Canada.

Some women interviewed in English wanted classes that offer more time for speaking than for writing, as some women are better at writing than speaking. Provide excellent handouts, they recommended; make the students listen to talk shows on TV, and then discuss them in class.

But again and again, the linking of language instruction to real life and especially to work arose. Women interviewed in English stated:

Language for meetings is important, as are idioms. Preparation for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) tests, required of those who want to go on at a post-secondary level, would be most helpful.

A catalog of characteristics of good teachers emerged from the interviews in English:

[Teachers who will give us] interesting stories about Canadian women, about Chinese women, school...children...

Teachers who use humour and appropriate materials:

[Teachers and] classes that provide good reading material for daily practice of English, building fluency...

[Teachers who] encourage students, respect students, are polite and helpful (*e.g.* teachers who explain mistakes, not just correct them, teachers who build your vocabulary with good memory tricks and good examples to illustrate their teaching).

Teachers who are not racist.

Participants offered several suggestions: Teachers should be supplemented by Canadian volunteers, so the issue of accent is not so critical. High school students could use volunteer hours chatting with newcomers. Where there are Canadian seniors willing to volunteer, they could meet with newcomers for conversations in public libraries.

Teachers themselves need more time to speak one-on-one with their students, said the Key Informants:

Small class size would allow for teachers to talk to them and establish a relationship so that it's easier to communicate.

Pronunciation and accent must be addressed but that is by no means to say that the women all agreed as the best way to do this. From women interviewed in English:

Cantonese-speaking women need to take classes with women from other places, to hear English from non-Cantonese speakers.

From women interviewed in L1 focus groups, the topic did not arise among Punjabi speakers. Urdu speakers, however, noted their difficulty in understanding speakers of other languages who spoke to them in English. Mandarin speakers were clear about the challenges of understanding other accents, but Cantonese speakers were most articulate about the need to have both native Canadian teachers and Cantonese assistants or interpreters, given their inability to understand what was being said.

Key Informants had perhaps the most useful advice for best practices:

Since students are opposed to learning from teachers with non-Canadian accents, the first thing is to teach them that accents will vary across Canada, and some trace of it will always be there. The point is to be easily understood. “Accent reduction” is possible, [but better referred to as “clarity of accent” – *authors*] and that can be part of advanced level classes, taught by people who have that specialization.

Racism.

From the Key Informants: Cultural sensitivity on the part of the teachers is critical. For example, sex education is taboo or drop outs will increase. Racism is an issue immigrant women deal with but cannot comfortably discuss so teachers need to be trained to deal with each cultural group in an appropriate way, knowing how and when to approach topics that are sensitive for the particular group.

Assessment, placement, and promotion of students.

Acknowledge, said the women interviewed in English, that English is a difficult language, that many are intimidated by it, and that they need to be accurately assessed and placed in classes that will lead them gently from where they are to where they want to go. Because they do not all believe that they can become fluent in English, they said, and fear they will embarrass themselves, they need to be introduced to it gradually and slowly:

First, start with just 30 minute classes, a short time, building up, maybe demonstrating in markets [or malls but then] be sure the classes are held near by.

Give them small learning steps to convince them they can do it.

This is the opposite of the picture painted by both the women interviewed in L1 and KIs: both stated the common practice was simply to plunge the newcomers into the midst of whatever classes were running that were deemed appropriate.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The principal finding is one that emerged in the review of the literature and was confirmed in the three types of interviews conducted: the issues facing immigrant women in their desire for English are quite complex and impossible to address with a one-size-fits-all type of program or outreach. Some of the specific differences that emerged, however, had not been reported in the literature and some of the differences only emerged in one type of interview, making clear the importance of methodology that includes different interviews with specific types of participants.

Although we had interviewed as Key Informants many service providers who worked with immigrant women in the four language groups targeted, and found these informants extremely knowledgeable about those whom they served, there were still surprisingly new facts that emerged in the interviews with immigrant women themselves. For example, some women in the Punjabi focus group stated a strong preference for women-only classes on the grounds that “Parda³ [purdah] is important,” while in the Urdu focus group the same preference was stated as a issue of personal comfort and specifically not as a matter of cultural prescription. Both groups of women included a similarly strong

³ Purdah is the practice of segregating the sexes at puberty; this may be by an all-covering garb or by spatial segregation within buildings, including the home, or by chaperoning or by a combination of any or all of these practices. Since it was adopted by Islam centuries after its origin, it has been based on a religious rationale which aims to protect the chastity of women..

preference that the classes be held close to the immigrant's home, and preferably in the large apartment complexes in which many urban immigrants reside. These preferences were only revealed by the women who were not able to take English classes and had to be interviewed in their first language. This had not been suggested by women from the same language groups who were now fluent in English or by the Key Informants.

Similarly surprising was the overarching need for financial security and support that only emerged among the Chinese now fluent in English, as did its explanation: that mainland Chinese have no history or culture of credit, so that the large loans for the cars they need in the suburbs, and even more for home mortgages, are terrifying, and make the taking of time to learn English first an unthinkable luxury. Indeed, the need to work extra shifts or jobs to pay off such debt makes even night classes not practical. A suggestion by the interviewer that they would be able to pay it off more quickly were they fluent in English and thus able to earn a higher salary was not something they could readily address; the looming threat of the debt conquered all.

Not surprising but a nevertheless important finding are the two rather contradictory findings that on the one hand, many women see English principally and importantly as a way to integrate into the larger society in their dealings with schools, etc., and hence want a strong focus on conversational English with many opportunities built in for practice, while others see it as the *sine qua non* for a good job, and define their ideal classes of English instruction as those that would be linked by employment services at the class site to jobs at every level at the end of their instruction, not just as they are in specific types of English programs, *e.g.*, for teachers, engineers, *etc.*

Less comfortable a finding was the common desire by immigrants to be taught by "Canadian-born teachers", not by immigrants like themselves, no matter how well trained in English and pedagogy they were. The issue of accent had arisen in the literature as one of bias: there are many ways to speak English, many accents arising from regional differences, and to identify one as the "proper way" to speak English was an invidious judgment upon the many other "proper" accents. This was not a topic addressed at all by

this very limited study, but it arose again and again in all the four language groups as the women themselves stated a preference for teachers and conversation partners with a “Canadian” accent. In informal conversation, there seemed to be a sense that they would make themselves ludicrous by being, for example, Chinese Canadians who spoke English with a Pakistani accent with British overtones –the result of their teacher having come from one country but having studied English in another.

In sum, through the Landing of Immigrant Data System and Statistics Canada we identified the language groups who were the most challenged in terms of coming to this country in large numbers without being able to speak English, and who, in subsequent census enumerations, were still unable to speak English; the four most prominent were those who were speakers of Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, and Urdu. We found that the obstacles or challenges they face in acquiring proficiency in English to be complex and varied, and even differing one from another. We found the programs that were described by the immigrant women as most successful in addressing some of those needs to be the ones they considered the most flexible, the most apt to listen carefully to women, and the most likely to adapt to those needs. Not all needs were met, however, and to meet them will require appropriate funding as well as sensitive planning for creative outreach and flexible programming. Our sense is that such adaptations will be cost effective and most productive in terms of supporting the successful integration of new Canadians.

The significance of the findings is the importance of the need for outreach and programs to be clearly tailored to the specific groups of the women they are intended to serve. The four groups the data identified as the targets could benefit immensely from outreach and programs adapted to their needs. While some Chinese Canadians need services provided on weekends when they are free from work, they also would benefit immensely from any provision of subsidies to obviate the need for so much work, and any linking of increasing English proficiency to better job opportunities. While so many Punjabi- and Urdu-speaking women have for the most part had instruction in English in Pakistan (or India), they need considerable more instruction and particularly practice –and ideally during the day when their children are in school, since family duties take precedence at

most other times. Many others, not found in our study, have not the level of education represented here, and will need additional support.

One of the most significant impacts should be upon research, as the findings make obvious the gaps in research, as stated in the attachment. For policy makers with an interest in any area of this work, funding such research should become a priority

The most significant finding for service providers is the need to tailor language instruction to the specific group being served. Sex-specific classes are needed by many immigrant women. Weekend classes designed for those who work many shifts during the week were requested; daytime classes leaving mothers free to be with their children at lunch and after school are the strong preferences of others. Long shifts and high housing costs prompted requests for financial subsidies. For researchers, the enormity of what we still do not know, both about other groups and about the groups whom we briefly sampled here, is the most significant finding: when we are constantly surprised by new data and puzzled by conflicts in it, we know we need to go back to more research to illuminate the area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The women themselves and those who work with them who served as Key informants were most articulate in identifying “best practices” for improving access to proficiency in English. These are the recommendations that the research team supports. Their cost may be high but we argue that the cost of ignorance of an official language is higher. This can be examined in another study that compares the income of women with an official language against their cohorts of similar education or training who are not proficient in English or French, and examines the taxes paid and social assistance received in the two groups.

The rich mine of information that these women provided as to the impacts of a lack of proficiency upon their lives in the areas of work, education, health, and well being, while

not specifically addressing the research questions posed here, nevertheless needs to be mined in other papers, and this will happen. At times poignant, at times witty, their stories indicate so many lost opportunities for Canada to profit from the presence of these women in our midst. Their recommendations to support their becoming proficient in English deserve the attention of policy makers and service providers. And the insights of the Key Informants reveal professionals who are thoughtful, dedicated people who are genuinely committed to the advancement of the women they serve. Their stories are also in need of a separate telling, so that policy makers may target additional support to their work in ways they have specified, which will enhance considerably the outcomes for immigrant women.

Appendix A: Native Language-Canadian Language Cross-Tabulation

This table provides the numbers of immigrant women aged 18 or more who arrived in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area in 1996, their first language, and their proficiency in 2005 in either English or French, or both languages or neither.

