

**Mapping community with African-Canadian youth newcomers:  
Settlement narratives and welcoming communities**

by

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## **Declaration**

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

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Immigration is important to Canada and Canadian society in many ways. Leading the G8 group of countries with the highest proportion of foreign-born population, immigrants make up an important part of the Canadian economy and society (Statistics Canada, 2013). As noted by several authors, much of the literature surrounding newcomer settlement concentrates on either young children or adults, leaving a gap in research into settlement experiences of adolescents (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Janzen & Ochocka, 2003; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

The purpose of this research project is to explore important community places, themes around settlement, and welcoming communities with newcomer youth in the context of stories surrounding maps of their community. The data were collected as part of a larger project exploring engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups in community-based planning practices. Over the course of the three-day African-Canadian Youth Leadership Project in 2011, thirteen immigrant youth participated in leadership and research activities. The current study focuses on data gathered through a cognitive mapping exercise conducted as part of that larger project.

Through thematic narrative analysis of interview transcripts, videos, and maps, major themes of home and family, social places, and support networks emerged as being connected to important places in the context of settlement and the perception of a welcoming community. Issues of safety and exclusion were also raised in participants' stories. These themes are explored as they connect to place, which grounds a discussion of family connections, social capital, and third places contributing to newcomers' sense of place, and therefore their experience of places in the community.

The importance of bridging social capital is also illustrated, including the links to places in the community that share characteristics of Oldenburg's (1999) third places. Leisure settings were prominent examples of such places in newcomer youth's stories and maps, often as context for social learning, language skill development, and fostering social connections. Findings show support for Seat's idea of settlement as being conceived of full engagement in the host society, as well as the feeling of fitting in (2000).

Potential benefits of this and similar research include a greater understanding of newcomer youth settlement experiences, contributing to theory and grounding the settlement experience in the concept of place. Issues of bridging social connections and the importance of the community's role in newcomer engagement might facilitate policy and planning considerations for creating welcoming communities and community places.

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## Dedication

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Dedicated to my family and to Jules – couldn't have made it without you.

## Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter One: Immigration, Welcoming Communities, &amp; Youth</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Guiding Literature</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Settlement</i>	6
Recreation and settlement.	7
Youth issues explored.	10
Regional perspectives on immigrant youth issues.	12
<i>Place</i>	15
Space, Place, and Sense of Place	15
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology, Methods, &amp; Analysis</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	20
<i>Methodological Approach</i>	20
<i>Bounding the Study</i>	21
Activities & themes.	22
Situating my research.	23
Participants.	24
<i>Methods</i>	25
Cognitive mapping.	26
Interviews.	28
<i>Researcher's Role &amp; Ethical Considerations</i>	30
<i>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</i>	31
<i>Conclusion</i>	35
<b>Chapter Four: Findings</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Home and Family</i>	40
Connection to family.	41
Home as a place of responsibility.	41
<i>Social Places and Fitting in</i>	42
<i>Support Networks</i>	47
Formal Supports	47
Informal Supports	50
<i>Exploring Negative Themes</i>	52
Exclusion.	53
Safety and gender.	54
<i>Conclusion</i>	55
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion &amp; Conclusion</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>Home, Identity &amp; Adaptation</i>	58

<i>Social Places: Leisure, Social Learning, and Third Places</i>	60
Leisure as context.	60
Place-making.	62
Third places and settlement.	64
<i>Social Capital: Social Networks and Settlement</i>	66
Bonding and bridging: The need for bridges.	69
<i>Connecting to Place: Social Capital, Sense of Place, &amp; Settlement</i>	70
Marginality & Access	71
<i>Conclusion</i>	72
<i>Limitations and Future Directions</i>	74
<b>References</b>	<b>76</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Sika's map featuring the Reception Centre .....	37
Figure 2: Natasha's map featuring the Reception Centre .....	38
Figure 3: Charles' map featuring descriptions of his daily activities .....	39
Figure 4: Ahmed's map centred on his home.....	40
Figure 5: Shandi's map featuring her and a friend in the park.....	44
Figure 6: Kwame's map featuring soccer pitch. ....	45
Figure 7: Daniel's map.....	49
Figure 8: Keisha's map featuring representations of social connections .....	50



## Chapter One: Immigration, Welcoming Communities, & Youth

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Among the G8 group of countries, Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born population – 20.6%. In comparison, Germany and the United States are second and third, with 13% and 12.9% respectively (Statistics Canada, 2013). Over the two decades spanning 1991 to 2011, the proportion of immigrants living in Canada rose from 16.1% to 20.6% (Statistics Canada, 2005; 2013). National Household Survey data from 2011 indicate that nearly seven million Canadians are immigrants to the country (Statistics Canada, 2013). This group represents a significant portion (over one-fifth) of Canada's population, and as such, exerts an influence on regional and national economies, population, and employment. Canada's aging (and retiring) population combined with a general downward trend in birth rates (Statistics Canada, 2010) brings the necessity of the immigrant contribution to Canadian society to the forefront. Not only is immigration crucial to population growth in Canada (Feng, 2005), but it is also projected to become an even larger part of the Canadian labour force in the future. Martel et al. (2011) estimate that one in three Canadian workers will be foreign-born by 2031, and the figure will likely be higher in the immigration hotbeds of Ontario and British Columbia. A likely future scenario is one in which communities will be competing for immigrants as they struggle to fill jobs and maintain their tax bases.

As the immigrant population increases it has become more necessary than ever to plan and promote the welcoming and diverse communities that Canada holds as a cornerstone of national identity. Indeed, cultural diversity and development are stated objectives in Canada's Immigration Act alongside social and economic development (Krahn,

Derwing, & Abu-Laban, 2005). In this vein, authors such as Rahder and Milgrom (2004), call for a critical eye to be cast on current community planning trends in ways that acknowledge cultural differences of traditionally under-represented groups. At the municipal scale, the City of Kitchener, Ontario sets out in its Strategic Plan a commitment to the development of a diverse, inclusive, and representative community, as well as to creatively work to engage the diverse populations found in the city (City of Kitchener, 2010, p. 9). It is in this overall context that my work is set.

Many mid-size cities in Canada are in need of an influx of newcomers to address the previously mentioned issues of population decline and economic stimulation. This also eases pressures on settlement services in immigrant centres of larger cities (Krahn et al., 2005), as immigrant settlement in Canada is geographically imbalanced. Most newcomers in the last decade have chosen to settle in large cities on arrival in Canada. Almost 75% of immigrants choose to live in one of the “big three” - that is to say the three largest urban centres in Canada: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver (Krahn et al., 2005). The reasons for this pattern of settlement in large urban centres are complex, interconnected, and span across various spheres of life. While large cities often plan for and depend on an influx of newcomers for a variety of economic and population related reasons, mid-size cities rarely put as much thought or effort into recruitment and retention of newcomers (Simard & Simard, 2005). In several case studies of mid-size cities in Quebec, Martin (2000) and Clermont (2000) laud the efforts of the provincial government in regionalizing immigration flows, and note that knowledge of the local language and the degree of welcoming attitudes of host communities contribute positively to immigrant retention in addition to the draw offered by existing ethnic communities and employment opportunities.

Aside from attracting and retaining newcomers, there is a growing recognition of the need for a more holistic understanding of how to meaningfully integrate immigrants into the larger host society (Vineberg, 2012). In order for newcomers to more fully participate in local community life and broader society in Canada, the discourse around immigrant settlement must consider more than language barriers and job-readiness. In this vein, Tolley and Young (2011) have identified additional areas that are essential for settlement; among these are the creation, provision, and management of recreation and leisure services and programs. Indeed, recreation and leisure have been shown to provide a context for several facets of newcomer settlement, including opportunities to interact with members of the local community, develop language and communication skills, and explore broader cultural aspects of the host society (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Shiness, Glover, & Parry, 2004; Tirone & Pedlar, 2005). Research into adolescent newcomers' participation in sport has also shown positive relationships between recreation contexts, self-esteem, and feelings of settlement success (see Yu & Berryman, 1996). This example is notable as it represents a relatively small area of literature about youth and adolescent newcomers.

Research exploring immigration, settlement, and community are typically focused on either adults or very young (e.g. elementary school-aged) children (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003), despite the number of adolescent and youth newcomers rising steadily for the last decades. Perhaps one of the most comprehensive literature reviews on the subject, Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, and Khattar's (2003) work on immigrant youth in Ontario determines that the issues of being new to a country and society are exacerbated by the stresses of adolescence and vice versa. The authors also point out that language barriers and issues of discrimination are at the forefront of settlement issues for youth-

newcomers. Support from family, social networks, and institutions has been shown to help ameliorate some of the difficulties that this demographic may face (Beiser, Shik, & Curyk, 1999; Kilbride, et al., 2003).

Including the concept of place into the discussion of settlement is important, as newcomers are settling *somewhere*. As immigrants experience the unfamiliar landscapes of their host country, these settings are endowed with meaning through a multitude of processes (Ng, 1998). Public places, for instance, are a key component of welcoming communities, notably for youth, as they provide opportunities for social learning and the building of social capital (Esses, Hamilton, Bennett-AbuAyyash, & Burstein, 2010). Indeed, Sampson and Gifford (2010) note the general dearth of literature surrounding immigrants' connection to place and place-making, and note that positive experiences in different types of places in the community may contribute positively to the well being of refugees and immigrants. Given the importance of place in both settlement and community building, I argue that place is an appropriate context in which to explore community with newcomer youth.

In general, research into the experiences of youth newcomers will contribute to this relative gap in literature and discourse about understanding particular needs and diverse situations of such youth. Discourse with newcomer youth about their perceptions of places within their communities may yield insights into factors that are important for developing welcoming communities and further understanding youth newcomer settlement. This work also advances the importance of a holistic perspective in considering the challenges and issues of youth newcomers. Indeed, the idea of settlement success for many newcomer youth can be summed up simply as "fitting in" (Seat, 2000). By exploring a 'snapshot' of

spaces and places in the community where youth fit in (or are excluded from), I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that make a community welcoming.

Throughout the African-Canadian Youth Leadership Project in Kitchener, Ontario in summer 2011, I helped facilitate interactive sessions with African-Canadian youth newcomers. My research analyzes a part this work: a cognitive mapping exercise in which youth were asked to draw cognitive (mental) maps of their community and engage in an interview dialogue about them. The purpose of this study is to explore important community places, settlement, and welcoming communities with newcomer youth in the context of the features included in their maps. Specifically, the research questions that I seek to address here are: 1. How does discourse with newcomer youth about important spaces and places in their community inform understandings of settlement and community building? 2. What strategies or considerations for the building of welcoming communities emerge through this dialogue with youth-newcomers?

## Chapter Two: Guiding Literature

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I begin this chapter with an examination of settlement, focusing specifically on newcomer youth. I discuss the meaning of the term *settlement* and how it guides my understanding of this topic. In addition, I review the contributions of a diverse cross-section of academic and applied literature about youth settlement, issues, and challenges. Being cognizant of the fact that newcomers are settling *somewhere*, I then turn to literature surrounding sense of place to explain the importance of this concept in a settlement context and provide a framework for this study. I conclude by connecting the ideas of settlement and sense of place and demonstrating the link to the purposes of this research project and my specific research questions. .

### **Settlement**

The newcomer experience has been described using different terminology, sometimes interchangeably. Terms like: *settlement*, *transition*, *integration*, *inclusion*, *assimilation*, and *acculturation* are common in the literature. For the purposes of this project, and the sake of clarity, I will use the term *settlement* as an overarching reference to the ongoing process of adjustment, adaptation, and integration of newcomers into the host society (Doherty & Taylor, 2007). Some authors have separated the concept of settlement from that of integration, following the Canadian policy wording that the immigrant settlement time period begins upon arrival and lasts for three years (Tolley & Young, 2011). In this case, integration then refers to an eventual “full and active participation in Canadian life and institutions and a commitment to the broader society” (Tolley & Young, 2011, p. 12). This distinction, however, can be viewed as largely arbitrary, and likely relies more on policy, in

which three years is the duration of most Canadian federal government funding for settlement services (Lim, Lo, Siemiatycki, & Doucet, 2005).

The concepts of acculturation and adaptation are also important when discussing immigrant settlement. Largely drawn from a psychological perspective, these concepts may assist in providing background and context to this discussion. Acculturation refers to psychological and cultural changes as a result of interacting with members of the host society (Berry, 1997). These changes in immigrants' attitudes and beliefs (psychological acculturation), and shifts in their customs, economic, and political lives (cultural acculturation), guide social behaviours, interactions, and identity development (Berry et al., 2006). Adaptation is the ongoing result of acculturation - akin to the concept of ongoing settlement - and can refer to how well newcomers fit into their host society. To sum, the view taken throughout this project regards settlement in more broad terms than simply the duration of funded settlement services; rather I turn to Seat's notion of settlement as "a long-term dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equity and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities" (Seat, 2000, p. 9).

### **Recreation and settlement.**

As previously mentioned, Seat (2000) noted that youth newcomers often view successful settlement into a host society simply as a feeling of 'fitting in'. In light of this concise, yet powerful notion, it seems logical that welcoming communities are a key component of successful settlement and inclusion efforts. Tolley and Young (2011) have identified recreation and leisure services as one of the factors in developing welcoming communities. In Canada in the 1960s it was increasingly recognized by government that immigrant

settlement needs were not limited to labour market readiness, but also to full participation in social and cultural spheres of life in Canadian society (Vineberg, 2012). Indeed, recreation and leisure have been increasingly studied in relation to immigrant groups in North America over the past few decades, and while this body of literature remains small relative to the rest of the field of leisure studies (Floyd, 2007), there are valuable lessons learned in an expanding and progressively more critical field.

