MAPPING VULNERABILITY, PICTURING PLACE

Negotiating safety in the post-immigration phase

by

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This thesis examines the experiences and interpretations of place of immigrant women in Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario. Immigrant women in smaller Canadian cities contend with a varied and unique set of circumstances that are specific to their geographic positioning. Kingston and Peterborough, with populations of under 150,000 residents, are cities with particular racial discourses. Racialized discourses in Kingston and Peterborough identify each of these places as white cities. As a result, racialized inhabitants who reside in these cities are subsequently rendered invisible or out of place. Participants of my research, most of whom are racialized visible minorities, have all had to contend with oppressive effects of negotiating a white, and oftentimes unwelcoming landscape.

There are three main objectives to my research. First, my desire was to learn about immigrant women’s lived realities and to better understand how the experience of migration and racialization had affected their lives. Second, I wanted to facilitate opportunities for women to share their stories with each other in the hopes of perhaps creating the types of learning experiences that would empower participants. Facilitating social interactions in which women could voice their experiences and share their emotional geographies became the most meaningful aspect of this research project at the level of the individual. Finally, I wanted our collaborative research experience to reach the wider public with the intention of creating transformative social change. The voices of immigrant women in smaller cities are often ignored or overlooked, and this gap in knowledge, I believed, was in need of exploring. Previous studies with immigrant women have focused primarily on immigrant women who live in larger Canadian cities. Little
research has been directed at smaller cities such as Kingston and Peterborough and my thesis seeks to begin to remedy this oversight.
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Preface

Every year on our planet millions of women migrate between countries and nations. Canada has accepted over two hundred thousand immigrants each year (since the early 1990s), and approximately half of these individuals are women. Women the world over are subjected to particular gendered challenges in their lives. Gender matters, and it does so because women experience the world as gendered beings who face countless challenges, barriers, and oppressions because of their gendered positioning. I place my focus on women who migrate because I am interested in both exploring the gendered experiences of women in part because their experiences are unique to their gender, and with the knowledge I acquire, to change the social fabric of society.

Women have, and continue to experience, domination and oppression throughout the world. This statement is true across scales, whether one is looking at the everyday realities of women globally, nationally, provincially, or locally. Despite the feminist project over the past many decades, women still do not earn as much as their male counterparts; women continue to contend with very specific and sometimes horrific forms of gendered violence; women’s experiences are rendered less valuable than men’s because of their subordinated positioning in society; and the proportion of women in positions of power is drastically lower than that of men.

My thesis project attempts to place women’s experiences on the map so to speak, by facilitating an opportunity for participants to voice their stories. In doing so, this project strives to fill a gap in knowledge and to make a small step towards strengthening the voices of immigrant women in Canada. My personal experience with women’s stories of immigration; my positioning as a witness to women’s emotional, economic, cultural,
and social struggles; and my emotional attachment, admiration, and respect for all of the immigrant women who have shared their stories with me compel me to better understand and raise awareness of this topic of study. Our project (that is, the project of my participants and myself) seeks to speak out against oppression and domination. The voices of my participants are placed front and centre. Our goal is nothing more than social transformation: to raise awareness of the realities facing immigrant women in Kingston and Peterborough and ultimately, to change the world and create a safer, more welcoming, and fully inclusive place in which to live.

Figure 1                     Walking in downtown Kingston
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Chapter I: Introduction

The lived realities of women who have (im)migrated to Canada and gone on to make new homes in smaller Ontario cities is relatively uncharted territory within the field of geography. A great deal of research has examined the experiences of immigrants in larger urban centres, such as Canada’s three gateway cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, but little research has delved into what life is like for newcomers who exist along the periphery. Lives of inhabitants in smaller cities are vastly different from lives of those residing in large urban centres. Large urban centres are home to a population of ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse groups. In contrast, smaller cities such as Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario have traditionally housed a population that is predominantly of white-European descent. The similarity in what can be termed a “racial social identifier” has created the perception of Kingston and Peterborough as “white cities” within the dominant imagination. In these monolithically defined white spaces, individuals who are racialized as visible minorities are considered by many to be “out of place” and are in many ways excluded from full citizenship status through the processes of “Othering.” Defined and thought of as different, many visible minority residents in smaller cities contend with countless discriminatory (including racist) social interactions with other residents who socially, culturally, economically, and politically exclude them.

The women who participated in my project were invested in voicing their lived realities by sharing their stories with others who had experienced similar life events. Eighteen immigrant women from thirteen different countries participated in my project. Many of the participants were of visible minority status (a term coined by the Canadian government in 1986 as a result of Employment Equity). Participants wanted to learn more
about themselves and each other by looking at their lives from a new perspective. Women knew what their experiences had been, they knew how those experiences had made them feel, but for various reasons they had not had the opportunity to look back and analyze their experiences. In large part, women were willing to expose very painful memories and episodes in their lives because they believed that others could hear their stories and somehow be helped by what they had learned. It was important for participants that other individuals were provided with the opportunity to learn from their challenges and successes. The project employed a variety of research methods, such as: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups using photovoice (a unique method that uses participant-generated photography), a mapping exercise, and public photography exhibitions and presentations (some may chose to call this participatory-action research).

As my primary objective was to map the places of vulnerability in (im)migrant women’s lives, the first step I took was to locate safe places in which to conduct my fieldwork. The Ban Righ Centre for Continuing University Education, located at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario and the New Canadians Centre in Peterborough, Ontario, were the perfect locations in which to facilitate feelings of comfort and safety among the women who participated in the project. Women graduates of Queen’s University founded the Ban Righ Centre in 1974; one of the main premises underlying their endeavour was the goal of providing a place for mature women students to feel part of the community. Founders believed that “a community forms more quickly…when it has a roof over its head, some walls, and a kitchen. The Ban Righ Centre is a place of encounters…and the principal encounter [here] is with learning” (BRC website). For many mature women students on campus, the Ban Righ Centre is a home away from home. My reasons for
choosing this location as the Kingston research site are grounded in the belief that participants would feel less vulnerable (making themselves vulnerable) by being in a safe and welcoming environment such as the Ban Righ Centre. This goal was met and was voiced time and time again by the women who participated during the course of the research project.

Nestled unobtrusively in a brown brick building near downtown Peterborough is the New Canadians Centre, an immigrant service agency that was founded in 1979, which became the location of my second research site. The executive director and other staff members were instrumental in generating interest among potential participants and the executive director also provided me with the space in which to meet with women in an environment that was safe and familiar. Many of the women who participated had only recently arrived in Canada (within the previous two years) and their willingness to participate was directly connected to how comfortable they felt within the space of the New Canadians Centre. Participants’ sense of ease also assisted in the level to which they felt comfortable with me. The rapport between myself and the agency executive director and staff enhanced my rapport with the participants. In fact, some of the staff also became participants. The project’s connection to the immigrant service agency also ensured that participants at the Peterborough location were readily able to access support and advice should the need arise during fieldwork. The New Canadians Centre’s involvement with the project also matched well with a fundamental goal of the NCC, that of “promoting cross-cultural understanding and acceptance through awareness and education” as well as its mission of “promoting cultural integration through social and community activities”
(NCC website). The project assisted on both of these fronts by facilitating learning experiences for participants from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The project was also about empowering the women who participated. For many of the participants, sharing their lived realities within the safety of a group of women who had undergone similar life events was an enriching and transformative experience. In this sense in particular, “place mattered” from the very onset of our time together. The selection of appropriate research sites allowed participants to feel relaxed and comfortable, which assisted greatly in their ability to share with other women/participants. The opportunity to connect and really engage with one another created meaningful and lasting social connections among the participants. Participants were learning from each other from the very first group meeting and they continued to do so throughout the entire research process. The opportunity to share their emotional experiences of place with a receptive and supportive audience was a powerful experience for participants; so powerful in fact, that even after fieldwork had ended, some participants continued meeting on an informal basis.

My attempt to understand the different places in which women experienced vulnerability while geographically positioned in smaller cities took us into the realm of women’s emotional geographies. Place(s) and emotion(s) were at the forefront during all steps of the research process. Using a unique collection of qualitative methods that enabled us to explore the personal geographies of (im)migrant women, participants and I engaged in a synergistic learning experience throughout our time together.
Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 “Race” and Racism in Canada

The history of Canada and its inhabitants is also a history of “race” and racism. The interconnections of place, time, and “race” are complex and interwoven throughout the national narrative of Canada. Historically, the dominant majority in Canada has consisted of white Europeans, and has particularly referred to members of the middle class. This group has had, and continues to have, the power to name who is “different” and to ascribe certain negative attributes and characteristics to these differences and the persons who embody them. In Canada, “place” and places hold very specific meanings for the dominant majority, and as such, places become attributed with specific meanings through the process of racialization. One of the primary manifestations of the historico-geographical experiences of “race” in Canada is the domination and oppression of different groups (read different “races”) of people, at different periods in time. All too often, the groups in question are those who have been racialized by the dominant majority. For clarification purposes, the term racialized is defined by Henry and Tator as “the processes by which meanings are attached to particular objects, features, and processes, in such a way that the latter are given special significance and are embodied with a set of additional meanings” (2006: 6). Razack (2002) states that one means of “uncovering processes of racialization is by taking a spatial approach” (17): furthermore, to invoke a spatial inquiry involves looking at the ways racialization have worked “to segregate, contain, and limit those who are conceived and defined in spatial terms” (17). The manner in which individuals and groups are racialized in Canada plays a prominent role in their lived experiences and life opportunities. Individuals and groups who are not
considered to be members of the dominant majority have endured countless injustices at the hands of the majority (and continue to do so), because of the colour of their skin. It has been noted by theorists such as Li (2003), Henry & Tator (2006), and Kobayashi & Johnson (2007) that conceptions of “race” are not static; rather, racialized groups have changed over time (and place), depending on the needs, wants, and agendas of the dominant majority. It is important to keep in mind that conceptions of “race” are contextual, meaning that one must consider the historical, geographical, social, and political environments in which “race” and racism are present when exploring the ways in which individuals and groups are racialized.

In this section, I will lay the groundwork for a discussion about “race” and racism in Canada. I will briefly describe the history of racism in Canada as a means of grounding the history of racism in this nation. In addition, the term “race” will be defined. Secondly, I will discuss some of the ways in which groups such as Aboriginals, Blacks, and non-white immigrants have experienced racism in Canada. This section will by no means chronicle all of the groups in Canada who have experienced racist treatment by the dominant majority, but it will attempt to lay the foundation and provide a means of understanding racism in Canada today. Due to the fact that my thesis is specifically immigration-related, my emphasis will be placed on groups who have migrated to Canada recently. Third, I will introduce Iris Young’s theory of the “Five Faces of Oppression” and discuss how her theory provides a lens through which to analyze racism in Canada. At its core, racism is about power, domination, and control, and Young’s theory of oppression presents a valuable means of illuminating these concepts. By viewing racism through the lens of oppression we can understand the immensity of its power, the
strategies racism employs, and the damage racism has done and continues to do in the lives of those who are racialized as subordinate. Finally, I will move to positioning us in the present and outline some of the ways in which racism continues in Canadian society. The focus in this final section will once more be centred on those who (im)migrate to Canada and will explore the ways in which they continue to experience racism, discrimination, and marginalization once they set foot on Canadian soil.

2.2 Racism in Canada: A brief history

The “discovery” of North America in the fifteenth century, by Europeans, was gradually followed by increasing numbers of white settlers, and with these settlers came a series of changes and expectations that were quickly grafted onto the Aboriginal population. As a “white-settler” society, this country we now call Canada evolved into what Razack (2002) terms a “settler society [that is] structured by a racial hierarchy” (1). White Europeans were positioned at the top of the hierarchy and Aboriginals were at the bottom: other “races” fell somewhere in between. The positioning of “other” races changed from time to time as it moved along the continuum, yet it has always been those of white settler heritage who have remained positioned at the top of the racial pinnacle. Other races could experience mobility along the continuum only when the dominant majority deemed them to be more or less valuable according to the purposes they served for those in power. Usually this involved exploiting the labour of racialized minorities.

National mythologies soon propagated the conception of Canada as an undeveloped land in need of Europeans for development and civilization purposes. With the perception of Canada as an empty land, or terra nullius (Richardson 1993), the misconception allowed the colonizers to ignore any wishes the Aboriginal peoples may
have had. In fact, Aboriginals soon came to be presumed as being either in need of
civilizing (not quite human), already assimilated, or mostly dead. The colonizer’s belief
in myths such as these allowed for guilt-free settlement of Canada, much to the detriment
and long-term expense of the Aboriginal peoples who resided (and continue to reside) here. According to Razack, “mythologies are about a nation’s origins and history…and enable citizens to think of themselves as part of a community, defining who belongs and who does not belong to the nation” (2). It is all too clear that from the very onset of colonial contact the Aboriginal peoples were considered to be outsiders. Under the colonalist mentality, Aboriginals did not belong to the community or to the nation. The existence of Aboriginal peoples simply did not fit with the conception of the Canadian nation and what Anderson has described as the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983). Aboriginals may have called this land their home in an earlier time, but being “uncivilized” in the minds of white settlers relegated the indigenous population to this earlier time period. Within this construct, white settlers brought civilizing ways and developed the land, Aboriginals just lived here; whites represented progress, whereas Aboriginals represented the uncivilized past.

As part of colonalist expansion and in the name of “progress,” the creation of a Canadian infrastructure was required. Canadian land was seen as a resource in need of development and one important step deemed necessary for developing Canada was the building of a national railway. In the nineteenth century, Canada actively encouraged Chinese men to come to Canada to assist in the construction of the western portion of Canada’s national railway (Abu-Laban & Gabriel 2002: 38). Chinese men were then exploited for their willingness to work (a willingness that stemmed from conditions of...
extreme poverty and political instability in China) in low paid and frequently dangerous conditions until they were no longer necessary (this time coincided with the railway’s completion). Once the railway was completed in 1885, and as a means of curbing the number of Chinese men entering the country (in essence, an attempt to keep Canada white), the Chinese Immigration Act was passed (ibid. 38). This act introduced the Chinese “Head Tax,” a bill that required Chinese men to pay a fee to gain admission to Canada. As time went on, and as the desire to keep out unwanted Chinese grew, the tax became progressively more expensive, thus making it a virtual impossibility for Chinese men to raise the necessary funds. Finally, in 1923, the Chinese Exclusion Act replaced the head tax, and this legislation, which remained in effect until 1947, barred the entry of any individual from China (Mawani 2003).

The desire to create a white-settler state was paramount to the process of Canadian nation-building. The building of a nation involves a dual process. “Nation-building [entails] the management of populations and the creation of national identity” (Mackey 2002: 23). From early on in the colonial process, white settlers “mobilized representations of others and managed non-British cultural groups” (ibid.). Canada needed people to settle the land, and in the process of populating a nation in the image of Britain, individuals from “white” countries were sought out and preferred (Mackey 2002). Prior to major changes to immigration policies in the late 1960s, Canada maintained what has been termed a “White Canada Policy” (Hawkins 1989: 17).

2.3 Defining “Race”

Historically, “race” was seen as a biological reality that inherently grouped people hierarchically according to the colour of their skin, as well as other visible identifiers.
People were seen to belong to different “races” according to physical identifiers such as skin colour, facial features, and according to the texture of their hair (among others). Once identified as being a member of a particular “race,” characteristics such as intelligence and moral character were then attributed to the individual and/or group. Whites were positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy and accorded positives traits, whereas Aboriginals, Blacks, Asians, and other non-white groups were positioned lower on the scale of humanity and accorded negative attributes (i.e. Aboriginals were seen as unmotivated, Asians as sneaky, etc.).

A social constructionist position, along with advances in technology, holds that “race” is not a biological reality. In fact, it has been shown that intra-group differences exceed inter-group differences, which negates the prior theory/misconception of physiological differences among races. “The differences attributable to “race” within a population are as great as that between racially defined groups” (Gunaratnam 2003:4). “Race” has increasingly come to be understood as a social construction. According to Kobayashi, “everything that has any meaning for human beings…is socially constructed” (in Limb & Dwyer 2001: 67). Race is a political and social construct (Razack 2002; Gunaratnam 2003; Henry & Tator 2006) that is interwoven into society’s dominant power structures. Race, as a form of difference, is not biologically or inherently given, “but takes on historically specific meanings as a result of human action” (Abu-Laban & Gabriel 2002: 13). As such, “race” is more about the process of labelling those who are not white with certain derogatory attributes that place them in a disadvantaged position. It is used by the socially dominant to extend their dominance. Lopez (1995) defines “race” as “a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially
significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry” (Ighodaro 2006:16). His belief
is that race mediates every aspect of our lives.

Omi and Winant (1993) theorize that although race is a social construct, it is
deeply entrenched in our society. As a mistaken set of beliefs and misperceptions, the
process of racializing bodies contributes to the lived realities and racialized experiences
of people(s) of colour. We live in a society that uses race as a tool of social identification
and this process of racialization has real-life impacts on individuals. In the process of
being racialized, what is referred to is “[the process] by which ethno-racial groups are
categorized, stigmatized, inferiorized, and marginalized as the others” (Henry and Tator
2006:352). In Canadian society, “others” most frequently tend to be those who are non-
white.

Where the belief that people belong to different “races” because of their inherent
biological qualities constitutes a belief in “race,” the subsequent differential treatment
that people receive because of this belief is one of the fundamental components of racism.
According to Henry and Tator (2006) “one of the most complex aspects of racism is its
elusive and changing nature” (16). Racism is embedded in its social, political, historical,
and geographical context, and is a system that operates at different levels in society.
Racism can be found and experienced at the individual level, at the organizational and
institutional level, and at the level of the state and within the value system of society
(Henry and Tator 2006). Racism is a complex and multifaceted form of oppression that
marginalizes and disempowers individuals, groups, communities, and entire nations.
2.4 Young’s “Five Faces of Oppression”

The manner in which individuals are oppressed is frequently related to the social group of which they are perceived to be a member (for example: Blacks, women, gays and lesbians, etc.). One experiences oppression on an individual level (through lack of opportunities, feelings of shame and frustration, and so on), but it is one’s social group membership that so often renders one vulnerable. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Iris Young begins with the argument that to conceive of justice is to wrestle with the concepts of domination and oppression. (3). Young asks to what conceptions of social justice do social movements (such as feminism, Black liberation, etc.) implicitly appeal and how do they confront/modify traditional conceptions of justice? Young also argues “where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression” (3). “Oppression happens to social groups” (9) and while “groups do not exist apart from individuals, they are socially prior to individuals, because people’s identities are partly constituted by their group affinities” (9). Groups are fluid, shifting, and political. Young contends that many types of oppression confront racially marginalized groups. Racialized individuals and groups can be culturally, socially, economically, emotionally, politically, and geographically oppressed. “Not all racialized groups are subjected to the same oppression, but all racially marginalized groups share oppression in common” (Ighodaro 2006:18). In a world that normalizes everything according to the white majority, being non-white all too often puts an individual at risk of oppression.
According to Young, there are five faces of oppression and I will now provide a definition of each, and follow up with an example as it relates to “race,” racism, and racialization. The first face of oppression that Young discusses is *exploitation*. In the context of Canadian immigrant experiences, the labour force is the most prevalent example. Racialized minorities, (such as live-in caregivers from the Philippines and elsewhere, or Seasonal Agricultural Workers from various developing nations), are found in low-status positions, with few benefits or room for advancement, little job security, and they are employed in this sector in disproportionate numbers compared to white Canadians. The Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), known formerly as the Foreign Domestic Worker Program (Bakan & Stasiulis 1997; Pratt 2004), was initiated to fill an employment need that Canadian-born workers refused to fill. The live-in component of the program places workers in a precarious position since the ability of live-in caregivers to remain in Canada is dependent upon being employed in this capacity. It is far too easy for women (most LCP’s are female) to be exploited as a result of having to “live-in.” Workers are frequently taken advantage of in terms of hours worked (working far longer than is legal), being underpaid, lack of privacy, and sexual harassment/assault. There are a variety of ways that women who work in this capacity can be (and are) exploited (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997; Pratt 2004). The same holds true for workers (mostly men) who come to work in Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). Both of these forms of “temporary” migration are designed to exploit the needs of workers from under-developed nations. It is a form of exploitation because the employers and the government have a distinct advantage over the worker. The individual who comes to work abroad does so to earn enough money to care for families “back home.” Their
need is one of survival. In contrast, those at the Canadian end of the dyad are earning a profit and enjoying the benefits of their privileged position (along with considerably more freedom).

Young’s second face of oppression is *marginalization*. This face of oppression affects the ways in which racially minoritized groups are perceived, viewed, and subsequently treated. Groups who are marginalized are not valued by the oppressive group and are seen as less useful, and therefore as less valid. One need only think of how immigrants and refugees are often treated in Canada. Immigrants are frequently selected to come to Canada as a result of their educational and professional credentials, yet once they are here these credentials are often undervalued or ignored. This undervaluing then places immigrants on the periphery, or margins, of the labour market. Individuals who were doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, and employed in other highly skilled positions in their countries of origin frequently find themselves working in marginalized, unskilled labour positions once in Canada. Young argues that social marginalization is one of the most extreme types of oppression because it excludes racialized groups from complete participation in society (Young 1990). Once positioned on the margins it can take a tremendous amount of time, energy, and effort to re-establish oneself as a fully participating member of society. And the truth is that not everyone is able to emerge from the margins since factors such as race, gender, religion, age, education, class, and ability all affects one’s chances.

Young’s third face of oppression is *powerlessness*. Racialized minorities suffer powerlessness when they lack the mechanisms to make and implement decisions on issues affecting their own life chances. We can draw examples to illustrate this point by
looking at the lack of recognition of foreign-trained professionals who come to Canada. To be considered a suitable applicant for immigration to Canada, potential immigrants are accorded “points” for things such as education, professional experience, age, and financial resources. Applicants receive higher points according to how much education they have and how much money they will bring with them. The human capital (Abu-Laban & Gabriel 2002) that immigrants bring is recognized during the application process, yet once immigrants are here they find that it does not matter in the job market whether they have a Bachelor’s degree or a Medical Doctor’s degree. Initially, they are still only able to find low-skilled, low-paying, and tenuous types of employment. Immigrants are powerless to change these rules and are forced by circumstances to play by the rules of the dominant majority. The representation of racialized minorities in positions of power in Canada is low and this makes it extremely difficult to change the rules of the immigration game.

Young’s fourth face of oppression is cultural imperialism. Young (1990) contends, “cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture and its establishment as the norm” (59). The practice of universalizing experience leads to a system of cultural domination, negative stereotypes, and ethnocentrism. Newcomers to Canada are expected to “fit in” to the European-North American cultural experience and way of doing things. For example, if a Muslim woman comes to Canada and experiences racism because of her religious beliefs (i.e., wearing some type of head covering according to her religious belief), she is pressured by the dominant group to “change her ways” and integrate into the mainstream (which means removing her head covering). Through the practice of cultural imperialism, the dominant
majority in Canada will racialize women who adhere to their “non-Western” religious beliefs, stigmatize them as “different,” and socially ostracize them because of these perceived differences. The practices of cultural imperialism may not be written down as rules that newcomers must abide by, but through processes of socialization and racialization, immigrants quickly learn what the expectations of mainstream society are.

Young’s fifth and final face of oppression is violence. Racialized groups suffer tacit violence not limited to emotional, psychological, or physical violence, but also overt forms of violence including racial discrimination and genocide. Violence operates as a form of oppression because of society’s views of violent acts against oppressed groups. Psychological and emotional violence is grounded in both the systemic and direct fear felt by visible minorities that they may soon become victims of violence as a result of their imposed social identification. This can play out in the ways that visible minorities choose to make use of urban or institutional space. For example, visible minorities feel both exposed and invisible in Canadian universities because of the university’s historical association with whiteness (for further elaboration, see the Henry Report, Queen’s University). And this can also affect the geographies of living arrangements, whereby visible minorities feel more comfortable in larger urban centres because they do not feel as though they stand out as much as they would in smaller centres. The fear of violence is one of the strongest tools of oppression because fear is an effective control-device.

All five of Young’s forms of oppression are relevant in the discussion of immigration and race in the Canadian context. Those who immigrate to Canada, especially those who are racialized by the dominant “mainstream” majority, are oppressed in different ways. New immigrants are more often living in poverty (despite
their higher education rates--exploitation), non-white immigrants are still viewed as 
outsiders whose cultural beliefs and practices are believed inferior to those of the 
dominant white majority (cultural imperialism), many immigrants do not feel in control 
of their destiny (powerlessness), and all too often, immigrants are faced with racist 
treatment that is enacted to keep immigrants in their “place” (violence and 
marginalization). Young’s model of oppression allows us to see the ways in which those 
who immigrate to Canada experience oppression on a multitude of overlapping and 
complicated levels. The “places” of racism are numerous and multifarious, as are the 
different forms that racism can take.