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	NEITHER' % OF TOTAL	TOTAL
1	301 - Mandarin	13292	18	142	35550	73%	49002
2	324 - Punjabi	9109	18	50	15777	63%	24954
3	300 - Cantonese	9581	11	60	10794	53%	20446
4	325 - Urdu	16606	33	95	9721	37%	26455
5	101 - Yiddish	10379	178	453	9375	46%	20385
6	327 - Tamil	9088	18	61	8549	48%	17716
7	330 - Gujarati	7167	11	48	5958	45%	13184
8	120 - Spanish	7783	74	397	4957	38%	13211
9	250 - Arabic	7608	678	1783	4108	29%	14177
10	299 - Chinese	9630	29	164	4041	29%	13864
11	223 - Farsi	6095	55	368	3894	37%	10412
12	305 - Korean	4412	12	26	3891	47%	8341
13	306 - Vietnamese	941	11	23	3303	77%	4278
14	309 - Tagalog	16541	7	30	2639	14%	19217
15	115 - Polish	1890	8	48	2110	52%	4056
16	322 - Bengali	5073	2	36	2044	29%	7155
17	195 - Dari	706	7	103	2013	71%	2829
18	106 - Ukrainian	1747	18	66	1912	51%	3743
19	251 - Persian	1637	15	121	1545	47%	3318
20	119 - Albanian	1503	43	92	1429	47%	3067
21	108 - Romanian	2448	271	2737	1345	20%	6801
22	321 - Hindi	8033	13	88	1286	14%	9420
23	131 - Turkish	972	9	46	1085	51%	2112
24	109 - Serbo-Croat	518	9	31	1057	65%	1615
25	122 - Portuguese	1798	38	107	1008	34%	2951
26	099	1014	13	102	899		2028
27	209	2199	21	37	843		3100
28	125	1337	29	5	633		2004
29	326	289	0	1	620		910
30	107	1142	37	212	551		1942
31	254	775	1	21	506		1303
32	255	177	0	4	445		626
33	001	37642	15	604	376		38637
34	319	695	0	1	331		1027
35	329	1375	3	8	305		1691
36	112	965	5	71	291		1332
37	311	68	2	2	276		348
38	328	1237	2	8	275		1522
39	111	408	5	36	243		692

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME					NEITHER'	TOTAL
		ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	% OF	
							TOTAL
40	098	241	2	14	236		493
41	123	307	10	42	235		594
42	256	43	0	2	220		265
43	323	1961	1	16	188		2166
44	334	2138	1	23	185		2347
45	162	310	2	3	184		499
46	102	340	11	54	174		579
47	252	170	0	3	170		343
48	303	1276	2	13	154		1445
49	114	508	3	36	147		694
50	304	668	1	5	145		819
51	116	661	9	172	129		971
52	297	540	0	2	121		663
53	204	1006	28	36	115		1185
54	218	64	0	0	100		164
55	105	212	1	11	99		323
56	320	389	1	8	89		487
57	307	379	1	5	84		469
58	332	1056	0	20	80		1156
59	183	162	0	0	76		238
60	199	135	2	20	71		228
61	259	65	1	7	67		140
62	113	362	1	11	60		434
63	308	81	0	0	59		140
64	130	191	1	13	57		262
65	302	149	1	1	54		205
66	028	803	0	11	53		867
67	253	578	11	46	50		685
68	312	19	2	2	46		69
69	298	92	0	1	42		135
70	400	68	76	461	42		647
71	085	96	0	7	41		144
72	117	185	0	61	39		285
73	043	98	0	1	38		137
74	066	123	0	0	29		152
75	165	73	1	2	28		104
76	499	281	1	5	28		315
77	257	12	0	3	27		42
78	104	54	0	1	25		80
79	201	264	29	18	25		336
80	073	13	0	0	24		37

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME	CANADIAN_LANG				NEITHER' % OF	
		ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	TOTAL	TOTAL
81	207	837	4	7	24		872
82	213	104	0	7	23		134
83	181	17	0	0	21		38
84	168	106	1	0	20		127
85	167	95	0	3	19		117
86	002	124	376	722	18		1240
87	103	34	1	0	18		53
88	166	73	6	5	18		102
89	019	18	0	0	15		33
90	205	259	0	6	15		280
91	018	21	0	0	14		35
92	214	47	0	0	13		60
93	100	16	0	0	11		27
94	027	115	0	0	10		125
95	110	26	0	1	10		37
96	191	31	40	54	10		135
97	200	34	0	1	10		45
98	210	240	1	1	9		251
99	010	7	16	12	8		43
100	017	7	0	0	8		15
101	141	57	0	3	8		68
102	310	113	0	0	8		121
103	004	11	0	1	7		19
104	031	13	51	46	7		117
105	041	4	0	0	5		9
106	067	25	0	0	5		30
107	235	46	0	0	5		51
108	333	82	0	0	5		87
109	021	31	1	0	4		36
110	026	2	0	0	4		6
111	044	17	83	38	4		142
112	050	10	0	0	4		14
113	129	11	12	8	4		35
114	140	82	0	10	4		96
115	172	15	0	1	4		20
116	184	39	0	0	4		43
117	202	10	0	0	4		14
118	003	5	0	0	3		8
119	009	20	0	0	3		23
120	012	6	0	0	3		9
121	059	2	0	0	3		5

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME	CANADIAN_LANG				NEITHER' % OF TOTAL	TOTAL
		ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER		
122	060	29	0	0	3		32
123	124	9	1	3	3		16
124	142	40	0	5	3		48
125	174	18	0	0	3		21
126	189	0	0	0	3		3
127	228	4	4	0	3		11
128	020	13	0	0	2		15
129	033	84	0	0	2		86
130	062	2	0	0	2		4
131	128	24	0	0	2		26
132	139	1	0	0	2		3
133	170	4	1	1	2		8
134	182	16	0	0	2		18
135	212	46	0	0	2		48
136	900	21	2	1	2		26
137	005	4	0	0	1		5
138	011	5	0	0	1		6
139	014	1	0	0	1		2
140	024	4	0	0	1		5
141	042	24	0	1	1		26
142	046	2	3	2	1		8
143	051	1	0	0	1		2
144	056	1	0	0	1		2
145	118	1	0	2	1		4
146	138	0	0	0	1		1
147	143	27	0	2	1		30
148	161	3	0	0	1		4
149	173	1	6	7	1		15
150	178	32	0	0	1		33
151	186	1	0	0	1		2
152	188	34	1	6	1		42
153	192	0	0	0	1		1
154	206	8	0	0	1		9
155	211	2	0	0	1		3
156	216	4	0	0	1		5
157	217	3	0	0	1		4
158	219	2	2	2	1		7
159	224	2	1	1	1		5
160	006	2	0	0	0		2
161	007	1	0	0	0		1
162	008	2	4	3	0		9

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME	CANADIAN_LANG				NEITHER' % OF	
		ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	TOTAL	TOTAL
163	013	3	0	0	0		3
164	015	6	0	0	0		6
165	022	8	0	0	0		8
166	023	4	0	0	0		4
167	025	179	0	0	0		179
168	030	1	0	0	0		1
169	034	5	0	0	0		5
170	035	1	0	0	0		1
171	037	1	0	0	0		1
172	038	1	0	0	0		1
173	039	1	0	0	0		1
174	040	2	0	0	0		2
175	047	3	0	0	0		3
176	048	8	0	0	0		8
177	049	2	0	0	0		2
178	054	1	0	0	0		1
179	055	6	0	0	0		6
180	057	7	0	0	0		7
181	061	1	0	0	0		1
182	064	2	0	0	0		2
183	068	0	1	1	0		2
184	082	2	0	0	0		2
185	083	1	0	1	0		2
186	087	0	2	0	0		2
187	088	0	0	2	0		2
188	090	1	0	0	0		1
189	091	2	0	0	0		2
190	121	17	1	0	0		18
191	126	1	0	0	0		1
192	132	3	0	0	0		3
193	133	0	0	1	0		1
194	134	1	0	0	0		1
195	135	0	2	1	0		3
196	136	1	0	0	0		1
197	137	0	0	1	0		1
198	150	2	0	0	0		2
199	151	1	0	0	0		1
200	160	18	0	1	0		19
201	169	5	0	0	0		5
202	171	5	0	0	0		5
203	176	2	0	0	0		2

NATIVE LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
CANADIAN_LANG							
RECORD NUMBERS	NATIVE LANGUAGE CODE & NAME	CANADIAN_LANG				NEITHER' % OF	
		ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	TOTAL	TOTAL
204	177	10	0	0	0		10
205	179	1	0	0	0		1
206	180	1	0	1	0		2
207	185	4	0	0	0		4
208	187	2	0	0	0		2
209	193	3	0	0	0		3
210	196	1	0	0	0		1
211	203	227	0	2	0		229
212	208	8	0	0	0		8
213	215	1	0	0	0		1
214	220	5	24	8	0		37
215	222	5	0	0	0		5
216	226	2	0	0	0		2
217	229	2	0	0	0		2
218	230	2	0	0	0		2
219	231	14	0	0	0		14
220	233	1	0	0	0		1
221	234	15	0	0	0		15
222	331	4	0	1	0		5
223	401	3	0	0	0		3
224	402	2	0	0	0		2
Total		223961	2565	10405	150272		387203

Appendix B: Citizenship-Canadian Language Cross-Tabulation

This table presents the numbers of immigrant women aged 18 or over who arrived in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area in 1996 and had become citizens, and the numbers of these citizens who in 2005 were fluent in English, French, both languages, or neither, arranged by first languages.

CITIZENSHIP AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
RECORD	CITIZENSHIP					NEITHER'	
NUMBERS	CODE & NAME	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	% OF	TOTAL
1	202 - China	20170	40	268	40926	67%	61404
2	205 - India	38545	52	355	22558	37%	61510
3	209 - Pakistan	17080	34	99	11605	40%	28818
4	201 - Sri Lanka	8262	17	30	8545	51%	16854
5	223 - Iran	7652	71	477	4994	38%	13194
6	010 - British National Overseas	5719	2	36	4281	43%	10038
7	056 - Russia	3861	71	190	4114	50%	8236
8	258 - Korea Republic of	4369	12	24	3868	47%	8273
9	059 - Ukraine	2889	28	115	3658	55%	6690
10	270 - Vietnam	919	4	20	3528	79%	4471
11	227 - Philippines	18550	11	34	3150	14%	21745
12	252 - Afghanistan	1043	6	95	3066	73%	4210
13	979 - Stateless	1491	18	39	2842	65%	4390
14	033 - Poland	2066	11	52	2249	51%	4378
15	212 - Bangladesh	4314	2	30	1972	31%	6318
16	224 - Iraq	1585	6	69	1857	53%	3517
17	203 - Taiwan	2374	3	24	1592	40%	3993
18	206 - Israel	3918	85	222	1579	27%	5804
19	088 - Romania	2452	265	2719	1335	20%	6771
20	081 - Albania	1204	38	91	1199	47%	2532
21	722 - Colombia	1693	23	35	1178	40%	2929
22	045 - Turkey	1042	6	46	1074	50%	2168
23	044 - Yugoslavia	1442	19	108	1012	39%	2581
24	161	1104	4	26	793	41%	1927
25	650	565	11	25	741	55%	1342
26	753	449	1	6	738	62%	1194
27	165	1535	3	17	693	31%	2248
28	101	2216	77	578	681	19%	3552
29	005	2140	1	10	675	24%	2826
30	048	218	5	11	672	74%	906
31	182	1981	8	8	662	25%	2659
32	051	404	5	21	614	59%	1044
33	709	941	4	58	591	37%	1594