Though prior work exists, ethnicity, race, and leisure research began in earnest in the 1970s with Washburne's (1978) marginality-ethnicity theories (Gómez, 2002). In this work, Washburne explored the relative non-use of outdoor parks use by Black Americans, presenting marginality and ethnicity as explanatory concepts. Specifically, marginality suggests that Black under-participation is "because of poverty and various consequences of socioeconomic discrimination" (Washburne, 1978, p. 176). Alternatively, ethnicity proposes participation is "based on...subcultural style, or *ethnicity*" (p. 177, emphasis in original). Importantly, this work suggests that research into ethnicity, race, and leisure might focus on how people of ethnic and racial minorities identify with their subculture in the context of a larger dominant culture (Gómez, 2002).

Since Washburne's seminal work, a number of theories have been adapted, borrowed from other disciplines, and developed to study an increasing diversity and number of questions about ethnicity, race, and leisure. Yu and Berryman (1996), for example, used survey methods to explore the relationship between acculturation, sport, and self-esteem of adolescent Chinese immigrants to New York. The authors found that high degrees of acculturation were correlated with high degrees of recreation participation, and identified several constraints to participation including a lack of English proficiency, financial



constraints, and a lack of information or knowledge of opportunities. As the field expanded, Tirone and Pedlar (2000; 2005) used a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of social integration of second-generation South-Asian immigrant youth in Canada. In this case, the authors noted that leisure created a context for youth to develop connections with other cultures, and foster understanding and friendships with other youth of diverse backgrounds. Similarly, in their study of African-American and White community gardeners, Shinew et al. (2004), note that leisure settings can provide potential context for positive interracial and intergroup contact. Feelings of positively connecting with the community were also reported by participants in this study, which could be a valuable connection in terms of leisure and the building of welcoming communities.

There is a current impetus to acknowledge the importance of factors such as immigration status and generational tenure in the field of minority leisure, along with the unique and contextual challenges and opportunities these factors may create; placing research in historical, societal, and cultural context is increasingly essential to asking deeper questions (Stodolska & Walker, 2007). In a fitting example of this, Glover (2004) uses social capital theory as a lens to critically examine the experiences of community gardeners and the production, maintenance, and distribution of social capital in these communities (see also Glover, 2003; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005). Indeed, Anisef and Kilbride (2003) note that building social capital is a key factor for newcomer youth in overcoming challenges, personal achievement, and well-being.

Yuen, Pedlar, and Mannell (2005), worked with children of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in a camp setting to explore how leisure participation functioned in the building of social capital and community. Findings indicated that leisure experiences

provided a foundation on which children built relationships and shared meanings across cultures. The aforementioned studies have provided an interesting research path to follow in working with newcomer youth utilizing visual and narrative methods and methodologies to engage these youth with an emphasis on their experiences and voice.

### **Youth issues explored.**

As noted by Omidvar and Richmond (2003), much study in the area of newcomer settlement is concentrated on young children or adults (see also Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Janzen & Ochocka, 2003). The adolescent cohort that seems to be missing in this collection of research warrants further attention for three reasons: First, focusing research on this demographic will contribute to a more complete understanding of immigrant settlement. Second, the number of youth immigrating to Canada is on the rise (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003), with a resultant need to address the needs of newcomer youths specifically and effectively. Finally, as previously discussed, numbers of immigrants to regions like Kitchener-Waterloo is steadily increasing. A greater understanding of the links between settlement and newcomers' sense of place may help to facilitate discussion around how cities and regions plan to create communities that welcome newcomers and foster the development of social capital. As previously mentioned, welcoming communities are necessary to facilitate the success of any settlement program (Vineberg, 2012).

How individuals who have been raised in one culture transition to living in a different culture has long been an important question to societies, especially now in our increasingly global communities. Berry (1997) notes that living in a new society requires a complex mix of continuity and change in psychological, sociocultural, and economic spheres of life, resulting in what he refers to as adaptation - or how an individual changes in relation to a

larger dominant society. Two important factors are noted in this process: first, the degree to which newcomers wish to maintain their native cultural identity; and second, the degree to which newcomers desire interaction with the broader society (Berry et al., 2006). These two factors are hypothesized to create a matrix representing profiles of acculturation, including *assimilation*, *separation*, *marginalization*, and *integration*. Of these four profiles, most newcomer youth in Berry et al.'s (2006) study identified with the last: integration. This form of acculturation reflects high degrees of desire to both maintain a unique cultural identity and pursue meaningful interactions with and within larger society. Development of a consistent sense of identity, diverse peer contact, language skills, and a shared value-orientation were posited to be key factors for successful integration of newcomer youth within a host society (Berry et al., 2006). That being said, the web of elements involved in newcomer settlement is dynamic and complicated, often dependent on institutions (e.g. service providers, lawyers, employers and employment networks, advocacy groups, educators, and so on [Tolley & Young, 2011]), and compounded by the coincidence of settlement with adolescence - a tumultuous life stage regardless of ethnic background or citizenship status (Seat, 2000; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

Indeed, Anisef and Kilbride (2003) have identified several major issues that youth newcomers face, including: a) identity development, especially when home and peer groups have different cultural orientations; b) language issues, particularly in school settings; c) lack of recognition of prior learning experiences; d) conflicts in institutional values of family, school, and the larger community; and e) gender-specific difficulties that may result from a combination of certain youth's home culture and other factors in this list (p.12). To foster successful settlement, youth must be able to negotiate these issues, and

others (e.g. discrimination). The theory of *ethnic resiliency* has informed much previous research on immigrant youth - the concept of resiliency being defined by Steinhauser as an individual's ability to achieve "unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress and/or the ability of the stressed person to rebound to the pre-stress level of adaptation" (1998, p. 51). In their review of literature surrounding newcomer youth in Canada, Beiser et al., (1999) note that resiliency (and thus an increased likelihood of successful settlement experiences) is a characteristic most often seen in youth that identify with and respect their native cultures (see also Berry et al., 2006). Developing resiliency may be key in negotiating many issues faced by youth at school, namely language acquisition and the degree of peer acceptance of newcomers - which can in turn lead to difficulty in academic success. Family has been shown to be a strong source of support, along with peer and community networks, in fostering resiliency in youth (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Beiser et al., 1999).

### **Regional perspectives on immigrant youth issues.**

From one of the most in-depth local perspectives available to date, Janzen and Ochocka (2003) interviewed over 60 participants consisting of youth newcomers, their parents, and service providers in the Kitchener-Waterloo region in an attempt to discern settlement issues for immigrant youth (aged 16-20 years in this case) in this region. The authors provide compelling reasons for studying this group, among them the fact that Kitchener-Waterloo receives a much higher proportion of refugees than the national average: over 18% compared to 11% nationally (Abu-Ayyash & Brochu, 2006 ODC 2006).

Kitchener-Waterloo is also a hub for *secondary migrants*, or immigrants that change locations after arriving in Canada. The authors note by way of example that enrolment in

English as a Second Language (ESL) programs offered by the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) has continued to increase even when Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) data suggested that numbers of youth newcomers coming to the region held steady or declined slightly (Janzen & Ochocka, 2003). Issues faced by youth newcomers in this study were considered in five spheres of life, according to the ecological model adopted by the researchers: First, in relation to the youth themselves, issues of language were dominant, with English skills (or lack thereof) contributing to nervousness, shyness, reticence to communicate, and therefore possible social isolation. Second, in relation to their peers, youth newcomers noted the general difficulty in making friends in a new country, a task often compounded in difficulty by language barriers and differing cultural norms and expectations. Youth newcomers often relied on connecting with other immigrants, regardless of their country or culture of origin, for the simple fact that they shared the common bond of the immigration experience. Third, in relation to youth newcomers' families, issues raised were those of a cultural 'clash' (in which youth felt caught between their native culture and the culture of Canadian society); those of changing family roles (in which youth, who generally learned language skills more quickly than their parents, felt forced to grow up faster and act as translators and interpreters of most things Canadian to their parents, thus distorting traditional power structures within the family); and issues of dealing with effects of pressure on parents (youth were affected emotionally by seeing their parents struggle in a new culture, with employment, and with the shortage of time available to spend with their children. Fourth, in relation to the Canadian school system, youth noted issues of language and integration with the larger student body as concerning. ESL programs were praised for their ability to help youth newcomers learn

about the Canadian system and foster social networks among other immigrants with similar experiences, but also criticized for the feelings of separation from the larger student population that sometimes occurred. Parents felt a loss of control and ability to advocate for their children, as well as a lack of familiarity with the culture of the Canadian system, which the authors attribute mainly to a lack of easily accessible information. Finally, in relation to broader society, participants frequently noted positive elements, often citing freedoms and the mind-opening experiences of Canadian society as overriding benefits of their move to a new country, but also hinted at negative issues of discrimination, racism, and negative portrayals of cultural stereotypes in popular media that affected them on personal, emotional, and social levels (Janzen & Ochocka, 2003).

These themes have recurred in at least one other research study from the Waterloo region conducted more recently, focusing on positive and negative determinants of high school aged newcomers' social and academic success (Roderick, Janzen, Ochocka, & Jenkins, 2007). The authors in this case note some key issues that may hinder youth success include: difficulties in 'fitting in' with Canadian high school culture, stresses of parents' unemployment and/or underemployment, parent-child role reversals, cultural conflicts between home and school, perceived unwelcoming culture and climate in schools, difficulty in understanding the Canadian school system, and gaps in education and mastery of English. Key positive contributors to the success of immigrant youth include: family and peer support and friendship, intentional community support services, school-community partnerships, and supportive teachers and school administrators (Roderick et al., 2007).

It seems then that although the experiences of immigrant youth are complex and greatly varied, there is indeed a common thread running through them: the concept of

'fitting in' to a new society, new school system, and new group of peers at a stage in life where one must grapple also with inner questions of identity and what that identity means. This process of maturation, adolescence, and self-discovery must be undertaken by all individuals regardless of race or ethnicity, and is not an easy task. Placing these questions in the context of a new and unfamiliar place serves only to add another layer to this already tumultuous time in youths' lives.

## **Place**

As previously mentioned, immigrants do not simply *settle*, they instead settle *somewhere* - it is this subtle distinction that must sensitize us to the idea that concepts of place are key to understanding settlement. I propose that any exploration of newcomer settlement experiences that does not take the experience of place into account is inherently lacking in completeness. Newcomers cannot settle in a vacuum; thus, place is a necessary component of settlement and indeed the very context in which the experience is situated.

### **Space, Place, and Sense of Place**

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan, 1977, p. 6)

The concept of *place* can most simply be described as "a meaningful location" (Cresswell, 2004). I turn to Gieryn (2000), who proposes three features of place as a

definitional background for this discussion. These features of place are *geographic location*, *material form*, and *investment with meaning and value*. Geographic location refers to the discrete co-ordinates of a place, its existence in physical space, while material form refers to the shape of a place - the material setting. If geographic location denotes a particular spot in the universe, material form denotes the stuff that fills and constitutes that spot. While the first two aspects focus on properties of the physical environment, Gieryn (2000) notes that the third is a property of people who inhabit and pass through that environment. Without an investment of meanings and values by people, place would not exist. Indeed, this sense of place is concerned with the subjective, emotional attachments held by individuals in relation to a place (Cresswell, 2004). Gieryn presents place as “doubly constructed” – both physically built, and also cognitively and emotionally interpreted, perceived, and understood (2000, p. 465).

To provide context for this definition, we also must consider concepts of *space*. Smale (2006) succinctly describes space as the objectively defined geometry of a physical location, while the notion of place “shifts attention to the subjective or lived experience of location, to the profound meanings we ascribe to it, and to the wholly human experience of place” (p. 370). This definition emphasizes the nuances of experience in considering place; an unfamiliar space can become a place through the experience and the meanings endowed by humans. Indeed, the concept of place is relational to people and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning (Cresswell, 2004). This shift in thinking about space and place is attributed largely to Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph, key thinkers in the area of humanistic geography in the 1970s. By expanding their thinking of geography to include a phenomenological perspective, these authors took a view of geography that accounts for



not only location, but human experience and meanings as well.

It is important to recognize that not all scholars define space objectively, and indeed definitions are largely a disciplinary perspective. Lefebvre (1974/1991), for instance, holds that space is socially constructed through, and exists within, social relations and conflicts. Indeed, a Lefebvrian conceptualization of space recognizes that “space is both the medium and outcome of social relations” (van Ingen, 2003, p. 204). These spatial forms of social relations are referred to as *social spaces*. van Ingen (2003) summarizes the basis of understanding Lefebvre’s theories of social space in terms of a “three-part spatial dialectic” (p. 202) of simultaneous and interdependent moments in the production of space: *perceived space*, *conceived place*, and *lived space*. Perceived space refers to the interactions of our physical bodies with material and physical spaces that can be empirically measured and bounded; through these interactions, we produce social space. Conceived spaces are those we engage with through abstract thinking, planning, and knowledge of codes and other forms of representation, rather than physically. Lived space integrates concrete physical spaces with metaphorical understandings of space. Lived space is where local knowledge interacts with dominant societal discourse, becoming the site of counter-discourse and counterspaces; this space can be both oppressive and enabling depending on geographical, historical, and ideological contexts (Van Ingen, 2003). Aside from these conceptualizations of space, social construction plays a large role in the consideration of place.