Where racism was once overt and legally embedded in Canadian institutions in 
the form of policies (such as immigration policies prior to 1962), “new racism” has 
become much more subtle. “One of the most complex aspects of racism is its elusive and 
changing nature” (Henry and Tator 2006: 16). The ways in which racism develops are 
affected by the social contexts in which they occur. Most of society no longer condones 
overt acts of violence, racial slurs, or hate graffiti, yet many have a limited understanding 
of racism in everyday life and discourse. According to Kobayashi and Peake (2008), “the 
new racist argument goes as follows: racism is no longer acceptable in modern society; to 
talk about racism is therefore to make an accusation of behaviour that goes against social 
norms; those who talk about racism therefore seek either to cause trouble or to displace 
the blame for a given social condition from some other cause…” (173). There are a 
variety of rationales that individuals and institutions employ to make excuses for racist 
behaviour. In The Colour of Democracy (2006), Henry and Tator define different types of 
discourses of democratic racism that are used to deny racism. Defined as an “ideological
and discursive form [that] is deeply embedded in popular culture and popular discourse” (23). Henry and Tator contend that racism is learned through the process of socialization. Democratic racism “begins in the families that nurture us, the communities that socialize us, the schools and universities that educate us, the media that communicate ideas and images to us, and the popular culture that entertains us” (23). As individuals, we use the primary discourse of the discourse of denial in our attempt to ignore or come to terms with racism in our society, but other forms include: the discourse of political correctness, the discourse of colour-blindness, the discourse of equal opportunity, the discourse of blaming the victim, the discourse of reverse racism, and the discourse of moral panic, among others (for a complete list of discourses see Henry and Tator 2006: 22-29). The majority of Canadians are proud of this country’s reputation as being a nation that believes in human rights and equality, and this belief can cloud their ability to see through the veneer of denial and come to terms with the ways that the actions of the dominant majority can be defined as racist.

Accepting Canada’s racist past and analyzing the ways the dominant majority continue to invoke racism in Canadian society is an important undertaking. As Canadians, accepting our part in racism in Canada is the first step, understanding how we came to think this way is the second, and figuring out ways to “unlearn” racism and strive for an equal and anti-racist society is the final step we need to take. “We must ground our discussions of [racism and] oppression in the harsh lived realities of all oppressed peoples” (Dei 1996: 26). As Canadians, we must challenge ourselves to question the ways in which immigrants who migrate to Canada are subjected to racism in this country. This thesis attempts to do just that by exploring the lived experiences and interpretations
of women who made their way to Canada through a number of different methods and means, but who have all had to contend with the dominant majority’s frequently negative view(s) of them.

2.5 Mapping Place, Race, and Immigrant Women

The twentieth century experienced a mass movement of people, through either voluntary means (as in the case of immigration), or through involuntary means (for example, displaced peoples who become refugees). Mobility “is not simply an expression of individual agency or choice” (Hyndman 2004:169). There are countless variables including those connected to economical, political, and cultural factors that contribute to the movement of people from one place to another. The means and context by which people migrate has a profound effect on how migration is experienced. Furthermore, according to researchers Wright and Ellis (2006), “in immigration research, mapping the foreign born often produces images that feature the spatial and, assumed, social separation from others” (284). In this sense, mapping those who migrate has been one means of “othering” those who are perceived as foreign and subsequently, inferior and different to the native-born.

To attempt to place clearly defined boundaries around “us and them” is problematic on a number of levels. To begin, the notion that boundaries are absolute and non-permeable is a fallacy. Boundaries are porous and dynamic, changing between time and place, and are enmeshed with power (such as power relations stemming from class, gender, sexuality, ability, and other social, cultural, and economic variables). One cannot always see the physical boundaries between nations, social classes, or cultures, but the effects of national, class, and cultural boundaries are real and felt at the level of the
individual, as well as beyond. Mapping differences between native and foreign-born individuals and groups in Canada has a long history.

In his paper on the “production” of Canadian immigrants during the inter-war years, Osborne (2006) describes the various ways in which the Canadian government used photographs of newcomers to frame the nation and its inhabitants. Methods such as this are one means of situating difference and of not only creating, but of perpetuating differences among people of diverse ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds. Mapping immigrants, and allocating particular spaces and places as acceptable locations in which newcomers could reside—for example, on the Prairies to farm the land, or in British Columbia for the railway (Anderson 1991)—became a misguided preoccupation of the Canadian government (Goutor 2007; Osborne in Swartz & Ryan 2006). The practice of placing of immigrants in Canada during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be argued to be a form of Eurocentric mapping. Eurocentric maps positioned white Europeans as the norm, while placing others outside the acceptable norm. As is the case in many segments of society, and in many cultures, those who are labelled as embodying difference are often pushed to the margins or periphery of society. Such has been the case with many different groups of immigrants to Canada.

A second point for consideration involves the ways in which immigrant women and their everyday lived experiences have traditionally been overlooked as the focus of mapping the newcomer location or experience in Canada. Historically, women came to Canada most often as dependants of their fathers or husbands and were viewed more as additional considerations (“add-ons”) in the overall immigrant/immigration experience. Women were not encouraged to immigrate on their own since cultural traditions and
patriarchal social norms forbade it (Domosh & Seager 2001). During the Victorian era, the normative role for women frequently confined them to the home, which made it virtually impossible for women to immigrate on their own. When women did make the journey with family members their experiences were rarely highlighted.

The notion that, “maps of immigrants allow readers to be better able to see them,” (Wright & Ellis 2006: 285) may be true in some cases, but for many years immigrant women in Canada were not easily distinguishable from their male counterparts or other family members. Immigrant women were presented to the public in very particular, normative ways, yet their experiences were rendered invisible because of their gender and their subordinated status to male counterparts. Women were simultaneously “othered” and made invisible. There were photographic depictions of the acceptable immigrant woman, but women were viewed primarily as appendages of their male counterparts: little was known of the everyday lived experiences of immigrant women. The everyday lives of women who immigrated were rarely, and quite possibly never mapped.

Mapping is a powerful tool and is a practice that is often located at the heart of geography. Mapping gives validity to place(s) and experience(s). Maps tell us what is real (for example, the naming of places gives place validity) and what is not (i.e. if something is not named or classified the interpretation is that it does not exist). Maps tell us where we are. Yet maps can also be distorted. Maps can render invisible the lives of others. If one thinks of mapping as a form of language and communication you quickly see that the power to create knowledge is given (or taken) by those with the power to do so. Those with the power to create knowledge have been white men of European descent: not women, and especially not racialized women.
Countering this tendency to silence women’s voices, recently geographers such as Mei Po Kwan who have used gender as the basis for mapping women’s experiences and everyday lives. Kwan considers (2007) how geographers can combine geospatial technologies and emotion to accurately reflect the spatial and emotional lives of participants. How geographers map others is an act that is fraught with issues of representation and power. How can researchers accurately map their research participants? Kwan (2007) provides one means of doing just this. “Increasing collaboration between researchers, artists, community groups, [and participants] in projects that seek to understand people’s feelings and concerns” (29) is indicative of how social concerns can be brought forward to those who have power to create social change in people’s lives. By collaborating with those with whom we conduct research to become active participants in creating knowledge, we facilitate opportunities for participants to become participant-researchers. Instead of researchers simply mapping the lives of others, through the facilitation of a participatory approach a collaboration of knowledge and theory building takes place. Through the process of power sharing, which then transfers to the shared creation of knowledge, participants/participant-researchers become active in mapping their own lives and experiences. Not only does mapping then become an empowering experience for the participant through the active generation of their knowledge, but it also brings the lived experiences of the participants to the forefront, thus bringing into focus the lives of those who have so often been ignored or rendered invisible.

The issue of mapping is at the forefront of Razack’s (2002) edited analysis of the Canadian nation and its formulation as a white settler society. In *Race, Space and the*
Law, contributors explore ways of unmapping a white settler society. Metaphorically, “unmapping is intended to undermine the idea of white settler ignorance and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination” (Phillips 1997). Unmapping thus becomes a powerful tool of the oppressed, dominated, and marginalized. Applying this concept to immigrant women ultimately means that immigrant women’s lives not only become the focus of mapping, but that it is the women themselves who are the mapmakers. In “unmapping” their own lives, immigrant women uncover the ideologies and practices that have dominated their existence and opportunities in Canadian society. By doing this, it is then the lived experiences and realities of immigrant women that become mapped, and then marked, into place.

2.6 Putting Emotional Geographies in “Place”

Our emotions affect the ways in which we experience every aspect of our lives. Whether remembering a poignant moment in our past; going about our everyday routine; or thinking about what kind of future we envision for ourselves, emotions are always with us and they make a difference to the way(s) we experience our world(s). In the last decade, debates have given more attention to the role that emotion(s) play in our social and professional lives. Orbach (1999) discusses the concept of “emotional literacy” as a concept that “draws attention to a psychological relationship between private and public spheres and the cultural and political necessity of managing individual emotional states” (408). This idea also challenges the (im)permanence of the borders that separate the public and private spheres.

Harding and Pribram’s (2002) cultural analysis looks at the ways in which power, as an unequal distribution, weaves its way “through specific articulations of emotion”
The ability to feel is often not something that is entirely within an individual’s power to control. Myriad factors influence how we feel at any given moment in time and place. “Race,” class, sexuality, gender, and cultural context all play a role in how we feel and the emotional composure we exhibit in our public persona.

The recent “emotional turn” (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith 2005) in geography has also seen an increased awareness and attention towards the ways that emotion affects us. Historically, it was believed that one had to remain impartial and detached when involved in research or when involved in the creation of knowledge. Emotions were seen in a negative light and alongside their connection to being one of the inferior qualities that women possessed, emotions were construed as being messy and unreasonable. The “emotional turn” has begun to change—and to challenge—this way of thinking. For example, some researchers have explored emotional ill health (Davidson 2003; Parr 1998) and the challenges faced by individuals whose emotional states have a tremendous impact on their day-to-day living. Davidson’s research with individuals contending with agoraphobia explored their experiences from a phenomenological perspective. Places and one’s “sense of place” took on entirely different meanings for those with agoraphobia depending on whether they were situated in peopled “places” or in open spaces. Parr (1998; 2000; 2006) has also explored emotional health, but her work addresses the manner in which those who are considered “mad” negotiate places such as asylums and drop-in centres, the ways that mental health issues affect one’s experience of place, as well as the ways that individuals attempt to make sense of their world. Emotions are an ever-present reality in one’s experience of place, regardless of age, gender, race (or immigration status) and the individuals described by Parr illuminate the diversity of
emotions experienced in “place.” Others have looked at the experiences of those with physical ill health/disability (Chouinard 1999). How is “place” experienced by those with mobility impairments and how do the attitudes of others emotionally affect the person labelled as “ill?” Each individual brings a unique set of variables with which they experience place. As such, there is not a set way in which people experience a particular place, although there will be some similarities in those experiences.

Women who (im)migrate all contend with a physical uprooting from their country of origin as well as their subsequent transplantation in another country. All women who migrate experience a sense of dislocation, disorientation, and uncertainty about what the future may hold for them in the new places in which they now find themselves. All women leave behind their life as they know it and enter into a new life in a country where they are contending with multiple challenges and changes. The amount of energy and emotion work that goes into learning a new language, finding employment or attending school/employment training, making a home for themselves and their families, and mourning the loss of what they have left behind is an immense undertaking. It can be exhausting and overwhelming to contend with the any one of these experiences, let alone all of them in unison. Emotions and ones experience of place are tandem; that is to say, they go hand in hand (and “place” to “place”). “Place matters” and it does precisely because of the way we feel when we are in a particular place.

“To be a person is not merely to be embodied but also to inhabit a public place. Our social selves are created for us, not just symbolically but also physically within our roles determined by social, cultural and religious hierarchies as well as gender stereotypes” (Cloke & Johnson 2005:21). Sartre’s contention of: by making meaning
through emotion, we actually make the world itself (Tiedens & Leach 2004: 6), is compelling for human geographers interested in emotional geographies. Sartre’s claim that emotion is not simply a reaction to the world but rather that emotion “is a transformation of the world” (Sartre 1948: 58) blurs the boundaries between individuals and their individual contexts.

Emotion is something that is always both inside and outside of us. Disentangling emotion(s) from context is impossible because one is always dependent upon the other. For instance, the emotions we feel in private spaces can be, and often are, affected by other individuals, communities, and institutions once we situate ourselves in public places. Other people, and the way(s) in which they interact with us in social settings, profoundly affects whether we feel socially comfortable and experience a sense of security, or whether we experience feelings of discomfort, fear, and vulnerability. One’s sense of place is comprised of a complicated mixture of individual attitudes, perceptions, and life experience(s), both in private places/spaces as well as in public spaces/places. The extent to which individuals are marginalized or oppressed by external forces is dependent on several factors, including “race,” class, gender, family status, immigration class, and so on. All immigrant women must contend with complicated external factors that affect their emotional experiences of place.

According to Agnew (2005), one of the greatest political challenges of today concerns how to open up places for those currently marginalized and oppressed within them. The emotional experiences of immigrant women are a result of the context that is their lived reality. For example, the types of responses an immigrant women receives from those with whom she interacts at the frontline of an agency (those who have the
power to make decisions that directly affect her life, such as the Ministry of Transportation for example) will profoundly affect her experience and subsequent feelings of that service agency. Being treated with a lack of respect or impatience will affect one’s perception of that place and potentially leave the individual feeling disillusioned, disrespected, discriminated against, and vulnerable. Negative emotions attached to place greatly affect a woman’s migration experience and can have long lasting, and often detrimental effects.

The geographies of immigrant women and their experiences of place are multifarious. Three dominant meanings that geographical place has acquired in writings that draw upon space and place (Agnew 2005: 89) are all reflected in the ways in which newcomer women experience new landscapes and environments. The first meaning sees place as location or a site where activities or objects are located, such as a city or settlement. The second meaning views place as locales or settings where everyday life occurs, such as places of employment, places of education, or places of consumption such as restaurants, department stores, malls, etc. The third dominant meaning is place as “sense of place.” A keen sense of belonging to a place as illustrated through interactions and engagement is indicative of a strong “sense of place.” Yet place never really fits into one of these neat definitions, but is rather a conglomeration of all three. Tuan (1977) claimed “place is a center of meaning constructed by experience” (152). Amin and Thrift (2002) have said that place can be viewed not so much as “enduring sites but as moments of encounter, not so much as “presents,” fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation” (30). Places are never just one thing; they are messy, contextual and dynamic. Feminism claims “places may be thought of as open
articulations of connections. …[place] exists through identities of subjects and identities of places constructed through interrelations” (90). Geographers (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994) have argued how places are contested, fluid, and uncertain. Place is not simply a set of coordinates on a map (McDowell 1999), but places are made through intersections (such as race, class, gender, sexuality, etc) and power relations. Massey (1994:154) suggests, “instead of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understanding” (91). The definition(s) of place are then multiple, yet connected: social, geographical, and grounded in the belief of an interrelation between humans and their environments.

Immigrants are affected by each of these dominant meanings of place. In moving from one “place” to another, immigrants are in a constant negotiation with the meanings of place in their everyday lives. Emotions and place become tightly bound, especially when one feels as though they belong in two (or more) different worlds, as is often the case with those who migrate. Multiple belongings leave individuals struggling with such questions as: Where is home? Where do I belong? How long do I have to live in one “place” to stop being conceived of as a newcomer? And how can I help myself to fit in to another culture? Our “emotions matter” and place is one of the predominant factors that affect how we experience different emotions in place. In an exploration of immigration experiences, place and emotion are equally important.

2.7 Photography and Geographic Inquiry

Photography remains a powerful tool in our engagement with the world around us. Through photography we see, we remember, we imagine: we picture “place.” (Schwartz & Ryan 2006: 1)
One of the primary methods of invoking emotion in people and in place is through the use of visual representations. As individuals we are “moved” by images we see; whether viewing a photograph of a loved one who is no longer with us, or watching a movie that stirs a memory of an emotional personal experience, or watching the television news and being moved to tears by the latest world tragedy, we are all affected by the visual images we encounter. Since the invention of the camera in the early 1800s, our world has become increasingly technologically visual. There has been a close and longstanding relationship between photography and the discipline and practice of geography. Images of landscape, the use of the visual to convey and map meaning(s), and the ways in which issues of “truth” and power connect to our conceptions of both fields of inquiry spring to mind. Both modes of “knowing” rely on visual representations to depict people, place(s), and space(s) in myriad ways. “The significance of photography in the constructions of notions of space and place, and landscape and identity may be found at a range of scales, from the sites and sights of popular local urban memory to the image and symbol of the whole earth from space” (Schwartz & Ryan 2006:4-5).

The practice of photography and geography, both taking shape in the nineteenth century, became quickly connected and interwoven. Geography mapped people and place, while photography pictured people in “place,” or simply “place” itself as the construction of landscape. Both told a story, both communicated a narrative whose meanings were fluid, shifting, and open to interpretation (but this latter point is something of a new development and one in which this thesis does not elaborate).

Photography was central in forging changes in people’s geographical imaginations in nineteenth-century European and North Americans (Schwartz & Ryan
Historically, the ability to picture place was ascribed to those with power. Those who enjoyed the privilege and power based on their race/gender, and/or social class were the ones who were able to do so (Rose 2001). Photography was used by geographers (and others) in numerous ways to construct the identities of people, places, and nations. Photography was a colonialist tool (and some would say it was a weapon) that was used in the pursuit of an imperialist agenda.

In the early twentieth century when the Canadian government was implementing policies to keep “non-preferred” immigrants out of the country, one method they employed to garner the support of the public was to depict new immigrants in their traditional styles of dress. Photographs of new immigrants in “peculiar” and un-Canadian-like clothing could then be used as proof of their difference and their unsuitability for “Canadian” ways. Instructions were specifically given to professional photographers in how to properly photograph new immigrants to receive the desired effect of the public. In 1929, at a the time the CNR colonisation officials were responsible for helping to settle western Canada with suitable immigrants, the Superintendent of Land Settlement, F.J. Freer, wrote to the District Superintendent, N.S. McGuire, (in regards to the depiction of immigrants in photographs) “mode of dress is responsible for much of the criticism of newcomers as “foreigners” and in our photographs it is well to have them look as “Canadian” as possible” (Osborne 2006:186) Rather than simply depicting what was real and true (meaning of course, what is true as we know it), photographers had the ability to communicate their own meaning(s) and agenda upon their viewing audience. Yet there is more to it than this.
Not all viewers are content to sit back and absorb what others are attempting to convey to them: there are those who look at the world with a much more critical eye. As such, the meanings that photographs and other visual images convey are often challenged and contested, “Photographs are not simply looked at, but are read, deciphered, and therefore, open to a range of interpretations” (Schwartz & Ryan 2006: 7). Recently, there has been an emerging trend towards putting cameras in the hands of a very different group of expert interpreters. The last two decades have seen researchers making use of photography as a method in their research projects. Instead of cameras being used by the researcher as a tool in their “expert” hands, project participants are the ones taking the photographs. No longer just the subjects of a research study; participants become the experts in depicting place, ideas, emotions, identity, space, and safety (to name but a few topics of study).

Wang, Burris, and Xiang (1996) describe a participatory approach that has been termed photo novella and photovoice (this phrase was in fact coined by Wang and is now the one most commonly employed by researchers). In collaboration with the Yunnan Women’s Health Development Program, Wang, Burris, and Xiang developed a project whereby rural Chinese women took photographs of health-related themes and presented their photographs to each other, the wider community, and to policymakers.

A fundamental principle of photovoice is that it is designed to be an empowering experience for participants. Individuals who would normally be silenced because of their oppressed or marginalized status are given the means to voice their concerns, (for other examples of Wang’s use of photovoice with marginalized communities, see Wang & Burris 1997; Wang, Cash, & Powers 2000; Wang & Redwood-Jones 2001). Katharine
Side’s project, “Snapshot on Identity” (2005), also made use of the photovoice approach. Side collaborated with women in a rural community in Northern Ireland and explored the cross-communications and gendered ideologies between Protestant and Catholic women.

A further example is that of Heather Castleden, whose research involved working with an Indigenous community on the west coast of Canada to study local health and environment issues. Castleden found that the photovoice approach allows for a more culturally sensitive style of learning and exploration of issues since it is the participants themselves who “picture” what is important and meaningful to them (Castleden, Garvin & Huu-ay-aht First Nation 2008).

Photovoice is not the only visual technique that has been used in research methodologies. Other researchers have referred to the use of photography in their research processes as photo-elicitation (Frohmann 2005), autophotographic study (Dodman 2003), and photo-text (McIntyre 2003). Although there are differences between these styles of visualization, what all of these processes have in common are: the intent to empower participants by facilitating an opportunity for the participant to speak out about what it is they care about in the topic/issue being explored; using photographs to communicate with each other, the community, and policy makers in an attempt to invoke social change; providing an alternate type of text that provides an alternate form of expressing one’s thoughts, emotions, concerns (and so on), and; using images to communicate to a wider public audience. It should be noted that not all of the above processes have involved cameras being in the hands of the participants, but this seems to be the trend that even these methods are taking.
Photovoice, as developed by Caroline Wang (1994), has three primary goals: 1) to empower participants and to facilitate an opportunity for participants to record and reflect on their lives from their own point of view; 2) to increase their collective knowledge, and: 3) to inform policy makers and broader society. “Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community [and themselves] through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris1996). The use of a visual image to “furnish evidence” can be used as a launching point for communication and discussion between the researcher, participants, the community, and policy makers. Wang contends that three primary theoretical foundations underlie photovoice. First, there is documentary photography, which is based on the premise that individuals will visually record and represent issues/places as a means of communicating and instigating change in their lives/community. The second theoretical underpinning is Paulo Freire’s (1970) theory of critical consciousness that promotes individual and community-based identification of problems and solutions. And finally, the third foundation from which photovoice gets its bearings is from feminist theory. Facilitating opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized communities to communicate their criticisms, emotions, insights, and solutions in issues that affect their lives is the point from where feminist theory embarks. All of these theoretical underpinnings believe in research that gives a voice to those who have traditionally been silenced as well as striving for positive social change.

Castelden expanded on Wang’s approach to photovoice by “building in an iterative process” (2008). Castelden notes how Wang’s approach is presented as a fixed method. In contrast, she incorporated a “feedback loop” into her project to enable
community input at every stage of the research project. This type of respect and flexibility is paramount when dealing with communities who have been (and may continue to be) oppressed and marginalized. Castleden discusses how initially, the plan was to follow Wang’s approach as described in previous studies, but that the team quickly began to feel that this approach felt too much as though they were conducting “parachute research”: historically, researchers have entered into a community, extracted data in a few short weeks, and then departed. Castleden’s project with the Huu-ay-aht community involved constant collaboration at every stage of the research process which not only showed respect for the generosity of the participants, but which served to build rapport, a sense of ownership, and a sense of trust. Castleden’s project lasted for six months and the constant communication between the research team, the community Advisory committee, and the participants resulted in a successful collaboration between all involved parties. The project was successful because of the use of the photovoice technique and the manner in which the researcher’s modification of the technique made it even more respectful and engaging for the community. In overview, the use of the technique of photovoice and the manner in which this technique is flexible, engaging, creative, and empowering, allows for a method of enquiry that is respectful of power-sharing and generates knowledge from the standpoint of those whose voices and experiences have traditionally been rendered invisible or inconsequential.

The use of photography in the practice (and creation) of human and physical geography has enjoyed a longstanding relationship. This relationship has been fluid and dynamic and has moved from depictions of the landscape and its inhabitants; a practice that involves particular standpoints and agendas on the part of the
photographer/geographer, to methods such as photovoice—whereby the power is shared with the participants of the research process. Envisioning the use of photography in such a manner allows one to “picture” and “place” it along a continuum and thus strive towards a balance between the participants and the researcher(s). A balance that is non-exploitative and non-oppressive, seeks to create positive social change, and one, which also seeks to empower its participants. The importance of facilitating a research process that adheres to the fundamental principles of collaboration, empowerment, and positive social change should not be underestimated.