CITIZENSHIP AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
RECORD NUMBERS	CITIZENSHIP CODE & NAME	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	NEITHER'	TOTAL
						% OF	
						TOTAL	TOTAL
34	083	1135	39	213	576	29%	1963
35	225	1324	3	103	538	27%	1968
36	034	880	25	49	512	35%	1466
37	210	604	41	122	483	39%	1250
38	053	409	5	22	457	51%	893
39	723	560	3	48	398	39%	1009
40	208	714	199	545	388	21%	1846
41	543	281	1	3	380	57%	665
42	200	350	3	7	372	51%	732
43	185	619	3	12	336	35%	970
44	256	75	0	2	301	80%	378
45	501	1555	7	106	273	14%	1941
46	070	399	7	38	269	38%	713
47	043	227	1	11	260	52%	499
48	003	4456	4	162	255	5%	4877
49	725	585	6	57	249	28%	897
50	028	359	11	41	247	38%	658
51	055	401	17	71	234	32%	723
52	703	785	9	58	212	20%	1064
53	651	79	2	6	198	69%	285
54	026	766	2	36	191	19%	995
55	019	170	0	3	163	49%	336
56	207	1295	3	14	156	11%	1468
57	721	259	2	8	155	37%	424
58	222	711	1	6	152	17%	870
59	016	513	2	36	151	22%	702
60	162	216	0	0	143	40%	359
61	020	246	1	11	137	35%	395
62	024	620	4	113	133	15%	870
63	060	120	1	12	122	48%	255
64	544	124	1	5	118	48%	248
65	049	146	3	18	104	38%	271
66	050	231	0	11	101	29%	343
67	267	388	1	4	91	19%	484
68	213	156	1	9	88	35%	254
69	130	482	2	9	84	15%	577
70	177	2240	3	33	83	4%	2359
71	273	80	0	3	82	50%	165
72	264	378	0	8	81	17%	467
73	546	120	0	2	80	40%	202
74	242	642	0	3	77	11%	722
75	054	86	1	3	71	44%	161

CITIZENSHIP AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION								
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005								
RECORD	CITIZENSHIP					NEITHER'		
NUMBERS	CODE	&	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	% OF	
	NAME						TOTAL	
							TOTAL	
76	461		4248	1	151	69	2%	4469
77	545		101	0	4	66	39%	171
78	171		42	0	2	61	58%	105
79	724		206	2	5	61	22%	274
80	042		279	3	0	60	18%	342
81	133		54	186	209	60	12%	509
82	015		361	1	12	58	13%	432
83	018		78	0	1	58	42%	137
84	241		87	0	0	58	40%	145
85	031		241	1	40	55	16%	337
86	132		952	2	30	55	5%	1039
87	025		158	2	11	53	24%	224
88	052		112	2	6	53	31%	173
89	040		161	0	12	51	23%	224
90	260		10	0	1	46	81%	57
91	246		495	0	9	45	8%	549
92	001		506	1	18	38	7%	563
93	011		90	0	10	37	27%	137
94	801		179	0	2	37	17%	218
95	902		61	33	551	36	5%	681
96	547		66	0	1	33	33%	100
97	131		26	164	139	30	8%	359
98	231		80	1	7	28	24%	116
99	000		23	0	2	27	52%	52
100	041		71	12	81	25	13%	189
101	751		60	1	5	25	27%	91
102	181		219	1	3	23	9%	246
103	542		190	1	3	23	11%	217
104	164		28	0	1	22	43%	51
105	037		89	3	11	20	16%	123
106	151		135	12	8	20	11%	175
107	226		71	0	2	20	22%	93
108	061		46	0	5	19	27%	70
109	654		3	57	56	19	14%	135
110	032		56	0	2	18	24%	76
111	602		7086	2	9	18	0%	7115
112	305		680	0	13	15	2%	708
113	711		5884	2	4	15	0%	5905
114	280		49	0	1	14	22%	64
115	121		1642	2	24	13	1%	1681
116	198		8	0	0	13	62%	21
117	755		33	1	0	13	28%	47

CITIZENSHIP AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION							
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005							
RECORD NUMBERS	CITIZENSHIP CODE & NAME	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	NEITHER'	
						%	OF TOTAL
						TOTAL	TOTAL
118	004	53	0	1	12	18%	66
119	047	32	0	1	12	27%	45
120	541	19	0	1	12	38%	32
121	179	34	43	61	11	7%	149
122	017	62	0	6	10	13%	78
123	021	68	0	4	10	12%	82
124	135	8	30	38	10	12%	86
125	057	11	0	2	9	41%	22
126	136	211	0	5	9	4%	225
127	257	8	0	1	9	50%	18
128	154	19	62	59	8	5%	148
129	158	72	312	140	8	2%	532
130	156	5	11	1	7	29%	24
131	183	8	16	5	7	19%	36
132	262	18	0	4	7	24%	29
133	058	14	0	0	6	30%	20
134	752	64	0	0	6	9%	70
135	022	42	100	401	5	1%	548
136	221	27	0	3	5	14%	35
137	253	37	0	1	5	12%	43
138	339	197	0	3	5	2%	205
139	625	208	0	5	5	2%	218
140	911	0	0	0	5	100%	5
141	605	3868	0	18	4	0%	3890
142	012	23	11	64	3	3%	101
143	170	47	0	3	3	6%	53
144	846	1	0	0	3	75%	4
145	014	2	0	0	2	50%	4
146	155	34	31	52	2	2%	119
147	174	1	0	2	2	40%	5
148	263	10	0	0	2	17%	12
149	399	50	0	0	2	4%	52
150	631	858	0	0	2	0%	860
151	030	37	1	9	1	2%	48
152	113	553	0	5	1	0%	559
153	166	7	18	11	1	3%	37
154	167	1	0	0	1	50%	2
155	169	5	27	9	1	2%	42
156	175	1	0	0	1	50%	2
157	187	6	9	2	1	6%	18
158	265	7	0	0	1	13%	8
159	341	0	0	0	1	100%	1

CITIZENSHIP AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE CROSS TABULATION								
FEMALE IMMIGRANTS 18 YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE TORONTO CMA 1996 - 2005								
RECORD	CITIZENSHIP					NEITHER'		
NUMBERS	CODE	&	ENGLISH	FRENCH	BOTH	NEITHER	% OF	
	NAME						TOTAL	
							TOTAL	
160	904		7	0	8	1	6%	16
161	914		0	0	0	1	100%	1
162	013		1	0	2	0	0%	3
163	027		231	0	10	0	0%	241
164	085		10	0	0	0	0%	10
165	086		0	0	1	0	0%	1
166	099		1	0	0	0	0%	1
167	111		5	0	0	0	0%	5
168	112		81	0	4	0	0%	85
169	122		3	0	0	0	0%	3
170	152		3	0	0	0	0%	3
171	153		3	0	0	0	0%	3
172	157		1	2	0	0	0%	3
173	159		4	11	4	0	0%	19
174	160		3	2	0	0	0%	5
175	163		0	1	2	0	0%	3
176	172		2	4	3	0	0%	9
177	173		2	6	8	0	0%	16
178	176		2	2	2	0	0%	6
179	178		3	0	0	0	0%	3
180	180		1	16	18	0	0%	35
181	186		2	0	0	0	0%	2
182	188		0	0	3	0	0%	3
183	199		0	0	1	0	0%	1
184	254		10	0	0	0	0%	10
185	255		3	0	0	0	0%	3
186	274		2	0	0	0	0%	2
187	299		1	0	0	0	0%	1
188	548		1	0	0	0	0%	1
189	549		1	0	0	0	0%	1
190	610		302	0	4	0	0%	306
191	621		50	0	1	0	0%	51
192	622		32	0	0	0	0%	32
193	626		1170	0	0	0	0%	1170
194	628		3	0	0	0	0%	3
195	629		28	0	0	0	0%	28
196	630		316	0	5	0	0%	321
197	830		1	0	0	0	0%	1
198	844		2	0	0	0	0%	2
199	905		1	0	0	0	0%	1
TOAL			223961	2565	10405	150272		387203

Appendix C: A Review of the Literature

IMMIGRANT WOMEN
AND
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

By

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Introduction

This review of the literature provides an overview of the multidisciplinary academic research currently available with respect to issues surrounding the acquisition of English by adult immigrants, and therefore adult immigrant women, in Canada. It is presented as an Appendix in order to give the fullest possible overview of the research, which is summarized in the Report itself. The goal is to identify common issues or factors that will have an impact on female Canadian immigrants' ability and/or desire to acquire English.

After providing a brief orientation to relevant immigration policies and official language training in Canada, this review will give an overview of: (1) the policies and economic conditions influencing language acquisition by immigrant women; (2) issues related to their countries and languages of origin; (3) variations in language acquisition needs (based on literacy and education, history of colonialism and displacement, age, residential segregation, and gender); (4) motivations and barriers to learning English as a second language; and (5) gender inequality (including dealing with husbands and children). The review will conclude with a segment on negative effects associated with the lack of English proficiency in immigrant women.

Immigration and Language Training in Canada

The government department responsible for the selection and settlement of immigrants is Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). CIC uses three platforms, with associated programs, for the settlement process. The platforms are settlement, adaptation and integration. Settlement refers to meeting the initial basic needs of the immigrant; adaptation, to assisting the immigrant in realising some of the benefits of life in Canada; and integration, to the concept of the immigrant becoming a fully functioning member of Canadian society (Ekos, 2004). The three associated programs run by CIC in concert with its stated goals are: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC); the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP); and the Host Program (Ekos, 2004).

The LINC program comprises three main focus areas: language assessment, language training, and delivery assistance (Ekos, 2004). Immigrants are assessed at local assessment centres, often not-for-profit entities working in partnership with the Canadian government, using the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) framework for English proficiency. Currently twenty-six service providers offer LINC programs in Ontario (CIC, 2006).

Once the initial assessment of proficiency has been completed, the individual is directed to an appropriate language training facility. The language instruction itself is generally provided separately from the assessment centre, and will ideally be tailored to suit the individual's particular proficiency and location (Ekos, 2004). The CLB standards are used throughout to track the student's progress.

In addition to LINC, which was established in 1992 (Ekos, 2004), the government of Canada operates a newer program, known as the Internationally Trained Workers Initiative (Canada, 2005). A subcomponent of this initiative is known as the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative, the goal of which is to provide workplace-specific language training with a view to easing the transition for the immigrant into the

workforce (Canada, 2005). The main difference between the LINC program and the ELT initiative is that the latter is aimed at training immigrants to higher levels of competence in English, and also contains a job placement and mentoring component (CIC, 2006). The Canadian government spends in the vicinity of CDN\$95 million on immigrant language training, and an estimated 50,000 individuals are enrolled in various language programs (CIC, 2006).