Socially constructed place meanings, along with place attachment (positive emotional connection with the environment) and place satisfaction (a person’s evaluation of the quality of a setting), constitute Stedman’s (2003) description of a sense of place. He writes

that sense of place “is based on symbolic meanings attributed to the setting” (p. 672). While sense of place consists of external and internal components, it is a subjective property of the individual, rather than the setting. Because sense of place is rooted in lived experience, different individuals may have a very different sense of place in regard to the same location and locale. This subjectivity can be influenced by several factors, some of which include gender, race, sexuality, and other components of critical inquiry. Considering this, Smale (2006) offers the caveat that romanticizing the notion of place in research, or assuming singular meanings, may ignore or downplay such interpretations. We must therefore be aware and open to recognizing that this individual sense of place is key in interpreting different meanings and experiences of place. As an example from within the recreation and leisure literature and return to the preceding discussion of social production of spaces, Van Ingen (2003) moves beyond the focus on place to an in-depth discussion of the production and negotiation of gendered, sexualized, and racialized identities in and through social spaces. By considering questions of the broader social and cultural contexts in which we live, work, and play, she critically examines the subjective and varied experiences of individuals in sport. Furthermore, Lashua (2011) explores the idea of the changing city in terms of space, place, maps, and music, noting that spatial and social changes are linked and reflected in musicians’ memories and maps of their city. His discussion of maps as a component of discourse surrounding changing urban spaces served as an inspiration for the inclusion of cognitive mapping in this research.

In sum, the notion of sense place as a sensitizing concept seems to be a logical and congruent extension of the context of this research. Cresswell (2004) writes that place is not simply a ‘thing’, but a way of understanding the world around us. In the same vein, I

seek to use this understanding of the surrounding community to inform my work with newcomer youth.

## Chapter Three: Methodology, Methods, & Analysis

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### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss my approach to this research, including the philosophical underpinnings that will guide my data collection and analysis. After addressing the theoretical perspective, I move on to the strategy of inquiry that will provide the framework for methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Because qualitative inquiry is situated in the specific, rather than the generalizable, I clearly address the bounds of the study in terms of the research settings, participants, and broader project of which this research is part. Following these descriptions of framework and context, I move to procedures followed in data collection. I touch on my role as researcher and reflect on the role of my own context in my interpretation of this work. Lastly, I outline procedures for data analysis and interpretation.

### **Methodological Approach**

This research utilizes an overarching constructivist-interpretivist framework, focusing on subjective and contextual meanings of the interactions of individuals, communities, and places. A constructivist framework acknowledges that meanings are constructed as people engage with the world around them from their situated social and historical perspective (Crotty, 1998). It also recognizes that the researcher's interpretations of meanings are affected by their own historical, cultural, and social context (Creswell, 2009).

Following this focus on meanings and interaction, a narrative methodology was originally selected as a lens through which to view this work. Indeed, to borrow a phrase from Sparkes and Smith (2008), we live in "story-shaped worlds" (p.295). That is to say,

stories are a means by which we come to understand the world around us (Daly, 2007). Through narratives we make meanings of actions and interactions; we use stories to communicate points of view and describe our interpretations (Chase, 2005). Glover's (2003b) use of narrative inquiry is notable in this methodological sense. By examining narrative discourse in this setting, the author was able to explore not only the social structures at play, but also the socio-historical development of the setting as it relates to the lived experiences embodied in participants' stories. Indeed, diverse methods and methodologies such as these have been shown to be of invaluable use in working with minority groups, as well as youth - exemplified by Yuen et al. (2005).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that the outcome of the process of narrative inquiry is a collaborative effort between the participants and researcher. In this sense, the resulting narratives refer to the storied discourse that surrounded participants' drawings of cognitive maps of their communities. Inherent in this framework, then, is the assumption that these youth constructed their experiences through their stories (Glover, 2004). These stories serve to "organize experience, give coherence and meaning to life events, and provide a sense of continuity, history, and of the future" (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000, p.481).

### **Bounding the Study**

As mentioned in chapter one, data for this project were collected during a session of the African-Canadian Youth Leadership Project in June of 2011. This program was the result of a larger project under the supervision of Dr. Troy Glover seeking to explore the engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups in community-based planning practices. Through working closely with Edwin Larea, president of the African-Canadian

Association of Waterloo Region (ACAWR), language specialist, and educator, Dr. Glover was sensitized to key components of African cultures that influenced the eventual manifestation of the African-Canadian Youth Leadership Project. A key focus at this point was the idea that youth from countries in Africa and the Caribbean possess a cultural tendency to show deference to their elders (see McAdoo, 2010); thus the primary focus on engaging youth to give them a prominent voice in this project.

Mr. Larea emphasized the importance of stories in many African cultures; setting the stage for the eventual choice of using the youths' own narratives as an eventual research focus. Dr. Glover and Mr. Larea also agreed that to provide value to participants and the larger community, research should aim to give back to these groups rather than simply collect data and disengage with participants. In this vein, the project took on a collaborative bent. The Youth Leadership Project was conceived as an opportunity to: (i) interact with newcomer youth for research purposes; (ii) provide a learning environment in which to teach leadership skills (communication, conflict management, critical analysis, etc.) to African-Canadian Youth; and (iii) provide an opportunity for youth to express their voice to the larger community in terms of a civic discovery forum in which they could share with community leaders, regional policy makers, and community members.

### **Activities & themes.**

Over the course of three days, youth participated in different activities and reflective discussions. Each day emphasized a thematic component of the immigration and settlement experience. The daily themes were: 'where did you come from'; 'where are you now'; and 'where are you going'. It was hoped that these thematic breaks would help provide context for youth newcomers' settlement experiences in terms of reflecting on the

past, present, and future. Methods used to elicit and discuss these experiences included cognitive mapping, drama activities, trust games, teamwork exercises, and reflective discussion. These methods emphasize the importance of storytelling, dialogue, and collaboration with participants.

Examples of activities include team-oriented and problem-solving exercises. These helped break the ice for participants and the research team on the first day, encouraging youth to connect and express themselves in small groups. Using a set amount of game-currency to purchase supplies, youth worked in teams to develop systems to protect an egg for an egg-drop contest. In another activity, a statement about settlement or life in Canada was read aloud and youth moved to a station representing their level of agreement. In this case, we attempted to briefly interview as many participants as possible after each question in regards to their answers. Yet another exercise involved videotaping dramatic presentations after a session facilitated by a member of the research team. These brief scenes, created by participants, dramatically represented their feelings about settlement in terms of the three major themes discussed previously (i.e. 'where did you come from,' etc.). Group discussion and critical thinking was encouraged, and each day ended with a recap of major themes and ideas.

### **Situating my research.**

My work with the Youth Leadership Project started with a role as a research assistant. Over the course of the program, I became interested in the newcomer settlement process and the use of cognitive maps as elicitation tools. As the project gathered a large amount of data, Dr. Glover and I decided that the analysis of the cognitive mapping exercise could constitute a research project with enough depth to serve as my thesis project. That being

said, it is appropriate to remain cognizant that this thesis represents a snapshot of data from a larger project, asking broader questions.

The research questions asked in the present study are reflective of the exploratory spirit in which data were gathered, and are relatively simple so as to remain true to the straightforward yet powerful cognitive mapping exercise on which this thesis is based. While the dataset in this thesis is presented as a discrete project, it was collected, and understood, as part of a larger study. Indeed, analysis and interpretation in this project are informed by interactions and rapport built over the duration of the Youth Leadership Project.

### **Participants.**

Participants consisted of students recruited to the Youth Leadership Project through contacts with The ACAWR and a Kitchener high school with a noted English as a Second Language (ESL) program that welcomes many immigrant youth each year. The Project was held at a local community centre that was deemed to be sufficiently close to the students' home neighbourhoods to allow for ease of transportation. The choice of an accessible community-centred location was also made purposefully to empower participants to express their views and thoughts in a safe space.

Thirteen students participated in the Project in 2011, all of which immigrated to Canada directly or indirectly from countries in Africa (and in two cases, Saudi Arabia). The group was made up of six male and seven female students, with ages ranging from 15 to 20 years (the average age being 17 years). At the time of the study, six students were enrolled in ninth grade, four in tenth grade, two in eleventh grade, and one in grade twelve. The students had been living in Canada just over four years on average, with a range from one



to eight years. Countries of origin for the group included Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Sudan. Ten of the students hold a 'landed immigrant' status, while two are Canadian citizens (the remaining one did not indicate on their personal information form their legal status in Canada). It is important for the purposes of this research to note that none of the participants spoke English as a first language, and only two indicated that they speak predominantly English in their homes. On average, however, participants speak three languages (including English), with some indicating as few as two, and others as many as four. When surveyed about religious affiliation, six participants identified themselves as Muslim, six identified as Protestant or 'other' Christian denomination, and one as Mormon.

The average age of arrival to Canada within this group was 13 years, which is consistent with existing research noting that youth arriving in Canada after the age of six years were preferable to involve as participants, as they would likely be more able to recall, articulate, and reflect on their settlement experiences than very young children or newly arrived youth (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). Over the three-day span of the Project, participants engaged in experiential activities in which they reflected on and critically explored their urban landscapes. One such exercise, the focus of this research, was the production of a narrative around eight participants' cognitive maps of their communities.

## **Methods**

Participants engaged in cognitive mapping prompted by the request to "draw a map of your community". An example of the session leader's own cognitive map was discussed and the youth were supplied with various drawing materials and large sheets of paper. After the mapping session, one-on-one open-ended interviews were conducted with each participant

regarding their map. In concert with our understanding of narrative inquiry, and the flexible, emergent nature of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), open-ended questions were used to engage youth in dialogue about their community and their cognitive maps. Guiding questions included: (1) “Which places in Kitchener do you find desirable/undesirable, and why?”; (2) “In which places do you feel safe/unsafe, welcome/unwelcome, and why?”; (3) “Which places contribute to your quality of life in a positive/negative way, and why?”

The interview data were elicited through discussion with youth about cognitive maps of their community. The interviews were video recorded, resulting in a total of five forms of data: videotaped interviews, the resulting interview transcripts, visual materials (cognitive maps converted to digital images), observational notes gathered from group discussion with participants about the cognitive mapping exercise, and reflective notes kept over the duration of the project.

### **Cognitive mapping.**

Maps aid in navigation; they help us to know our way into and through different places. This is one of the most fundamental capabilities of maps - they render a certain kind of legibility, as a combination of knowledge and space that make the city navigable... Maps help us know something of ‘where we’re going and where we’ve been.’ In this sense, maps operate not only cartographically, but also biographically. (Lashua, 2011, p. 139)

The preceding quote encompasses the basis for using cognitive mapping in this research as a means of prompting discourse and eliciting stories about places. When we talk to youth about their community, we are attempting to glimpse, know, or understand their knowledge and experience of the places around them. To understand questions about the

places in and through which these youth live, travel, study, work, and play, maps are a natural fit. Downs and Stea (2005) define cognitive mapping as “a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, codes, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in [their] everyday spatial environment” (p. 9). Cognitive maps are the product of this process, and may or may not take the form of the familiar cartographic map, as Downs and Stea note (2005). Regardless, however, of the use of the term ‘map’ as an analogy for this representation of psychological process, as drawings of maps are produced by the youth in this study, we see the result through their own mental organization – how the person making the map believes the environment to be (Knight, 1983). Thus, cognitive maps become useful in the context of exploring subjective understandings of places, regardless of artistic talent and spatial skill (Knight, 1983).

Cognitive mapping and the study of cognitive maps have been used to explore topics such as spatial behaviour, decision-making, and learning through multidisciplinary methods, frameworks, and theoretical approaches (Kitchin, 1994). Indeed, Downs and Stea (2005) contend that there is “no unified theoretical framework upon which we can base our understandings of cognitive mapping” (p.1). Early theorists focused on the elements found in these representations of the city. Cognitive mapping pioneer Kevin Lynch’s five categories of map elements included paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (for further description, see Lynch, 1960). This was useful in being able to aggregate data from maps drawn of the same area and allowed for researchers to capture a sense of urban space as residents saw and defined it.

Lynch’s work has been noted as contributing importantly to our understandings of

culture and space through cognitive mapping, since this concept focuses on everyday residents of the city and their experiences there (see Lashua, 2011). It is this understanding of community that I seek to explore with the participants in this study by using cognitive maps to engage in dialogue with youth about their communities. Returning to the idea of social production of space through stories, Lashua (2011) reminds us that “people not only produce ‘the city’ through their everyday movements and pathways through the urban environment, but also through their memories and talk about the city” (p. 138).

### **Interviews.**

To explore participants’ cognitive maps, qualitative interviews were held with as many participants as time allowed (again, this research focuses on one session of a larger project). Qualitative interviews are in-depth discussions with participants that make use of open-ended questions to elicit perspectives and thoughts on a general area of research interest (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative interviews were used because of their inherent flexible and open-ended nature. The interviewer was free to modify questions and probe into different themes and issues as they arose during the interview, while seeking rich, detailed description (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2009). The focus in qualitative interviewing is on the perspectives and experiences of the interviewee – a central theme of this project.