2.8 Concluding statements for the literature review

The review of the literature for this thesis has taken us from discussing issues of “race” and racism in the context of Canadian immigration, to laying the groundwork in which to understand the oppressive nature of racialization by conceiving of the process of racialization through Young’s five faces of oppression, to exploring how feminist geographies can illuminate the lived realities of (im)migrant women and show the complicated relationship between gender and place, and ending with a discussion of the ways in which photography has been utilized by geographers (and other researchers) in the practice of depicting (and creating) human geographies. The geographies that I have sought to explore, although not unheard of in the study of human geographies, have been embarked upon from a fresh and new perspective. The use of photovoice as a research method employed in the exploration of the experiences of women who have (im)migrated to Canada is an under-explored topic. Using Young’s concept of oppression from a feminist geographical perspective, and doing so in combination with a non-exploitative and empowering research methodology, allows for the illumination of the oppression
many women who (im)migrate contend with. This thesis will show how the women who participated in the project interpreted their experiences, learned from each other, made sense of their challenges and successes, and communicated their knowledge to the public in an attempt to invoke positive social change.
Chapter III: Project Methodology

3.1 Biographies: An introduction

This project is dedicated to facilitating the opportunity for women to voice their experience, to make their thoughts, feelings, and interpretations known, and to the creation of participant-based knowledge(s). The Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place project takes a step towards meeting this challenge.

The women who took part in the research process shared pieces of themselves throughout the duration of the research project. It seems only fitting that I should provide a brief biography of each woman who participated, as a way of validating and affirming the lives, experiences, and everyday realities of each woman who participated.

3.2 Participant Biographies

*Carmela:* Embarking from the Philippines, Carmela made her way to Canada in 1990 as an International student, where she spent four years at Trent University. She graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in International Development and Sociology, was married shortly thereafter, and then returned to the Philippines to work at a college. Disillusioned by the way workers were treated by those in positions of authority, Carmela decided to return to Canada a year later: only this time as an immigrant. Returning to Peterborough, and working in a number of employment positions that were less than ideal, Carmela eventually found a job in an immigrant service agency: a job that was meaningful to her. Now employed as the executive director of this same immigrant service agency, Carmela helps others who need assistance in finding their way in Canada. Still living in the Peterborough area, Carmela has two children whom she travels with to the Philippines once a year.

*Dawn:* Dawn came to Canada from Iran just forty days after her marriage and arrived in July 2006. Encouraged by her parents to come to Canada, she has received a great deal of support from her sister-in-laws’ since her arrival. Dawn is very committed to her career and wants to return to school as soon as she is able. She has a Bachelor’s degree from Iran and hopes to pursue graduate work in the future. Dawn found the first few months in Canada very intimidating and overwhelming. Yet as the months went by, and Dawn began to feel better about her new place in the world (not to mention her English speaking abilities), she gained the confidence to try new things. Dawn is currently volunteering in her field at an audiology office, gaining the much-needed Canadian experience that she will be required to move her into the employment field.
**Esperanza:** Esperanza came to Canada via Buffalo in 2003 after leaving Colombia eight months earlier. Not content to remain in the US without papers, and having heard positive things about Canada, Esperanza and her husband, (along with their young baby) decided to apply for refugee status and try to forge a new life for themselves in Canada. Having come from a large, close-knit family, Esperanza has found the transition very difficult. Frequently finding herself lonely and missing her family, Esperanza often dreams of the life she once had. Yet Esperanza is also determined to overcome her sad feelings and has continued to struggle to improve her situation in Canada. Now with two young daughters, Esperanza will go to visit her mother this summer for the first time in four years.

**Estela:** As the most recently arrived participant (November 2006), Estela emigrated with her two sons from Cuba just a few months prior to the onset of this project. Sponsored to come to Canada by her husband, she and her sons live with him in a country home thirty minutes from Peterborough. Estela considers herself retired after working for the government in Cuba for a number of years. As such, she is not contending with the frustrations of trying to find meaningful employment in Canada, as are many of her colleagues. Estela is able to make the most of the quiet and beauty of her country home and enjoys entertaining friends with her husband and spending time with her sons.

**Gamila:** When Gamila first entered Canada as a refugee in 1991, her belief was that her stay here would only be temporary. Her husband had fled Sudan ahead of her after the government was overthrown and it was learned that his positioning of diplomat put him in a precarious position. Prior to this civil unrest, Gamila had lived a very good life in Sudan. She had a meaningful, good-paying job, she and her husband lived in a house that they owned, and she had her family in close proximity. In essence, Gamila lived a privileged life. Fast-forward a few years ahead to Canada and the picture is totally different. As refugees, Gamila and her husband had to live temporarily on social assistance until their claims went through (they were not allowed to work or go to school during this time) and this was completely humiliating for them. This requirement eventually changed, but there were still a number of barriers to contend with in their search for meaningful employment. Presently, Gamila is employed in two part-time jobs that she loves, yet sometimes cannot help but wonder where she would be if her career had not been severed in Sudan.

**Joy:** Enticed by the prospect of freedom of movement and the chance at a better life, Joy came from China in 2005 with her husband and young daughter. In China, Joy had attended university and both she and her husband held well-paying jobs. They lived a secure life financially, but they felt constrained by the politics in China and wanted something different for their daughter. Since immigrating to Canada, and ultimately moving from Toronto to Kingston, their transition has been challenging, but their improvement slow and steady. After eighteen months in Canada Joy and her family moved in to their own apartment and it is here where Joy has found the feeling of “home.” Disappointed at first by the lack of recognition of her education and employment experience, Joy will return to school in September at the college-level to obtain a “Canadian” education.
Jan: Sponsored by her husband, Jan came to Peterborough in 1999 after emigrating from Korea. Having owned a small merchandising business in Korea, Jan hopes to eventually return to this type of work once her husband’s employment-related travel ends and her life becomes more stationary. Until that time, Jan plans to continue traveling with her husband, going to the gym, and practicing and teaching Yoga.

Lily: Originally from China, Lily immigrated to Canada in 2005 with her husband. With a Bachelor’s degree in Art, Lily was very intrigued by the photography component of this project. Unfortunately, due to a health condition she was unable to participate as much as she would have liked. In China, Lily had been employed as an Art Director for a major newspaper. Her hope is to eventually return to this type of work. Lily will give birth to her first child in the summer of 2007.

Luisa: Encouraged by her parents, Luisa left home as a teenager to pursue English studies in Canada. Arriving in 1999, Luisa took one year of English at Trent University before beginning regular studies in 2000. During her years as an International Student, Luisa had the ongoing support of her older sister who had arrived in 1998. Although Luisa has gone years between the times in which she has been able to physically see her family in Colombia, Luisa feels very connected to them and maintains regular contact (mainly through use of the Internet, text messaging, and telephone calls). After graduating from Trent, Luisa began working at the New Canadians Centre and is currently the Host Program Coordinator and Settlement Worker.

Maria: Emigrating from Portugal at the age of three, Maria came to Kingston with her parents in 1960. Maria’s experience is quite different from her colleagues in this project, as she is the only participant who was born in another country, but who spent the vast majority of her formative years in Canada. As such, Maria’s perspective is unique. Maria has attained one university degree in Sociology and is currently working on her Master’s in Public Administration. Maria is married, works full-time and has a twenty-three year old daughter. Maria’s love for learning brought her to this project and she has been truly inspired by the other participants who took part.

Miao: Without knowing anyone or what she would find, Miao came to Canada from China in 2004 as an International student to attend Queen’s University. During her years at Queen’s, Miao has spent the majority of her time studying and working on campus. Miao is now a PhD student (after successfully completing her Master’s), and she is also involved in teaching undergraduate courses, working part-time, and also being employed in a primary school off-campus where she teaches French. Miao has lived both in residence on-campus, and has also rented a room in a house off-campus. As a result of her various living arrangements, Miao has met many different people and made a number of different friends.

Pranvera: Escaping from Albania in 2005, Pranvera arrived in Canada as a refugee, and was met at the airport by her father and brother who had escaped years before. Pranvera was the last of her immediate family to leave Albania and make their way to Canada. Her
parents, a younger brother, and an older sister had all left prior to her. Consequently, Pranvera’s arrival in Canada was an emotional event for the entire family. Pranvera had studied to be a teacher in Albania and had taught for ten years. She is not sure if she can resume this career, but is making steps to improve her employability. Pranvera coordinated the women’s group at the immigrant service agency in Peterborough. She lives with her family in a small town a short bus ride from Peterborough and shares this space with a young nephew whom she adores.

**Salma:** Although she first landed in 2003, Salma came to Kingston in September 2006 with her three sons. Toronto had been their initial intended destination but when her eldest son decided that he wanted to study at Queen’s, Salma felt that it would be better for the family if they all stayed together, so they all relocated to Kingston. One of the primary motivations for leaving Jordan and coming to Canada is because of safety concerns. Life is not safe in the Middle East. Salma is also attending university and is currently enrolled in the Master’s of Public Administration. Her goal is to find employment with an NGO and to make a difference in the world.

**Sevdije:** Formerly of Kosovo, Sevdije was sponsored by her fiancé to come to Canada in 1996. Having attended university in Kosovo, Sevdije came to Canada already having attained a Bachelor’s degree in Law. As a result of the civil war, economic hardships, and lack of employment opportunities in Kosovo, Sevdije had been unable to find work in her field while living in Kosovo, but had hoped to change that once established in Canada. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. The transition to her Canadian life has not been without its own set of struggles, one of the most difficult being the lack of recognition of her educational credentials and her difficulty in obtaining the type of employment that she has always dreamed of. Although at times finding life stressful, Sevdije continues to strive for meaning in her new life and finds solace in the time she can spend with her daughters.

**Sharon:** Sharon came from Trinidad with two young children in 1988 to join her husband who had come the year before. They knew no one else in Canada, but they were determined to make a life for themselves away from the constraints of familial expectations in Trinidad. The most difficult aspect of immigration for Sharon has been the initial sense of loneliness and family separation. Sharon and her husband both secured steady jobs at the university and their two children have since grown up.

**S.K.:** Arriving as a thirteen year old in 1990, S.K. emigrated from the Netherlands with her parents and two younger brothers. S.K remembers this experience as one that was extremely difficult and painful. Her first two or three years at school were particularly challenging and she missed her friends “back home.” After completing high school S.K. went to university, earning a doctorate in the process. She has also earned her art therapist designation and works in a part-time capacity as an art therapist. S.K. and her partner are also passionate gardeners and they are currently organic farming enthusiasts! They tend a farm on Wolfe Island and sell their produce to Kingston and area families.
Yang: As an International student from China, Yang arrived in Canada on September 1, 2006. The only person she knew in Canada at that time was her PhD Queen’s University supervisor. The initial shock of being in an English-speaking country bordered on overwhelming for Yang, yet she persevered and began taking graduate-level courses just two weeks after her arrival. A few months later, Yang saw my posting for participants and contacted me almost right away to enquire as to her ability to participate. An enthusiastic participant from the onset, Yang approached her studies in much the same way and finished her first year with straight A’s. Although she has no family in Canada, Yang has made many friends and will spend one month over the summer going back to China to visit her parents.

Zhaleh: Since arriving from Iran in July 2006, Zhaleh has plunged herself in to her new life in Canada. Zhaleh came with her husband and three children to the same city her brother had landed in a few years before. Encouraged by her brother to leave the danger and uncertainty of Iran behind, Zhaleh and her family migrated to Peterborough. Zhaleh landed in the month of July and began taking ESL classes to improve her English language skills in September of 2006. As a practicing lawyer in Iran, her hope is eventually to obtain employment in a law office. She continues to question whether or not a larger city might not be a more suitable location for her family to reside, as it would provide more employment and educational opportunities for the entire family.
3.3 Methodology

Mapping the emotional geographies of (im)migrant women and exploring the spaces and places of their personal geographies was a complex and powerful experience for both myself as the primary researcher, and for the women who participated in the Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place (MVPP) project. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues we were exploring, I took a great deal of time prior to the onset of research, thinking about how to carefully and respectfully approach (im)migrant women’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences that revolved around their process(es) of migration. This section of my thesis discusses the major methodological issues and describes the processes I employed in “mapping vulnerability and picturing place.” First of all, as a segue into a description of my methodology, I will discuss the types of methods I made use of to illuminate (im)migrant women’s emotional and relational geographies. I will discuss my rationale for making such choices, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Secondly, I will explain in greater detail how the methods were employed, how the participants reacted and responded to each method, and the types of challenges that arose during fieldwork. Third, and finally, I will discuss the ethical justifications and limitations of conducting this project.

The primary methods used for the implementation of this project were: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and photovoice and mapping. Prior to the onset of interviews and focus groups, I conducted two research information sessions. The initial session was held in Kingston at the Ban Righ Foundation for Continuing University Education (the Kingston research site, which will be described in further detail later on), and the other session was held in Peterborough at the New Canadians Centre (the
Peterborough research site, which again will be described further). The information sessions provided the opportunity to describe my rationale and vision(s) for the project and also allowed potential participants to ask me any questions they may have, or to voice suggestions or concerns about the project. The information sessions also allowed participants to meet face-to-face prior to the onset of the focus group and photovoice components of the project. Meeting prior to the focus group/photovoice components proved to be very beneficial as it assisted in creating positive rapport among the participants. The topics discussed during group meetings were often very personal and sensitive in nature and the interaction(s) and rapport between participants and myself played a huge role in creating the atmosphere of trust and respect that facilitated these honest discussions and sharing of information.

Prior to the onset of research, I approached two community organizations to determine their interest in supporting my project. I had chosen these particular sites because of their warm and welcoming atmospheres, as well as the organizations’ commitment and dedication to women, to newcomers, and to the community. In addition, I believed that these two organizations would support a project that created a better understanding of the experiences of (im)migrant women. I also hoped to obtain permission from each organization to use facilities in which to conduct interviews and focus group/photovoice sessions. After meeting with the executive directors of both the Ban Righ Foundation for Continuing University Education (BRC) in Kingston and the New Canadians Centre (NCC) in Peterborough, I was pleased to discover that these individuals were fully supportive of the project. In fact, both directors were excited about the potential of the project for learning more about the experiences of (im)migrating
women, women’s conceptions and experiences of vulnerability and safety, and their interpretations of “picturing place.” The directors were also supportive of, and excited by, the idea of developing a project that had as one of its foundational principles the intention of empowering women. I was given full support and encouraged to share the findings of the research project with them at the completion of the project.

Some of the participants who took part in this project had met each other prior to the onset of research. This was particularly true at the Kingston research site where all but two participants had met at least one other participant prior to the project’s onset. There were varying levels of familiarity between these participants. Two participants, both International students, took part in all facets of the project and their prior relationship as friends allowed them to feel at ease very quickly within the larger group. Two other women had met very recently and were in the same graduate program at Queen’s University. One of these women also knew another participant (both had connections to the BRC). Only two of the participants who took part in the focus groups and photovoice components had no prior relationship with other participants. I think it is important to also note that I knew some of the participants prior to the onset of the project. This prior connection positively affected the comfort and trust levels that seemed to quickly develop within the group. Our “relational geographies” and rapport were a positive factor because they seemed to ease communication as well as enhancing the atmosphere of openness, trust, and respect.

The information session that occurred in Peterborough was slightly different. In total, there were ten women who participated at the Peterborough site and most of those who attended the information session ended up participating. Prior to arriving at the
research site, I had envisioned the information session in Peterborough to occur very similarly to the one in Kingston. On the day the session was scheduled to occur, instead of setting up the room myself and preparing for women in attendance to ask me about the project, I found myself seated in the weekly “women’s group” meeting at which I was the guest speaker (or “the honoured guest” as I was introduced by the facilitator). Most of the women in attendance had no previous knowledge of my project, but after the facilitator of the group introduced me as the guest speaker, I then described and explained to the group the project’s focus and intent. The women’s group was in its initial stages (this was only their second meeting), and the staff thought that it would be both an ideal forum in which to present my research project to a group of potential participants, as well as being an interesting and beneficial opportunity for newcomer women to participate in a qualitative research project. Always looking for ways in which to provide newcomers with innovative and beneficial experiences, the executive director and staff of the New Canadians Centre are consistently very supportive and encouraging of new ideas and opportunities for community building.

As mentioned above, very few women who were in attendance at the information session in Peterborough did not participate in the research project. In fact, some of the women in attendance ended up telling friends and acquaintances and encouraged them to participate as well. This is an example of the type of participant generation known in qualitative research as the “snowball technique” (see Hay 2005). Two of the participants were staff of the NCC and two other participants were in the process of obtaining much-needed Canadian experience by participating in internships within the NCC. As such, these women all knew each other prior to the onset of the research project. Other women
who participated knew each other at a recognition level (they knew each other’s name, country of origin, etc.), since many of the participants were attending English as a Second Language classes together. The atmosphere among the Peterborough group increasingly became more relaxed and I believe that this initial information session laid the foundation for a positive experience. Towards the culmination of the information session with the Peterborough participants, I successfully arranged interviews with a number of women. I encouraged women to feel free to contact me if they had any further questions, and we discussed the more official aspects of the project, such as letters of information and informed/signed consent, and the manner in which I was obligated to ensure confidentiality and ethics throughout the duration of the research project.

A few days after the information sessions took place; I began to conduct individual interviews. The questionnaires were administered at the time of the interview and I strove to follow a similar format for each questionnaire (see interview schedule Appendix A). The interview was in fact guided by the questions contained within the questionnaires. The questions included basic background information such as country of origin, length of time in Canada, immigration status (at time of arrival and now), education (then and now), current occupation, marital status, etc. The questionnaires also asked more open-ended questions that delved in to issues of mobility, places of safety and vulnerability, and various experiences of place. Each interview was audiotaped and later transcribed. The original questionnaire worked quite well although there were three questions I ended up rewording due to participant misinterpretation. One particular question that caused a great deal of confusion was the question asking women if they considered themselves to be a “visible minority.” The participants were either not
familiar with the term, or they did not feel comfortable identifying themselves in that manner. It quickly became apparent that it would make more sense and cause less confusion if I were to simply checkmark the box yes, or no. As the dominant majority in Canada remains to be of a white-settler background, individuals who were not “white” were indicated as belonging to the category of visible minority in that context. I chose to use this term because it is the legal term that is used within Canada, although I find the term problematic at best. The term “visible minority” situates the white body as the norm in Canada and this only serves to perpetuate the “myth” of Canada as a white society. I use the term with much hesitation.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of settings. In Peterborough, all of the interviews took place in one of the offices at the NCC and with the exception of one interview; they were conducted over a period of one month. In Kingston, three interviews were held at the BRC, two in one of the offices of the Geography department at Queen’s University, one in a room at the main university library, one at a participant’s apartment, and one in the living room of my home in Kingston. With all of the interviews I began by going over the details of the project, looking through the letter of information with the participant, and having each participant sign a consent form. It was at this point that participants chose the level of identity masking they wished to employ for the write-up of the project. Women could chose to remain anonymous (1 participant), they could decide to be given (or chose) a pseudonym (3 participants), or they had the choice of using their own names (14 participants). An overwhelming majority opted to use their own names for all aspects of the project. Yet even for some who used their own names, there was a request that I not use the real names of any of their family members (namely their
husband or their children). This request illustrates both protectiveness for their families’ privacy as well as a desire to have their experiences and stories told from their individual standpoint and perspective. They wanted to speak for themselves only and did not feel that it was up to them to speak for their husbands or other family members.

The average interview lasted from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, although there were some that stretched to as much as 2 hours in duration. The participants were not required to fill out the questionnaire themselves, as I did so as we went along, but I also relied on the recording device to accurately record what was being said. Reliance on the recording device allowed me to focus more on the participant and to engage in the interview with less distraction and interruptions. Not having to write every single word that was spoken gave me more ability to pay complete attention to the participant and to focus on the content of the discussion. There were specific questions that I asked of each participant, but my ability to maintain eye contact and to show that I was genuinely interested in what they had to say assisted in creating a level of comfort that felt more conversation-like in tone. It also allowed me to record verbatim the actual words of the participant. This is important when analyzing the interview transcripts and allows me then to quote the participant since I know exactly what they said and how they said it. Contextualizing the spoken word is very important if one wishes to accurately reflect what the person meant at the time of speaking. By the end of the interview all of the interviewees appeared to feel more comfortable than at the onset of the interview. I encouraged them to ask any questions they might have and some of the participants who would be subsequently participating in the focus groups/photovoice workshops asked further questions about the photography component (I will discuss this further in the next section). The interviews
provided me with a great deal of demographic information, but also allowed me the privilege of learning more about each participant’s context of entry into Canada and the way in which this was experienced. The lived experiences of the women were all unique and in many ways challenging and emotional. The interview allowed the participant to take a look back and to describe her experience to me in a way that many women of the had never done before. As a researcher who is genuinely interested in her participants, I found the interviews to be a very moving experience. Just prior to the culmination of each interview I would then provide the participant with the themes that they should consider when thinking about what photographs to bring to the first focus group/photovoice workshop. I also reassured participants that they would not incur any costs as a result of taking photographs since I would be providing cameras for those who did not have digital cameras of their own.

Connecting at the onset of research was very important in setting the tone for our future interactions in the focus groups/photovoice workshops and was one of the primary strengths of making use of the interview and of doing so at this stage of the research process. The interviews were a beneficial introductory experience for the participant as it allowed them the opportunity to interact face-to-face with me in a more private manner. For individuals who were shy and/or introverted and may have had reservations about participating fully in the project, having this type of introductory experience provided them with the confidence to go on. The interview also gave me the opportunity to show that I was interested in their stories of migration and that I was committed to approaching my research with interest, empathy, and sensitivity. The weaknesses of employing interviews as one of the methodologies were primarily related to participants being
worried about whether they would respond properly or whether they would know how to answer the questions I would be asking. One participant proclaimed after the interview was completed that she had thought beforehand that the interview would be much more difficult and that she had been anxious about how she would perform. Another participant wanted more time to reflect on particular questions and as a result, during the interview I left those particular questions blank on the questionnaire and then emailed them to her shortly after the interview so she could think about and respond in more detail at a later date. Another weakness of interviews is that interviewees are put on the spot so to speak, as they must answer questions without a great deal of reflection time. Being aware of this fact, and realizing that the lack of reflection time can sometimes cause individuals to respond differently than if they had more time to think about it, I reminded participants that they could provide further clarification or even change their responses at a later date if they thought of something to add. I also informed the participants that if after the interview they felt uncomfortable about anything that they had told me they could contact me and I would delete that information from the interview transcript. The provision of the ability to change their answers after the interview ended counter-balanced the lack of reflection time and thus diminished this time constraint as a weakness of the interview method of data collection.

Once the questionnaire and interview components of the project were complete, the first set of focus groups/photovoice workshops was scheduled. The first focus group/workshop took place in Kingston, with the first of three Peterborough focus group/photovoice workshops occurring the following week. In all, three focus groups/photovoice workshops were held at each research site. The groups/workshops
were scheduled approximately three weeks apart at each site, and were held on alternating weeks (meaning that one week there would be a focus group in Peterborough and the next week in Kingston). By alternating the weeks that I was facilitating these groups it enabled me to make use of what I had learned in one group and apply it to the meeting that was held the following week. The week without a group meeting was the week I used to work through the data and make note of recurring themes, as well as exploring the areas of interest for further discussion. As mentioned in the previous section where I discussed the interviews, participants were encouraged to bring to the first group meeting/workshop photographs that represented specific themes: the themes we were exploring at the first group meeting were comfort, safety, and/or vulnerability (see Appendix B)

I chose to have participants bring with them photographs that they had already taken since the first group meeting would be an introduction to photovoice. By bringing photographs that they already had in their possession I could ensure that each participant would be starting at the same level of analysis in terms of the images they were sharing with the group.

In Kingston, the focus group/photovoice workshops were held in a large room at the BRC. Six participants attended the first focus group/photovoice meeting. A seventh participant had emailed to say she would be absent because one of her children was ill. Five out of six participants brought photographs, while the sixth participant brought an object that represented all of the themes we would be discussing. One participant brought hard copies of her photographs to share with the group, while three participants used my laptop, and the fifth participant shared her images with the group through a combination
of description and the use of her cellular phone. In Peterborough, four participants took part in the first group meeting. Two days prior to the first meeting I had been contacted by a key informant at the NCC to say that she had found me another participant, and so I scheduled my interview with the new participant just in advance of the first group meeting. This participant was one of the participants in attendance at the initial Peterborough focus group. Of the five participants who were unable to attend, three were forced to be absent due to employment commitments and the remaining two participants had issues with transportation.