Besides government programs, there are approximately 600 private sector firms providing language industry services in Canada, with revenues in 2004 of over CDN\$404 million (Statistics Canada, 2004). The language industry in Canada essentially breaks down into three sectors: instruction, translation and interpretation. Of these, instruction, both classroom and online, brought in the highest revenues, CDN\$193.2 million (48% of total) in 2004 (Statistics Canada, 2004). Interpretation services reported the lowest revenues, 2% of the total revenue (CDN 8.7 million) in 2004 (Statistics Canada, 2004). This indicates the general unavailability of interpretation services and highlights the need for newcomers to Canada to learn English quickly.

The Immigration Policy Context

Canadian immigration policy currently recognizes three major categories of immigrants: skilled or professional immigrants, business immigrants, and family class immigrants. (Provinces may also nominate immigrants who thus enter under separate agreements. The oldest and best developed program is the one designed and run by Quebec.)

The first two categories are commonly referred to in the general literature as “economic” or “independent” immigrants.

1. Skilled or professional workers are assessed on a point system, the relevance of which becomes immediately apparent in noting the weight given to proficiency in English or French.
2. Business immigrants are admitted under three categories: investors, entrepreneurs, and the self-employed. Investors give \$400,000 to the government to invest,

which is returned without interest over five years later; entrepreneurs have the net worth and experience to own and actively manage a business in Canada; and the self-employed category allows in-migration of those in the fields of culture and athletics.

3. “Family-class” immigrants are those who enter under the sponsorship of a family member who is a permanent resident or citizen and who pledges to take care of them financially should the need arise within a specified time.

Another important, albeit much smaller, source of migration to Canada are refugees. These are people who meet the criteria of various international conventions to which Canada is signatory, or criteria defined by Canadian case law. Essentially they are people in need of sanctuary on the basis of their experience, or well-founded threat, of persecution on one or more of several identified bases, such as religion, labour or political affiliation, gender, or sexual orientation. Refugees may be pre-identified, *e.g.*, by the United Nations, and government sponsored or privately sponsored, or they may be claimants who arrive in Canada and seek acknowledgement here of their status.

Canada receives approximately 250,000 immigrants annually. In 2004, the two economic classes comprised 57% of immigrants, while the family class formed 26% of total immigration (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 31). The group that is the focus of this study, immigrant women who arrive with little or no knowledge of English, arrives principally as dependents of economic migrants, as family-class sponsored immigrants, or as refugees.

According to Mesch (2003), economic migrants are individuals who have moved seeking better economic opportunities than in their home countries. Economic male migrants who enter Canada are most likely to have done so as principal applicants on a point system that, as we have noted, gives credit for their level of English and French proficiency. Men are more likely to be proficient in an official language than women, most of whom enter as spouses or dependents of principal applicants, or as sponsored family class members or refugees. Adult male immigrants, who are usually heads of

households, receive the major advantages of Canada's language training programs so that they can enter the workforce quickly. Programs for female immigrants who are not heads of households have a focus on "practical" rather than advanced or professional English, and even those are inaccessible to women who have primary childcare responsibilities (Boyd, 1992). For a variety of reasons, therefore, the structure of Canadian economic immigration screening results in fewer immigrant females being fluent in English and Canada's structure of entitlement for professional English classes contributes to fewer of those women being able to acquire proficiency in English.

In 2004, among permanent residents in Canada, only 18% of principal applicants spoke neither English nor French, whereas the figures were 39% for family class immigrants, 50.5% for spouses and dependents, and 80.5% for Refugees. (CIC Facts and Figures 2004: Immigration Overview sheet 28.)

Mesch (2003) discusses what he calls "tied movers", a term which encompasses both the "spouses and dependents" category and the "family class" category, as well as many families in the refugee group. A "tied mover" migrates to be close to family. For example, a foreign national married to a Canadian citizen can be admitted on the basis of that relationship, as long as other requirements, such as police and medical clearance, can be satisfied. As educational level is not assessed as part of the application, these applicants may and often do have fewer years of schooling than their counterparts in the economic stream, and may be completely unfamiliar with English. This may be problematic for some immigrant women, as some of the literature suggests that, in several cases, it may not even be the woman's desire to move to Canada, and that she had done so at the behest of her husband (Kouritzin, 2000).

The Economic Undervaluing of Immigrants

While the overall focus of this research project is immigrant women, much of the immigration literature examines both male and female immigrants. Women often move to Canada as part of a family unit, and their economic fortunes will depend on the

financial success of the men in their households. An unfortunate fact is that the Canadian marketplace assigns little value to foreign work experience—the very work experience that qualifies economic migrants for immigration status under Canada’s ‘points system.’ This situation places such immigrants, either male or female, in an extremely difficult position.

Much of the literature (Liu and Kerr, 2003; Aydemir and Skuterud, 2005; Warman and Worswick, 2004) confirms a deterioration of immigrant market-entry wage earnings and examines some of the underlying causes for the declining economic fortunes of Canadian immigrants. The lower economic returns for immigrants are particularly baffling, since these groups are traditionally better educated than the Canadian-born population (Aydemir and Skuterud, 2005).

Female immigrants’ lack of English proficiency does not mean they are poorly educated but that their education may not have included English or French. Among Permanent Residents 15 years of age or older in Canada in 2004, 72.6% of the males and 68% of the females had 13 or more years of schooling, including 49.5% of the males and 42.1% of the females who had one or more university degrees (CIC Facts and Figures 2004: Immigration Overview sheet 23). Consistently, Statistics Canada data have indicated that both female and male immigrants are likely to be more highly educated than their Canadian-born counterparts (see, for example, the 2003 Report on the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada), although this difference, despite the stringent point system, is declining as Canadian-born youth pursue higher education in greater numbers. Immigrant women who come with high levels of education and with several years of work experience in sophisticated organizations but who lack proficiency in Canada’s official languages stay out of the Canadian workforce or take up blue collar jobs.

A dreadful illustration of this phenomenon is the female space scientist who was a member of the team that put a Chinese satellite into space, but who subsequently earned her living in Canada by rolling out dough for a pastry shop in Toronto (*Toronto Star*, October 28, 2003).

Thus, studies suggest several trends. First, immigrant earnings have declined significantly over time when compared with those of Canadian-born workers. A study of market entry earnings of immigrant women and men to Canada by Aydemir and Skuterud (2005) based on census data from 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001, found a deterioration in successive immigrant cohorts. The authors also found that an educated immigrant with foreign work experience will experience difficulties finding gainful employment in Canada. In addition, they found that roughly one-third of the income deterioration can be attributed to shifts in language ability and place of birth. This issue does not appear to be particular to Canada. Studies in the United States and Australia—two other nations with substantial immigration programs—have shown the same downward trend in immigrant economic fortunes. Notably, both countries have also experienced compositional shifts in immigrants' point of origin, from predominantly Western European origins in the immediate post-World War II era, to Asian and South East Asian origins in more contemporary periods (Chiswick *et al.*, 2004).

Compounding the income deterioration is the geographic distribution of immigrants in Canada. Warman and Worswick (2004) found that immigrants were much more likely to live in a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), including cities beyond Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, where they were most likely to receive lower incomes than their Canadian-born peers.

Thus, immigrants do not seem to find the opportunities in Canada that they were hoping for. Most immigrants report underemployment and a downsizing of socio-economic status once in the country (Duff *et al.*, 2002; Tyyskä, 2007). Both immigrants and analysts attribute this to systemic xenophobia and racism in Canadian society. Many immigrants report that they were misled by officials at Canadian missions in their home countries as to the local employment prospects for immigrants. These immigrants are now likely to believe that they are only required in Canada to do the menial work that no one else wants to do (Kahn & Watson, 2005).

Duff *et al.* (2002) noted four core issues with respect to immigrant women in Canada and their integration into the workforce and host society: finding gainful employment; obtaining access to available training programs; acquiring vocational English as a Second Language (ESL) for the workplace; and resolving immigrant settlement and identity issues.

The wage experience for immigrant females echoes that of males, although, by and large, immigrant females earn less than immigrant males (Warman & Worswick, 2004). Aydemir and Skuterud (2005) found that the income decline was similar for both male and female immigrants who worked full-time. Notably, however, the returns on foreign work experience for women were similar regardless of country of origin or time of arrival, while those for Western European men were better than those for men from South Asia. Warman and Worswick (2004) found that although immigrant women in the biggest Canadian cities (Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) demonstrated higher incomes, these incomes have to be considered relative to the overall deterioration of male and female immigrant incomes in Canada. Across all levels, it appears that female immigrants' earnings mirror males; a slightly less pronounced recent upswing in immigrant earnings for females than males was noted.

Particularly instructive in this regard is Kahn and Watson's (2005) close look at the immigration experiences of seven Pakistani women in Canada. This study examined the women's overall experience in the country, including their linguistic abilities. All of the participants reported that their high hopes of prosperity had not been realized through immigration. They were struck by the discrepancy between the positive assessment of their professional skills and work experience that the Canadian government gives to economic migrants under its points system, and the "real life" experience of finding this work experience virtually valueless in the Canadian job market. In the end, many wanted to move back to Pakistan after acquiring their Canadian citizenship (Kahn & Watson, 2005).

The picture painted in the literature is generally quite bleak, with descriptions of isolation, broken families, disappointment and mental health problems. Immigration and acculturation can cause severe psychological distress even in the most motivated immigrant (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). All of the immigrant women in Kahn and Watson's (2005) study expressed a severe sense of loss in Canada, in terms of identity, family, professional status and culture. The authors note that this sense of loss can have severe health impacts; in particular, the loss of homeland can trigger the same psychological reaction as the loss of a loved one (Kahn & Watson, 2005). Other studies have also noted these impacts and the fact that immigration generally has a negative impact on the family lives of participants (Ward & Styles, 2003). Although the impact of family demands on immigrant women will be discussed in more detail below, this latter point is worth stressing, as all of the participants in the Ward and Styles (2003) study stated that improving the quality of life for their families was a main motivator in their migration. Instead, their experiences were the opposite.

Yakushko and Chronister (2005) argue that stress is a significant factor in preventing some entrants from integration into the larger society. Refugees, especially, may be in a poor state of physical and mental health. Such individuals may well have faced considerable physical and mental trauma in escaping persecution in their home nations and in living in refugee camps, and this can have a considerable complicating effect in terms of successful resettlement (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005).