Questions about the degree of structure involved in qualitative interviewing traditionally involve an examination of pre-planned questions or prompts, with resulting interviews being described as either semi-structured or unstructured. Bryman et al. (2009), however, note that both types are increasingly described collectively as simply *qualitative* or *in-depth* interviews (even though different approaches to structure may yield different results). In this case, the approach that was used more closely resembles a semi-

structured interview, with a general list of interview topics and questions guiding each discussion (outlined specifically in the *Methods* section).

In addition to the previously mentioned strengths of qualitative interviewing, there exist several drawbacks. Some authors have pointed out that the context and setting of these interviews and the researcher's presence may influence participants' responses (Creswell, 2009). In the case of this research, I argue that a certain level of trust and familiarity was built between participants, researchers, and research assistants over the duration of the project that minimized this concern. Throughout the initial sessions of the Youth Leadership Project, participants, researchers, research assistants, and community leaders actively engaged in building trust and rapport.

The research team engaged in trust and rapport-building activities with participants over the course of the Project to help relieve the pressure of being recorded, photographed, and videotaped. The research team was involved wherever possible – introducing and talking about ourselves alongside participants when we first met, participating in activities with youth wherever practical, and most importantly, simple socializing during breaks and lunches. These low-key conversations helped the research team build a friendly and open rapport with participants, and helped reduce feelings of awkwardness over the course of the Project. This was a step in negotiating a feeling of mutual trust, which was hoped to create an environment where youth would be free to express themselves.

Interviews also may be conducted differently from participant to participant as interviews unfold and probing questions are followed up, making consistency a concern (Bryman et al., 2009). This concern is addressed in the present study by the use of a general list of guiding topics, and a thematically broad set of research questions. In a sense,

there are no wrong answers to interview questions, nor is there a proper order in which questions should be asked, as the process elicits participants' interpretations of the topics and places discussed guided jointly by participants and the interviewer.

### **Researcher's Role & Ethical Considerations**

As I mentioned previously, my role as author inherently means that I bring my own experience and context into my interpretation of this research. As a white, middle-class, graduate student, I am admittedly culturally different from many of the youth that participated in this study. I was also born in Canada and grew up in Southern Ontario, far removed from the experiences of immigrant youth from countries in conflict, trying to make sense of home and the transition to adulthood in a new country. These are perspectives to remain mindful of as I engage with this work.

Over the course of the Youth Leadership Project I engaged in conversation with participants, recorded observations, videotaped interviews, and participated in activities with these youth. It should also be noted that other researchers present besides myself facilitated interviews and collected much of the data in this project. In conversation with the principal researchers and other research assistants, we discussed the importance of being as open as possible to youths' stories, emotions, and experiences to understand what meanings spaces and places in the community hold for them.

I feel that the relationships developed with participants, the research team's shared understandings, and my observations and reflexive thoughts about the Project and its participants help to sensitize my resulting analysis and interpretation. As the researcher and author in this case, I become another narrative voice in this text, and thus bring my own experience into the fold. In this sense I acknowledge that authority over the final text

is mine, and my interpretations based on context.

Because this research involves working with immigrant youth, the original proposal for the larger project from which these data were collected contained several considerations. Participants and their parents gave informed consent to join the project, and were free to choose the extent of their participation. The format of the Youth Leadership Project took shape as a response to questions of power, voice, and engagement with youth; activities and sessions were designed through collaboration with African-Canadian community members and creative youth engagement organizations. The University of Waterloo Office of Research Ethics granted ethical clearance for all activities conducted as part of this project.

### **Analysis & Interpretation**

Creswell (2007) describes data analysis in qualitative research as a general process, rather than a set of specific procedures. This reflects the open-ended, context-driven, and emergent nature of qualitative research on the whole. Indeed, the specific steps involved in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data are often combinations of perspectives and techniques from different disciplines. The fit between context, researcher, and technique must be aligned in a reasonable way that reflects and considers philosophical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings. In the case of this research, I have chosen to frame my analysis using elements of what Reissman (2004) called *thematic (narrative) analysis* within the contours of Creswell's (2007) data analysis spiral.

The data analysis spiral is a construct that embodies the qualitative research process. It represents the analytic circles that researchers move through during a project. These circles consist of four general parts of analysis: (i) data managing; (ii) reading and

memoing; (iii) describing, classifying, and interpreting; and (iv) representing (Creswell, 2007). This notion de-emphasizes a linear approach to analysis and recognizes the flexible, emergent, and iterative nature of qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002). Within this framework, I used a thematic analysis to explore and analyze the data (Reissman, 2004).

Thematic analysis can be one of the most useful techniques in delving into the plurality of meanings contained in textual data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). This form of analysis focuses on *what* is said, and acknowledges the construction of meanings in participants' stories (Reissman, 2004). Similar to grounded theory, this approach entails identifying, describing, and organizing common themes across a variety of narratives (Guest et al., 2012). Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, (2009), and others (see Creswell, 2009; Guest et al., 2012) advocate for presenting a clear and detailed account of the analysis process, enhancing transparency. What follows is an overview of specific steps of analysis in this project. Structural features are modified from Creswell (2007; 2009) and thematic analysis components are adapted from Guest et al. (2012), Reissman (2004), and Sampson and Gifford (2010). Through each step of the data analysis spiral, I make note of how codes and themes were identified and organized throughout this project

1. Data managing: This refers to an organization of the project data (interview transcripts, digital map images) into a form coherent and useful to the researcher. All videotaped interviews were transcribed and maps were photographed to obtain digital copies. Transcripts were printed and matched with the associated videotaped interview and map.

2. Reading and memoing: Interview videos were watched to get a sense of the ways participants talked about their maps. Maps were reviewed with video interviews, to allow



me the chance to follow along with places in participants' descriptions. Transcripts were also read individually, with memos and observations noted throughout this stage. This overview reading helped develop a sense of immersion in the data, and gave me pause for reflection to acknowledge my voice and perspective in my writing of the resulting text. I was reminded of working with these youth in-person, and reviewed my own notes about their attitudes and demeanors.

I attempted to follow Sampson and Gifford's (2010) thematic analysis of cognitive maps by counting and comparing different places the participants included. I extended this approach by coding places that had been described as welcoming and safe versus places of exclusion. After comparing the types of places found in participants' maps, I noticed a similarity in themes that were common across most examples, in maps and interviews. Since the focus of youth during these interviews seemed to be on their stories, I decided to incorporate maps in this analysis as a background to interview texts.

At this stage, I decided to focus my analysis on the interview transcripts while drawing examples of common themes from maps. In this sense, maps were key in eliciting stories, and played a supporting role in the analysis process. I noted the obvious presence of several key features from maps and interviews alike (i.e. home, leisure space, friends, and navigating through the community). These themes were explored through a thematic analysis that attempted to take into account the more abstract notions of safety (or lack thereof) and welcoming/unwelcoming feelings in the stories participants told about places from their maps.

### 3. Describing, classifying, and interpreting:

In this stage of analysis, Creswell (2007) suggests describing narratives, identifying stories

and contextual themes, and interpreting them in the context of the larger meaning of the narrative. In this case, I used analysis steps suggested by Tesch (1990) for initially exploring themes in interview transcripts. As I read through transcripts, I kept notes regarding what the story was essentially about, other important themes that emerged, and connections of stories to places on maps. During this stage, I noticed that places from maps tended to be described through stories of participants' experiences. These stories were largely about settlement, home, family members and relationships, friends and peers, and leisure experiences. I reorganized, regrouped, and renamed these themes during subsequent re-readings of transcripts and reviewing of maps. Through this process, as Creswell (2007) described, these initial codes were eventually thematically organized into the findings presented in this project.

4. *Representing*: Themes surrounding welcoming communities were represented in a discussion of different facets of narratives surrounding participants' cognitive maps. Similar and divergent elements of participants' stories will be presented in their own words, with my description. Likewise, features of participants' maps were incorporated into this discussion, with support from interviews and maps. As emphasized by Sampson and Gifford (2010), the goal of this representation is to explore the aspects of place that youth have come to connect with in both positive and negative ways. I attempted to connect these themes with a more broad theoretical perspective, and present them within the context of participants' maps and larger meaning of their stories. It is worthy to note that the preceding steps of data analysis did not follow a linear order, but rather occurred simultaneously, overlapping each other as data were read and reread, themes were explored, and understandings emerged (Creswell, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

In sum, I have attempted to outline my approach to this research by linking an overarching theoretical orientation to a guiding methodology and specific strategy of inquiry (as per Creswell, 2009). The original aims and scope of the larger project, of which this work is a part, was included and discussed to provide background and context. Participant demographics and the research setting were also addressed as I defined the bounds of the study. An outline of data collection procedures was discussed, along with the underlying concepts of cognitive mapping and interview data. Following this discussion of theory, methodology, and methods, I presented my thoughts on my role as researcher in this project, my voice in this text, and ethical considerations. Finally, I have attempted to provide a detailed description of the specific steps of analysis used to interpret the data collected. Inherent in any qualitative research project is an element of flexible research design, and as previously mentioned, some procedures changed slightly from the proposal stage in accordance with the emergence of themes and issues surrounding my original research questions.

## Chapter Four: Findings

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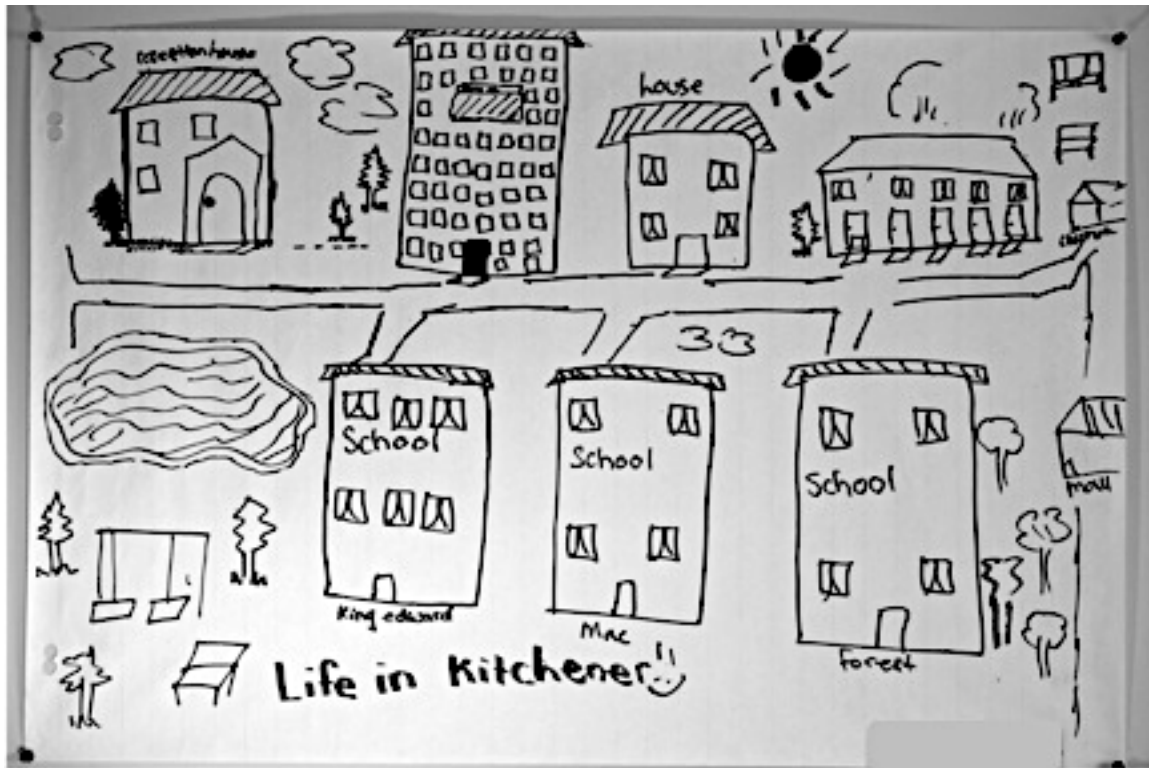
The data gathered as part of this project provided a set of rich descriptions to which to work. Having access to maps, interview transcripts, and videotaped interviews was helpful in piecing together a more holistic analysis than any one of those sources alone. As transcripts were read and reread, interview footage watched, and maps analyzed, several major thematic categories became evident. First, the theme of home and family linked both familial connections and responsibilities with the place of home. Secondly, social places and fitting in were an important part of maps and the dialogue surrounding them. In this case, youths' maps tended to show places of context for social experiences while dialogue related to perceptions of a feeling of belonging in these places. Third, and brought up mainly through dialogue with youth, was the theme of support networks. These formal and informal networks contributed to feelings of fitting in. Additionally, I touch on the idea of negative experiences and themes and their relative silence in both maps and dialogue. In the words of Turchi: "to ask for a map is to say 'tell me a story'" (2004; p.11); and when asked to describe the maps of their communities, many participants used places on their maps to tell stories of their settlement in Kitchener. One of the participants, Keisha, began her description with: "This is the Reception House. [points to a building on her map] This is important because that's the first place where we lived [upon arrival in Canada]." Natasha talked about the Reception House as well, explaining that it was a good introduction to the community: "There's so many people there – it's across from Victoria Park! [A large multi-use park close to downtown Kitchener]" The Reception House was a starting point for

several youths' stories and sometimes quite prominently featured in maps, as seen in figures 1 and 2.