The themes for the second set of focus groups/photovoice workshops were generated from discussions and issues that came out of the initial group meetings. As soon as possible after the first set of group meetings, I emailed participants a list of themes that they should consider when taking their photographs. In addition to the original set of themes, I added: community/belonging, isolation, and fear (see Appendix C). Participants who attended the second set of focus groups/photovoice workshops brought with them images that represented these themes. Prior to the day of meeting, I made arrangements to collect the disposable cameras that I had distributed to participants who did not possess a digital camera. This gave me time to take the cameras in for developing to be prepared for the next group meeting. The camera/photography store (I had approached in advance of the project) made copies of the photographs on compact disk and I loaded the images onto my laptop to ensure they would be visually accessible to the entire group. Overall, this method worked well; the only difficulty was the time delay between when the participant took the photo and their viewing of it at the focus group/photovoice meeting. The participants benefited from taking a few extra minutes to
look through their images prior to the discussion component with the group in order to think about what they had been attempting to capture with their image(s), resulting in a more detailed and nuanced description of their images. The remaining participants (those with their own cameras) were asked to email me their images prior to the group meeting. During the focus group/photovoice meeting, the order in which participants presented their images was determined in large part according to who volunteered to begin, with the rest of the group taking turns thereafter. With the exception of the initial focus group/photovoice meeting there was never an issue with participants not volunteering. Occasionally, a participant would have to depart early, and to ensure that they were able to fully participate in the presentation component, as well as facilitating their schedule; they would present their images first. Women’s ability to chose the order in which to present their images provided them with a sense of control over their participation. I believe that this sense of control was a very important component in fostering a sense of empowerment for the participants.

At the second focus group I introduced participants to the mapping exercise. Using city transit maps, (one from Kingston and one from Peterborough—see Appendix D & E), and an activity sheet (Appendix F), participants were asked to keep track of their movements during a one-week time period (Appendix G). In addition to chronicling their movements, participants were instructed to log how each place made them feel. When marking the places where they travelled on the map, participants used the colours red, green, and yellow/orange to indicate their emotions in that place. The colour red indicated that the place made them feel uncomfortable/unsafe/fearful or was a place in which the participant had had a bad experience; the colour yellow/orange indicated that the place
*sometimes* made them feel unsafe or fearful; and the colour green represented a safe and comfortable place. The participants were then each given a copy of the map and an activity sheet on which to log their place, activity, and emotion.

Six participants attended the second group meeting in Kingston. One individual was again absent because of a child’s illness, but it was not the same participant who had missed the first group meeting. At the second group meeting in Peterborough, seven participants attended. Although there were a total of ten participants from the Peterborough area, two participants did not attend any of the group meetings and one other participant only came to the first session. In the third focus group/photovoice meeting, there was a similar turnout. In Kingston, one individual was unable to attend while in Peterborough the same seven women attended. The consistency in attendance was reflective of two things. Firstly, those who came to the group meetings were committed to their participation in the project. Participants enjoyed hearing and learning about other women’s experiences. Secondly, participants wanted their stories to be heard. They wanted to learn from each other and to communicate their experiences and interpretations to a larger public audience. Participants felt that what they were doing was important and that those in the community could benefit from what we were learning and creating in the *Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place* project.

Near the end of the second focus group/photovoice workshop meeting, participants and I discussed the fact that the next group meeting would be our last. In the time we had spent together, the participants had begun to feel a connection to each other and felt that they had benefited from their experience of having participated. As a means of acknowledging the importance of our time together, both groups decided that we
should celebrate the success of our research project by incorporating a potluck dinner into our final group meeting.

The third focus group/photovoice workshop followed a similar format to the second group meeting. The themes for the third group included those from the previous two, as well as images that illustrated a favourite place, or one that portrayed an object or place that reminded participants of their first days in Kingston or Peterborough (see Appendix H). There were six participants in attendance who contributed photographs; the seventh participant missed the meeting because she was traveling outside of the province. The seventh participant, Yang, would later meet with me for a second interview in place of the third group meeting and would share photographs with me at that time. As had been done in prior meetings, participants decided at what point they would present their photographs and then took turns describing their images to the group. After each participant had described her photographs, she then described her contribution to the mapping exercise. The participant from Kingston who did not participate in the focus group/photovoice workshop, but who did agree to be interviewed also took part in the mapping exercise. We scheduled a second interview at which time she described her map and her mobility patterns to me.

At the third focus group/photovoice workshop meeting, each participant brought food to share with the rest of the group. While sharing the photographs and engaging in a discussion centred around the photographs and the experience(s) the photographs reflected/represented, as well as after the formal part of the discussion had ceased, participants and I shared food and participants reflected upon their participation. It was during this time that participants asked about what the other group of participants was
like. Jokingly, one of the participants asked which group I liked best. Before I could respond, another participant stated how that question was not fair: “it’s like asking her to choose between her children.” I then asked the participants if they would be interested in meeting the women from the other research group and there was a resounding yes at the thought of this prospect.

During the final focus group we also discussed the photography exhibition. Participants were very excited at the thought that their images would be enlarged, framed, and shared with a public audience. I informed the participants that the exhibition would not happen for a few months, but women seemed more relieved than anything by this statement as it was now nearing summer and women’s lives were becoming increasingly busy. It was decided at this time that we would have the exhibition in either September or October.

The last focus group/photovoice workshop took place at the beginning of June and plans were then made to coordinate a day trip for the participants from Kingston to meet the participants in Peterborough. On June 27 we loaded into a mini van and departed to make the 200 km drive to Peterborough. Our drive was longer than expected due to highway closings, but still, we managed to reach our destination and arrive only 30 minutes later than the estimated time. When we arrived, participants from the Peterborough group were waiting and welcomed us with a selection of food items to accompany the dishes and food that we had brought with us to share with them. Despite the fact that the two groups had not met prior to this occasion, the women fell into conversation easily and appeared very comfortable with one another. After lunch we went for a walk to the waterfront, taking photographs along the way (see Figures 2 & 3).
After spending a few hours with the participants from Peterborough, the Kingston participants and I re-boarded the van and drove back home to Kingston, talking en route.
about how much they had enjoyed the day and how special it had been to meet members of the other research group.

Facilitating the chance for the two groups to meet was meaningful on a number of levels. First, it gave women an opportunity to meet the other participants of the research project and to connect with other women who had gone through similar experiences. The opportunity to see that other immigrant women in different places are faced with similar challenges creates a sense of shared experience, connection and bonding, and an opportunity to see that the challenges and barriers they are facing are not as a result of their own weakness or lack, but rather as a result of systemic variables. A second level on which the experience was meaningful is that it gave women the chance to expand their network of possible friends and contacts. Life in smaller cities like Kingston and Peterborough does not offer immigrant women the same opportunities to meet people from similar ethnic or linguistic backgrounds, countries of origin, or life circumstances as that which would be available to them in larger urban centres like Toronto or Montreal. The ability to build a network of support and contacts is all the more important when you are a newcomer with a limited social network. Thirdly, by facilitating the trip to Peterborough, I was illustrating for the participants the importance I was placing on the research project, as well as on their experiences, stories, and emotional lived realities. Far too often, the thoughts and emotions of women are brushed aside as being inconsequential, and this is especially true of immigrant women.

3.4 The Photography Exhibitions: Kingston

Four months after the trip to Peterborough, our photography exhibition: *Emotional Places, Paradoxical Spaces* opened in Kingston. On October 27, 2007, the
opening took place at a local art gallery (see Appendix I). The photography exhibition ran
for nearly one week and during that time just over 100 people visited the exhibit. On the
night of the opening, five of the seven women who took part in the photovoice
component of the research project from the Kingston site were in attendance. The
exhibition and display of the photographs was the first time that Kingston participants
had seen all of the photographs between the two groups. Participants had shared
photographic images with each other during the photovoice component of the focus
groups, but this meant that women had only seen the images that were shared at the group
to which they attended. In other words, if a participant missed a particular focus group
session, then the participant would not have viewed the images that were presented
during that session. The fact that participants would be seeing all of their images
displayed together in a formal exhibition created a great deal of excitement for the
women since it facilitated the opportunity for women to “place” their work in relation to
what other women had produced and to see the reactions of the viewers.

Prior to the exhibition, there was also a general feeling of excitement among the
woman at the prospect of exhibiting their photographs to a larger public audience. We
were fortunate to locate display space at a local art gallery situated in an historic building
in downtown Kingston. The gallery provided a professional, special, and magical type of
atmosphere for the photographs and their accompanying text. The room in which the
photographs were hung was well lit, spacious, and possessed an air of promise. Each of
the participants who were able to attend the exhibition commented on the beauty of the
space and how incredible it was to see the photographs all together as a compilation of
shared work. It was important that the participants felt good about the space in which we
were to display the photographs. As a project grounded in feminist methodology, it was my desire to create a sense of empowerment among the women involved in the project. Having their thoughts (in the form of quotes) and images (in the form of photographs) displayed for the public placed women in a position of vulnerability. Many of the thoughts and ideas that were being shared with the public were very personal and intimate, so it was imperative that every step be taken to ensure a positive and empowering experience.

Participants were consulted prior to the exhibition and were aware in advance that a textual component would accompany the photographic images. The textual (written) component that accompanied each visual image consisted of quotes that originated from the focus group/photovoice workshop sessions. During the process of meeting in groups, participants described their photos and it was out of this discussion that quotes were pulled. Women talked about what the photo illustrated, or represented to them, and the discussions that then occurred would relate to a particular theme. The themes (such as vulnerability, safety, comfort, and community/belonging) covered during the focus groups were the themes that were ultimately depicted in the subsequent photography exhibition.

Each participant had been given an opportunity to select the images that she wished to be included in the exhibition. In fact, many participants were contacted more than once and I took different steps in securing participant feedback with different participants. Participants were sent potential exhibition photographs via email and asked to choose two or three photographs they wished to be used for the exhibition. The majority of participants replied to these emails and many selected their own set of
images. Some participants wanted to meet with me to discuss the photographs and then
decide which ones to include; while other participants were happy to make the choice
using email as our primary mode of communication; one participant wanted to see the
quotes that I would be using to accompany her photographs and then requested a revision
of wording; three participants gave me free rein with deciding which images to include;
and two participants were unable to be contacted for consultation. Both of the latter had
left Canada in the months between our last focus group and the time of the selection of
photographs (a time period of just over three months). Both of the participants who could
not be contacted had submitted photographs only once, and so the images to select from
were greatly diminished in regards to many of the other participants. Yet, despite the
reduced number of images, those that were taken by these two participants were
thoughtful, powerful, and important to the overall project and subsequently, two images
from each of these participants were included in the exhibition. The process of selecting
images for the exhibition was as collaborative an effort as was feasible.

The opportunity to view images that they had created was an entirely new
experience for participants. During the exhibition, participants proudly spoke about their
participation in the project and were pleased to take more photographs with their friends,
family, other participants, and myself. Many women brought other people with them to
view the exhibition and I believe this interest in sharing their experience with others is
indicative of their sense of pride, ownership, and empowerment that women gained from
participating in the project. Of particular importance to the women who participated was
the need to “voice” their challenges, difficulties, insights, and experiences. For many of
the participants, the discussions we had during the focus groups were the first time that
they had discussed their experiences with other women who had gone through similar life events. The voicing of experiences using photographs as a mode of expression was a profoundly effective way of communicating their experiences. Using a visual image to help illustrate an experience, or to represent an emotion or theme, created a deeper level of understanding among the women who participated in the focus groups. Our research project would not have tapped in to the same experiences, to the same extent, if women had not connected with each other through the sharing of visual memories.

During the time in which the exhibition ran in Kingston all of the participants who resided in Kingston and who took part in the photovoice component attended the exhibit. In fact, some of the women came more than once. With the exception of one day, I was present for the exhibition every day that it was open. For the day that I was unavailable, I had the assistance of a friend who took my place and welcomed visitors to the exhibition. For the duration of the exhibition in Kingston there was a notebook placed at the entrance to the gallery in which visitors could sign in and/or write comments, impressions, and thoughts about the exhibition. On the one hand the inclusion of the notebook allowed for individuals to communicate their thoughts, while on the other hand it provided the participants and I with a tool for gauging people’s impressions of the photographs included in the exhibition. Reading the positive thoughts and impressions was one means of measuring how successful our project was as seen through the eyes of the viewer.

3.5 Peterborough Exhibition

The exhibition in Kingston was initially conceived to be one in which all of the women who participated in the project would be in attendance. Yet, during the planning stage it became apparent that the women who resided in Peterborough would not be able
to attend the opening. This development caused me some concern. In my approach to the
exhibition, I had anticipated that all of the participants would have the same opportunity
to view their images in a collective setting. The fact that half of the participants would be
unable to attend the opening created a moral dilemma for me. Many of the women in
Peterborough did not yet have a driver’s licence or they did not have access to a vehicle.
With the distance between research sites being approximately 200 km, and there being no
convenient form of public transportation, the issue of mobility created a real problem. It
quickly became apparent that I would need to put together a second exhibition in
Peterborough if I wanted to facilitate the same type of experience for the participants
residing in that location. With the assistance of the New Canadians Centre in
Peterborough, a second exhibition was launched a few weeks after the exhibition in
Kingston (please see Appendix J). The New Canadians Centre gladly provided wall space
within their agency on which to hang the photographs as well as providing various other
types of assistance. For example, staff at the centre publicized the event and invited many
individuals, groups, and agencies from the Peterborough area to attend the exhibition;
staff also assisted me in preparing the space, hanging the photographs, and purchasing
food and drinks to offer to visitors on opening day. It should also be noted that staff at the
New Canadians Centre were also very active in the research project as a whole, since
some of the participants of the project were closely involved in various capacities within
the immigrant service agency. The manner in which the agency and staff assisted with the
exhibit attests yet again to the collaborative nature of the project, and the level of
commitment involved at each stage of the research process.
In addition to myself, four of the seven women who took part in the photovoice component of the project were in attendance on opening day. All four participants appeared pleased with the selection and layout of the photographs and when I enquired with them individually, each participant gave very positive feedback in her impressions of the exhibition.

Having the opportunity to re-visit their photographs and read what it was that they had said about the image was a powerful experience for the participants in Peterborough, just as it had been for the participants in Kingston. At the New Canadians Centre, I had made use of seven different sections of the walls and displayed one theme per wall. Each section was labelled with signage indicating the theme and as participants/visitors approached the images they had a sense of what the photographer was attempting to illustrate. During opening day, those who attended the exhibition really took their time to walk through the exhibit, reading the text and gazing upon the images as they went. A representative from the local television station also attended and conducted an interview with me, which was aired on the local television station the following day. The interest in the community surrounding the use of photographs to illustrate emotions and places was an intriguing concept for many. Not only was this part of what intrigued the participants in the initial stage of the project, but it was also a concept that caused people (visitors to the exhibition) to stop and think about others in addition to their own lives. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to leave comments in a guest book, which a number of them did, while many visitors spoke to me directly about their impressions. Through the use of photographic images to convey thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of places, visitors to the exhibition were constantly commenting on how they could better relate to the
challenges and difficulties associated with uprooting from one geographic location and striving to transplant oneself in another. By opening the eyes of the public and illustrating the lived realities of immigrant women in Kingston and Peterborough, visitors to the exhibition(s) were learning more about what problems were being faced by immigrant women. Raising awareness of the issues concerning newcomers to Canada is the first step towards positive social change.

Including photography exhibitions in the final stages of the project adheres to one of the primary foundational principles of the photovoice methodology. By coordinating an event where participants could exhibit their photographs to a wider public audience, we were raising awareness of the realities that participant’s had/were faced/facing. Informing broader society was an element that participants felt strongly about from the very onset of the project. Participants wanted others to know about their lives and experiences. Participants commented on how letting others know and learning from each other could make people who were experiencing similar circumstances feel as though they were not alone. And this they (we) believed was an important undertaking.

It would be negligent not to comment at this point on the differences in our positionality for this project as far as researcher-participant is concerned. The difference in terms of the ways in which we were placed in the research relationship made for a difference in power. Since my position as the Canadian-born white researcher was the potentially more powerful and directive of the two, my participants could have felt as though they had to tell me what I wanted to hear (or what they thought I wanted to hear). Yet I do not believe that this was the case. After having known the participants for a period of ten months to seven years I feel confident that women felt as though they could
be honest and direct in their interpretations and opinions of the research process. I was consciously aware of my positionality throughout the duration of the research project and my critical reflexivity allowed for a constant analysis of my potentially exploitative position. Being Canadian-born and white placed me within the dominant “norm” as it is reflected within Canadian society. To try and offset this power imbalance, participants were informed of every aspect of the project in advance and I was constantly asking for feedback to ensure that participants felt comfortable with the manner in which the research project was being conducted, as well as feeling as though they had some control of the process.

3.6 Project Participants: (Im)migration status and source countries

The participants in the MVPP project consisted of a heterogenous group of immigrant women who had migrated from a total of thirteen countries. Participants came from: Albania, China (4), Colombia (2), Cuba, Holland, Iran (2), Jordan, Korea, Kosovo, the Philippines, Portugal, Sudan, and Trinidad. These source countries are reflective of the current trend in Canadian immigration that sees the majority of new immigrants emigrating from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. It was my intention at the onset of the project to allow for as many diverse experiences and perspectives as possible; therefore, I did not strive for rigid boundaries when selecting participants for the project. Research projects involving qualitative research methods are not seeking to make their findings statistically representative of the particular population being studied. Among other things, qualitative research seeks to draw out subjective interpretations and individual lived experiences. As a way of encouraging individual experience and personal reflection(s) I welcomed participants from many backgrounds,
from varied source countries, and with differences in such things as context of exit and entry, length of time in Canada, and levels of English speaking ability.

A total of eighteen women participated in the project. Three women crossed the Canadian border as refugees, two participants were in Canada as international students, nine women had immigrated under the Immigration Canada (CIC) *Skilled Workers* class, three women had been sponsored by their husbands or fiancés, and the remaining two women had originally entered Canada as international students and had become permanent residents.

### 3.7 Demographics

#### 3.7.1—Type of residence and location

Of the eighteen participants, eight resided in Kingston, while ten lived in Peterborough and area. Eleven participants lived in houses that they either owned with partners or family members (6), or rented (5), again with either partners/family members or housemates/friends. The remaining seven participants lived in apartments shared with their partners/children. The majority of participants (15) had indicated Kingston or Peterborough as their intended city of destination at the time of their arrival. In fact, all of the participants from Peterborough and area had chosen to make their new lives in that location, whereas three of the eight participants from Kingston had originally chosen to begin their Canadian experience elsewhere (two in Toronto and one in London).

#### 3.7.2—Marital status and children

Most of the participants were married at the time of the interview: eight women from the Peterborough research site and four from the Kingston site. One woman was married but separated, one woman lived with her partner, and the remaining four
participants identified as being single. In Kingston, all of the women who were married (including the participant who was separated) had at least one child whereas in Peterborough six women had children, one woman was expecting her first baby, and only one of the married participants (recently immigrated and married just prior to coming to Canada) had not yet started a family. None of the other participants had children.

3.7.3—Education, employment, and income levels

The participants were extremely well educated. In fact, two women had completed high school while sixteen of the eighteen participants had at least one university degree. Furthermore, three participants had a degree at the Masters level and one participant had a doctoral degree. Many of the women—five from the Kingston site and seven from the Peterborough site—had degrees from their countries of origin and a number of these participants had returned to school after immigrating to Canada, or were planning to. Three of the five participants in Kingston who had degrees from their countries of origin had either already obtained a Canadian university degree (1) or were currently in school (2), and the other two women had come as international students and were currently studying at the PhD level. In Peterborough, of the seven women with foreign degrees none had yet to return to school at the post-secondary level, although most of them were either involved in upgrading or discussed wanting eventually to return to school. Several were still working at raising their language abilities to a level that would allow them to succeed at the university level or they were strategizing the best route to take in negotiating the Canadian education system and employment market.

Concerns about their education, employment, and financial situation were a common theme for the vast majority of participants. Two-thirds of the participants (four
in Kingston and eight in Peterborough) survived on under $40,000/year as a combined household income (in fact, there were five participants who survived at under $20,000). Many from this group spoke of the stress involved in figuring out how to improve their financial situations and the constant worry of how to better their lives and those of their families. Of the remaining one-third, two women lived in the $40-60,000 range and the remaining four women (two in Kingston and two in Peterborough) were more comfortable in the $60-80,000 income bracket. Length of residency did not necessarily convert to being positioned in a higher income bracket. Two of the four participants in the highest income range had been in Canada for over fifteen years, but two of the women had arrived since 2005. As this number of participants is quite small, it is more a point of interest than proof of any emerging trend.

Nine of the participants with university degrees from their countries of origin had been employed in their fields prior to immigration, but no one had returned to her former career, although three participants were volunteering in capacities that were related to their fields. Five were working in full-time jobs (three in Kingston and two in Peterborough), three were working part-time (two in Kingston and one in Peterborough), one was self-employed, two were full-time students, and the remaining participants were not yet working or in full-time studies. Several of this latter group were enrolled in ESL classes during the mornings and were engaged in various volunteering positions as a means of obtaining Canadian experience and diversifying their skill sets. All of the women who had left careers in their countries of origin indicated a desire to return to that type of employment. Included in the grouping of previous careers were: a development and planning officer, a teacher, a lawyer, an accountant, a newspaper art director, an
audiology assistant, a project manager, and two women who were employed in different capacities in the environmental science field.

The high level of education of participants does not necessarily correspond to household income. Providing evidence in support of the research showing that immigrants are having a more difficult time living above the poverty line (for poverty line measures see Canadian Council on Social Development 2004), the participants in the MVPP project struggled with having their credentials recognized and finding employment that would lift them above that line. One cannot help but question the reasons why. Since immigration source countries have changed to allow immigrants from non-traditional source countries there have been more opportunities for racialized minorities to migrate to Canada. At the same time as Canada is allowing racialized minorities in greater numbers, however, there is also a decrease in income and an increase in the number of years that it takes to rebound to a comfortable income level. How do racism and discrimination come into play in this scenario? Is it simply a coincidence that as more “non-white” immigrants enter Canada the income levels decrease (for further information on racialized poverty see Halli & Kazemipur 2001; Galabuzi & Teelucksingh 2005)?

3.7.4—Age and length of residency

Length of residency varied from four months to forty-seven years, with the most recent arrival having come in November 2006. The majority of participants were recent arrivals (defined as having been in Canada for less than five years), with five participants having arrived in 2006, three in 2005, one in 2004, one in 2003, six during the 1990s, one in 1988, and one in 1960. Ages at time of entry also varied widely with the youngest
migrant having been three years old and the oldest forty-seven. Women varied in age from twenty-five to fifty-two years of age.

3.7.5—Language proficiency

The ability to communicate in English at the time of entry into Canada was also a factor that varied widely among participants. For two of the participants, English had been one of the official languages in their countries of origin and so their ability to understand, read, write, and speak English were all very high, (although they did speak with an accent different from the Canadian-born English accent). Since many participants had attended university in their countries of origin, many had taken English language training, therefore seven of the participants considered their abilities to communicate in English to be at a medium level of understanding. Five participants identified their abilities as being on the lower end of the scale, which meant that they could understand most of what was being spoken as well as having the ability to read basic English, but they were unable to speak very well or to carry on a conversation at a comfortable level. Four of the participants stated that they were unable to communicate in English at all at the time they first came to Canada, a fact that all had found particularly challenging.

Most of the women who had difficulties with learning and communicating in English identified language as the primary barrier to moving ahead in their education and in the workforce. Two participants identified it as their number one vulnerability factor. The inability to communicate effectively can create all sorts of confusion, embarrassment, emotional discomfort, and in a worst-case scenario, the lack of ability to communicate can place an individual in an unsafe or dangerous situation. Fortunately for the participants in this project, the experiences with lack of ability to effectively
communicate in English did not cause them to be subjected to physical violence, although
for many the intense embarrassment was extremely humiliating and participants did
identify this as having caused episodes of emotional upset and discomfort.
Chapter IV

Placing Experience and Picturing Place: An Analysis

In our exploration of safety and vulnerability, the women who participated in the MVPP project required time in which to feel safe sharing the stories of their (im)migration experiences. As a researcher, by asking women to discuss their memories, experiences, and interpretations of safety and vulnerability, I was asking women to make themselves emotionally vulnerable in a very public sort of way. In sharing the way we feel and the emotions we experience, we risk many things. Among those things, we risk being invalidated or ignored, we risk being chastised, we risk being hurt, and we risk being embarrassed or humiliated. Exposing to others the way we truly feel about our experiences is an ominous and daunting task. How we communicate our thoughts and emotions and the openness to which other individuals hear what we say (and know what we mean) are instrumental to the manner in which our emotions are heard and treated. Keeping in mind that there will be instances when no matter how we attempt to communicate with others they will be unable or unwilling to listen, it was important for me to try and create an atmosphere that was as emotionally and socially safe as possible for my participants. An integral component to participants’ sense of safety within the research project was the provision of a space for voicing experience. For many of the women who participated, being able to tell their stories of (im)migration to an audience that was engaged and actively listening to their voices was a unique experience. The provision of a space in which women could share and voice their experiences helped to give validity to their experiences, as women learned that they shared similar experiences
with other immigrant women, a point which highlighted for them that they were not alone.