Country and Language of Origin

Immigrants today are more likely to have a mother tongue that is neither English nor French than were their peers of forty years ago. The studies confirm the trend away from English fluency among more recent immigrants, which reflects a marked shift in country of origin—away from source nations in Western Europe and towards those of the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia. In the 1995-1999 cohort, 79% of men and 76% of women reported a mother tongue other than French or English, while the corresponding figures for 1965-1969 are 50% and 47%, respectively (Aydemir & Skuterud 2005). The

same study draws a link between mother tongue and immigrant earnings, suggesting that shifts in mother tongue and point of origin among immigrant cohorts have had an impact on market entry earnings.

Lack of English is not the only ground for workplace discrimination. In Kahn and Watson's 2005 study, the Pakistani women believed that their accents and fluency in English could be a barrier to their ability to advance their socio-economic status in Canada. The relation of accent to stereotyping or stigmatizing is further examined by Creese and Kambere (2003) in their study of African immigrant women in Canada. What is especially interesting about this study is the high level of education, at English-speaking institutions, reported by the participant women. Nonetheless, the participants still reported a measure of discrimination and stigmatization because of speaking English with an African accent.

Most commonly, the participants in Creese and Kambere's (2003) study reported that they found it, at best, distracting to have their pronunciation continually corrected, and they questioned the inference that their 'African' English pronunciation was any more or less correct than the Canadian pronunciation. The subject of accent raises the further issue that speaking to be understood requires not only effort on the part of the speaker but a genuine attempt on the part of the listener. Other studies concerning women from Africa in Canada have raised similar concerns (Dossa, 2004). This perhaps stresses the need to ensure that the local vernacular is used for ESL purposes, even if ESL was not directly relevant to the African women in Creese and Kambere's (2003) study.

Variations in Language Needs and Acquisition

In addition to recognizing the general need of recent immigrants for training in official languages, studies also suggest that there may be different needs among immigrants based on their mother tongue, education, gender, age, and whether they are embedded in ethnic enclaves or not.

Chiswick and Miller (2005) suggest that there are differences in the rates of learning English among different immigrants. They posit that the more distant the language is from English, the more difficult it is for the immigrant to learn it. Using data from the 1991 Canadian census, the authors tested their hypothesis. They assigned the greatest linguistic distance from English to Korean and Japanese. The smallest linguistic distance is assigned to Afrikaans, Swedish, and Norwegian. According to the authors, the greater the linguistic difference, the less likely the immigrant is to be able to speak English, and, even if it is acquired, the less likely it is to be spoken at home. Indeed, they found that after five years in Canada, 25% of those with Japanese or Korean as their mother tongues could not carry on a conversation in English. The figure for those with mother tongues closest to English was 5%. After 15 years in Canada, the study found that 5% of those with linguistically distant mother tongues could speak either English or French and were likely to speak it at home, as compared with 58% of those speaking the closest languages linguistically

The impact of speaking English or French at home, as well as conversationally, becomes clear when comparing immigrant language ability and income. Chiswick and Miller found that incomes for immigrants who could not conduct a conversation in an official language (*i.e.*, English or French), or who could conduct a conversation in an official language but did not speak it at home, were 10 to 12% lower than those of immigrants who usually spoke an official language at home. Moreover, the authors found that lack of proficiency in one of the official languages correlated to lower economic returns for foreign schooling and work experience.

Literacy and Education

Not all studies have confirmed Chiswick and Miller's hypothesis on the mother tongue being a predictor with respect to potential proficiency in English. In a study concerning linguistic ability among refugees in the Twin Cities, Fennelly and Palasz (2003) found that mother tongue was not necessarily a predictor of ability to acquire English and that education level and age were of significant importance. Their study examined linguistic

ability among Mexican, Russian, Somali and Hmong (Laotian) refugees in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Of the four, the authors found that Somalis and Russians reported the highest level of English proficiency, even though individuals from these countries have a mother tongue with roots different from that of English. Both Mexicans and Hmong were found to be less proficient in English, their proficiency levels being around the same, even though Spanish does share Latin roots with English.

This led Fennelly and Palasz (2003) to conclude that the higher education level of Somalis, coupled with the British colonial history of that country (see below), were key factors in their English proficiency. This was in contrast to the lower educational levels among the Hmong and Mexican migrants. The Mexican workers were found to be less well educated than the other migrants studied and indeed on a par with the average educational levels of the population in their home country. On the contrary, the other migrants were found to be educated at above-average levels for their home nations. Clearly then, education plays a significant role in the ability to acquire English.

The number of years of schooling that an immigrant has had can impact the likelihood of exposure to English in the home country, and can also facilitate the acquisition of the requisite academic skills needed to learn another language. Some studies have suggested that literacy in the mother tongue is required before literacy in English can be expected (Fennelly & Palasz, 2003; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006). Moreover, in many countries English is already taught as a second language at the secondary school level. Furthermore, because of the prevalence of academic material that must be written or printed in English, any higher learning is most likely to have exposed the immigrant to English by definition. Therefore, educational level and country of origin may be inseparable as predictors of the ability to acquire English as a second language.

History of Colonialism and Displacement

Among the several factors that play a role in the acquisition of English, Fennelly and Palasz (2003) stress that historical factors may explain why one ethnic group demonstrates a greater command of English than another. The authors postulate that some of the Somalis in their study may well have spent time in refugee camps in Kenya, an English-speaking country, before moving to the United States. In the same vein, they note that Laos was largely pre-literate as a country before the 1950s and that it was unlikely many of the Hmong had had much exposure to English before moving to the United States. Exposure to English, such as that experienced by immigrants coming from a former colony of Great Britain, is a factor in the adult immigrant's ability to acquire English, regardless of mother tongue.

Age

Education and language acquisition can also be tied into age of immigration, inasmuch as an individual who has recently graduated university will have had far more recent exposure to complex English language construction than one who graduated twenty years ago. As outlined by Carliner (2000), the ability to successfully acquire another language decreases with age. The ability to fully integrate also declines with age, unless there is another motivating factor present (Mesch, 2003).

As a result, it has been suggested that all academic studies on the issue of language acquisition should record the age of entry into the new country, rather than the age at which formal language training begins (Carliner, 2000). Clearly it would be unrealistic to suggest that language training was not appropriate for people over a certain age, but age could be a useful category with which to group English language learners, as indeed is done elsewhere in the academic world.

Residential Segregation

Fennelly and Palasz (2003) also note the extent to which the Hmong are spatially segregated in the twin cities area and suggest this too could play a factor in their English proficiency as an ethnic group. The idea that ethnic segregation, in enclaves or communities, plays a role in acquisition of English has been examined in several studies (Garret and Stevens, 1996; see Mesch, 2003, for an international example). It has generally been concluded that such segregation can be both a cause and effect of lack of proficiency in English (Fennelly & Palasz, 2003). Immersion within a community of individuals with the same mother tongue can lessen the incentive and opportunity for an individual to learn English. At the same time, people moving into a foreign country and language will gravitate to the familiar. Very often this trend will be further enforced by familial relationships (see below) where women are doubly disadvantaged in terms of chances for English language acquisition

Gender

Fennelly and Palasz (2003) found a direct relationship between gender and language proficiency. While women in their sample groups were consistently less proficient than men in reading English and, with the exception of Russian women, of speaking English, they found that this trend reversed when education was considered as well. It was demonstrated that women with college diplomas spoke English at a higher level than men with the equivalent education. The authors therefore present this as evidence that women are more responsive to social environment than men and thus, given the right education, are better able to acquire more advanced English than men.

Motivations and Barriers to Learning English as a Second Language

There is a variety of motivating factors in learning a new language. The point that becomes clear through Mesch's (2003) research is the importance of identifying the

motivations behind the immigrant's migration as a potential indicator of the likelihood to invest time in learning the host language.

Mesch's (2003) model of Hebrew language acquisition by immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union suggests that language acquisition is a matter of economic opportunity. If immigrants believe they can improve their socio-economic status by learning the host language, they will do so, using a cost/benefit model. All other things being equal, one could apply this model to both male and female economic immigrants to Canada whose primary motivation is to succeed in the working world and in their professions—they should be equally motivated to learn English.

For family migrants, the goal appears to be reuniting with other family members. Given this goal, are these individuals more or less likely to want to acculturate and learn English? In other words, is the family setting conducive to learning English, or does it hinder it? Mesch (2003) found that over time all migrants residing in Haifa had to acquire some knowledge of Hebrew simply to function. Is that the case in Canada as well, and can a qualitative literature review reveal any insights into the practical difficulties experienced by women, who are often the primary caregivers in the family unit, in becoming properly conversant in English?

Mesch (2003) also proposes that the perception of the host society's attitude towards immigrants and the original motivation for immigration are important in integration, including language acquisition (Mesch, 2003). Therefore he sees the act of becoming an immigrant, and the associated desire to integrate, as a two-way street that also includes the original perceptions of the host society by the immigrant and the subsequent perception of the degree of acceptance by the host society. Both of these issues, he believes, are crucial in determining the likelihood of the immigrant learning the host country's language. Applying this scenario to the Canadian situation again, one finds it conceivable that the negative responses of the host society reported by the women in the above studies (Creese & Kamber, 2003; Dossa, 2004; Kahn & Watson, 2004) may serve to dampen immigrant women's motivation to learn English.

Mesch (2003) distinguishes between language proficiency and language use. He believes language proficiency is driven mainly by economic incentives, such as those found in the traditional human capital model, as well as the attitude of the host society towards immigrants. However, Mesch believes language proficiency should not be understood to mean that the individual uses the host language at home or in any other context other than that required to work and function in the host society (Mesch, 2003). Chiswick and Miller (2003) found that immigrants who did not use English or French at home had lower overall incomes. Thus, women who are more likely to be confined to their homes and communities would be at a disadvantage in terms of language proficiency and therefore economic returns.

Li (2000; see also Duff *et al.*, 2002) examines some of the issues that can arise around cultural differences between North America and elsewhere and how these can impact the individual's ability to acquire, and successfully use, English. For example, Li (2002) states that an interlocutory style is very much rooted in the individual's cultural background. Therefore what could be considered polite in one culture could be misinterpreted in another. Li (2002) focuses on interlocutory issues because of their overall importance in the workplace and day-to-day life. Li (2000) also introduces other, less obvious issues, such as body language and directness of manner, both of which can have different norms among cultures.

One point that becomes clear through Li's (2000) work is the extent to which 'language socialization' is an ongoing process. For the person born into an English-speaking culture, it will start at birth and continue through adulthood as new experiences arise (Li, 2000). One of the challenges of successfully teaching English to immigrants is that both the language acquisition and adaptation need to occur in a relatively short space of time.