**Figure 1: Sika's map featuring the Reception Centre**

The Reception House was a frequent starting point for stories, as it was many of the participants' first residence on arrival in Kitchener. Youth seemed to regard it as a positive and welcoming place that provided support, but likely due to the short duration of their stay there (from one to three weeks), descriptions during interviews were brief.



**Figure 2: Natasha's map featuring the Reception Centre**

Natasha's map, shown in figure 2, exemplifies how these maps contained stories of settlement. In her map, and the associated interview, Natasha tells the story of how she moved from the Reception House to an apartment, then to a shared house, then a townhouse, and each of the schools she attended over this time. As she spoke, it became clear that each move was a step forward for her in her own settlement experience and the relationships developed along the way. She told us her middle school was a positive experience because "...I knew some people from my old school, so I could connect with them better".

In addition to stories of settlement, we also observed stories of day-to-day life – routines and routes through the community. When describing his map, Daniel walked us through his routine: "So I get up in the morning [points to house], there's a bus stop right

here [points], I text [for the bus schedule], I get on, it goes down here [traces route on map]...and I get off here, and then go to school..." Another youth, Charles, centred his map around his day: "Each day I wake up at six, and I just try to clean the house, make lunch for the younger ones [his siblings], and I prepare myself for school." He continued to walk us through a typical school day, detailing his routes around the community as they relate to his school and attending to his mother and siblings (see figure 3). These stories generally narrated participants' transitions to new places, and a sense of knowledge and ownership of them as they showed how they navigate through the community.

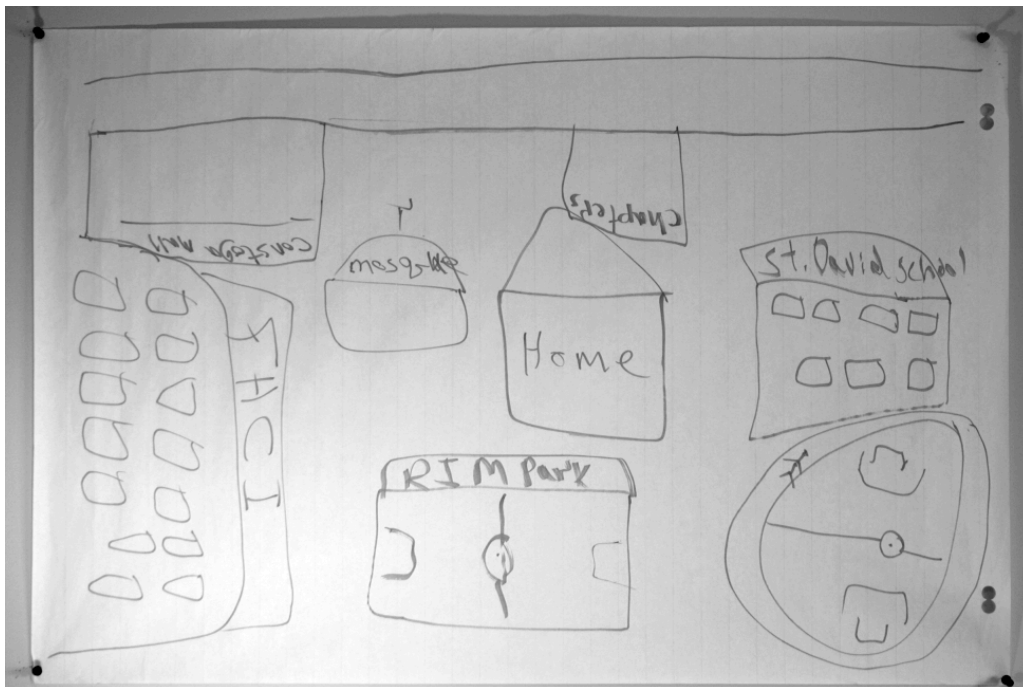


**Figure 3: Charles' map featuring descriptions of his daily activities**

It was interesting to note the stories that seemed to flow from the discussion of places throughout the interviews with participants. It was during these brief stories that youth stepped out of simply *describing* their maps into a mode of *explaining* why certain places held significance. With this observation, my analysis began to centre on places of importance to participants as contexts for connections and experience that contributed to their perceptions of community and place.

## Home and Family

When describing his daily routine, Ahmed (map in figure 4) commented: “Basically, after school, I rarely go out...” Instead, most of his time at home is spent “studying, helping the family, and also, I don’t know, Internet, Facebook, you know.” While this sentiment may apply to a wide variety of adolescents, the home (and in most cases, family) was a common feature of all youths’ maps and descriptions. Of the eight youth whose maps are included in this project, seven live with family members, while one lives alone. Regardless of living situation in this case, home was a natural starting point. It is likely one of the most familiar landmarks to participants, and it should also be noted that the home and the family hold a special and central importance in many African cultures (McAdoo, 2010). In addition to a physical ‘home base’, this theme can be further described in terms of the home as a place of connection to family, and home as a place of responsibility and care. In both cases, home is discussed as an important part of participants’ maps and life in their community.



**Figure 4: Ahmed's map centred on his home**



### **Connection to family.**

Charles (map in figure 3) expanded on the centrality of family in relation to home: “I prefer staying at home with my family...I spend the best moments with my family, actually.” When asked if this was different from his experience in Africa, he replied: “Uhh...not that different, because even in Africa I had some friends, but I usually spend most of the time with my family.” Other youth expressed similar sentiments; Daniel (the participant living alone) told stories of his family elsewhere in Canada when he spoke about his current home. Natasha told us “I don’t really *go* to places, I just mostly stay at home...I just prefer to be at home.”

“Home” then, seems to represent a connection with family on an emotional and cultural level. Indeed, McAdoo (2010) argues that the importance of togetherness and family in many traditional African cultures is still reflected today in both African families and North American families of African descent. This connection to family may also facilitate retaining a sense of cultural identity - an important factor in a well-rounded adaptation to a host society (Berry et al, 2006) and important to settlement success. The theme of home as a place of connection to family and culture seemed to flow naturally into stories of family and personal responsibility, discussed further in the next section.

### **Home as a place of responsibility.**

According McAdoo (2010), the notion of collectivity in many traditional African family structures is an important cultural touchstone. Historically, socialization and care of young children was often traditionally shared among adults and older children in many parts of Africa, and to an extent in families of African ancestry in North America. Indeed, similar stories of responsibility for siblings were common in discussions with other youth. Shandi

mentioned in her interview that she spends a lot of time at her home: “I help my mom, I do my homework, and my brother – if he needs help I help him.” In this quote, she touches on both personal responsibility and family responsibility. Ahmed also talked about “helping the family” when discussing his map (fig. 4). Charles told us how he wakes up early for school so that he can “...just try to clean up the house, make lunch, and make lunch for the younger ones [his two younger siblings]”. This could be a reflection of the cultural significance of shared family responsibility, but perhaps also unique family situations (e.g. all adults in household working full-time), that necessitate such responsibility.

In sum, home and family was discussed and drawn as an important part of youths’ communities. The physical home was used to orient maps and provide a starting point for stories of family. Home also seems to be an important part of maintaining a sense of cultural identity, and through dialogue with youth we noted that home was indeed where participants were closest to their heritage. In addition, home was also discussed as a place of responsibility where there was an expectation to help with caring for and teaching younger children. Inferring from these brief interviews, both cultural and situational factors seem to be responsible for these perceptions of home and the connection to family and responsibility.

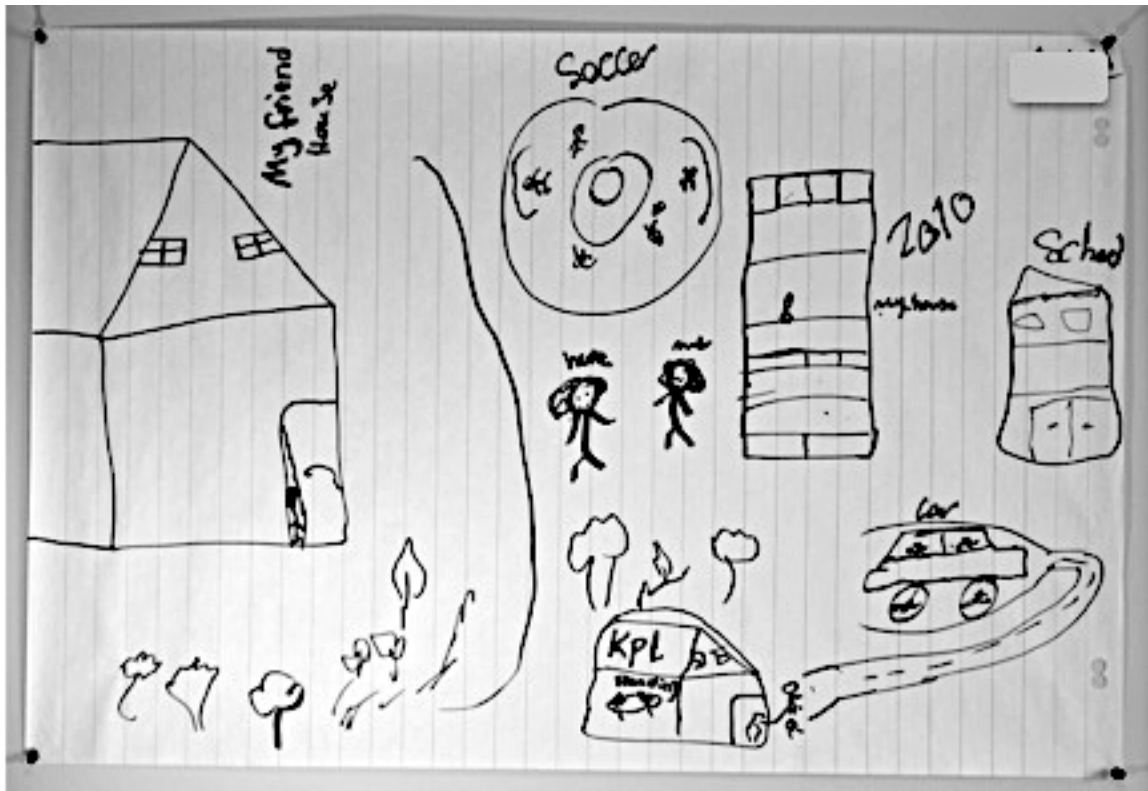
### **Social Places and Fitting in**

Unsurprisingly, connecting socially with peers was important to youth newcomers with whom we spoke, as they are to many Canadian youth (Janzen & Ochocka, 2003).

Participants demonstrated through their maps and discussions the various places they made, developed, and engaged in these connections. Sports and recreation activities were most often cited as important contexts for social connections, as were other leisure places

and institutions (e.g. the YMCA, public parks). Many of these social experiences occurred in places that shared characteristics of Oldenburg's *third places* (1999). Outside of the home (the first) and school (the second), third places are those usually informal, relaxed settings that support easy social interaction. Indeed, some youth stressed the relative unimportance of an activity in and of itself, but related more to the people they connected with and the social networks that they built.

Several participants included in their maps and discussions various aspects of 'the park' – referring to Victoria Park, a large, multi-use park close to downtown Kitchener and very near to the Reception House (transition housing for immigrant families settling in the region). Sika (map in figure 1) felt comfortable in the park: "Yeah, it's a really safe place. There's a lot of people. We came last summer...we went today and play everyday and make new friends." Shandi (map pictured in figure 5) described it as "our park" (referring to her and her friends). This sense of welcoming and safety seemed to be important when developing friendships and social connections with others. By and large the relationship with Victoria Park seems positive in participants' stories, though at night the area takes on a different tone. Keisha noted that: "...there were these guys that would go there to smoke or something, so it wasn't safe at night, but in the day it was okay."



**Figure 5: Shandi's map featuring her and a friend in the park.**

Recreation activities were by far the most commonly mentioned (and drawn) contexts for social connection. Shandi (map in figure 5) included a soccer field in her map and described her affinity for the social connections that come with the sport:

Shandi: In the park, we play on the soccer field there.

Interviewer: Okay, how important is soccer to you?

S: Hmm...when I'm playing soccer, I feel happy!