Equally as important to the creation of a safe place, I wanted to facilitate an opportunity for women to participate as fully as possible in the decision–making opportunities that arose during the course of the project. To counter issues of differences in power (or as Iris Marion Young would say, issues of domination and oppression), the provision of an inclusive and participatory environment was of the utmost importance for this project (Young 1990). Creating an environment, in which participants felt as though their opinions, insights, and suggestions were valid, was vital to the creation of a participatory project grounded in social justice and equality.

Our first group meeting occurred at the information session and this groundbreaking meeting set the stage for subsequent steps and was a vital first step in building rapport with the participants. First impressions are often very important and it was imperative that women should feel from the project onset as though their voices would be heard. Participants asked questions, most of which at this time were related to the logistics of the project. For example: what was the time line of the project? How were women to know what kinds of photographs to take? How frequently would we need to meet? How would the sharing of photographs take place? Potential participants at both research locations asked logistical questions such as these.

By the time we met for the first focus group/photovoice workshop, it quickly became apparent that women were at ease in each of the research sites. The level of comfort felt by the participants I ascertained by listening to the comments that women made as well as the ways in which they moved through and in the space of each location.
Women’s body language indicated their sense of comfort and/or familiarity in the space in which we worked as a group. The topics that we shared, voiced, and discussed during the group meetings were often very sensitive and difficult in nature. Participants wanted to talk about their experiences and the ways in which their experiences were felt on an emotional level. The intersecting components of emotion and place became the basis for discussion within the groups.

During analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts I became immersed in the data. Reading through the interviews and focus group/photovoice workshop transcripts enabled me to go back and think more deeply about what the women had said, as well how they had said it. I was also able to more fully analyze the interactions between participants by listening to the participants’ voices. During this process I added to the list of themes that we had discussed during our group meetings. I connected more directly the topics that women discussed to my analysis of the concept of place. What kinds of places did women experience different emotions and what types of actions or interactions were occurring in those places during the time that those experiences/emotions were taking place? A series of overarching themes emerged.

Women’s experiences in place consisted of three predominant themes. The first theme, comfortable places, will be divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section relates to the approach that participants individually took to particular places. More specifically, a participant’s sense of place; that is, her connection to a specific geographic location or site, and her positive experience in that place, was rooted within the participant’s inner perceptions, intentions, and interpretations of that place. To extrapolate this point further, women felt good/comfortable in some places because of
their individual connection and intentional interaction with this place. Examples of the types of places where participants “created” comfortable places include: natural settings (such as parks, lakefronts, or waterfront walkways); making the conscious choice to be at home, either alone or with friends/family, rather than situating themselves in public spaces; or enjoying opportunities for solitude and quiet reflection by positioning themselves in peaceful outdoor settings (e.g., one participant had her morning coffee by the lake after dropping her son off at school; another went for long walks to give herself time to think). The primary reason that these types of places were experienced as comfortable was because the participants made these places comfortable, through their approach to the experience and through their creative use and sense of place.

The second sub-section of comfortable places is related to the way(s) in which the actions of other individuals culminated in feelings of comfort for participants. If other individuals treated them in a friendly, courteous, patient, and respectful manner, participants felt comfortable. Immigrant women are forced by circumstances to deal with new situations and new people on a regular and ongoing basis. If the people with whom they are required to interact socially communicate to with are patient and friendly, they experience the interaction positively and subsequently identify the place in which the interaction occurs as safe and comfortable. A place cannot be welcoming without welcoming individuals being present. Examples of positive social interactions can occur within social agencies, while walking along the street and receiving a smile from a passing stranger, or when accessing services or purchasing products at sites of consumption. Under circumstances such as these, comfortable places are defined as
comfortable as a result of the ways in which other individuals interact with participants and assist them with feeling accepted, welcome, and included.

Another aspect that arose in defining and discussing comfortable places was the ways in which family and friends contributed to certain places being identified as comfortable. The presence of friends/family often enhanced and deepened participants’ experiences because the existence of those with whom participants shared personal relationships provided participants with an emotional attachment to a particular place. “Place” matters, but those who people place have a profound and powerful impact on the manner in which one experiences place.

The second predominant theme identified in the analysis of data consists of places of discomfort and vulnerability. In all cases, places of discomfort and vulnerability became identified as such as a direct result of the actions of other individuals (those who were unwelcoming). Participants experienced place in a negative way because they had negative experiences that were directly connected to the treatment they received from others. Participants shared numerous examples of experiences they had endured with individuals who treated them unfairly and/or unkindly. The third predominant theme that emerged was the identification of paradoxical places. In paradoxical places, women had a mixture of different experiences as well as conflicting emotions. In paradoxical places (or space) not everything was good, nor were all aspects of the place bad. In many cases, paradoxical places were places that could not be avoided by participants; thus, women were forced to engage with the paradox of interacting in a space that made them feel vulnerable or uncomfortable, but which they could not avoid because they needed to go to this place.
In my discussion of the paradox of place, one particular example will be used to highlight and explore a paradoxical place. I am choosing to focus on one particular example for two reasons. To begin, the site I am defining as paradoxical emerged directly from fieldwork and represents one of the major findings of the project. Participants did not set out specifically to picture paradoxical places, but through discussions and the sharing of information in focus groups, paradoxical place was identified. My second reason for choosing to focus on one example is to highlight the importance of conflicting emotions in place. For immigrant women, there are numerous places in which conflicting emotions can occur. Part of this conflict is rooted in immigrant women’s lack of familiarity with new places, but another very big part of their conflict is connected to the manner in which others treat them. In my discussion of a paradoxical place, I will be focusing on the latter of these two variables.

Places of comfort, places of discomfort, and paradoxical places will be the overarching themes under which the analysis of place, as well as the experience(s) of research participants, will be discussed. It is tempting to think of these themes as being situated along a continuum, with places of comfort being located at one end, places of discomfort at the other end, and paradoxical places falling somewhere in between. Yet this would not be an accurate depiction of the manner in which “place” was experienced by participants. One’s sense of place can change under different circumstances (for example, by having people who once treated you badly apologize for their mistreatment and change their future behaviour) and this thought holds some promise for the ways in which immigrant women’s experience of place can be altered and “place” rendered less vulnerable or uncomfortable. Thinking along these lines, we can see how important it is
to learn about and to further our understanding of the experiences of immigrant women, since identification of a problem is the first step towards positive social change.

4.1 Comfortable Places

Participants spoke at length about the ways in which different places invoked, created, and facilitated different types of emotions. The act of describing how places made them feel was an intriguing and powerful conduit for women’s interpretations of “place.” As noted by Cresswell, “the word ‘place’ hides many differences” (Cresswell 2004:15). Hidden and differing experiences of place were expressed by participants during the course of the project. Participants illustrated how contextual factors play a very important role in the manner in which places are experienced at the level of the individual. There are a variety of intersecting variables affecting one’s experience of place. In the case of immigrant women in Canada, there are variables such as “race,” class, cultural background, language ability, immigration status, context of entry (and exit from country of origin), length of time since arrival, geographic location (and so on), that all have a potentially powerful effect on how immigrant women will experience place. Place is not a neutral concept, but rather it is one laden with history(ies) and experiences, as well as with emotional and relational geographies.

Women were adept at locating places in which they felt safe and comfortable. As I introduced earlier, feelings of comfort were created through two different means. First of all, it was the participants themselves who created places of comfort by the attitude and intent with which they interacted with place. Women sought out places that made them feel safe, comfortable, and relaxed. Participants chose to position themselves in these types of places because of the ways in which these places could be experienced
positively. Many participants found solace in outdoor places, like parks, waterfront walkways, and other outdoor places. In addition to outdoor places, all of the participants identified their homes as being comfortable places, (at least the majority of the time). I believe it is important to note that not all women experience their homes in this way, but for this project, women’s homes were experienced as a comfortable place the majority of the time.

The second way that comfortable places were created was as a result of the actions of other individuals. If those with whom participants came into contact (i.e., at social agencies, in grocery stores, at the bank, on the bus, or in any other social location) treated them warmly and with patience and respect, then participants felt welcomed and comfortable in these places. A positive social interaction made participants feel validated and respected and was a step towards facilitating feelings of belonging and inclusion. The actions of others could be minimal (such as a smile or nod of encouragement) or more involved (such as a verbally warm welcome).

I will explore, using participant photographs and excerpts from focus group/photovoice workshop transcripts, the specific places of comfort as identified by the participants.

4.1.1 Waterfront Places

Many of the comfortable places that women discussed in the focus groups incorporated an air of peacefulness and reflection. Participants talked about how they felt a sense of freedom in places that allowed them to relax and just be themselves. A common pastime that participants enjoyed and found relaxing involved walks along the waterfront, through city parks, and along city streets. In fact, nearly every participant
included at least one photograph depicting the water or local waterfront walkways during one of the focus group-photovoice workshop sessions. For some of the participants, being near water was extremely important. In her discussion of the river she frequented near her home (see Figure 4), Pranvera shared with us the way being in nature often made her feel:

“This place means for me safety…and feeling free. I feel really good when I see nature. This place, this is where I go when I want to be alone and to hear my ideas…this is the only place that I go.”

Entering Canada as a refugee claimant, Pranvera was reunited with her family after many years of separation. In her country of origin, Pranvera’s mobility, in addition to all other areas of her life, had been constrained and difficult. In Canada, her life was different and Pranvera highly valued her newfound sense of freedom and her ability to experience the world around her. The photograph of Lakefield illustrates and represents the freedom and peacefulness in being able to walk by the water and immerse herself in the quietness (“hear my ideas”) of this place. The image depicts an open and attractive place, one filled with peace and reflection. For Pranvera, walks along the water were identified as comfortable and safe.
Luisa also spends much of her spare time around the water. Walking through Peterborough’s Millennium Park, Luisa took many photographs during the course of the research project. The timing of her photo taking included: during her lunch hour, after finishing work for the day, and on weekends. Luisa’s photography and exploration of the trails and pathways of the park shed a new light on the beauty of this space for other participants. One participant, Carmela, who has visited the very same park on numerous occasions, commented: “I have been there many times, but I have never noticed this much beauty.” For Carmela, seeing images of the park and thinking about this specific park/place in the context of immigrant women’s experiences, created a different impression of this place for her. By taking her camera and depicting scenes and objects from different angles and perspectives, Luisa showed women views of the park that they had never noticed before. Seeing this place through the eyes of another participant brought otherwise unnoticed aspects of the park into focus for the others to whom Luisa described her images. The new knowledge that was gained from sharing in another
woman’s experiences and interpretations rendered the place more meaningful for all. The generation of knowledge between participants, (through the sharing of photographs as well as their descriptions), was an exciting aspect of the project. Women were excited to learn new things from other women who participated by sharing their thoughts and stories.

Also related to the water, another special place that surfaced for participants in Peterborough was a specific lift lock located within the city. An integral part of the Trent-Severn Waterway (see Figure 5), for Carmela, the grounds near this lift lock were the first place on which she had set foot when she had arrived in Peterborough seventeen years earlier as an international student. Perhaps ironically, Luisa had photographed the very same lift lock, and in her description, Luisa had mused: “It is a nice place here at the park, I use this space quite a bit. I guess it is one of the places that I just feel at home…” This photograph subsequently turned out to be symbolic of first days in Peterborough for many of the women. To this day, every time Carmela has visitors from other places (i.e. family visitors from the Philippines), she takes her visitors to the lift lock and tells them the story of her arrival.
Participants in Kingston were also drawn to nature, the outdoors, and waterfront places. The water seemed to bring a sense of peace and the quiet required to reflect deeply on their lives. The speed and intensity at which adaptation takes place for (im)migrant women keeps their lives moving at a hectic pace, and the ability to relax and slow down is very beneficial to women’s peace of mind. Participants could also make connections between their new lives and their former lives. For Joy (see Figure 6), one of her first experiences of Kingston involved the realization of how beautiful the waterfront was, in addition to the connections it raised:

In the summer [of 2005] I was visiting Kingston…it was in July and then we moved here in August…when I see this [the lake], the water is so beautiful, [just] like in my hometown—where I can see the ocean. This (Lake Ontario) is just a lake, but I can see that it is very peaceful and this picture makes me feel like I am in a very peaceful place.
Maria expanded the discussion on the importance and symbolism of the waterfront as a geography of immigration. Maria commented on how the waterfront was a symbolic welcoming place for new immigrants to Canada.

There is something about the water that I think is really calming…and when you are talking about the first place that people come, I think that [the waterfront] is sort of like a landmark for a lot of immigrants.

Representative of the founding of Kingston, positioned near the waterfront is an iron lion. For some individuals, the lion represents the British monarchy. Yet for others (such as Maria), the lion and the waterfront site at which it is located reminds them of immigrants landing in a new place.
I was actually going to take a picture of this lion, but then I thought it was kind of hokey…but actually, a lot of immigrants when they came [to Kingston] would get their picture taken [sitting] on the lion.

Yang also shared images of the waterfront in Kingston, as did Miao and Joy, while in Peterborough Esperanza joined Luisa and Pranvera in sharing waterfront images. Waterfront places/images were photographs that many participants shared in the first focus group in their initial discussion of places of comfort. The overwhelming majority of participants found the water soothing, relaxing, and comfortable to be around. This “place” facilitated a chance for women to think, which was a welcome aspect for most of the participants.

There was one exception to this rule, and this differing opinion came from one of the Peterborough participants who did not like the way the peaceful atmosphere made her feel. Sevdije, who missed her family and country of origin more than anything, experienced the waterfront very differently from other participants. For Sevdije, waterfront places were associated with vulnerability. Any time she found herself near the water, the emotional impact of the quietness of that place would cause her to think, and to feel. Sevdije avoided the waterfront as much as possible for this reason. For her, the waterfront was an emotional place—one where she rarely ventured.

When I sit there, I just watch the water…I know that I will be thinking about: what if I am back in my country? And if I was there I would be going to the water with my family, or with friends…in a different life. Sometimes I really avoid going there [to the water]. In most cases I think that my body is here [in Canada], but my mind is still there in my country…like when I think, I think of Kosovo.
Sevdije’s feeling around water is in stark contrast to the other participants. Most of the participants sought out waterfront places specifically because of the way(s) it made them feel, whereas Sevdije avoided the waterfront for the very same reason. This difference not only highlights how powerfully emotive waterfront places can be, but it also illustrates the emotional toll that the act of immigration involves.

4.1.2 Nature and Outdoor Places

Women also photographed natural beauty, such as flowers and scenic vistas. The colours and freshness of the outdoors attracted and held meaning for many participants. S.A. depicted the beauty of Canada in a photograph of a tulip (see Figure 7), commenting:

I like the green because we lack green in our country…I think that green is the colour of something ambitious…something cheerful. I am taking pictures now of things in the outside, which is nice because they are representing that I am more at ease with the outside world.

The beauty, colour, and freshness of the green, placed S.A. in a state of happiness. She used the image of the tulip to convey her increased sense of confidence and ease with her external surroundings. Looking at the image of the tulip created positive feelings for S.A. For other participants, S.A.’s tulip represented warmth and the time of year, and in this way positive feelings were shared amongst the group.
Similarly, for S.K., the outdoors and natural environment were an extremely important part of her everyday life. S.K. had a large vegetable garden and for three or four days per week from May until October, worked with her partner in their garden to raise enough produce to provide families with baskets of fresh vegetables every week. S.K. grew organic vegetables and herbs and would travel from Kingston to Wolfe Island by ferry to tend to her garden on the island. S.K. explains:

So I usually spend four days a week out here, and it’s really, really great to have that. To live in the city but be able to go out here and just be outside.

In her garden place (see Figure 8), S.K. felt rooted and part of her environment, as opposed to the outsider that she sometimes felt she was in other places. Images of her Wolfe Island garden as well as scenes taken during the ferry ride to and from the city and
the garden appeared several times in S.K.’s collection of photographs. Being in the outdoors brought S.K. a sense of comfort and connection.

![Figure 8](image_url)

4.1.3 Comfortable Places, Togetherness, and Reminders of Home

Comfortable places involved other things as well. In particular, other individuals with whom women shared place and space could have a very positive affect in the manner to which participants experienced place. For instance: comfort happened through the creation of the recurring theme of “feeling like home,” and a comfortable place could be a location where “people know you and care how you feel.” Finally, comfortable places were those where participants could relax and be themselves without fear of embarrassment. In comfortable places, participants did not feel centred out as being different or categorized as not belonging. Participants were not mis”placed” or forced to adhere to a narrow definition of what was socially, emotionally, or culturally appropriate.
Participants shared photographs and memories that tied their two worlds together. Participants who had lived in Canada for a number of years experienced a degree of having roots in their new country. They enjoyed the benefits that living in Canada had brought them; benefits such as a universal healthcare system, an increase in civil safety, and improved opportunities for their children. Yet many participants had also spent a large portion of their lives in their countries of origin and they often felt as if they had one foot in each world. In describing comfortable places, the images that some participants shared with the group illustrated this relationship: the relationship between their two lives. For example, in her image of a factory in Peterborough that many residents probably do not even notice (see Figure 9), Luisa shared:

In this one, I think I took it because the first time I came to Canada, well to Peterborough, I think that something that really, really gave comfort to me was Quaker, because they make things like cookies, and, I don’t know, what else do they make… like cereal, and things like that….Quaker Oats, yeah, so you know sometimes, like this whole city, and especially where I live, I can smell the good smells….So this is a particular place that really reminds me of Peterborough, and I guess because at home we also have Quaker and so somehow you make the connection. At home we didn’t have this smell, it was more like a factory, you know, but I guess the first thought was like “oh, they have Quaker Oats here too, and not just the factory” and so I guess for us [Luisa and her sister] it was like a big thing because it reminded us of home.
For women who have (im)migrated to Canada, the locations and number of places where they can go and feel at home can sometimes be few and far between. For some women, their connection to Canada and the manner in which they transplant themselves in their new homes is by giving birth and raising their children here. Carmela expressed this very clearly when she discussed what having children in Canada meant for her and the way(s) in which her children connected her to place (see Figure 10).
This is my son Benjamin. I chose this picture [to share] because of him and the apples. [For me] what apples signify is Canada. Every time I drink apple juice I remember the first week I came to Canada. It [apples] is one of the first smells and tastes that I…that even now…reminds me of when I first came. And I chose the picture of Benjamin because he is one of my roots now in Canada…and Canada becoming home for me because of the children.

Carmela’s ability to connect her child and her first memory of Canada to a specific place and experience are indeed profound. Carmela had attended university in Canada, married, and then returned to the Philippines to work as her way of giving back and doing something for her country of birth. Yet once back in the Philippines, working at the college she had attended prior to her initial sojourn to Canada, Carmela realized that she would never be able to reach her potential if she remained where she was in the Philippines. Carmela expanded on this when she said:
I went back to my college [in the Philippines] and taught there for one year. That was the deciding point of coming to Canada. I knew that I could survive in the Philippines, but I had a hard time living with how people in power treated other people there—how that school where I worked treated their employees—there was a total lack of respect… I began thinking that this is where that saying really applies: ‘Life is what you make it.’ I have a choice—I can continue living in the Philippines or come back to Canada. I felt that it is not everyone that is lucky enough to have this choice [to immigrate] and that since I did, I should take advantage of the opportunity.

Despite her desire to “give something back” to her country, Carmela realized that her ability to do so would be minimal if she were to stay in the Philippines. Her decision to return to Canada was rooted in the desire to have the opportunity to reach her potential as well as to provide any children she might later have with the opportunities to do the same. Carmela also has figured out a way to combine her two worlds as she travels back to the Philippines on a regular basis and takes her children with her (see Figure 11).
Figure 11  Katrina/Bougainvillea

This is my daughter Katrina, and again, with the backdrop—this is bougainvillea—this picture was taken in the Philippines when we were there in March 2007. These flowers grow all over—and so every time I see it I remember warm sun, sea breezes, and perspiration...hot. And so this picture is a big contrast to the apple, this one is kind of representative of the Philippines, and both places are home—so where is home? These two photographs definitely represent my two worlds.

To Carmela, it was important that her children be exposed to life in both worlds. When Katrina and Ben go with her and her husband to the Philippines, the children are interacting and learning from people with very different types of life experiences and everyday lived realities. It is a huge learning opportunity and Carmela hopes that these experiences will assist her children in better understanding the world and becoming more understanding to the people who live in it. Through her experiences as an immigrant and
her work with newcomers, Carmela is making efforts to create a more welcoming and comfortable place in the world for those she comes in contact with.

Comfortable places also included places that signified participants’ hopes and dreams. For participants who are also parents, their dreams are frequently focussed on their children. Joy’s photograph of her daughter skating (see Figure 12) is symbolic of the hope that mothers have for their children’s futures, as well as providing the much-needed validation that their act of immigration will provide their children with opportunities that they would never have had in their country of origin.

This is my daughter, and this is her first time learning how to skate. I don’t know how to skate. It scares me. But in just half an hour my daughter learned how! I tried it once, I held my husband’s hand and I kept saying ‘don’t go…don’t go.’…for her it was easy, but for me…I think my daughter will get to do, get to have many experiences that I will not.

Figure 12 Little Girl Skating
The fact that Joy felt fearful standing on the ice while wearing skates was overridden by her daughter’s ability to be unafraid and to learn to skate quickly. It was satisfying for Joy to see her daughter provided with opportunities to learn, to experience, and to grow. Women often receive a great deal of satisfaction from knowing that their children will be exposed to more opportunities, and this was true for the participants in this project.

For many of the participants, the decision to come to Canada and to endure the hardships associated with immigration was in large part a result of providing for their child(ren)’s futures. Parents wanted their children to have more opportunities and freedom and they believed that Canada was the place that could provide these. Seeing their child/ren learn and grow and knowing that they would have more opportunities as a result of immigration, was a positive and powerful experience for participants.

Gamila’s family photograph (see Figure 13) is significant in the exploration of comfortable places. When you are visibly identifiable as being “different” from the stereotypical citizen, places of comfort can be challenging to locate and difficult to maintain. Kingston, the city in which Gamila and her family live, is a very white city. The proportion of visible minorities in Kingston is low, at 5.8% (Statistics Canada, 2008). In a depiction of a moment in time in which she and her family felt comfortable, Gamila shares a story about the photograph of her family.

This is a picture of me with my husband and children. We are at the Ban Righ anniversary party that was a few years ago, and I usually feel comfortable at the Ban Righ Center, which is different from some other places…and so it was an absolutely beautiful event, and my husband came too and my kids were there and
at first I didn’t think that anything was very special about that picture, not at the moment, but then when I looked at it I thought that this was a wonderful picture—look at us, we looked so happy. I just loved it because it is one of the…a picture that brings a smile to my face every time I look at it. My children were so cute and my husband looks so handsome in that picture, and we look happy… and it seems like we felt happy. We didn’t feel out of place like we do in some of the other places that we go, so that was special.

Figure 13  Family

Taking time to look back at a particular moment in time facilitated an opportunity for Gamila to reflect upon the memory of an event she had taken for granted at the time, and to gain a new appreciation of how special the moment had been. Gamila and her family often struggled with being “othered” in different types of social settings. Feeling out of place; being placed on the periphery of mainstream society; and experiencing instances where people would say or do things that made either herself or her family members feel marginalized were (and are), all too common. The event at which the
“family” photograph was taken stands out as special in Gamila’s mind because it was a moment in time where each member of her family exuded happiness and shared in the special feeling of belonging.

During the course of the photovoice/focus group component of the research project, food became an important facilitator of group cohesion and shared expression. During the second photovoice/focus group meeting, both groups suggested that we incorporate a potluck dinner as part of our final group meeting together, so in addition to sharing photographs and experiences, we also shared food and informal conversation.