Further complicating this issue are those discussed by Kahn and Watson (2005). The individual immigrant may be going through a period of personal loss—of culture, professional and socio-economic status, family, and country. Will anyone undergoing

these types of stresses be able to learn another language and successfully adapt and integrate into the new society, assuming that this is what is required to level the playing field in the Canadian job market and economy?

Both Kouritzin's (2000) and Ho's (2006) studies are revealing. First, Kouritzin (2000) found that there are as many different motivations behind the decision to immigrate as there are immigrants. Although each will have to fit into a legal classification, whether they can be easily quantified is questionable. This presents a major problem for policymakers in the ESL realm, as limited resources compel them to develop policies that are fundamentally utilitarian, and the pure numbers of people involved can make the simplest methods of classification (Mesch, 2003) the most attractive.

Gender Inequality

Like Canadian-born women, many immigrant women are faced with gender discrimination in their homes and communities. In her study of Chinese and Hong Kong-born female immigrants to Australia, Ho (2006) notes that immigration can have the effect of reinforcing traditional gender roles. This can be the case even though these roles may be less rigid in the immigrants' home countries. One particular cause that is stressed in Ho's (2006) work is the loss of household assistance, from either other family members or paid help, experienced by these females as they moved to Australia. This situation can be reinforced by a woman's perceived need to spend more time with the children of the family in order to help them with their adjustment to the new country (Ho, 2006).

In addition, the change in female immigrants' freedom from household duties can also be driven in part by the downgrading of foreign work experience, as discussed elsewhere in this paper. This fact appears to hold as true for Australia as Canada—many of the women in Ho's (2006) study report that they could not find gainful employment in their chosen fields. As a result of this and the lack of access to affordable daycare, the women felt it was better to return to a more traditional gender role as mother and homemaker

(Ho, 2006). Another dynamic stressed in Ho's (2006) study is that many of the women interviewed stated that they were more dependent on their husbands once in Australia, than they had been previously. There were also some who suggested that expectations for gender roles in Australia were more conservative than they had been in either China or Hong Kong, where women are traditionally encouraged to work.

Thus, adult female immigrants can undergo a shift in their own gender roles and career expectations once the move has been made. As suggested by Ho (2006), immigrant women can fall into a more traditional gender role almost by default. The reasons include: lack of economic opportunity; high cost of local daycare; greater dependence on their husbands; expectations to pass on their original culture and language to their children; and a sense that their presence at home is needed to help their children deal with the stresses of the move.

It is clear that immigrant women can be subject to contradictory forces with respect to the issue of ESL. These forces would appear to be rooted in the cultural or familial expectation that the female be the primary person to pass on the language and culture of their home countries to their children. As a result, concern arises that Canadian integration will inhibit their ability to do so and that their mother tongue and culture will be forgotten in the process. Abu-Rabia (1997) notes that this can cause particular tensions along gender lines if the new (Canadian) culture is seen as clashing with the ideals and traditions of the old.

For women, relative deprivation of opportunity can also occur, as some cultures discourage women from learning the new tongue, as this testimony indicates:

“I tell my friends that they should help their wives to learn English, and learn to drive a car. You need to help people to grow wings. But they say to me, ‘If people grow wings, they can fly away!’ It’s this Latino culture, a part of it that I don’t like.” (Kenise Murphy Kilbride, Personal communication from a Salvadorean male immigrant, July 2004.)

Agnew (1998) proposes that immigrant women need to acquire ESL not only for knowledge of available social/health programs, but also for knowledge of their legal rights. Agnew's work centred specifically on the plight of battered immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area. While obviously not all immigrant women are going to be victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), there is some evidence to suggest that the prevalence of IPV is greater for immigrant women who have lived in Canada longer than for more recent arrivals (Hyman *et al.*, 2006). If this is indeed the case, then developing ESL programs that at least touch on some legal rights is important.

Further to this point, and as already noted, both male and female immigrants are in danger of severe health impacts, such as depression, during the immigration and settlement process. There is clearly a need to be able to identify and articulate these concerns to the relevant health authorities, if they arise. Evidently it is in the earlier stages, according to Kahn and Watson (2005), that the danger is highest, thereby highlighting the need for appropriate ESL instruction shortly after arrival. As women tend to be caregivers to ill family members, it is also imperative that they learn English in order to deal with medical professionals effectively.

Other studies point towards the importance of considering patriarchal barriers to the acquisition of English by immigrant women. Abu-Rabia's (1997) study of gender differences among Arab students' attitudes towards Canadian society found sharp differences by gender in these attitudes and in motivations for learning English. Arab societies are generally far more male dominated than Canadian society, and opportunities for women are limited. In his study of fifty-two grade-eight Arab immigrant schoolchildren in Canada, he hypothesized that one of two approaches towards ESL acquisition would be revealed: integrative or instrumental. 'Instrumental' English refers to ESL that is acquired and used for a specific purpose, such as economic advancement. He uses the term 'integrative' to mean ESL that is acquired for the purpose of integration.

Abu-Rabia (1997) found that that female students were overwhelming more integrative in their approach to ESL acquisition than male students. As suggested by Chiswick and

Miller (2003), 'integrative' English is required for full success in the Canadian workplace. Abu-Rabia's (1997) interviews with female students revealed that the cause of the gender split was related to the normative roles of females in Arab societies and families, as opposed to the perceived opportunities for females in Canadian society:

[A]ll fathers rejected the 'modern behaviour' of their daughters and forbade them to interact in Canadian society (p. 127).

This view was compared with the prevalent female attitude, reported among both mothers and daughters, that integration into Canadian society was desirable (Abu-Rabia, 1997). The study illustrates the difficulties some immigrant women may face in their efforts to learn English, based on patriarchal practices.

In her work examining the motivations behind Canadian immigrant women and their participation in ESL classes, Kouritzin (2000) refutes the popular notion that accessibility is the biggest constraint to attracting and retaining students for ESL instruction. Kouritzin argues that each female immigrant will most likely be subject to any number of forces, factors or constraints that will impact her decision-making process. These influences may range from the need to care for family members and maintain a household, to being subject, culturally, to the decisions of their husbands. The latter point can have some very wide-ranging implications, and Kouritzin reports several of the women she interviewed did not want to emigrate to Canada at all and had only done so as it was their husband's decision. One such woman, following the failure of her husband to find gainful employment, was now left in Canada to care for the family's children while her husband had returned to their homeland to work.

Clearly, then, some amount of ambivalence exists among female immigrants with respect to their mere presence in Canada, let alone attending ESL classes. Kouritzin (2000) notes that very often such women are under pressure from contradictory forces, in that their culture often includes the expectation that the female in the family unit will be the one to pass on cultural traditions to her children. Yet from a practical standpoint, there is a

distinct need to socialize into English as quickly as possible in order to function competently in Canada.

The complexities of English language acquisition and motivations to learn defy easy categorizations along the lines of Mesch (2003). While Mesch's three main motivational categories—economic/ideological, tied movers and refugees—may be useful for providing broad, theoretical categories in which to classify immigrants, it very much appears that these headings are too simplified when applied to many individual immigrants and particularly to immigrant women.

A poignant example is one woman in Kouritzin's (2000) study who had moved to Canada from Ukraine. She stated that the main reason she made this move was to allow her to school her children in Ukrainian culture and language, believing that Russian was too dominant in Ukraine to allow her to do that there. While there is logic to this reasoning, it cannot be easily classified under a general heading as Mesch (2003) does in his work.

Specific issues such as class sizes and attrition in ESL instruction need a more sophisticated approach, one that recognises the unique and often contradictory forces that immigrant women are often subject to. Simply stating that they need to be made more accessible hardly addresses the complex reality of the lives of non-English-speaking immigrant women. Indeed, as Kouritzin (2000) notes, during her research almost all of the attrition experienced by ESL instructors was from women dropping out of class, and of these women, the vast majority were mothers.

Dealing with Husbands and Children

As reflected in the above summary of patriarchal practices, immigrant women often face competing demands from the need to work and the need to be wives and raise families. To begin with, marital status can have bearing on the acquisition of English in two ways. If the female immigrant is already married to a man of the same first language, there is

less likelihood that she will learn English once in Canada as she can already communicate with her significant other in their home tongue. However, if the female is unmarried, and then marries someone else of another first language once in Canada, the likelihood of learning English increases significantly (Chiswick & Miller, 1999).

For immigrants, factors such as the high cost of housing in the large metropolitan areas where they tend to settle, coupled with the difficulty they face in having their credentials recognized so that they can get appropriate jobs, mean that immigrants usually need two incomes to make ends meet when they arrive. Language training for married women with children thus becomes an unaffordable luxury. When their children are small, women are either at home caring for them or, if they are fortunate enough to find childcare they can afford, they are working, often in menial positions unrelated to their level of expertise. (See, for example, research on the de-skilling of female immigrants in Mojab [1999] and Man [2004], and on the devaluing of immigrant skills in general in Finnie, Alboim and Meng [2005].) When the last of their children has finally entered school, women may not be eligible for language instruction for newcomers because they have been in the country too long or have already become citizens. Local classes offered by school boards outside of those that are government-sponsored are not accessible for many because they are offered at night when the women must be cooking, tending to their children, and otherwise preparing for the following day's work.

Even if the mothers must work until the family can afford to have them stay home, they are seen as the culture-bearers, the preservers in the home of the original country's culture. From them are the children expected to learn the first language and the norms of their culture, and they are to model the role of the ideal woman in that society. Speaking English, driving a car, and otherwise usurping the role of the head of the family are to be avoided in some communities. Even for clearly intelligent women, violating these cultural taboos may prove too painful:

“My friend [born in Italy] is a queen in her beautiful home here; anything she wants, her husband will provide. But he doesn't approve of her wanting to learn English. I said, 'It's all right; I'll teach you!' But she was

too uncomfortable with violating his wishes, and so she stopped after just a couple of lessons.” (Personal communication in 2005 to Kenise Murphy Kilbride by a female Professor who also speaks Italian.)

Rather than something associated with a particular culture, this issue is one of relationships within particular families. It means we must identify the types of outreach to immigrant families that will result in better opportunities for immigrant women to access language training.

Two perspectives exist on this issue regarding the acquisition of English by immigrant woman with children. According to one, since the ability to learn another language decreases with age (Carliner, 2002), children are better able to learn English. Having English-speaking children in the house can therefore have a positive effect upon the English acquisition of the parents (Chiswick & Miller, 1999).

Another perspective is that there is a tendency for children to act as ‘translators’ for their parents in the latter’s’ day-to-day interactions with the outside world. The alternative argument is therefore that this reliance on children for translation will mean that the parents are less motivated to learn the language themselves. Most likely the explanation is dependent upon the varying degrees to which the other issues that make up the immigration equation exist on an individual basis. It follows that this one issue alone is probably not a good indicator of who will, or will not, display a greater tendency to learn the language.