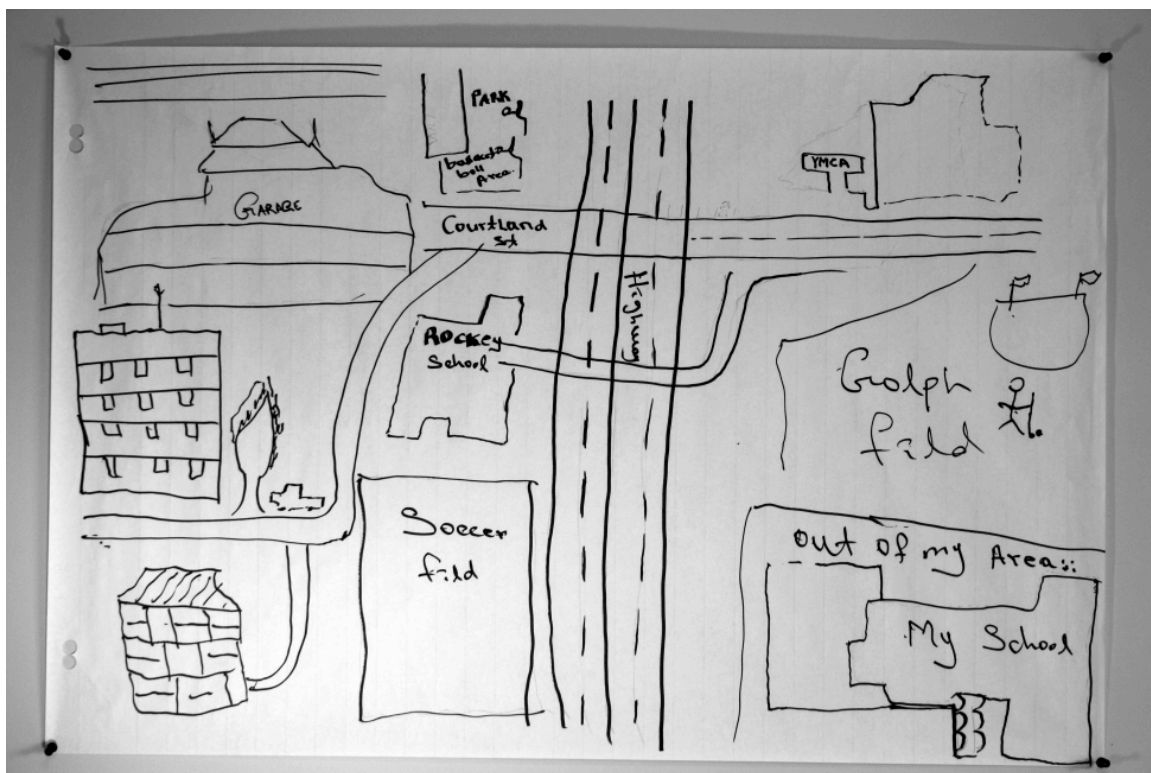
I: Oh okay good, so if you didn't have soccer would it be a different experience?

S: Actually I don't like the game all that much.

I: You don't like the game?

S: Just the soccer team!

Ahmed (map in figure 4) also talked about social connections through soccer, going by himself to a local high school soccer field to play pick-up with strangers, as does Kwame (map pictured in figure 6). Other youth mentioned basketball nets at home, basketball courts at the park, and the YMCA as other places of social connection. Along with making connections with others in the community, these contexts also seemed to serve as a learning setting for aspects of Canadian culture and language. Speaking about his experiences on his high school soccer team, Ahmed said: “First year I had problems with the language, but now I know basically every word. The coach yells out “Tuck your shirt in!” or “Shoot the ball!” Okay – you have to know all the words.” This reminds us of the importance of language skills, something identified by authors as a major issue for immigrant youth (Tolley & Young, 2011; Janzen & Ochocka, 2003; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003).



**Figure 6: Kwame's map featuring soccer pitch.**

While places of leisure were most often discussed as the third places where youth interacted, two youth also mentioned places of worship as a setting for social connections. Natasha speaks of the Youth Group at her local church: “We still go every Wednesday, we have activity days...and Young Women’s Group – we do service projects, we play sports, and do crafts and stuff.” Ahmed touches on the social importance of his mosque (shown in his map in figure 4). When asked about the sense of community there, he replied: “Yeah, actually I have a lot of friends from high school who go to the mosque too, we meet there.” In light of the diversity of faiths observed in Canada’s multicultural society, the importance of religious places to adaptation and settlement is no doubt an interesting topic for further exploration.

Places where participants could connect socially with other youth emerged as a central theme in stories and maps. These were represented by different places and settings (e.g. sports, community groups, public places) where participants talked about feeling a sense of safety and welcoming. Oldenburg includes these as characteristics of third places (1999) and Seat (2000) refers to this feeling as a goal of successful settlement. Though there was some evidence of other third places (e.g. places of worship), there was not enough detail to explore them more in-depth. Recreation was most often associated with these social places, and has been shown in previous work with multicultural youth to act as a common ground, bridging language and cultural barriers (Yuen et al, 2005). Some of the connections made and maintained by participants constituted their support networks, discussed in detail next.

## **Support Networks**

This theme became most evident when exploring interview dialogue. In several cases, the context of a source of support was included as a part of the map. For instance, prompted by discussion of her drawing of the Reception House, Keisha told of a support worker that was very important to her and her family in terms of going out of his way to prepare them for the Canadian winter – taking them shopping for coats and boots. Regardless of context, all participants touched on this theme of support networks. These networks were both formally organized (schools/teachers, public agencies, churches, mosques, government programs), and informal (friends, community members, teachers outside of school, and even strangers). They provided different supports – emotional, social, financial, and educational – that seemed to have assisted with participants’ transition to different areas of life in Canada. Even though some of these networks were connected to certain places (for instance, the social workers located at the Reception House), there was not enough consistency and depth in the data gathered to support organizing this theme by place. Therefore I consider support networks in terms of their structure (formal and informal), and attempt to draw connections between the availability of these networks and their role in creating a welcoming community for newcomer youth.

### **Formal Supports**

Many participants drew and discussed the Reception House, a government-funded temporary housing unit in Kitchener that assists with immigrant settlement. Sika told us of her family’s three-week stay there, and some of the support they provided, including arranging vaccinations and dental checkups:

Sika: And here [points to drawing of pharmacy], we went there the first time when we came to Canada and they take test, tests here [points to arm], and your finger – so, the pharmacy.

Interviewer: Do you go there often?

S: Yeah, we went there and here too [points to dental clinic].

I: The dental clinic, yeah?

S: Yeah the dental clinic near to here [points to Reception House], near to Victoria Park.

Keisha also talked about the importance of the Reception House's support to her family:

"Yeah it was pretty good 'cause, like, we got people that came over and they gave us clothes, and we got a lot of money also!"

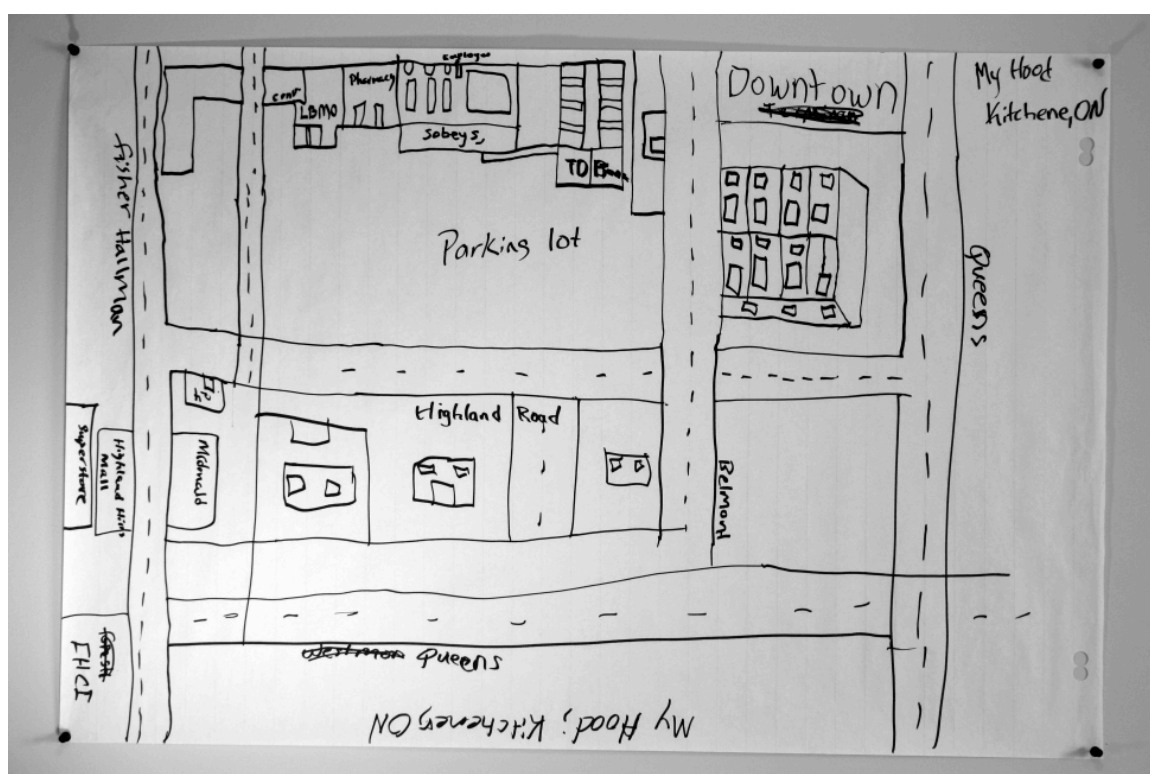
Specific teachers in school were generally a major component of formal support networks, and in most cases school was discussed as a positive and welcoming experience for participants. Charles told the story of his English teacher:

Yeah I really love my teacher because he's really...like, he understands me...he's not the kind of teacher that says: "You have to do this, and that it." So, he usually takes his time, during lunch period, and some students who don't have their homework, and he helps make them do it, like he gives them tips - always, always, always. So I can say it's hard to have a bad time in his course!

Organized programs seemed to be important as one context of participants' support networks. Both Natasha and Ahmed talked about involvement with church groups/the local mosque in the context of supportive social and cultural environments. Ahmed "meets up" with friends who share a common cultural background at the mosque. Natasha told us



how she feels welcome and connected to other young women in her youth group. The YMCA was also mentioned as another formally organized support, providing youth with basketball courts and open gym times. One participant, however, noted that financial barriers can make it difficult to participate in organized programs – in many cases subsidies and membership discounts last only a few months while one is considered a “new-newcomer” (noted by Daniel – map pictured in figure 7).



**Figure 7: Daniel's map**

While many of these so-called formal supports are place-based, more common was discussion of supports that were not place-based. These informal support networks were based in social connection, and extended to friends (accessible regardless of location thanks to current smart-phone and internet technology).



apartment, so it was different to make noise..." Natasha best described the sense of importance of a network of friends when she discussed her apprehension about starting high school. When asked why she thought she would enjoy her first year of high school, she relied: "I don't know...my friends. 'Cause if you have friends then you have support".

Strangers and community members were described as generally welcoming, with some exceptions that will be discussed in the next section. Walking us through her map, Sika discussed how she has learned to navigate through the city:

Interviewer: Do you take a bus to get around?

Sika: Yeah, yeah I take the bus always.

I: And do you find it a good place to be?

S: Yeah I got lost a lot of times, but now I know...

I: You were lost?

S: Yeah I was lost, but now I know pretty much every place in Kitchener.

I: Were people generally pretty friendly and helpful in terms of helping you find your way around?

S: Yeah, yeah if you ask them "I wanted this place", like, they will show you!

Many of the participants used public transport, and bus drivers and passengers were mentioned as mostly helpful. Daniel told us: "The bus drivers, some can be nice, some bus drivers are nice and some are...not very nice, but most people will take care of you."

Lastly, one participant shared an example of an ESL teacher at his high school going out of their way to provide support during his transition to living on his own. Daniel talks about how much this help meant to him:

When I first came here, I didn't know anybody in school. I got into the school and I would go there every day, nobody really cared. Until I met her. Cause when I moved here, I'm a student, I'm with...what do you call it...something Ontario Works...So like, um, they pay your rent and you go to school, right? So I - they told me to find a place, and I got a place to move in and I didn't have any source of, like any sources to go to get furnitures... But [my teacher], she, I met her and she asked me where I'm from and I told her, and she helped me around, she got me a bed, and chairs, and stuff and moved me into an apartment.

These informal support networks, along with their formal counterparts, seem to provide several benefits to the youth involved in this research and assist with various aspects of settlement and transitioning to a new culture. This constituted a major theme in analysis of discussions with participants, with each story either linked to or told in relation to a place featured on their maps. While place seemed key to formal support networks, the very nature of a formal organization necessitates a designated site to operate. Informal supports, however, seemed to be more based on the social actors in the situation and extend beyond the boundaries of place.

### **Exploring Negative Themes**

Many of these youth seemed to hold relatively mature attitudes about community, acceptance, and transition to life in a new country. Throughout our discussions surrounding maps of their communities, these youth emphasized feelings of positivity and a conscious gratefulness to be in a place of relative freedom, opportunity, and safety. This presented an unexpected challenge in terms of drawing out negative themes, unwelcoming aspects, and feeling unsafe. Issues that were briefly touched on by some participants during

these interviews included unsafe areas of the community, discrimination, difficulties adapting to the Canadian school system, and language issues. It should be noted that these topics represented a small portion of already short interviews, and as such were difficult to extrapolate. They offer a glimpse into some negative aspects of community that are touched on in other literature, and have been grouped in two sub-themes: exclusion and safety.

### **Exclusion.**

The common theme in most descriptions of negative experience was that of being made to feel like the outsider, or the other. Incidents of outright and implied discrimination in youths' stories were sparse, and when asked about the perception of being welcomed by the community, most participants indicated that they felt welcomed indeed. One participant, however, told of an incident in which she was barred from boarding a public bus. Sika recounted: "Yeah, when I was standing there waiting for the bus, one girl – a Canadian girl – first went, and then she said, "You're waiting here – you're not going on my bus" ...so I stand there and I wait for another bus. It was just me and another girl from Africa." Despite this, when asked if this made her think of Kitchener as more or less welcoming, she replied: "Actually I'm happy in Canada – I saw different things in my life before this..." Similarly, Ahmed, a Muslim, talked about how he feels certain aspects of society (e.g. popular media) focus negatively on Muslims in general – yet did not feel this discrimination in day-to-day life in his community.