The sharing of food was an important activity for participants both during our research project as well as in the course of their everyday lives. Food was commonly referred to throughout the duration of the research project and represented a number of important things. One of the more common representations of food sharing was the ability for the sharing of food to produce feelings of comfort, including community and belonging. Participants shared images of food that they had taken during social events in which they would get together with friends and colleagues to share in a meal or in a celebration such as a holiday or birthday. Participants talked about how they would gather in their community and share traditional food dishes from their countries of origin. Yang and Luisa both talked about how they would gather with friends from their respective countries of origin and that the sharing of food was a very important component to bringing people together. When describing an image of a table laden with food, Luisa stated—“I think cooking and eating Colombian food makes us feel that sense of home.” Yang also shared many images in which food was depicted. In her description of a social gathering at the International Centre (see Figure 14), Yang said:
We had a celebration to celebrate the end of this term. Several Chinese students got together and made Chinese dumplings together. This kind of activity makes me feel very comfortable…getting together with other Chinese students. This I enjoy very much.

Photographs of food also conjure up memories and feelings of belonging. Speaking about another food photograph, Yang said—“I think that this picture, when I see it, I think that it is a kind of community to have dinner with friends.”

For S.K., food was connected to a number of different, yet equally important things in her life. Food maintained an instant connection to the garden in which she spent so much of her time, and in which she felt so comfortable. Food and her garden also made her think of the important people in her life. For instance, in sharing an image of her family taken at the garden (see Figure 15) S.K. said:
They [my family] are helping us plant potatoes and I always feel like a place feels more like home when the people that are important to me have been there…you know, my friends, and my brothers…so now the farm feels even better to me than before…because they (my family) have been there.

![Gardening Together with Important People](image)

**Figure 15**: Gardening Together with Important People

In pondering feelings of comfort, the experiences of international students were different from those of other participants in two important ways. Miao and Yang, both international students who had originally come from China, spent the majority of their time in and around the Queen’s University campus. Miao and Yang’s circle of mobility was exceptionally small when compared to the other participants. Focussed on obtaining higher education, (as opposed to severing former ties in their countries of origin and creating an entirely new life for themselves in Canada), Miao and Yang did not experience the challenges of adaptation in the same way as other participants. This did not mean, however, that there were not tremendous adjustments to be made. The most
difficult aspects of their migration were becoming fluent and comfortable in English and
dealing with separation from family and friends. Both women migrated from China
alone. When they arrived at Queen’s University, they did not have friends or family in
Canada. Yet despite this fact, Miao and Yang accessed services on campus that assisted
them in the process of adjusting to life in Kingston and on Queen’s campus. The Queen’s
University International Centre provides an immediate support network for newly arrived
international students. Through the international centre most new students from abroad
learn how to navigate through the system and to meet other students who are contending
with similar circumstances. All international students can feel included in this “instant
community” because all students are in Canada for the same reason(s). Upon arrival,
many new students begin their first term living in the graduate residence. The close
proximity to one another is an added benefit that allows novice international students to
learn from one another and from those who have been here longer and to socialize with
other students who understand the challenges they face. The structured “instant
community” that Miao and Yang were presented with eased their adaptation experience.
Yang’s photograph (Figure 16) depicts one of the entrances to JDUC (John Deutsch University Centre) that she considers to be a welcoming entranceway. Housed within the JDUC building are the Queen’s University International Centre and a graduate residence. When Yang first arrived at Queen’s, this is the building in which she lived. Initially an overwhelming experience because of the newness of everything she encountered, Yang eventually made strong connections and strong friendships while living in the graduate residence.

The manner in which participants were treated in social settings and the people with whom they surrounded themselves played a vital role in the way(s) in which participants experienced place. On an emotional level, participants felt more comfortable when they had positive experience in “place” with family and friends. Children played an especially significant role in women’s experience of place, both at the level of the home as well as within their overall immigration experience. The motivation and strength to endure hardships and challenges often came from the knowledge that their children
would be provided with more opportunities because of their decision to come to Canada. This knowledge often propelled women to endure barriers and hardships, especially in the early stages of immigration.

It was also important for participants to share special places with those whom they cared about because these places then became even more meaningful and special. As S.K.’s photograph and quote exhibited earlier, places became invoked with greater meaning because family and friends spend time there and often share and create memories in this space. The connection with other people was important for participants. Connections assisted in facilitating feelings of comfort and belonging, but even more, connections deepened attachments to place.

Safety and safe places were other variables that affected participants’ in their decision of whether to (im)migrate to Canada. In discussions around the importance of safety in their decision to migrate to Canada, for some, safety was the number one factor. For instance, Pranvera stated:

It’s a small country (Albania), but many bad things happen there, mine [my reason] was totally safety… I mean, you can’t live there…like if you are alone, especially for a woman. And it is hard to live in an economic way… and there are many things you have to do to support yourself.

Other participants highlighted the importance of safety, and the existence of physical safety as an attribute of Canadian life that they factored into their overall analysis when deciding whether to come to Canada. Participants who came from countries in which violence, civil unrest, and war were present were especially aware of the significance of safety. S.A. highlighted this point when she shared:
I think that this is the main reason why this country is chosen because…Canada is known for being a peaceful country, and it is even much safer than the U.S., so most people they come to Canada because of this…it is much safer, compared to our country…or to the Middle East. I mean why we wanted to have the nationality, the citizenship...because the turmoil and situation, the unknown, unpredictable and critical situation, in most Arab countries…that’s why we wanted to have another citizenship, at least for our future…like [for] our kids, a better future for our kids…

As illustrated by the above quote, participants (such as S.A.) were very conscious of wanting to provide safety, security, and opportunities for their children to thrive and grow.

In their quest for safety, many participants identified their homes as their primary “safe place” in Canada. It is true that not all women experience their homes as an entirely safe place, but the overwhelming majority of women in this project identified their homes as a safe place that made them feel secure. S.K. discussed how her feelings of safety in relation to her apartment were normally good but added how they had been temporarily compromised when she and her partner heard a prowler on the fire escape outside of their bedroom. This prowling individual did not enter the residence, but the fact that someone who was not supposed to be there was outside of her room, (essentially trespassing in her private space) diminished S.K.’s sense of safety in her private space. Salma also experienced incidents at her rental home that made her feel less than safe. The house she rented was in need of repairs, and in one incident her son identified and located the smell of smoke in their basement that was coming from an appliance in need of repair. In
another incident a large section of the ceiling had fallen and struck Salma. After the second incident Salma no longer liked the house and began making arrangements to relocate. These examples highlight how contextual factors can affect one’s sense of safety. In the home, one longs for safety, security, and privacy. When those comforts are compromised, (or when there is violence or the threat of violence) one’s sense of safety and security is severely tested.

It is important to recognize that for immigrant women, home and/or living space is the one location where they can be away from the public eye and not feel as though they are being appraised. At home, women can be themselves. Home is the first place in which women gain a sense of familiarity, and becoming familiar and at ease in one’s surroundings is an important first step towards creating a comfortable place.

4.1.4 Welcoming Places

As I have discussed previously, the people who inhabit particular places profoundly affect how individuals experience place. I have discussed the ways in which friends and family deepen and enhance the significance of place, by virtue of their relationship to participants. I will now turn to a discussion of the ways in which social agencies and organizations, and the individuals who people these places, play important roles in creating welcoming environments that lead to participant inclusion and comfort.

One of the places that conjured up feelings of comfort and community for many of the participants was the public library. This was true for participants from both research sites. Women talked about the library as being a safe place to go to learn more about their community and the resources available within the community. In Kingston,
many new immigrants frequent the public library on a regular basis during the initial stages of their adaptation journey. Gamila commented:

[The library] is also the place where I met a few of my friends, and some of these friends I still have now. That is where I used to go, and I would spend all day there, and the kids would play, and we would just spend time there…

The library is viewed as a place of special significance. Salma adds:

In general, the library gives me a feeling of tranquility and peacefulness because of the smell of books…I like it very much.

Other participants also felt a sense of belonging and community in the space of the library. Maria’s discussion around the unique ability of the library to bring people together from across the spectrum of society was an opinion shared by other participants (see Figure 17). Maria shared:

The library is always, at least for me—and I don’t know if other people have different connections than me, but when I think of books—I think of the library almost as sacred. You know there are walls of knowledge and it is always peaceful and I always get the sense of that calm and the colour when I go to the library…and I think the library is kind of like a sacred space, you know, because it holds peoples moods and peoples thoughts. As a society it is where we share them with the next generation. The library provides a sense of community. So I think of the library as a place of belonging and part of the community help.

Women saw the library as serving different purposes. For some, the library was as a place of quiet contemplation where they could seek refuge from the outside world. For others the library was a place of socialization and friendship. Many immigrants access the
library very early on in their adaptation process because of the availability of information and community resources. Often, the library becomes a meeting place for the sharing of friendship and well as for information. The people who participants tended to meet in library spaces were predominantly welcoming and helpful.

![Kingston Public Library](image.png)

**Figure 17  Kingston Public Library**

Participants in Peterborough identified particular places frequented by newcomers in which they felt a sense of belonging and community. Participants in Peterborough were relatively new to Canada, especially as compared to many of the participants in Kingston. As such, Peterborough participants were more apt to be using immigrant services and language training centres. Two such places that were discussed in numerous verbal exchanges between the participants at the Peterborough research site were the New Canadians Centre and the school in which ESL (English as a Second Language) was taught. Of the ten women who participated in the project from the Peterborough location,
five of the women were currently enrolled in ESL classes. Despite having previously met, most participants who were ESL students commented on how they had met only on an introductory level; they in fact did not know each other well. Despite their lack of post-class interaction, participants felt that ESL classes were comfortable places because the teacher was warm and welcoming, and because class members were all working towards similar goals.

Estela shared with the group (Figure 18) how her classroom was a place where she felt a sense of community and belonging.

This is my classroom at Fleming College. It’s a good place…a safe place…I feel good in this place. I go there every morning during the weekdays. This day [that I took the picture} there were no classes…but in this place I feel good.

![ESL Classroom](image)

**Figure 18**  
ESL Classroom

Many women felt safe and comfortable in their ESL class because they felt that everyone there understood and accepted them. Pranvera had earlier taken a photograph of
some of the students in her ESL class when they visited the home of their teacher. In describing the photograph of her class, Pranvera said:

"This one [photograph] is talking about community. You can see that there are people from many different places, from all over the world. So this is my teacher, she is Canadian, and then there are Afghanistan people, Chinese people, [and] Colombian people…so that means community to me. To be together, no matter if you are in Canada or in another place…community to me means everybody, like I can be with anybody and feel okay.

For Pranvera, thinking of all people as being part of the community was important for society because people needed to learn how to live together in a peaceful and friendly manner.

Through their participation in the focus group/photovoice workshops, participants felt as though they had been given an opportunity to connect with other newcomers in a more meaningful way that would not have been available to them should they have neglected to participate. In this sense, by participating in the research project women had taken steps towards expanding their sense of belonging and community. The pursuit of a common goal and the feeling of camaraderie were shared during group meetings. Women enjoyed sharing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with one another. Participants stated that by sharing, they felt less alone. Learning that there were other women who were going through similar types of experiences provided the participants with a sense of belonging and connection.

The primary challenge for participants in finding public comfortable places was to locate places that incorporated two primary aspects: first, these comfortable places were
peopled by others, but more precisely, the important second component was that places be peopled by those who welcomed and accepted participants wholeheartedly. The Ban Righ Centre in Kingston and the New Canadians Centre in Peterborough were two places that stood out for the majority of women who participated as being truly comfortable places. At the time I developed this project, and as I have mentioned previously, I knew that for the project to be a success I needed to provide safe and comfortable places for the group to meet and share experiences. Initially, I defined success as being both an empowering experience for women who participated, while also being an opportunity for each of us to learn more about the lived realities and experiences of women who immigrated to Canada, as well as being more able to understand the importance of “place” in their lives. I could not have foreseen just how strongly many of the women felt about the Ban Righ Centre and the New Canadians Centre.

Figure 19

Ban Righ Centre

The Ban Righ Centre on Queen’s University campus (Figure 19) played a very prominent role as a place of safety and comfort for the Kingston participants. The BRC
building became more than our Kingston research site. Salma surmised—“actually, this place makes me feel at home.” Other participants, those who had been in Kingston for a longer period of time and had a more long-standing relationship with the BRC expanded on this assessment. For example, Maria stated:

I think that Ban Righ is really about community for all of the mature women that go back to school. It gives them a place where they can connect…especially when you are starting [school], or stressed…people are always very welcoming and supportive here. So I think of it as a huge community.

Gamila was also very connected to the Ban Righ Center and this had been the case since the first time she stepped through the doors. Since that initial visit, the BRC has become a permanent fixture in her life. Gamila shared:

When I first came and started school here it was the only place where I could go to and really feel at peace. So I would come here as much as I could, and it would always feel like home.

The capacity for a physical place to make individuals feel welcomed (and part of a community) revolved around the creation of an atmosphere by the individuals who worked and spent time within that space. The people who were there had to be warm, welcoming, and accepting. Creating a place of inclusivity takes two things: a group of welcoming and open-minded people who are friendly and go out of their way to welcome individuals; and a structure that is set up with comfort and convenience in mind. The Ban Righ Centre captures these two aspects very well and the majority of Kingston participants echoed this sentiment.
The New Canadians Centre in Peterborough (Figure 20) was equally as important to participants. The NCC seemed to encapsulate all that was comfortable and inclusive and all of the participants felt that they had gained important skills, contacts, and connections by being involved with the NCC. For example, Zhaleh shared:

I have had good experience with this place. Really, really I like this place. Always I was very comfortable with the staff in this place, they are very kind and patient with clients…because the first time I came here it was exactly 2 or 3 days after we arrived in Canada. [The people here] told us everything we needed to know, they gave us information and helped us to fill the forms…I love this place and the people in this place.

![New Canadians Centre](image)

**Figure 20**  
**New Canadians Centre**

It is clear that the extent to which women felt welcomed at the Ban Righ Centre and the New Canadians Centre was in large part dependent upon the individual attention they received while there, as well as the genuine concern and assistance they received
from staff. The sense of home, and of hope, leaps out as an important component as to why participants feel comfortable in these *comfortable* places.

My discussion of comfortable places has focussed on three primary areas. I have discussed the ways in which participants created comfortable places through their approach and use of space. I have also discussed how individuals who are emotionally connected to the participants (family and friends) invoke a stronger and deeper connection to place, by strengthening the emotional connection for the participants to that particular place. I then concluded the section on comfortable places by describing some of the places that participants identified as being comfortable because of the manner in which they were treated by those who inhabited and made use of these spaces. If others (namely staff) made efforts to be welcoming, helpful, and friendly, participants felt comfortable, welcome, and included. Let us now turn our attention towards a different direction.

4.2 Place of Discomfort and Vulnerability

The second predominant theme identified in the analysis of data consists of places of discomfort and vulnerability. In *all* cases where places of discomfort and vulnerability were identified and experienced, places were labelled as such due to the actions of other individuals. Treatment at the hands of the dominant majority was often harsh and discriminatory. Participants shared numerous examples of times when others treated them in a negative or disrespectful manner. The experience of a painful and traumatic event and its connection to a specific place culminated in creating feelings of vulnerability that subsequently became directly linked to the place in which the interaction occurred. In some cases, due to the severity of the negative interaction, it took only one negative
experience for participants to identify a place as being unsafe. Many participants had experienced direct and undeniable discrimination because of their accent, their dress, or the colour of their skin, and these experiences were discussed during group meetings.

Participants were very aware that their non-white status centred them out as being different from the stereotypical Canadian-born citizen (this term I use to describe individuals who were both white and born in Canada). All of the participants who identified as being a member of a visible minority had experienced overt and covert instances of discrimination and racism. Several participants had endured countless incidents. If imagining levels of discrimination as being situated along a continuum (or scale), participant experiences with discrimination ranged from mild to severe.

Participants shared stories that described both extremes, as well as other experiences that were situated somewhere between the two extremes of experience. Geographies of racism and discrimination were prevalent in our discussions of places of discomfort and vulnerability.

Despite (or perhaps, because of) the prevalence of discrimination and racism as prominent themes, participants often had difficulties discussing their experiences of this nature. For some, the difficulty was related to the powerful (and painful) emotions that were attached. To share their experiences with discrimination and racism involved remembering and describing the event or an experience which was often painful and emotionally unsettling. For others, the difficulty concerned their challenges with being able to verbally identify actions as being discriminatory and/or racist. Participants sometimes had difficulty in naming an act as being one of racism or discrimination. Most frequently, the capacity to use direct terminology was connected to the length of time that
participants had been in Canada. Participants who had resided in Canada for a longer period of time (five years or more) tended to use terms like *discrimination* and *racism*, whereas participants who had been here for a shorter time period (less than five years) used more subtle language. I believe this speaks to how recent newcomers either felt uncomfortable using the direct terminology, or were unsure as to what term to use and when to use it. It is notable to mention that by the time the third group meeting took place, participants who had exhibited difficulty in identifying and naming what was discriminatory and/or racist had gained a better understanding of what constituted discrimination and racism. This realization is a powerful example of how group learning took place as a result of participant interaction and discussion.

My discussion of places of discomfort and vulnerability will focus on how the actions of others create feelings of discomfort and vulnerability for participants. In an instance such as this, it does not matter what type of social interaction is taking place, but rather, the manner in which other individuals have treated participants. Social interactions that were rude, unkind, or disrespectful were at the root of the creation of places of discomfort and vulnerability.

To explore places of discomfort and vulnerability, I will begin by looking at the types of places where participants have had uncomfortable experiences as a result of the way(s) participants were treated by others. I will connect participants’ public identification by others (namely, the dominant white majority) as a visible minority who does not belong (and as an immigrant woman with an accent), to their experience(s) of exclusion and marginalization. The ways in which participants were perceived and treated by others culminated in the creation of uncomfortable and vulnerable places.
Many of the examples I will be providing illuminate how visible minority women in historically white spaces are rendered vulnerable and targeted for mistreatment because of their non-white status, as well as other immigration markers (such as their accent and/or style of dress).

4.2.1 Public Displacing, Public Exclusion

As newcomers to Canada, participants struggled to attain a sense of inclusion and acceptance in their Canadian environment. With the exception of being situated within the safety of their family homes (as noted earlier, all participants experienced their homes in positive ways), participants struggled to locate places of belonging and inclusion. The degree to which participants felt fully included as equal members of society depended on a number of different factors, including: age at time of arrival, length of time in Canada, immigration status (international student, refugee, landed immigrant, or citizen), level of proficiency in English, current employment status, experiences of discrimination and racism, and the attempts by others to make them feel welcome in their new surroundings. The struggle to feel included, welcomed and an accepted member of the community was a never-ending challenge for many participants.

According to Omidvar and Richmond (2003), the cornerstones of social inclusion are: valued recognition, human development, involvement and engagement, proximity, and material well being. To extrapolate these points further, “social inclusion involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. For immigrants and refugees, social inclusion would be represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of life in their new country” (2003, 1). Iris Young also contends that full participation in society is key to the
realization of one’s full potential as an equal member of society. If one uses the connection to participation and complete citizenship as a starting point for looking at the level to which newcomers are included within the social, cultural, political and economic fabric of Canadian society, it is clear that immigrants and refugees are struggling to be recognized as equal members of society. Indeed, and as I stated above, such proved to be the case for many of the women who participated in the MVPP project.

Participants discussed how they at times felt as though they were not viewed in the same way as other Canadian residents. As hard as they would attempt to learn “Canadian” customs, values, and socially appropriate ways of interacting, something seemed to hold them apart from their Canadian-born counterparts. Women voiced this in different ways. It was more than their immigrant status: various participants identified the social distance and sense of disconnection between immigrant women and Canadian residents who had been born in Canada. For examples, Zhaleh identified the separation as Canadian-born people sometimes not liking people from other places:

I feel that because I am new in Canada…maybe they don’t like new people… maybe they don’t like people like that [like me].

Other participants identified their accents, clothing, or skin colouring as being the separating force between themselves and white Canadian-born citizens. Gamila’s reference to the rarity of being in a social setting in which everyone was Black drew forth a powerful means of conceptualizing this distance. In the sixteen years since coming to Kingston, besides within the boundaries of her family home, Gamila had only experienced this situation once in a public setting in Kingston:
One time I was riding the bus to go and visit my sister at the hospital and there were two Black passengers, myself, and the bus driver was Black. And I was thinking: ‘like wow, what is happening?’ And I even said to the driver, ‘Hey, did you notice, this must be the first time in Kingston that we were all Black on the bus?’ This has to be recorded!

Gamila’s identification of the uniqueness of the situation is telling. In Kingston, where the vast majority of the population is not a member of a visible minority group, the experience of peopling a public place with all visible minority individuals, does not occur very often. Gamila’s experience is unique, but also powerful, since it positions her non-white body at a moment in time where she is part of the majority. For visible minority individuals in smaller cities, this almost never happens.

In terms of style of dress, at various points throughout the project some participants touched upon the issue of headscarves, if only briefly. There were obvious struggles by some women in deciding whether or not to continue wearing their traditional headscarf in Canada, but we were not able to delve deeply into this topic. The one exception in which headscarves was elaborated upon was in S.K.’s transit discrimination experience, and this example will be discussed at length in the paradoxical places section.

In a discussion around feelings of exclusion, Joy talked about how much she enjoyed and appreciated her opportunity to be a Canadian citizen. During group meetings Joy shared images of Canada, such as her experience with the Canada Day parade and visit to the Parliament Building in Ottawa. Joy wanted to feel included, but she felt that she was not quite there yet. In expressing the difficulty of attaining a feeling of inclusion in Canada (see Figure 21), Joy said poignantly:
One of the reasons we immigrated to Canada is because we wanted it to be easier to go and visit anywhere, not like just in Canada, but maybe in the U.S. or in Europe. So we actually decided to immigrate to Canada by ourselves…and we think Kingston is amazing. This day of the [Canada day] parade is so different from any other day. So, at the time, my daughter was in the parade…and I remember thinking “aha, maybe one day we will become part of this group—this people”—but right now, I think it is a little bit far away.

Joy wants to feel as though she and her family are included fully in all aspects of their Canadian lives, but she realizes that there are times and places in which feelings of inclusion are fleeting or simply elusive. In a later discussion (within the same group meeting), Joy shares an experience describing how other individuals can make her feel strange and uncomfortable by the way they treat and interact with her.
This particular event happened to Joy while she was at school. During a lunch break, Joy left the computer room briefly to make use of other facilities, and upon her return, she found the door locked. Knocking quietly to alert other students, Joy made eye contact with the student closest to the door (a white woman). This woman did not move to let her in. Shortly thereafter, and upon noticing that her classmate was not moving to do anything, a student from Korea rose to open the door for Joy. Joy described the experience like this:

The lady look[ed] at me, and she didn’t open the door. I don’t know why. There was another lady…a Korean lady and she opened the door, but I think that this is so strange because she [white woman] knew that I was there…because I study there… She sits closer to the door and the other Korean woman was a little bit further away… but she just looked at me and then looked at the computer again. I don’t know her name but she knows that I study there, so I don’t know why. So sometimes I feel…that I am not part of this group. I have this strange feeling.

Places of exclusion were numerous for participants, whereas places of inclusion were challenging to locate. More often than not, reasons for exclusion appeared to be rooted in the “us and them” paradigm. The “us and them” paradigm views “others” as not belonging in a particular space or place. In places of exclusion, participants continued to maintain a sense of discomfort and vulnerability, long after changing geographic location.

4.2.2 Vulnerable Places

When I asked Zhaleh questions related to vulnerable places, Zhaleh immediately situated herself at two particular places in which she had been treated badly. In these places service providers and/or frontline staff had discriminated against Zhaleh and
caused her to feel badly. One such place of discrimination was the Drive Test Centre (see Figure 22), the location where Zhaleh had gone to arrange a time for her driving test. During the second photovoice/focus group meeting, Zhaleh brought images of the Drive Test office with her and shared these images and her experience with the group.