Thus, the circumstances shaping immigrant women’s English language needs are complicated. They are less likely to speak English, although they may be very well educated. If they have come with a family, they are most likely to be the parent who fulfills the homemaker role. Within that milieu, there is little time or opportunity to learn English. The situation may be further compounded by the nature of their relationship with their husbands and the extent to which they are supportive of their wives learning English. Yet without English, the female immigrant is unlikely to find any professional

or much personal satisfaction in Canada. This factor, combined with the inherent stress in immigrating, may have severe health impacts, particularly with respect to the onset of clinical depression, which would further dampen the women's motivations and opportunities for learning English.

Turning to the obvious support groups, for example, immigrant communities, may not ultimately be beneficial, for several reasons, not the least of which is that immersion in the immigrant community can arrest integration and the learning of English. So a vicious circle develops, and resentment can build to such a large degree that the only aspiration of the immigrant woman is to reside in the country long enough to acquire citizenship, and return home (Kahn & Watson, 2005).

Losses from Immigrant Women's Lack of English Proficiency

When immigrant women lack the opportunities to acquire proficiency in an official language, immediate and direct economic losses occur, such as:

- the loss of the application of (often highly educated and experienced) human capital,
- the loss of their spending power (their salaries are low), and
- the loss of potential direct and indirect tax revenues.

Beyond these immediate, direct economic losses are those that are more indirect, incurred through various impacts on their family:

- Husbands whose wives cannot contribute to the family income must accept low-paid, dead-end jobs more readily, and stay in them longer than those whose wives can contribute to the support of the family, because they cannot make use of, or make time for, opportunities for further training and education that could lead to professional advancement.

- Low-income families cannot afford optimal conditions for their children's growth and development such as safe and healthy housing, adequate food and clothing, social and recreational opportunities (Ali, in press)
- Children whose mothers (in their role as primary caregivers) cannot navigate the education system get streamed into non-academic programs, which limits their opportunities in higher education; they are unlikely to receive any of the special services that English-speaking mothers can insist upon (Bernhard *et al.*, 1998)
- Children of low-income families are much more likely to drop out of school, take up low-income jobs themselves, be associated with criminal activity, and become dependent on state subsidies (Curtis *et al.*, 2004).

All of these factors militate against the future educational and economic success of the family and its subsequent generations. At the least, it may make such economic success attainable only after a longer and harder path is trod by both generations.

Education is not the only social sector in which immigrant women not fluent in English or French are unable to serve their families well. Women also have the primary responsibility for their family's healthcare. In the health sector, immigrant mothers seeking care for their children or themselves, medications from a pharmacy, or assistance for seniors in the family are at a serious disadvantage. The health and well-being of family members is frequently seen as the mother's responsibility, but this responsibility is very difficult to fulfill without fluency in English or French. Similarly, children and seniors alike can benefit from community programs designed for them, but if mothers are unable to read information provided about these programs, their families may be less likely to access them than families in which the mothers are proficient in English or French. The latter can keep abreast of local services such as swimming lessons for children, day programs for seniors, workshops on tenants' rights, community gardens for wholesome foods, and so forth. Indirectly, such programs contribute to the social and economic well-being of individual families and of society as a whole.

The loss of opportunities to build social networks, which a shared language provides, lessens the likelihood of immigrant women integrating, or facilitating their families' integration, in Canadian society. If they cannot communicate with neighbours, with providers of public services, with their own or their spouse's co-workers who do not speak their native language, with other parents at their children's school, or with other users of public spaces such as libraries, parks and sports arenas, they will not be able to develop any social contacts outside their own linguistic groups. This scenario lessens the likelihood of immigrant mothers building the networks that can provide access to better jobs and housing for themselves and their families. The situation is particularly lamentable in light of the Beiser and Hou study (2000), which showed that when Southeast Asian immigrant women had access to English language tutoring or classes, they "made better use of them than men" (p. 326). Moreover, when these women possessed sufficient English language skills to enter the workforce, their language skills improved even more than did those of the men. Not having sufficient language skills rendered them less likely to enter the workforce, where they would have experienced occupational mobility. The Asian women who lack proficiency in English or French were also likely to feel excluded from 'mainstream Canadian Society', and their participation in social and political institutions was likely to be severely limited.

The effects on the women themselves of not speaking either of the official languages is also documented by Man, who writes:

The difficulties some of them encountered in communicating in English also exacerbated their feelings of isolation and depression. Some women from China talked about friends or acquaintances that had experienced depression or had even committed suicide after immigrating to Canada (2004a, p. 56).

In some cases, the isolation of immigrant women without an official language is made worse by domestic abuse, as the women who are victims of their husbands' anger and frustration find few or no allies with whom they can communicate (Coutino, 1986; Can.

African Newcomer Aid Centre of Toronto, 1992; McLeod & Shin, 1994; Martin & Mosher, 1995; Zorza, 1996; McDonald, 1999; Springer & Kilbride, 2004).

In sum: Immigrant women's lack of proficiency in Canada's official languages is a significant barrier for them and for their families' socio-economic integration in Canadian society. Despite their prior education and experience, they are unable to contribute fully to Canadian economy and to their families' financial health. They are unable to interact socially with Canadians other than those who speak the language they already know. This has a serious impact on their capacity to integrate in and to contribute to a cohesive society. Furthermore, their inability to communicate in English or French reduces their own and their families' capacity to benefit from programs and services available to all Canadians.

While it is clear that immigrant women coming to Canada need support in becoming proficient in the official Canadian languages, it is much less clear how this support can best be provided to them. Programs such as the federally funded LINC are offered by a wide variety of institutions, including school boards and non-governmental organizations. What contextual factors make such programs more successful than others? Who benefits from these programs and who does not? What other kinds of formal and non-formal programs are needed? Who can implement such programs effectively and efficiently? How can the media and the business sector contribute to this effort? How will we know what impact these programs have had on immigrant women and their families' socio-economic integration in Canada?

These complex questions do not have simple answers. Research in this area is thin and scattered, and no large-scale or longitudinal Canadian studies exist. Public service institutions and non-governmental organizations that deal directly with immigrant women who do not understand English or French are well positioned to tell us what are the most urgent and/or important questions for researchers to pursue, and also to incorporate what is known or learned into their institutional policies and practices. Private sector partners can guide us on strategies for dissemination, advocacy, financing, and fund-raising.

Government policymakers can suggest how, when, and where governmental policies and programs can be implemented. And researchers can pool their expertise to produce high-quality, authoritative research. Collaboration among these parties at the local as well as the national level is needed to encompass small-scale experimental initiatives as well as more comprehensive national frameworks.

Comment: overall, the above section was repetitive and could be better integrated.

Gaps in Research

The literature review reveals that this subject of the acquisition of proficiency in English by immigrant women is generally under-researched in Canada, and that there is a long list of areas in which future research is required, including:

- general baseline data (demographic, quantitative, qualitative) on both the immigrant women who are engaged in learning English as a second language and those who are not thus engaged;
- data on the English language proficiency and ESL needs of different categories of immigrant women by entrance to Canada (economic, family class, and refugees);
- data on the links between immigrant women's countries of origin and their English proficiency and needs for ESL;
- links between literacy and educational levels of immigrant women and their ability and/or motivations to learn English;
- past educational histories of immigrant women, including the impact of colonial education systems on their English language readiness/proficiency, and needs;
- history of migration, including the impact of living in multiple countries prior to migration to Canada, in relation to immigrant women's English language readiness/proficiency, and needs;
- impact of English language proficiency on the training, employment, and earnings of immigrant women;
- impact of "foreign accents" on the training, employment, and earnings of immigrant women;

- impact of age on immigrant women's English language needs, including the impact of their position in the life course in relation to family (as daughters, mothers, grandmothers);
- role of residential patterns (segregation vs integration) in immigrant women's opportunities for learning English;
- the direct link between gender on language learning, including comparative studies of women's and men's patterns of learning a language and their ability to translate English proficiency into successful integration;
- the range of immigrant women's motivations/incentives/compulsions to learn English, including education, employment, family related reasons, community related reasons, or individual/idiosyncratic reasons;
- the multiple barriers, based on gender and race inequality, that prevent immigrant women from engaging in learning English as a second language, including patriarchy and racism in the main social institutions (education, work, family, state/government policy and programs);
- patriarchal and interpersonal barriers in families against immigrant women's English language proficiency, including spousal relations (support from male partners), and the gender division of work with the main expectation of women as caregivers and nurturers of both young and old family members;
- the role of domestic violence in immigrant women's English language opportunities;
- the barrier of different familial and cultural attitudes and expectations from women in immigrant communities, including the expectations by elders and children for women to be primary caregivers, always available to fulfill their needs, and the expectations of women themselves, based on cultural values and norms, to be the primary "bearers of culture";
- the barriers against immigrant women's English language learning resulting directly from child care, including the impact of the lack of affordable child care, English language needs related to children's schooling, and children's expectations from their mothers;

- immigrant women's health status and needs in relation to their English language acquisition and proficiency.

In sum, there is no lack of topics for future research, and the above list is just the tip of the iceberg in the fledgling studies of immigrant women's English language proficiency. And given Canada's two official languages, we also need to add French language proficiency on the list, doubling the amount of work that needs to be done.

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APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Table 1:

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (Mandarin)

Participant's #	Country of Origin ¹			Approximate Age			Year of entry to Canada	Education ²					Original Occupation, if any	Occupation ³ & employer: Current, if Any	Children's Ages		Ages of Other residents	
	China	HK	Tai-wan	20's	30's	40's		<HS	HS	HS+	U ⁴	U+			Male	Female	Male	Female
1	√				√		2007	√					Housewife	Automobile Accessories Factory	14		30+	
2	√				√		2007	√					Factory Worker	Laundry Mill	10		30+	
3	√				√		2007	√					Factory Administrator	Automobile Accessories Factory		19	40+	
4	√				√		2007		√				Bookkeeper	Spring Roll Factory	15		40+	
5	√					√	2006		√				Bookkeeper	Spring Roll Factory		18	40+	
6	√					√	2002				√		Technician	Unemployed	20, 1.5		40+	
7	√					√	2002				√		Accountant	Automobile Accessories Factory		23	50+	
8	√					√	2006				√		Insurance Broker	Automobile Accessories Factory		21	40+	
Averages				Age: 39-40			2.0 yrs	Education: H.S.							Pre-School: 1 Modal #: 1 None = 0			

¹ For Country of Origin, if it is OTHER than China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, WRITE in the name across the three boxes (e.g., Viet Nam).