Throughout discussion with participants about their perceptions of their school environments, we noted stories about both fitting in (discussed previously) and feeling like

an outsider. Daniel told us of problems he has encountered with teachers outside of the ESL program at his high school:

I've seen, in classes, uh, it's happened to me before, when I used to take ESL. So you know how you come to a country and you haven't really been to school, so you're new to a school...and say you're done this level of ESL, so you go to regular, and the way they do work there is different than the way you do work before. So they want you to have everything really fast, and if you're not getting it good they start comparing it to your age, you know - 'you're 18 now, I shouldn't be telling you this...' You know, in front of the whole class and stuff, and embarrass you...And you're not really used to the system that much. You have this to work on, you have that to work on...

This story seems to illustrate difficulty in transitioning to regular stream classes from an ESL environment, perhaps suggesting that language can continue to be an issue even after a student has completed their ESL classes. This would be an interesting avenue to follow up, since English skills are an oft-cited barrier for immigrant youth (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Janzen & Ochocka, 2003).

### **Safety and gender.**

Gender seemed to play an interesting role in discussions of personal safety. Most male participants indicated a feeling of relative safety throughout their community, while female participants talked more about certain places taking on more threatening qualities at night, or in the presence of other groups. I touched earlier on Keisha's descriptions of Victoria Park as somewhere welcoming and safe during the day, yet not somewhere she would venture after dark. Sika also talked about Victoria Park and her perceptions of an

unsafe area – the basketball courts. After noting how much she enjoys the park as a place of solitude and relaxation, she brought up (much like Keisha) the idea of how other actors can alter the perception of a place:

Interviewer: Do you ever play basketball at the park?

Sika: The park? No, because I saw a lot of...err...people - that were playing, but not friends – not easy to talk to them. [They're] Somebody that you never know. But like, YMCA, I have a lot of friends I meet to play, at school I have a lot of friends in school, like, even the library, but at the park I never play. Because a lot of people – I never know them.”

When asked when she feels concerned for her safety, Keisha replied “When I’m on the downtown sometimes, or when I’m at the bus, even in the mall – you have to be aware of what’s around you and what you’re doing, ‘cause others are watching you.” The roles of gender in perceiving a community as welcoming or otherwise constitute an interesting follow-up question beyond the scope of this work.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, major components that emerged as positively contributing factors to the sense of fitting in essential to a welcoming community were: the home and family, social places within the community, and the formal and informal support networks which emerged through discussion with youth. Home was where participants were closest to their cultural heritage and family ties, as well as a place of responsibility. Social places offered opportunities to expand social connections and negotiate host culture, language, and norms. The concept of third places in the community (Oldenburg, 1999) seems central to connecting these social experiences with settlement experiences. Lastly, support

networks constitute an important part of a welcoming community for youth: both formally organized and informally developed.

Negative themes were sparse throughout these interviews, and rarely touched on without probing questions. These issues centred around feelings of being singled out as 'the other', in contrast to the feelings of fitting in which were central to the discussion of positive themes. Some participants, especially as it related to gender, also raised the issue of feelings of safety and unsafe places; an interesting topic for future work. Next, these findings will be further discussed in terms of third places, leisure contexts, and how social capital might play into the discussion of immigrant youth settlement.



## Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

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Further understanding of the settlement experiences of newcomer youth in Canada is important - as previously mentioned this group is relatively underrepresented in the literature surrounding immigrant settlement. At the outset of this project, I asked how discussion about important spaces and places in the community might inform ideas about settlement and community building. Findings suggest that, for youth participants, the idea of settlement success is most closely tied with Seat's (2000) description of settlement: the sense of fitting in. In addition, participation in the host community is valued as a settlement success, also part of Seat's (2000) two-way understanding of settlement. Participants did indeed describe Kitchener as welcoming in the vast majority of their stories, and on the whole, the youth that we worked with told stories of settlement successes. Several factors were found to contribute to this, indicated by common themes in both maps and discussions with youth about maps of their community.

While 'fitting in' may be considered simplistic, the major themes that emerged in this project suggest that this seemingly simple goal is supported by several underlying structures. The home as a place of responsibility and family connections emerged as a major theme throughout discussions, seemingly important as a cultural touchstone for youth. This connection to cultural identity has important consequences for settlement success (Berry et al., 2006) from a psychological and sociocultural standpoint. Outside of the home, places that foster a sense of fitting in were also important parts of what made the community seem welcoming to newcomer youth. In many cases, positive social experiences were located in these third places (e.g. public places, leisure contexts, schools, community

centres). Importantly, these places also support a ‘two-way’ understanding of settlement. Support networks were also discussed as critical to the success of adjusting to life in a new country for the adolescent African-Canadian youth newcomers involved in this research. Informal networks of peers, as well as formal networks (i.e. teachers), were key in providing social support, facilitating social learning, and connecting youth to the existing community.

The following discussion places these findings into the larger context of welcoming communities by exploring how they relate to a holistic view of newcomer youth settlement that includes psychological, place-based, and social capital perspectives. The discussion is split into three sections representing these perspectives: First, I briefly examine the links between home, cultural identity, and psychological benefits in adapting to a new culture. As previously mentioned, family support and a strong sense of identity are important to resiliency. Next, I examine how place, place-making, and third places provide youth with the opportunity for social learning through leisure and shared social experience. Findings suggest that third places might be important in place-making and building social capital. I explore the transition of space to place in maps and narrative, noting integration (or lack thereof) of third places into participants’ stories. Third, social capital provides the background for a discussion of the different types of relationships that participants formed and how these connections support bridging into the wider community. Last, I return to a discussion of place, settlement, and access to social resources.

### **Home, Identity & Adaptation**

Regardless of family situation, all participants in this project told stories of family connections when discussing their depictions of home. For this group of youth, home

seemed to be where they were closest to their cultural heritage. Similar to participants in Berry et al. (2006), home was where first languages were spoken and cultural traditions were observed. Indeed, in existing literature, strong connection to cultural identity was shown to be a key component of a positive settlement experience, along with an openness to engage in the host society (Beiser et al., 1999; Berry et al., 2006). This sense of identity impacts how newcomer youth view their cultural group, and is important for their psychological well being throughout settlement. Youth also find themselves in a situation where they must negotiate more than one set of cultural norms and identities (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). The psychological benefits associated with a close connection to culture may help ease some of these tensions.

Beiser et al. (1999) note that a supportive family environment is one facilitator of resiliency – in this case, resiliency is the participants' ability to rebound psychologically from stress and adapt well to the host society. The findings of this study suggest that participants were relatively successful in their settlement efforts; stories of fitting in and feeling welcome far outweighed stories of exclusion. It is likely to a degree that the cultural links provided by youth newcomers' home environments have helped them negotiate stressors in their settlement efforts. This is consistent with other research in the sense that home seems to represent a connection to cultural identity (Berry et al., 2006). Further research is necessary for a more detailed look at the role of the home and family in supporting youth settlement efforts, but we can be certain that it is one important (if indirect) aspect of a welcoming community.

## **Social Places: Leisure, Social Learning, and Third Places**

Place is central to participants' stories – the act of drawing a map begs the question: of all possible places, which ones are included and which are left out? Consistent with youth immigrants in Sampson and Gifford's study, participants emphasized the importance of home, school, parks, and subjectively "safe" places in their maps (2010). Geographically, these familiar places act as departure points for youth to go forth and explore their new physical and social environments (akin to Sampson and Gifford's description of *place-making* [2010]). Many participants in this study identified recreation and leisure activities and places in terms of feeling safe, welcoming, and social. As expected, findings in this case are consistent with existing literature, and will be discussed further below. Most of the social places described by youth can also be described in terms of third places. These third places are important in building community (Oldenburg, 1999), and also possibly in exploring how newcomer youths' understanding of the spaces in their community shifts to a sense of place, invested with meaning and experience. This sense of place in turn is important in how places of community are experienced.

### **Leisure as context.**

Exemplified in participants' narratives, leisure is the context for many processes essential for facilitating successful settlement. Consistent with findings of Tirone and Pedlar (2000; 2005), Ng (1998), and Yuen et al. (2005), participants in this case used leisure settings to develop and maintain friendships and connections with Canadian- and foreign-born youth, work on language skills, and foster understandings of Canadian culture. The previously discussed theme of social places and fitting in touches on these ideas directly: Shandi's discussion about valuing the social connections on her soccer team more than the sport

itself speaks to this. As Ng notes, the pursuit of common [recreational] activities is an important step in forming new friendships (1998). In this case, leisure seems to be the main context for forming social connections facilitating social learning about cultural norms and language, and experiencing the setting – building meanings and a sense of place.

Findings were also consistent with those of Taylor and Doherty (2005), specifically in terms of perceived benefits of recreation settings. Similar to participants in Taylor and Doherty's work, newcomer youth in the present study identified emotional benefits, social connections, and learning opportunities for English skills and Canadian cultural norms. Another interesting similarity is the preference of sport – Taylor and Doherty note that ESL students in their study preferred mainly soccer and basketball, while students in the general high school stream showed a preference to other sports (mainly basketball, baseball, and hockey). Participants in our study also spoke of soccer and basketball as their chief recreational pursuits. This raises the issue of motivational theories of leisure behaviour (see Ng, 1998; Taylor & Doherty, 2005), which is out of the scope of the current project, but has been discussed much in the social psychology of leisure literature (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011) and could prove interesting to explore further in the context of immigrant youth.

Sampson and Gifford (2010) discuss four types of places that are integral to the therapeutic landscape and well being of refugee youth. They point out that *places of opportunity* which support learning and play are important to these youth in terms of personal development and restorative experience (the latter more applicable to refugee youth). *Places of sociality* are posited to provide a context for developing *bridging and bonding* relationships (discussed in more detail later), as well as connecting with others

and forming attachments. The findings of the current study were thematically similar to these types of places, and in many cases, places held more than one role. For instance, the public park was referred with the characteristics of a place of opportunity during recreational use, and as a place of sociality during smaller group use. Indeed, leisure settings were important in fostering a sense of inclusion that aided in forming friendships and building social networks. I contend that these leisure settings, and other social places in participants' stories, constitute third places for these newcomers. The nature of third places brings important considerations to our understanding of settlement experiences.

### **Place-making.**

Findings from this research suggest that the transition of youths' perceptions of areas in their community from unknown spaces to places invested with meaning seems to be related to greater residency time, greater English fluency, and more social connections. This description of place-making is consistent with the findings of Ng (1998), in a discussion of how immigrants learn about the physical settings of their host country. The longer the duration of residency, the more detailed and accurate spatial knowledge becomes (see also Knight, 1983). It would seem from the detailed layout of some participants' maps (e.g. Daniel's - shown in fig. 7), the necessity and extent of travel also increase this familiarity. In this sense I observed that Daniel and Kwame (the participants that lived farthest from the high school) created maps (fig. 7 & 6, respectively) that emphasized their paths through the city to a much greater extent than other youth who lived closer.

Indeed, how a new space is experienced impacts our learning about that space. Active experiences like walking or driving provide greater opportunities to form more

detailed cognitive maps than do passive experiences, such as being driven as a passenger (Ng, 1998). This is interesting in that the youth participants in this study mostly actively experience the spaces around them as they travel mainly by foot or public transit. Sampson and Gifford note that a lack of transportation can be a limiting factor in terms of places available for immigrant youth to experience in their place-making (2010). Financial constraints may also prevent access to certain places, shopping malls and other places of consumption for example. Indeed, participants did not include many places of consumption in the present study (Sampson and Gifford [2010] reported a “marked absence” of these in their study as well).

An interesting example from the findings centres around a local shopping mall: Two participants – Keisha and Charles - with differing levels of English proficiency, residency time, and social networks discussed their perceptions of this location quite differently. Keisha has been living in Canada nearly twice as long as Charles (seven vs. four years, respectively), and has more advanced English skills and social networks. She talks about the mall in terms of a social place, where her and her friends can relax and enjoy themselves. Charles, however, only includes the same mall as a landmark in his map – one that bounds the edge of his territory but that he does not frequent or make social use of beyond simple grocery shopping. While this example might not be considered a third place by the strictest definition, it arguably embodies the spirit of the ideas behind it. The associated notions of consumption and how newcomer youth engage with places of consumption, however, is another layer to be explored in further research.

### **Third places and settlement.**

In the case of this study, 'social places' referred to by participants largely shared Oldenburg's characteristics of third place (1999). As previously mentioned, third places are arenas of socialization separate from first and second places – traditionally home and work, respectively. In the context of youth participants, the second place is considered school. Oldenburg considers third place as a fixture critical to community and community building – important for encouraging civic engagement and a positive sense of place, which in turn are important components of settlement success. Eight dimensions of third place are set out: it is considered a neutral ground; actors in third places are generally socially level; conversation is the main activity; it is somewhere easy to access; it is usually filled with 'regulars' who congregate there frequently; it has a low profile and visiting does not constitute a special occasion; the mood is playful and light; and finally, it feels like a 'home away from home' (Oldenburg, 1999).

Many of these characteristics were touched on in participants' stories of places of importance in their community. The park, for instance, was generally spoken of as a 'neutral', playful, social area, somewhere youth could easily get to that did not represent a special occasion, and having a relatively predictable 'cast' of regulars (including a more negatively perceived crowd at night time). While conversation may not have been the main activity in this public place (as also in the case of leisure settings or libraries), the feelings of inclusion and sense of participating in Canadian society were both important to participants. Indeed parks and public spaces are noted for their importance in newcomer youth place-making (Sampson & Gifford, 2010), and places that share the characteristics of Oldenburg's (1999) third place seem to positively impact settlement efforts.