**Figure 22**  
**Drive Test Centre**

I do not like this place…after one or two months when we came to Canada I had passed G1 and I wanted to book a time to do the driving test. There is a person…she is very…how do you say?…she was very unpatient and she was very mad at me, and because, like I didn’t understand her and I wanted her to explain more, but she doesn’t understand me because she is Canadian and her accent [was challenging] …for several times I asked her to explain more, but she [acted like] wanted to eat me, with her eyes and with her statement…and that is why I really dislike this place.
For Zhaleh, the language barrier, social humiliation, and the lack of patience as illustrated by the English-speaking agent at the Drive Test Centre created intense feelings of discomfort and vulnerability for her. Through the simple act of questioning in an attempt to better understand the situation, Zhaleh’s experience became profoundly upsetting due to the negative response of the English-speaking counter attendant. Our initial experiences with a place tend to influence our future interpretations of it. Realizing this, it is easy to see how important it is for individuals who work directly with the public to be culturally competent. By treating someone badly the first time, the individual who has been mistreated is then reluctant to use those services in the future or they suffer from emotional upset and stress at the thought of going back. For individuals who have a non-English accent or who are visible minorities (or both), the experience of being discriminated against because of their social identity markers can have profound, long-lasting, and damaging effects.

Gamila also shared memories of her vulnerable experiences. In Gamila’s vulnerable places, her experiences were identified as being discriminatory and emotionally upsetting. The places that were identified by Gamila as being vulnerable places were the Employment Centre, the Children’s Aid Society, and the hospital. Gamila shared images of all three places during the group meetings and described at length the experiences she had had in each of these places. The hospital stood out as one of the more poignant examples (see Figure 23).
This picture is of a place where I have a lot of baggage, a lot of conflicting emotions. Yes, I took it and it could be any hospital. When people ask me why I decided to stay in Canada I just say that one of the reasons is because there is a good health care system compared to where I am from, and I wanted my children, and my husband, and myself to have access to that. But, the hospital also reminds me of when my sister was sick…[in addition] I also have not had good experiences in the hospital…when I first came to Canada and we didn’t have a family doctor, I had to use the healthcare system a lot [because I was pregnant]…and it was really challenging…I had to explain a lot of things about myself, things I did not feel very comfortable explaining…and the language barrier made it even more difficult. There are so many different feelings [I have] that are connected to the hospital.
Gamila described different episodes that she had experienced at the hospital. Some of her experiences involved her own healthcare needs, but other experiences involved the healthcare needs of her family. For example, Gamila took her son to the hospital at one point because he was not feeling well and she suspected that he had an ear infection. When Gamila and her son arrived at the examination room, the doctor looked into her son’s ears, then admitted to her that he could not tell if her son had an ear infection or not because of the colour of her son’s skin. Furthermore, the doctor admitted that he had not been trained to be able to do so. The emergency room doctor had thus far only received clinical training which had involved people with light (read white) skin.

The above example speaks volumes to the lack of cultural competency as well as the underlying assumptions of not only the Canadian healthcare system, but of Canadian society in general. A physician’s failure to recognize what is a health “normality,” and/or when an abnormality (i.e. infection) is present, is imperative in the accurate diagnosis and treatment of patients. This particular experience created feelings of vulnerability and discomfort for Gamila because it positioned her and her family outside the societal “norm,” and rendered them vulnerable to misdiagnosis and improper treatment (if they received any treatment at all).

Nearly all of the participants experience(d) vulnerability as a result of their non-white and “othered” positioning. Many women stated that there was not so much a geographic location or place that created feelings of vulnerability, but rather it was their visible minority status and the discriminatory actions of others that created feelings of vulnerability. It is difficult to let go of this omnipresent sense of vulnerability when there are so many places that are peopled by those who would categorize one as different. To
be different (in the eyes of many) renders one to the margins of acceptance and belonging. For S.K., spending time in a location where she was surrounded by people who were predominantly white, she often experienced the sense of being different (see Figure 24) and therefore, of not quite belonging. People often asked S.K. where she was from, and they would spend time trying to guess where she had originated from before coming to Canada.

**Figure 24**  
*Chickens*

Because (the place where we garden) is a small community, it is very “white.” And I feel more like an outsider there than I do in bigger places. People there often ask me “where are you from?”…and there are all of these different guesses…like am I Mohawk, or Guatemalan?…like people need to know. They see me and they know I’m not from there and they want to figure it out. So I’m getting to know the place better, but in that same train of thought, I took a picture of the chickens on the farm…and I thought of how sometimes community makes me feel like this on Wolfe Island…that they seem kind of similar to me, not to me,
but they give me a similar impression…like they are living similar lives and they
all know each other and I don’t really fit in. I’m the strange chicken.

S.K.’s interpretation of her positioning in the small white community (Wolfe
Island) illustrates the way in which people who are othered by mainstream society
perceive their own situation and positioning. S.K. as the strange chicken means that
although she is similar, her colouring is different from Wolfe Island residents. The
difference in colouring and the attributes and stereotypes that are attached to skin
colouring, sets S.K. apart.

Other situations (and places) where participants experienced vulnerability
included places where others racialized participants. For instance, Miao experienced
numerous occasions where people identified her as Asian and treated her differently
because of this categorization. On one occasion, while walking with a Korean friend,
Miao endured a frightening episode in which a group of 10 year old boys began yelling
insults and throwing rocks at her and her friend. During other instances, Miao
experienced people yelling at her from passing cars or while walking alone along city
streets. Miao stated that these instances tended to happen more during the summer
months.

In the summer I am even more visible because many of the Queen’s students have
left Kingston for the summer. In the summer I am more easily identified as being
Chinese…being Asian. I can be more easily targeted during the summer months.

Gamila and Carmela experienced similar events. The lack of ethnic diversity in
Kingston and Peterborough means that for those who are not white, or who cannot pass
as white, the experiences of discrimination and racism occur on a regular basis. Gamila
shared an experience of being verbally assaulted outside the women’s shelter at which she works by one of the clients’ partners after the client had been asked to leave. Gamila shared:

> While walking the woman out, her male partner started yelling and screaming [at me] and saying just awful things to me…then afterwards I was worried because I thought this man was dangerous and if he saw me when I was out walking…I would be afraid to walk on the street. But when I told my husband that story he said not to worry because all Black women would look the same to him. ‘He won’t recognize you, so don’t worry’—that’s what he said. And it is true.

On the one hand visible minority individuals are targeted because of their visible minority status, yet on the other hand, visible minorities can also become invisible and transparent as individuals since all Blacks or Asians, or people who are racialized and/or of colour “look the same” in the eyes of individuals who categorize people according to the way they look.

Carmela shared examples of *random* acts of discrimination and racism when she shared her story of being verbally assaulted. Verbal assaults have happened to Carmela both while walking alone along Peterborough city streets and also while shopping in a local department store. Carmela shared:

> I had an experience a few years ago…someone was shouting at me…they were sitting on the bench [in the park] and they were just shouting at me and yelling rude things—like ‘go back to where you came from!’ And then in another place, and this was a jab towards immigrants in general, but one afternoon I was shopping at a department store with my family and then we ran into another big
family from Cambodia, and another from China and we were just standing there
talking, when this guy comes around the corner, and he was pushing someone in a
wheelchair, but he said something like—‘oh, we better get out of here, the welfare
people are here.’ So you know, he was both poor bashing and immigrant bashing.
But that day I was feeling good, and so I said something back. Something like ‘oh
really? Is that why you are here?’ So then he just looked and me and left.

Carmela was proud of having stood up for herself and her friends. Her statement
also recognizes that it took added courage to do so: “that day I was feeling good.”

Carmela’s statement highlights the energy and strength that it takes to contend with
discrimination and that responding verbally it not always an option. The fact that Carmela
was in a group of people gave her the strength to respond. Without the support of other
individuals (those she was conversing with in a group), it would have been more
challenging to directly respond to the discrimination she experienced.

4.2.3 White Spaces in Smaller Cities

Other participants identified particular geographic locations in which they had
experienced fear, felt discomfort, or were concerned for their social, emotional, and/or
physical safety, and the people in these places who they tried to avoid interacting with.

Two such places that were prominent in our project as being places of discomfort and
vulnerability were Tim Hortons coffee shops and local nightclubs/bars, locations which
participants in both Kingston and Peterborough identified as potentially dangerous.

As emblematic of Canada (perhaps by default), Tim Hortons automatically
becomes associated with the colonial conception of Canada and its perception as a white
settler society. Tim Hortons establishments are quintessential places of whiteness
complete with the sound of English as the appropriate language of communication 
(within the dominant Canadian imagination, Tim Hortons is a white space, which is 
exemplified by the fact that even the Canadian military provides Tim Hortons to their 
members). This is perhaps particularly so in smaller cities like Kingston and 
Peterborough. Individuals who do not fit the role of a stereotypical “Canadian” are 
“othered” when traversing these spaces. As with many types of experiences that 
individuals may have, being censored by glances, whispers, and stares are just some of 
the more subtle means of rendering someone uncomfortable in a social setting. S.K. 
shared her experience of being othered while in a downtown Tim Hortons location:

I was there [at Tim Hortons] with my father one time…and he has problems 
hearing, and so we were sitting there having a coffee and he was quite loud and 
there was just a very uncomfortable atmosphere. And there wasn’t one particular 
person who stood out, but people were staring and whispering and talking and it 
felt particularly bothersome to me because that was happening to my dad. If it was 
just me I could just shrug it off and think of whatever profanities I might come up 
with, but of him I think that I feel more protective, and when it is a family 
member I feel kind of powerless…so I don’t go there anymore …

S.K.’s father is originally from Kenya, although his parents had emigrated from 
Pakistan before he was born. For S.K., her father’s social identity as a racialized man of 
colour made him susceptible to discrimination and racism in social settings, and her 
uncomfortable experience in Tim Hortons made her feel unwelcome in this setting.

In addition to being othered within Tim Hortons locations, some participants felt 
fear as a result of different groups of people who frequented and made use of Tim
Horton’s outdoor and indoor space as a hangout for social interactions. Participants talked about biker gangs and street people as being two social groups they feared and would try to avoid. Miao shared her view when she said:

Near Tim Hortons there are often sometimes beggars or homeless people who are standing around outside…there is always a group of people outside of Tim Hortons that I would really just like to avoid passing by. I will go to the other side of the road because I feel that is it safer. I think that for me, like as a single woman, at that time that this is the only thing that I can do.

Miao’s technique of avoidance is a common strategy. Women consciously avoid specific social interactions at particular times and in particular places because they want to protect themselves from places and people who make them feel unsafe. As a result of the identification of certain sites/locations/places as creating feelings of discomfort and vulnerability (or being unsafe), women devise different strategies to contend with these uncomfortable places.

Many theorists have explored the ways in which fear works to control women and their movements. “Fears inhibit women’s use of space” (Bondi & Mehta 1999). Women are socialized to feel fear under different circumstances, in different places, and under certain conditions, and in many instances fear works to keep women in their place.

Women are socialized to believe that since they are not as physically strong as men that they are not as capable in dealing with difficult situations as men. Furthermore, it is not appropriate for women to locate themselves in certain places at certain times of the day. Women are taught (through public discourse and socialization) that some places are simply off limits to women (Pain 2000). Participants referred to this when discussing
the types of places they tried to avoid because of dangerous people being present, such as in the above Tim Hortons example.

Gamila felt intimidated by the bikers that would sometimes position themselves in a large group when parking outside Tim Hortons establishments.

Oh yeah, they scare me…I wanted to talk about that. That is what scares me the most. Because of all of the stories I hear about them and I know that they are very racist and hate black people so I avoid where they are. And there is always a group of them by the Tim Hortons and I just wait until they go… you hear about guns… and about how racist they are and abusive to women, and it is always the same, all of these stories…I think probably some of them are nice and they just want to ride, but…

For Gamila, hearing stories about how racist and misogynistic biker gangs were made her fearful of going to places where groups of bikers were located. Gamila had also had many direct experiences with individuals directing racist comments towards her. Connecting her experiences with stories of how racist and abusive biker gang members were created the belief that it was best to avoid any location in which groups of motorcyclists converged.

Similar to Gamila, S.K. identified her gender (as well as “race”) as placing her in a position of vulnerability (see Figure 25). S.K. identified her bad experiences as happening to her as a result of her gender (or as referred to earlier, through a process of racialization).
The spoon, it is kind of womanly shaped, like it’s curved and [this reminds me of] how when I feel vulnerable that is often connected to the fact that I am a woman, out somewhere on my own…
The combination of media discourse, socialization, and direct experience compounded to create feelings of vulnerability and discomfort for many participants. Stories about what had happened to other women, stories which originated from many different sources (friends, family, co-workers, and media), facilitated the belief among participants that women had to be careful in certain places because of the people that were present in that location.

Additionally, the sense of discomfort that some participants felt when positioned near or at a Tim Hortons location was the same sense experienced at the bar scene in Peterborough and Kingston. Participants indicated that they considered a nightclub/bar and the area in direct proximity to such businesses to be unsafe places for women. Participants’ opinions stemmed at least in part from beliefs that some of the participants had internalized through the process of socialization in their countries of origin (many women commented on things they heard from media sources). Participants’ fears were then exacerbated and enhanced by their intersecting positionings as women and their visible minority status. Bars conjured up images of late night scenes, darkness, alcohol consumption, and otherwise unruly behaviour. Several participants commented on how they either felt completely uncomfortable going into a bar or nightclub because it was unfamiliar, or that they avoided bars entirely. For example, Yang commented:

In China, I didn’t go out for a drink because we think it is not very safe to do so. Here I think that students like to go out for a drink together.

Yang’s comment highlights one of the differences in perception of what is considered to be a “typical” North American social activity. Miao also commented on the
difference between interpretations of acceptable social activities between Canada and her country of origin:

In China, the university areas and bar areas are more geographically separated and bar life is more connected to adults. Here, it seems that students prefer to go to bars—I guess it is just a different tradition. I have only gone out to a bar twice… I am conscious of the lateness when coming home from a bar.

Most of the other participants (such as Zhaleh, Carmela, Sharon, and Gamila) named bars as one of the primary areas they considered to be unsafe and would not venture. Zhaleh mentioned having discussed with her daughters the dangers associated with bars and the people in them. Carmela had been to a bar only once, and Gamila had avoided bars entirely.

Sharon discussed how she would never go out late at night because she considered it to be unsafe, especially downtown near the nightclubs:

I mean there is no place I would go at two o’clock in the morning. I think anywhere it can be dangerous at that time. But then I don’t go out at night by myself… and again I’m not in the club and dancing. I’m sure somewhere downtown at night outside those clubs maybe not safe and stuff like that but I’ve never…I don’t go, so I don’t know.

Estela had endured a socially humiliating experience while at a bar when she went there shortly after arriving in Canada. While trying to communicate with the bartender, Estela ended up being asked to leave because she was identified as having had too much to drink. Apparently, the bartender had mistaken Estela’s accent for her being intoxicated (yet Estela had only consumed one alcoholic beverage) and he requested she leave. Estela
was hurt that she would be identified in this manner and found the experience extremely disturbing.

This section has presented examples of the types of social interactions that participants identified as creating feelings of discomfort and vulnerability. Places of discomfort and vulnerability have their foundation in the direct action of others, or in the fear of direct action from others. As immigrant women, participants often felt/feel uneasy about traversing unfamiliar new spaces and when participants experience/d a discriminatory and/or racist interaction, their sense of discomfort was/is increased. Participants identified the manner in which place can be experienced negatively due to mistreatment from others, and that essentially, it did not always matter what attitude or perspective participants brought into a social setting: one incident of discriminatory behaviour from another individual or group was sufficient in affecting one’s experience of place.

Life in smaller cities such as Kingston and Peterborough can provide newcomers with a quieter way of life than the types of lives they would have had in larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. The pace in smaller cities is slower, the distance between services and places of consumption is less, and in some cases it can be more economical to live in smaller cities. Yet smaller cities also intensify the visibility factor of visible minority immigrants. As such, newcomers often experience processes of racialization and are frequently subjected to discrimination and racism in ways they may not have been, or would not be subjected to, in larger cities. Racism and discrimination occur across scales, in all cities, and geographic locations. Yet it is the ways in which racism and discrimination are manifest and expressed that vary from place to place. In
smaller Canadian cities, such as Kingston and Peterborough, being positioned in a historically white space can be enough to set one apart.

4.3 Paradoxical Places

The third predominant theme that emerged during fieldwork was the identification of paradoxical places. In paradoxical places, women had a mixture of different experiences as well as conflicting emotions. As mentioned previously, in my discussion of the paradox of place, one particular example will be used to highlight and explore a paradoxical place. As a major finding from fieldwork, the identification of a paradoxical place emerged directly from participant discussions during the focus group/photovoice component of the project.

This site (city buses) is defined as a paradoxical place because many participants are forced through circumstances to engage with this place on a regular, almost daily basis. As such, employing the strategy of avoidance is not an option for participants. Participants need to use the transit system as a means of mobility and in Kingston and Peterborough since the city bus is the only transit option available.

True to the definition of paradox (a tenet contrary to received opinion, or; something with contradictory qualities (The Penguin Dictionary) a paradoxical space is one in which there are contradictory or conflicting interpretations. Different people can experience the same place in a very different manner, or the same person can have contradictory experiences in a place depending on a variety of contextual factors. What is more, a paradoxical space can have both positive and negative connotations simultaneously. For example, the transit system allows individuals to be mobile and travel inexpensively and in relative safety (at least physically speaking); while at the
same time it can be a site of discrimination and discomfort, thus becoming emotionally unsafe because of language abilities/cultural differences, and other challenges.

For immigrant women in Canada, paradoxical spaces are located potentially in any geographical location; the places (and spaces) of contradictory and conflicting meanings can be anywhere (and indeed, everywhere) depending on the context of the social interaction/inaction. Place-based experiences can be conflicting, contradictory, and often unexpected. In some cases, paradoxical spaces may be easy to locate, as say in the case of an emergency healthcare facility, but in other instances, paradoxical spaces are not so easily mapped. There are places in which one almost expects to have a negative experience and so there is a level of anticipation and emotional preparedness, yet there are other places where one hopes that they will feel safe, comfortable, and secure, and when this expectation does not materialize the individual can be taken by surprise. Moreover, some women may have a positive experience in a particular place at one point in time and then in subsequent visits have a profoundly different, or negative, experience. The challenge of the paradox is that one can never be certain of the type of experience one will have in a particular place.

For several participants, the smaller cities of Kingston and Peterborough were experienced as spaces that encapsulated many paradoxical experiences. Their experiences in Canadian cities were diverse in many respects, yet strikingly similar in others. The vast majority of participants felt safer in urban areas than in rural areas, but cities of differing sizes facilitated differing renditions of urban experiences. For example, participants in both research sites found smaller cities provided them with a slower-paced lifestyle, a quieter atmosphere, and a safer place in which to raise their children (related to the belief
that there is less violence in smaller cities). Many women had specifically chosen Kingston and Peterborough as their initial destination sites. Seven participants chose these cities because of their local universities; another nine participants chose Kingston or Peterborough because of family/networking considerations (they had either family members or friends already living here) and of these nine participants, three came to join their husbands; one immigrated with her husband who had secured a job in Peterborough prior to immigration; and the final participant who entered Canada as a refugee had been given advice at the Canadian/United States border that Peterborough was a good place to go. Most of the participants had emigrated from very large cites and they often found the smaller Canadian cities in which they now resided to be much cleaner and quieter.

The most striking paradoxical example to emerge from fieldwork was the identification of city buses in Kingston and Peterborough as a paradoxical place. City buses were experienced as paradoxical in three ways. First, although the majority of participants who regularly used the transit had either witnessed or personally had bad experiences, not all of the participants who used the transit system on a regular basis either witnessed or experienced direct discrimination. Six out of seven women who used the bus had had more than one negative experience. For the one participant whose experience differed, the city bus was in fact as place of safety and comfort. The second way in which city buses are found to be paradoxical is because the bus provides a service that participants need to access, and this need creates the situation whereby immigrant women are forced to place themselves in a vulnerable position strictly out of necessity. The third and final way in which buses were experienced paradoxically is through the agent of discrimination. It was not other passengers who treated participants badly, but
rather, it was the bus driver, the one in power, who was the initiator and agent of discrimination.

Emerging from our third focus group/photovoice workshop meeting, the issue of transit discrimination began with the admission by one of the participants of a bad experience with a city bus in Kingston. Introducing the topic of discrimination was Miao, who went on to describe her experience of being rendered invisible and unworthy, presumably as a result of her visible minority status:

[I had] just got out of the entrance and I was running to the bus stop. So I was running very fast to prevent the bus from passing by and I am sure that the bus driver saw me, but he didn’t stop, and then he drove away. And then I had to wait for about another twenty minutes, and I was waiting inside and then I saw the bus coming and so I went outside and then it passed me again. And this happened about three or four times and I was very, very…I don’t know… I have seen too that if it is Canadian people and they are still a little bit away from the bus stop the bus driver will wait for them. And today I experienced it again. I was on the bus and the bus was just trying to go away and then another, some Asian people, maybe from Hong Kong…and the Asian man was knocking on the door to get in and the bus driver just took off.

Once Miao introduced the topic of transit discrimination, other participants began to share their experiences of having been mistreated. (See Figure 26) Gamila began to describe circumstances of transit use that were very similar to those of Miao:

This happens to me a lot. Bus drivers don’t stop—just because…we will be waiting and maybe just be a few metres from the stop and usually they see…and
they just keep going. I called Kingston transit two times just for that but they never called me back. They took my number but they have not called me back about this yet.

Figure 26

After Gamila spoke, S.K. entered into the discussion and described an overtly discriminatory and socially violent incident that she had recently experienced when she rode the city bus while wearing a headscarf:

I had a bad experience on the bus, maybe a few months ago. Some days I wear a headscarf, not for religious purposes but because I really like the way it looks. And I have to admit that I do it…like my dad is of Pakistani descent, and I think that sometimes I do it a little bit to challenge …like I just want to see how people will react…and so I got on the bus, and I was really quite upset about this at the time so I am not sure, I might start to cry, but that’s okay. The driver treated me so badly…I asked for a transfer and [the driver] said “what do you need a transfer
for? Where are you going?” And just this really rude interaction, and so I told [the driver] where I was going and that I understood that I needed a transfer for that, and so [the driver] said ‘okay, I’ll give you one this time, but you really should read the rules, when I give you the transfer read the back’…and so I said okay, if there is a rule I am breaking maybe you can tell me because if I am breaking one I am certainly not doing it on purpose….and then [the driver] said to just read the rules. So by this point I was just mad and so I walked to the back of the bus and just sat down and [the driver] got up after a minute and followed me to the back and just started yelling ‘I’m serious—look at the rules!’ Because I had just stuck the transfer in my pocket because I didn’t want to participate in that type of rudeness and so [the driver] noticed and began yelling and I just couldn’t believe this! I called Kingston Transit. They said that they would speak to the driver and they sent me some free tickets….and a letter of apology. Now I’ll never know for sure if that (the headscarf) was the reason, but I imagine it was.

Initially, some of the participants formulated excuses for the bus drivers that were not so directly related to discrimination and racism. One participant complained that most bus drivers were not nice people: “most bus drivers are rude in general,” as if to indicate that this type of treatment was not outside of the ordinary and was almost to be expected when riding the bus. For an individual who has been targeted for mistreatment as a result of the process of racialization, comments such as these can be an invalidation of their experiences. Another participant talked about how lack of education could be a factor affecting the attitudes of bus drivers and their treatment of visible minority individuals. Both of these rationales for the mistreatment of female visible minority passengers could
have played a role, but more likely, the discriminatory behaviour was based in discriminatory/racist ideology and the need to exert power over those who are positioned marginally in society. S.K. was racialized because she wore a headscarf, but when she called the Kingston Transit, her voice was heard and she received a letter of apology and free bus tickets. In contrast, Gamila’s voice, one that has a distinct “non-Canadian” accent, was ignored when she called and left messages at Kingston Transit. No one bothered to call Gamila back, even though she had called and left messages on more than one occasion.

The focus group/photovoice workshop in Peterborough took place a few days later and I was interested to learn whether participants in Peterborough had experienced similar types of events on the buses in their city. In contrast to the participants in Kingston who had initiated the discussion of transit discrimination, in Peterborough, it was Pranvera who first began discussing the frustrations with taking the bus, but in a different context. For Pranvera, it was frustrating having to use the bus as her only means of transportation because being reliant on a service that was not always reliable for punctuality created a great deal of anxiety for her:

One of the places that I feel that makes a bad feeling for me is the bus station—because I have to wait for a long time to take a bus…like, wherever I want to go. So, it takes me a long, long time. And especially this week, it was Monday and I came back from Toronto. Came back from Toronto and I saw the way from Toronto to here was almost 2 hours, and then I had to wait here for 1.5 hours to take the bus to go to Tim Hortons near Trent [University] and then someone had
to pick me up there to take me to my house, and so sometimes I don’t feel good, like when I am there, just because I have to wait.