² For education, check <HS for those who are literate but have less than a high school diploma. BUT if the participant is NOT literate, write NO in >HS box. HS means high school has been completed but no other qualification was obtained; U means university was completed but no further study was completed (unless otherwise stated in table). + means additional work was undertaken and completed, such as certificates, diplomas, or other degrees.

³ "Original occupation if any" means the one the participant held in the Country of Origin.

⁴ University diploma from China

Table 2.

**FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
(Cantonese)**

Participant's #	Country of Origin ¹			Approximate Age			Year of entry to Canada	Education ²					Original Occupation, if any	Occupation ³ & employer: Current, if any	Children's Ages		Ages of other residents	
	China	HK	Taiwan	20's	30's	40's		<HS	HS	HS+	U	U+			Male	Female	Male	Female
1	√					√	1992	√					Sewing Machine Operator	Sewing Machine Operator	13	12	60, 80	
2	√					√	2003	√					Sewing Machine Operator	Homemaker	36	34	40 60+	
3	√					√	1993		√				Sewing Machine Operator	Sewing Machine Operator	22	21		
4	√					√	1988		No t	give n			Umbrella Maker	Sewing Machine Operator	15	18	50+	
5		√				√	1992		√				Accounting Clerk	Sewing Machine Operator	Not	given	Not given	
6		√				√	1993	√					Sewing Machine Operator	Sewing Machine Operator	14	21		
7		√				√	1992	√					Homemaker	Sewing Machine Operator	19	14	50+	
8		√				√	1986	√					Sewing Machine Operator	Sewing Machine Operator	13	14,18	46	
Averages				Age: 40's			15	Education: Less than H.S.							Pre-School: 0 Modal #: 2 None = 0			

¹ For Country of Origin, if it is OTHER than China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, WRITE in the name across the three boxes (e.g., Viet Nam).

² For education, check <HS for those who are literate but have less than a high school diploma. BUT if the participant is NOT literate, write NO in >HS box. HS means high school has been completed but no other qualification was obtained; U means university was completed but no further study was completed. + means additional work was undertaken and completed, such as certificates, diplomas, or other degrees.

³ "Original occupation if any" means the one the participant held in the Country of Origin.

Table 3.

**FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
(Punjabi)**

Parti- pant's #	Country of Origin ¹			Approximate Age			Year of entry to Canada	Education ²					Original Occupation, if any	Occupation ³ & employer: Current, if any	Children's Ages		Ages of other residents	
	HK	Taiwan		20's	30's	40's		<HS	HS	HS +	U	U +			Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Pakistan			√			2002			√			Banking	None	5,3	4mths	35+	
2	Pakistan					√	1999		√				None	None	7			
3	India					√	2002	√					None	None	7,5,3	2 2mths	60+ 40+ 30+	25+ 18+
4	India				√		2002			√			None	None	8, 6	5	40+	
5	Pakistan			√			2003			√			None	None	18mths			
6	Pakistan					60+	2001			√			None	None	40, 30	35+,20+	70+ 50+ 45+	70+ 50+
	Averages			Age: 40			5.5	Education: High School +							Pre-School: 6 Modal #: 3-4 None = 0			

¹ For Country of Origin, if it is OTHER than China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, WRITE in the name across the three boxes (e.g., Viet Nam).

² For education, check <HS for those who are literate but have less than a high school diploma. BUT if the participant is NOT literate, write NO in >HS box. HS means high school has been completed but no other qualification was obtained; U means university was completed but no further study was completed. + means additional work was undertaken and completed, such as certificates, diplomas, or other degrees.

³ "Original occupation if any" means the one the participant held in the Country of Origin.

Table 4.

**FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
(Urdu)**

Particip- ant's #	Country of Origin ¹			Approximate Age			Year of entry to Canada	Education ²					Original Occupation, if any	Occupation ³ & employer: Current, if any	Children's Ages		Ages of other residents	
	HK	Tai- wan		20's	30's	40's		<HS	HS	HS +	U	U +			Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Pakistan				√		2001		√				Housewife	None	13,11,9, 1mth.		40+	
2	Pakistan				√		2006		√				Housewife	None	5	15,7,3	40+	
3	Pakistan				√		1998		√				Housewife	None	6,1	9,7	40+	
4	Pakistan			√			2007		√				Housewife	None	3	6	35+	
5	Pakistan				√		2003		√				Housewife	None	15,14,12 9,3		40+	
6	Pakistan				√		2001			√			Housewife	None	17,13	16,7	40+	
7	Pakistan				√		2004			√			Housewife	None		6	40+	
8	Pakistan				√		2006				√		Teaching	None		15,13,7	40+	
	Averages			Age: 30's			3.5	Education: High School							Pre-School: 5 Modal #: 4 None = 0			

¹ For Country of Origin, if it is OTHER than China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, WRITE in the name across the three boxes (e.g., Viet Nam).

² For education, check <HS for those who are literate but have less than a high school diploma. BUT if the participant is NOT literate, write NO in >HS box. HS means high school has been completed but no other qualification was obtained; U means university was completed but no further study was completed. + means additional work was undertaken and completed, such as certificates, diplomas, or other degrees.

³ "Original occupation if any" means the one the participant held in the Country of Origin.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Table 5

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors: Age				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	Mid-late 30's	Early 40's	None given	34
2.	Early 40's	43	None given	None given
3.	None given	38	None given	Early 40's
4.	Early 20's	40	Early 40's	Approx. 40
5.	29	58	30 yrs.	None given
6.	Late 20's	34	45+	Late 30's
Average	Mid 30's	Early 40's	Early 40's	Early 40's

Table 6

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors: Year of Entry				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	1996	2001	None given	2000
2.	1997	2005	2001	None given
3.	None given	2005	2005	2001
4.	2003	2000	1999	2003
5.	2003	1998, (visitor in 1995)	1995	1997
6.	2003	1999	2002	2001
Average length of time in Canada in 2007	6.6	5.6	6.4	6.6

Table 7

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors: Children's Number, Ages				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	1 Boy –12 yrs. 1 Girl –14 yrs.	1 Girl- 14yrs.	1(gender unspecified) 2 yrs.	Girl – 12 yrs. Boy – 10 yrs. Girl – 8 yrs.
2.	1 Boy –22 yrs. 1 Girl –15 yrs.	1 Girl-17 yrs.	2 Girls –19 and 21 yrs.	4 children 1 boy-16yrs. (gender and age unspecified for others)
3.	None	1 Girl- 8 yrs.	None	2 Girls – 19 and 21 yrs.
4.	1 Boy- 4 mths.	None	Girl-14 yrs. Boy-18 yrs.	2 Girls – 12 and 16 yrs.
5.	2 Girls-3, 1.5 yrs	1 Boy - 26 yrs.	Girl – 7 yrs. Boys – 1,6,8 yrs.	2 Boys – 4 and 8 yrs. 2 girls – 3 and 11 yrs.
6.	1 Girl – 3yrs, 3mths.	None	Girl –14 yrs. Boys –13,16,17 yrs.	Girl – 4 and 11 yrs. Boy – 7 yrs.
Pre-School:	3	0	2	2
Modal #:	3	1	2, 4	3, 4
None:	1	2	1	0

Table 8.

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors, Level of English upon arrival				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	Couldn't speak or understand	Read only	Read, write, and speak some	Read and write
2.	Only knew a few words	Read only	Read and write, couldn't speak much	Read, write and understand, but couldn't speak
3.	Speak and read	None	Read, write, couldn't speak, difficulty understanding it	Read and write, could not understand nor be understood
4.	Very little English	Read and write some	Read, write, difficulty understanding, speak a little	Read only
5.	None	None	None	Understand, but not speak it
6.	Some reading, a little speaking, but couldn't be understood	Read and understand (couldn't speak or write)	Read and write, couldn't be understood	Read, write, and speak some

E.g.,

- None
- Read only
- Read and write some
- Read and write
- Read, write, and speak some but not able to understand or be understood
- Read, write, and speak some

Table 9.

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors: Level of Education				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	High School (Hong Kong) Now OSSD & teacher's aide diploma	Post secondary (Masters) (China)	Post Secondary (Masters) (India)	Post Secondary Degree (Pakistan)
2.	High school (Hong Kong)	Post Secondary Degree (China)	Post Secondary School (Pakistan)	Not given
3.	None given	Post Secondary Degree (China)	Post Secondary (Masters) (India)	Post Secondary Degree (Masters) (Pakistan)
4.	High School (China)	Post Secondary Diploma (China)	Post Secondary School (India)	Post Secondary School (Pakistan)
5.	Not given	Post Secondary Degree (China)	Pakistan – Grade 10 Canada – High School Diploma	Not given
6.	College English	Post secondary Degree (China)	Post Secondary School	Post Secondary School (Pakistan)
Average	H.S. Diploma	College/Univ. Degree	College/Univ. Degree	College/Univ. Degree

E.g.,

(Home Country): some high school, high school, some post-sec, post-sec degree, diploma, *etc.*
 Canada: (same)

Table 10.

Individual Interviews: Demographic Factors: Youngest Child's Age at Arrival				
	Cantonese	Mandarin	Punjabi	Urdu
1.	1 yr.	8 yrs.	Undeterminable (no arrival yr. given)	1 yr.
2.	5 yrs.	15 yrs.	13 yrs.	Undeterminable (no arrival yr. given)
3.	No child at arrival	6 yrs.	No child at arrival	13 yrs.
4.	No child at arrival	No child at arrival	6 yrs.	8 yrs.
5.	No child at arrival	17 yrs.	No child at arrival	1 yr.
6.	No child at arrival	No child at arrival	8 yrs.	1 yr.

Table 11.

Comparison⁴ of Individual Interviewees⁵ vs Women in Focus Groups⁶								
	Cantonese		Mandarin		Urdu		Punjabi	
	Indiv.	F.G.	Indiv.	F.G.	Indiv.	F.G.	Indiv.	F.G.
Age	mid 30's	upper 40's	early 40's	about 40	early 40's	30's	early 40's	about 40
Educ. level prior to arrival	H.S. Dip.	Less than H.S.	College /Univ. Degree	H.S. Dip.	College /Univ. Degree	H.S. Dip.	College /Univ. Degree	H.S. Dip. plus
Length of time in Canada	6.6	15.0	5.6	1.5	6.6	3.5	6.4	5.5
Children: Pre- schoolers	3	0 ⁷	0	1	2	5	2	3
Modal number	3	2	1	1	3, 4	4	2, 4	3, 4
None	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0

⁴ Based on averages of demographic data for participants

⁵ Six women in each language group were interviewed individually in English for about an hour.

⁶ Focus Groups had 8 members except for the Punjabi group, which had 6 members. Each group was conducted in the first language of the participants.

⁷ Ages of children in Cantonese Focus Group ranged from 13 to 36.