It is in this spirit that I propose to look more broadly at what constitutes a third place for newcomer youth. Parks and soccer fields, as previously noted, represented places with many of Oldenburg's (1999) characteristics. These places constitute an important context for development of community as well as social learning. Through the social interactions in these places, youth have the opportunity to build their social networks, which raises the question of how newcomer youth come to interact with third places. Current findings suggest that participants branch out from their homes and schools, and the majority of their chosen social places are based around leisure. Victoria Park, for instance, is described as a type of third place by most participants, and is extremely close to the Reception Centre. This is consistent with Sampson and Gifford's observations of refugee youth place-making patterns (2010). This could raise interesting planning considerations for welcoming communities such as development and maintenance of public spaces to provide opportunities for such social places.

Youth are often excluded from traditional third places by virtue of neighbourhood planning that moves suburbs far away from social and cultural centres, and heavy television and internet use that tends to be concentrated in the home (Oldenburg, 1999). I argue that not only are the characteristics of third places important to youth in terms of developing and maintaining social connections and community engagement, but also that the connections between the use of third spaces by immigrant youth and their settlement success is an avenue of research deserving further attention. By paying greater attention to how immigrant youth engage with and come to know new third places, we may learn more about their potential for community development and fostering settlement success. Sampson and Gifford (2010), note that to facilitate positive connections to place, newcomer

youth benefit from the active involvement of community authority figures (teachers, police, etc), which can act as bridges into the larger community. The idea of bridging and bonding relationships requires the consideration of social capital, its connection to the present study, and its role in settlement.

### **Social Capital: Social Networks and Settlement**

The thematic importance of social connections was apparent in our discussions with youth. I turn to social capital theory to frame discussion of how these connections may benefit newcomer youth. I explore the possibility of different types of action and support that newcomers may have access to through different types of social networks, as well as the particular importance of bridging social relationships. Lastly, in consideration of the importance of social capital, I return to the discussion of space, place, and sense of place discussed earlier, with consequences for how the interpretation of community places may shape settlement efforts.

Social capital, as discussed by Putnam (2000), “refers to the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (p.19).” Social networks of newcomer youth (especially friendships) can be important sources of social capital, and allow access to support and resources that may otherwise be unavailable to them. Participants did indeed discuss various aspects of their social networks in relation to their maps, from formal networks like social service workers and teachers to informal networks of friends and peers. Forms of social capital based in these connections can mean access to social support, i.e. resources exchanged to enhance the well being of one or more participants in the relationship (Glover & Parry, 2008).

Glover and Parry also note that main forms of social capital consist of norms of reciprocity,

obligation, and sanctions (2008). These are important in facilitating three types of action: expressive, instrumental, and obstructive. In the following section, I discuss these forms of action in the context of this study.

Expressive action is linked with the notion of ‘getting by’, and encompasses emotional support and empathy (Glover & Parry, 2008). When Natasha described having friends as being akin to having support, she touched on the idea of emotional support as a form of expressive action. The present research findings suggest that many friendships and social ties in the case of newcomer youth are developed through leisure settings. Indeed, Iwasaki and Mannell (2000), note that leisure friendships can help individuals cope with stressful life events. Certainly the dual pressures of settlement and adolescence fit into this category. Emotional and social support is important in navigating these stresses (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). These examples illustrate the importance of expressive action as a form of social capital for newcomer youth. They also largely correspond with friendships based in shared experiences or circumstances – for instance, Shandi’s description of working on English skills with a friend – an immigrant as well. This notion of *bonding* social capital will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Instrumental action, or ‘getting ahead’, is related to material support and resources that are exchanged as part of a social tie (Glover & Parry, 2008). For instance, exchanges of information among social connections can be of great value, and Coleman (1990) identifies this *information potential* as another form of social capital. Daniel discussed instrumental action and ‘getting ahead’ when he told the story of a teacher from his high school that helped him find, furnish, and move into a new apartment. Other participants talked about knowledge they gained from workers and other residents at the Reception Centre during

their stay there. These examples of exchanging favours and information demonstrate how instrumental action has the potential to positively impact newcomer youths' settlement experiences.

Lastly, obstructive action is tied to the idea of 'falling behind', and represents negative effects of social capital on individuals (Glover & Parry, 2008). By way of example from the findings of this research, Charles indicated that he attended to many responsibilities around the house – caring for his younger siblings, preparing meals, and cleaning. It is possible that norms of obligation and sanctions are at work in this case, preventing Charles from participating more broadly in the social life of his community. In a settlement context, Stodolska (2007), reports that immigrants in a primarily ethnic leisure enclave were delayed in their settlement efforts and career advancement. Feeling comfortable and safe within these ethnic enclosures was found to be one reason for associating mainly with other immigrants, I argue that sanctions from within the ethnic enclosure and the resulting lack of bridging connections into the broader community may also constitute obstructive action as a form of negative social capital.

In the present study, social networks emerged as an important thematic element of participants' settlement into Canadian society and culture. Indeed, social networks and social capital that newcomer youth build throughout settlement have the potential to affect them significantly. Putnam (2000) further identifies two types of social capital that are key to this discussion: bonding social capital, and bridging social capital. Building from the idea that different forms of social capital can affect settlement success, I explore these concepts and implications next.

### **Bonding and bridging: The need for bridges.**

This discussion centres on two concepts of social networks and resulting social capital: bonding networks, which essentially refers to the connections of individuals that are alike in significant aspects (e.g. ethnicity, race, immigration status, etc.); and bridging networks, referring to connections of individuals who are essentially unlike one another (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002). Research has shown that of these two types, bridging networks were related to positive civic engagement more than those based on bonding (Geys & Murdoch, 2010). Several participants touched on bonding networks when they spoke of making friends that were “new, like me” and other connections based on shared ethnic backgrounds. While these bonding networks are important for expressive action and getting by, their potential for instrumental action (getting ahead) can be limited due to factors such as homogeneity of experience, for example (Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Glover & Parry, 2008)

There were also examples of bridging networks within the findings of this research. Natasha’s Young Women’s church group is one such example – connections are built outwards towards the community at large through service projects and the gathering of a diverse group of community members affiliated with the church. These ties into the larger community can mean access to greater resources and information than would be available otherwise. Ahmed set out a similar scene, when he spoke about meeting a diverse cross section of the community through seeking out pick-up soccer games at fields around his neighbourhood. Since these examples are only brief snapshots of our youth participants’ social networks, they give an incomplete picture of how social networks may have shaped these youths’ involvement in their community. They do illustrate, however, the importance

of examining this question further. As previously mentioned, Sampson and Gifford (2010) note the importance of bridging networks when they suggest that connecting immigrants to community leaders and authority figures is an important practical step in helping to actively develop bridging into the larger community.

### **Connecting to Place: Social Capital, Sense of Place, & Settlement**

Not only is the concept of settlement considered a two-way process, but the places in which settlement happens are also doubly constructed – that is, made up of locations with material forms and the subjective meanings and value of social interactions attached to those locations (Gieyrn, 2000). As discussed earlier, Gieyrn’s conception of place consists of geographic location, the material form of the environment, and the sense of place – that component which is a subjective property of the individual and their experiences rather than the space (2000). In this vein, I propose that the aspects of settlement discussed previously (namely the importance of social capital, family, and community support) might be viewed as factors that can influence sense of place, which may have consequences for newcomer youth connecting to places in the community. I also consider the role of community in supporting the development of engaging places that support bridging social connection in terms of place-making and settlement.

The building of social capital is important in the settlement context, specifically bridging capital, as previously discussed. Access to such social capital is a factor that may influence a sense of place, and thus how that place is experienced. Glover et al. (2005), provide an example of access to such examples of social capital grounded in place when they write of a community garden, in which social capital resources are not only built, but used as well. In the context of youth newcomer settlement efforts, access to social capital

building opportunities grounded in types of third places (Oldenburg, 1999), may contribute positively to place-making efforts. By another example, a newcomer youth with little social connection or access to different forms of social capital may understandably feel isolated and thus perceive the same place quite differently compared to another with greater ties and access. Family, other newcomers, and culturally relevant social connections are all elements that may also influence a sense of place. Maintaining positive connections to these elements has been previously discussed, as they seem to benefit settlement efforts of youth psychologically, emotionally, (i.e. Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Beiser et al., 1999; Berry et al., 2006), and in their place-making efforts.

Indeed, places of belonging and exclusion are singled out as a critical next step in research by Sampson and Gifford (2010), especially early in the settlement process. Engaging newcomer youth with opportunities for bridging connections in community places fosters not only a positive sense of place, but has also been linked to positive settlement experiences (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). This raises an interesting issue about the role of community in supporting the development of such bridging opportunities. Active engagement by community seems to hold more promising prospects for newcomer settlement success than a focus on passive support structures. In this vein, the community is perceived as a component of a place, and supporting bridging opportunities seems necessary for the type of civic engagement and participation that contributes to our two way understanding of settlement.

### **Marginality & Access**

During the early years of the ethnicity and leisure research field, Wasburne (1978) proposed two alternative explanations to racial underrepresentation in outdoor recreation

activities. While discussed in more detail in previous chapters, *marginality theory* suggested that being located on the socioeconomic margins, minorities might face additional barriers that prevent engagement. One of the ways in which this work was influential was the consideration of disparities to access (Floyd, 2007). The preceding discussion about social capital, bridging opportunities, and community engagement can also be considered in light of the notion of access. While marginality may lack lasting explanatory power, there is no doubt that socioeconomic factors can contribute to the degree of access to settlement advantages. Bridging connections (Geys & Murdoch, 2010), may serve to help negotiate some of these socioeconomic barriers, as well as providing access to the type of instrumental social capital necessary for 'getting ahead' (Glover & Parry, 2008), that might not be possible otherwise. In this sense, these findings may present a challenge to some tenets of the marginality thesis, namely refocusing on social and social learning related barriers instead, or in addition to socioeconomic factors. The issue of the role of community and community engagement in creating bridging opportunities for newcomers, especially youth, should not be overlooked.

## **Conclusion**

In seeking to explore welcoming communities with youth newcomers, I used a thematic narrative analysis to examine interview transcripts, videotaped interviews, and cognitive maps. This analysis used the sensitizing concepts of place and narrative methodology as guides in interpreting emergent themes. Main themes that emerged during analysis were: importance of home and family, social places and fitting in, support networks, and the relative silence of negative themes. It is important to note that these are not discrete



categories, and flow into one another as youth newcomers progressively become more settled into life in Canada.

From these findings, I have proposed that welcoming communities are perceived by youth as those places in which they feel comfortable, safe, free from judgment or discrimination, and where social connections are experienced; places where they can fit in. Indeed, the nature of the places youth cited as welcoming (parks, the soccer field, ESL classes in their high school, etc.), seemed to facilitate social connections by bringing together individuals with shared experience and common challenges. In other contexts, people of diverse backgrounds come together in welcoming and helpful ways; the teacher that takes time to help her student find an apartment, for instance, or the program staff and volunteers at the Reception House, preparing newcomers for winter. These connections between people of varying levels of social similarity are also examples of bonding and bridging social capital, respectively.

Moreover, these findings point to the continued necessity of taking a holistic approach to understanding newcomer settlement, particularly in the context of youth. A social capital lens may be useful in continuing to explore the social networks of newcomer youth. In the present study, it seemed participants' stories of bridging network connections were linked with access to information and other potential resources. Intrinsically, the development of a strong sense of personal identity, alongside a strong cultural one, has been linked to the development of resilience in youth (see Berry, 1997), and featured importantly in discussions around maps. Considering the importance of identity, places of leisure and sociality are critical features of a potential welcoming community. These, and other third places seem to be where a sense of community, connectedness, and a sense of

place are built, and fostering them is an important consideration for planning and engaging with youth newcomers. Recognizing social influences on sense of place and perceptions of community places during settlement may provide a framework for future research.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Due to time constraints during the Youth Leadership Program, interviews were necessarily short and general. This was a consequence of working with a segment of data from a larger project, and reflected in the necessarily exploratory nature of this work. To progress into more detailed theoretical exploration of settlement with a focus on place, future work should have ample time for both the creation and discussion of the nuances of cognitive maps. In attempting to discern an overall impression of community for newcomer youth, we were not able to focus specifically or in-depth on settlement experiences surrounding leisure – surely a valuable research avenue to pursue.

Future research, as mentioned previously, may also incorporate a social capital perspective to explore more in depth how networks contribute to the sharing of social resources. This could make use of the previously presented theoretical connections between community places, community engagement with newcomer youth, and bridging capital. Questions about the possible connections between leisure places and activities and the production and maintenance are also relevant in this sense. Further study may inform best practices for creating and maintaining places to foster the development of (notably bridging) social capital and community. This could prove valuable conceptually and also practically, in terms of policy development.

Lastly, the role of place-making in newcomer settlement is an interesting avenue touched on by Sampson and Gifford (2010), and fits well with perspectives on how

newcomers come to know and experience the geography of their host societies discussed in previous chapters (i.e. Downs & Stea, 2005; Feng, 1995). There is certainly room for greater understanding of how youth newcomers come to value places in the community, as well as how those places can serve to promote settlement success. Indeed, building from the previous discussion of bridging social capital, the question of the community's potential role in supporting place-making and settlement efforts seems to be a valuable research path as well. To reiterate, the role of place (and place-making) in thinking about questions of newcomer settlement is a valuable piece of context that should be considered thoroughly and explored further in future research.

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