For many women, the bus and other forms of transit are integral to their ability to be mobile since quite often it is their only means of transportation after arriving in Canada, especially in the first few months of arrival. The ability to make use of the transit system is one way that women can enjoy a sense of freedom and independence, instead of having to rely on friends and family to transport them to the places they need to go.

One participant preferred using the bus as opposed to a passenger vehicle because the size of the bus created feelings of safety for her and her time on the bus was her own. For Esperanza, the bus and waiting at the bus stop were places she identified positively as locations where she could be alone with her thoughts (see Figure 27):

I am sitting in this stop for a long time waiting for my bus…[during this time] I can think, I read my book, I singing…when I alone I thinking, I read, I relax…it is my time.

Figure 27                                          Bus Shelter
Esperanza’s sense of serenity and quiet was idiosyncratic when compared to many of the other women who participated in the project. In fact, Esperanza’s experience was in stark contrast to other participants. Esperanza’s contrasting experience highlights one aspect of the paradox in that different people can experience the same place very differently. Esperanza used the time she waited for the bus, as well as the time she was riding the bus, to think, relax, and reflect on her life in Canada. For Esperanza, her experiences with the bus since arriving in Canada had been pleasant and positive.

Riding the buses was not always a negative experience for the other participants, but for those who had experienced and/or witnessed discrimination and racism, the threat of mistreatment was always present. Luisa (also from Peterborough) witnessed an overtly racist incident on the bus that occurred shortly after transit fares had been raised:

One time, I think that I was coming to work, and I [remember] that at that time it was right around the time that they had changed (raised) the bus fares... and it was interesting to see, and I know that a lot of people felt the same way, but this woman, she looked Asian, maybe Chinese, and she was old too, and when she came to pay, and she had the $1.75 right, but they had changed the fare, and the driver said $2, and maybe she couldn’t really understand or something, but he was so mean and he was yelling at her, and he said ‘it is $2 and if you don’t have $2 then you are just going to have to get off the bus...’ and so everyone was thinking ‘oh, what is he doing’ and even some people offered to pay you know the 25 cents, but you know there have been a couple of experiences that I have seen like that where some people [are treated badly], maybe because of the way they look....
As previously mentioned, seven participants regularly made use of the city buses in Kingston and Peterborough. Six of these participants had experienced or witnessed incidences of discrimination and/or racism. As highlighted using examples, incidents occurred while either waiting at the bus stop or while riding on the buses. Furthermore, perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that the abuse came not from other individuals riding the bus, but from the bus drivers themselves. Gamila commented on how she had used the transit system in Toronto and had not experienced the types of mistreatment and abuse that she has endured in Kingston. During our group meeting, participants talked about how living in a smaller city was partly to blame. Gamila said, “yes, and they [the bus drivers] should know how to treat people….in Toronto I have not had this problem.” To this comment Maria responded, “maybe the drivers need to go through some sensitivity training…”

The lack of cultural diversity in Kingston and Peterborough was seen as a major catalyst for discrimination and racism to occur. Immigrants, especially those who are visible minorities and who choose to live in smaller cities, live their lives in a paradoxical space. Smaller cities offer them a more relaxed urban environment in which to go about their daily lives, yet their visible non-white status targets them as being out of place within these white settler geographies. Smaller cities create paradoxical spaces because non-white residents are viewed as being outside the norm.

The paradoxical place that I have discussed presents a picture for us of one of the challenges that visible minority immigrant women face in smaller Canadian cities. To live in smaller cities is to inhabit a paradoxical place (and space). Smaller cities offer comfort from immigrant women due to the city size and slower paced lifestyle, yet
smaller cities also position women as the targets of discrimination and racism because of the lack of ethnic and racial diversity.

4.4 Mapping Emotion and Place

Between the second and third focus group meetings, participants took part in a mapping exercise. This part of the project was designed as a means of illumination for participants and myself. I was interested in how participants moved throughout the city and was also interested in how participants would perceive their mobility. The mapping exercise also provided an opportunity for participants to highlight and “place” their experiences. Being as one of the goals of this project was to map participant’s vulnerability, using a visual representation of the cities in which they lived and having participants indicate their mobility and emotions was another means of visually representing their experiences. Using city transit maps of Kingston and Peterborough (see Appendices D & E), participants chronicled their mobility and emotions over a one-week time period. Each participant was provided a map of their city of residence along with an “Activity Sheet” (Appendix F) on which to record their activity, the location of the activity, and the emotion they experienced while engaging in that specific activity (and place).

The participants were provided with the map, the activity sheet, and verbal directions during the second focus group. I requested that the participants use colours to represent a range of emotions. For example, the colour green was used to indicate a place of safety/comfort, the colour yellow/orange was used to show a place that was sometimes uncomfortable, and the colour red was to identify a place of discomfort and/or danger. It is noteworthy to mention that the colours, similar to those of a traffic light, provide
information to us about the spatial accessibility and comfort level associated with each coloured “zone.”

Participants brought their individual maps and activity sheets to the third focus group meeting and when participants’ turn to share photographs came, along with photographs and descriptions of their experiences, participants shared maps and their interpretations of the mapping exercise. In addition to the sharing that took place at the focus groups, one participant who did not participate in the photovoice or focus group components of the project, met with me on two separate occasions to participate in the mapping exercise. This participant’s comments were similar to those of her colleagues.

It was an illuminating experience for participants to locate themselves and their everyday movements on a map. Along with a discussion of daily activities and the perception that their lives were fairly routine and uneventful, in many cases participants chronicled more than their everyday lives. I argue this point since the majority of participants also shaded in (using the colour red), many of the places where they had experienced specific events of a negative nature. In these cases, the events had not occurred during the time period that participants were to have chronicled, but rather, the events were significant experiences from the past that had left a lasting impression upon participants.

Examples of the powerful affect that negative experiences had generated for participants included: S.K highlighting the Tim Hortons location where she had felt uncomfortable when she and her father had been judged by other patrons; Miao discussing the place where the young boys had assaulted her and her Korean friend; Gamila discussing the hospital and downtown area as being places where she had
experienced feelings of vulnerability; Luisa highlighting the unsafe and dangerous areas of Peterborough; and Zhaleh identifying the Drive Test Centre as a place of discomfort. Participant’s maps stretched beyond their feelings associated with places they had visited during the one-week period between focus groups. Participant maps became a means of visually and spatially exploring and representing their lives.

Participants’ use of colour involved more than the colour red in their maps. In fact, all of the participants who took part in the mapping exercise identified places in which they felt comfortable and safe. Comfortable places that were identified by participants included: participant homes as well as the homes of family and/or friends, the Ban Righ and New Canadians Centre, the library, city parks and waterfront walkways, the Queen’s University International Centre, and Queen’s University campus.

Some participants also used the colours yellow/orange to identify places that incorporated a mixture of feelings. Participants, such as Miao, described yellow/orange zones as being “places that were sometimes unsafe or annoying.” Salma used the colour orange to identify places that she did not know or did not feel comfortable in. Salma stated:

Actually, what I did on the map [was that] I coloured many places in orange that I do not know… these ones (places) are the ones where I have never been… usually I think it is the periphery, I don’t know why, but I am afraid of them. Inside [of the city] I find it much easier.

Salma used the colour orange to represent unknown places. For Salma, unknown places were located beyond the city. “Places on the periphery” are places that are positioned “out of bounds” for many immigrant women. One cannot help but see the
paradox of this statement. Immigrant women avoid places outside the city, yet cities can also be places in which immigrant women are subject to discrimination and racism. Outdoor places in urban environments are places of comfort and escape; outdoor places outside city limits are not.

Beyond the issue of paradox lies still another interpretation. Immigrant women feel uncomfortable in places outside city limits. Wild spaces and places abound in Canada, yet many immigrant women do not explore such areas. And if they do, they do so under very specific circumstances. For example, Luisa discussed walking (with her sister and brother-in-law) on trails in conservation areas and parks that were situated in non-urban areas. S.K. spent a great deal of time in her garden on Wolfe Island, yet she worked her garden with other people around. Yang talked about visiting a local conservation area with colleagues from the campus International Centre, and Miao sometimes did the same. Pranvera loved nature, yet Pranvera’s natural places were situated in urban areas (walking along the waterfront in Lakefield). And Estela lived in a rural setting with her family, spending most of her time within the company of others (her husband, children, and friends who often visited). All of the other participants refrained from using non-urban spaces because they did not feel safe or comfortable in these types of places. As a nation made up of vast areas of non-urban spaces, the diminished comfort level of immigrant women in non-urban places creates a very centralized use of space in Canada. Participant’s lack of use of non-urban areas indicates a discomfort with “unpeopled places” and wild spaces and this type of fear of space excludes participants (and other immigrant women) from enjoying areas that can be peaceful and free of discrimination and racism.
The discomfort and sense of vulnerability that participants feel in non-urban spaces is in part related to the generalized fear that women have about being alone in secluded places (Pain 2000). Where the comparison differs relates to the dominant view of who it is that people’s non-urban spaces. In Canada, a country founded in a white-settler mentality, wilderness spaces are stereotypically viewed as both white and male. Immigrant women in general, and those who are members of a visible minority in particular, do not belong in wild or wilderness places.

4.4.1 International Students and Use of Space

Another finding that emerged from the mapping exercise concerned the ways in which the everyday mobility of international students differed from that of other participants. As students, Miao and Yang came to Canada because of their desire to obtain a Canadian graduate degree. To be successful at completing all of the components of their degrees meant that both students were studying the majority of the time. As such, Miao and Yang spent the majority of their time on Queen’s campus (Appendix K). Miao raised the issue of reduced mobility in the third focus group meeting when she commented how the map of Kingston was not really reflective of her everyday movements.

For me, the map is really too big because my area of mobility is quite small. It [my mobility] is really very limited because I am spending most of my time on campus.

Yang agreed that she also found herself on campus the majority of the time. With the exception of grocery shopping and the occasional dinner out with friends, Yang and Miao’s everyday experience was directly connected to campus life.
4.4.2 Mapping as a tool of Empowerment and Knowledge

The mapping exercise provided participants with a new lens through which to explore their lives. Identifying their daily movements and reflecting upon the emotions they experienced while being positioned in different places generated a fresh perspective from which new information and knowledge was gained.

Esperanza realized after participating in the mapping exercise that she needed to begin to think about making changes in her life.

I need change. I need to change my life. Yes, because in Colombia I was working all the time, studying, working, and I had lots of friends. I stay[ed] outside the home. My weekends I play, take a ride, but here it is the same, the same, the same… I feel as though I have lost my life. That I lost it forever…but I try to rebuild… but it is hard, very hard, and everybody back home speak my same language! There, if one day I would lose a job, the next day I find another one…all the time… and when I worked here I felt useful, but here [in Canada] nobody needs me….but maybe now it is getting better.

Dawn also found the mapping exercise to be an opportunity to reflect upon her life since first immigrating to Canada. The knowledge Dawn gained from listening to the stories of others as well as sharing her own experiences gave her the chance to identify how far she had come since first arriving.

If I had this map in the first days…I think that I was thinking when I was painting [the map], that there would be many red lights, many red crosses because I used to feel unsafe everywhere…wherever I go, and now it is more green and there are
red places too, but very few. And for example you record my voice, and you told me that my language and my speech was better, if it was up to myself I didn’t pay attention to the changes in my speech. I couldn’t realize, but now I can notice that I have passed many changes and that I could adapt myself to many changes. Maybe next month, next year it will be better….many green crosses…

The interpretation of participant maps was the final personal piece of information that most of the participants shared within the focus groups. Placing themselves on a map and highlighting how different places were experienced on an emotional level showed participants that they had progressed in their ability to feel safe in different places. Moreover, women saw that they shared similarities with other immigrant women and through this realization women learned that they were not alone.

As a tool, participant-mapping was an empowering way for participants to analyze their lives from their own perspectives. Identifying places of danger/discomfort, places of ambiguity, and places of safety/comfort was one way that women could place themselves within their Canadian experience. Rather than being mapped by others, participants were in control of mapping themselves, and this proved to be an empowering experience.
Chapter V: Conclusions

The “face” of Canada is changing. For decades, the Canadian government had actively pursued the settlement agenda of creating a white settler nation. Since the early stages of official immigration began, people of colour immigrating to Canada have faced the difficult and uphill battle of trying to integrate into a nation of citizens that were either unable, or unwilling to consider them as equal and deserving Canadian citizens. Over the years, and with changes to Canadian immigration legislation, the people immigrating to Canada have become increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse. Yet, many of the old sentiments of who belongs and who does not belong remain embedded within the fabric of Canadian society. As individuals, groups, communities, and governments continue to act on stereotypes, lack of knowledge, and lack of understanding about people who come from different parts of the world, discrimination and racism continue to abound and to affect the lives of racialized individuals who journey to Canada as newcomers. This thesis has explored the experiences of immigrant women in the smaller cities of Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario. Through interviews, focus groups, a mapping exercise, and the use of photovoice as research methods, the research on which this thesis is based delved into women’s emotional relationships to place, and the ways in which their social identities played a role in their experiences. Immigrant women’s emotional geographies were illuminated and explored, highlighting a number of challenges that are faced by women who come to Canada as immigrants to begin new lives.

Viewed in relation to the larger Canadian immigration picture, the number of newcomers who claim Kingston or Peterborough as their initial destination point is
relatively low. Most newcomers proclaim one of Canada’s three gateway cities as their intended city of destination. Yet not all newcomers who enter these gateway cities opt to remain for an extended period of time: some newcomers relocate to smaller cities such as Kingston or Peterborough. For the women who participated in this thesis research project, the three primary reasons why they chose Kingston or Peterborough were because: women had friends or family who were already living there; women went either to attend university, or for their children to attend the local university; and women went because of employment considerations (such as job offers).

Many important things were learned throughout the duration of the project. My conclusion will draw out the four predominant and overarching themes, and each of these themes will be discussed in turn. The four themes are: discrimination and racism, place and emotion, participation, social justice, and empowerment, and the use of visual methodologies as a tool for social change. In my final point I will explore some of the possible directions for future research.

5.1 Discrimination and Racism

Visible minority women felt more exposed and visible, more vulnerable, in smaller cities than they did in large urban centres. Visible minority women were more easily identified in Kingston and Peterborough because of the traditional lack of ethnic diversity in each of these Ontario cities. Participants discussed how they were more easily “targeted,” particularly at certain times of the year. Kingston and Peterborough are both home to universities that welcome students from across Canada as well as internationally. When university students leave town for the summer, the ability for visible minority individuals to become “part of the crowd” becomes more difficult to achieve. Participants
talked about being exposed to discriminatory and racist comments from strangers who would yell at women from passing cars, or verbally abuse them while they were walking down the street, and this happened more during the summer months than it did at other times of the year.

Participants experienced numerous forms of discrimination and racism based on their accents and the colour of their skin. Individuals employed on the frontlines of social agencies and transit bus drivers located in Kingston and Peterborough were two groups of individuals to whom women most referred during the research process. Individual males, pairs of males, individual females (often working in service industries), as well as groups of male children were also identified as being initiators of discrimination and racism. It is interesting to note the difference between genders in how racism is manifest. When a female engaged in racist or discriminatory behaviour with a participant she was often in a position of power over the participant and did so outside the range of other people’s hearing; whereas, in contrast, whether places were peopled or empty did not seem to matter: males did not seem to care who overheard their discriminatory or racist remarks.

The ways in which women felt vulnerable were predominantly with relation to their “race” (accent and skin colour), as well as the fact that they were women. Participants discussed how they sometimes had to work up the courage to go out in public because they felt vulnerable about the possibility of being embarrassed (due to their lack of English or not knowing what to do in different social situations) or of being emotionally upset or hurt (due to stares and verbal and body language communications from others). Women did not feel vulnerable for every minute of every day; their
vulnerability was felt during particular moments and was experienced along a continuum. For the most part, their sense of vulnerability diminished as time went on (the longer they were in Canada) and they became more confident in their ability to speak English and to navigate Canadian culture. Gender and “race” were the two most common indicators of vulnerability.

5.2 Place and Emotion(s)

The issues of place and emotion were discussed at length throughout the analysis section of this thesis. Participants found the exploration of their emotions to be an intriguing concept. Being given the opportunity (the place) to go back in time and rethink a previous experience was an exciting and oftentimes illuminating process for the participants. The majority of women who participated had never really had the time or been given the opportunity to stop, retrieve a memory from an earlier time in their life, and then share and analyze this memory/experience with a group of women who shared similar life experiences. For some women, sharing their memories and feelings during group meetings in regards to how they had experienced their migration to Canada, was the first time that they had shared these with other individuals. The act of sharing their emotions was a powerful and courageous endeavour. By the end of the project, women commented on how much they learned about themselves through their participation in the project.

Women’s relationship to the city in which they now lived was filled with a complexity of interlocking factors that affected the participants’ experience of that place. As McDowell (1999) has stated, place is much more than simple coordinates on a map. Each place within the city where women spent their time was experienced along a
continuum that was dynamic and complicated. How women experienced a particular place was contingent upon a host of contextual factors. Things like time of day and year, who was present, how other people interacted with them, what type of place it was (business, public space, private home, etc.), and what prior experience participants had of that place (among many other possible factors) could all affect how a woman felt in a particular place on a particular day and time. The ability to feel a certain way is not always completely within our control. Those we interact with within the public (as well as private) sphere have a tremendous affect upon how we feel: in how we experience place. The issue of power is another variable that often comes in to play and in the initial stages of adaptation and integration, immigrant women do not feel as though they have control over their lives and the choices they are required to make. The immigrant women in the MVPP project were at various stages in their adaptation process and some women felt more empowered and in control of their lives than others. It was beneficial for women who were more recent to Canada to hear the life experiences of women who had been here for a longer duration. Hearing about other women’s challenges and the barriers they were required to overcome was a sign of hope for the more recent newcomers.

The more familiar one becomes with a place, the more comfortable and in control one feels. As newcomers to a strange and unfamiliar land, immigrant women need time to gain the confidence to overcome the psychological and emotional hurdles that are part and parcel of the act of immigration. Newcomers who are visible minority women must contend with the challenge of making a place for themselves in a land based in a white settler mentality, and of coming to terms with the reality that some individuals will not be welcoming or accepting of their presence. Once women are able to recognize
that the problem lies within the discriminatory individual who has existed within a history of racist mentality: a mentality that has been socialized into the fabric of Canadian society, they are then able to see that racism is a societal problem and not one of which they, as individuals, are to blame. Racism is felt at the level of the individual and community, but it is not the individual or community that are to blame for its existence. In the minds of many, Canada is still seen as a “white country,” and perhaps it is here where we should begin to unravel the layers of racism present in our society. Canadians must learn to recognize racism in its many forms: to identify racism, and to discuss how it damages individuals, families, communities, and societies as a whole. Coming to terms with racism and identifying the places in which racism exists and thrives is imperative to the creation of a country that one (and all) can truly be proud to live in and call home. Through the recognition of emotion(s) in place, through the experiences of discrimination and racism that participants have endured, and using an analysis of the types of factors that affect one’s experience of place, the women who took part in this thesis research project helped to map the ways in which social interactions can affect how women experience new and unfamiliar places in Canada.

5.3 Participation, Social Justice, and Empowerment

Iris Marion Young contends that social justice must include “a framework that allows full, effective participation in decision-making by oppressed groups and a frontal attack on various forms of oppression” (in Mitchell 2003: 31). As immigrant women, the participants in the MVPP project are members of an oppressed and dominated group. Newcomers to Canada are forced to adhere to the rules, regulations, laws, and social expectations that have been created prior to their arrival. Newcomer women have not
played a role in creating the rules that govern their social and political lives. As such, the level to which social justice for immigrant women is achieved is frequently questionable at best. The voices of immigrant women are often silenced or ignored, but this changed for the women who participated. The MVPP research project provided an opportunity for the women who participated to have a voice and to share their experiences with each other and the outside world. The ability to communicate in a supportive group setting allowed women to learn from each other, to expand their network of support, and to be empowered through the process of being the creators of knowledge. Participants were also empowered through the process of discussing their experiences, sharing their photographs, and communicating what we had learned to the outside world.

It was imperative from a social justice perspective that participants take an active role in the decision-making components of the project. Women participated in diverse and numerous ways, including: deciding which photographs they would take and then share with the group, selecting which of these photographs they would then allow to be exhibited at the public photography exhibitions, by attending or co-presenting with me at public presentations (one participant co-presented at a conference and another participant co-presented with me twice during presentations at local immigrant service agencies), and women participated by taking part in interviews with the local media (for articles that appeared in the media please see Appendices O-T). Participants were happy to participate in activities in which what we had learned as a group could be shared with others. In fact, it was important for many of the participants that what we had learned would be shared with as many people as possible. The participants are aware of the ways in which discrimination and racism have negatively affected their lives and their hope is
to raise awareness of the injustices they have experienced in the hopes that those in power will listen and make efforts towards positive social change. Through their involvement in the MVPP project, the women who participated have been honest and brave in recounting some very painful experiences in their lives. Their participation has been an empowering experience because they have voiced, shared, and listened to each other’s stories.

In the final focus group in Peterborough, Luisa shared an image of the trail system (see Figure 28). Luisa photographed a sign, which included an added message that had particular significance for this project. Written in graffiti at the bottom right hand side was the phrase *Art is Resistance*. In the MVPP project, participants resisted oppression and domination from dominant society by participating in a project with social justice in mind. Photography and participant-generated images can, and indeed does empower participants and their supporters in invoking positive social change and justice.

Figure 28                         Art is Resistance
5.4 Visual Methods as a tool for social change

Through the use of photographs, participants were able to convey their feelings, interpretations, and experiences in a manner to which the viewer/observer could relate. Individuals who saw the photographs, which were accompanied by the quotes of the woman/photographer who had taken the image, began to see many things they had taken for granted in a different light. Viewers were also able to better understand the experiences and challenges of immigrant women and to put themselves “in their place,” if only for a moment. Words and the use of words to convey meaning are only one means of communication. The use of the visual to convey meaning touches people in a way that words alone are often unable to achieve. The visitors to our photography exhibitions were touched by what they saw. In some cases, the emotional affect was such that people experiencing the exhibition were brought to tears. During the first exhibition I had placed a notebook at the entranceway to the art gallery in which people could leave notes, thoughts, and impressions as to how they had experienced the display. Here are some of the comments left by viewers:

This was a wonderful experience. Thank you for the opportunity to walk and ponder this display.

This was a heart-felt experience. Thanks to all the beautiful women who shared their talents and lives in this way. Congratulations and peace!

This is a very interesting show, with the focus on newcomers to Canada…their experiences and feelings about our country and their new home. It makes me stop
and imagine how I might feel in a similar situation…I’m not sure I’d remain as optimistic as the people featured here.

This is a great exhibit! It was interesting to read the experiences of the women. Exhibits like these are so important because they pave the way for a more understanding society. The photos and their stories are so effective at communicating their emotion and experience. Awesome job!

The above comments give some indication of the extent to which viewers were moved by the photographic images and stories that were created by the participants. Many people who attended the exhibitions also spoke to me directly or to women who self-identified their role as a participant in the project. After the initial exhibition the display moved on to the second research site, where it was displayed for a number of weeks, and with great success and positive feedback from the public. The photographs have been displayed in seven different locations since fieldwork ended (in the last ten months), and there continues to be requests for exhibiting the participant photographs at various locations throughout Kingston and Peterborough. One of the main concerns voiced by viewers of the exhibition involved their anger and concern that some women had experienced discrimination at the hands of city transit operators. Viewers encouraged me to pursue action and to continue in my awareness raising and advocacy work for visible minority women in Kingston and Peterborough. This brings me to the conclusion that the use of photography in qualitative research is an effective and powerful conveyor of meaning (communication tool) and initiator of support for social change. The participants in this project have conveyed their emotion and experience of place in a
moving and touching manner, and the knowledge they have conveyed has had a profound affect on the people who have visited the exhibitions and/or other public presentations in which photographs were used. The comments from exhibition visitors have proven that visual research methods are an effective tool in the fight for positive social change.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

The experiences of immigrant women who live in smaller cities is an under-researched area. Little research has been done that looks at how those who immigrate to smaller cities like Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario cope with the challenges with which they are faced. As more and more immigrants migrate to smaller cities and the patterns of migration change, smaller cities need to learn how to adapt to these changes in a manner that is inclusive and welcoming to newcomers. Newcomers, researchers, and community agencies can work together in exploring the experiences of newcomers and in the development of programs that enhance the social supports that are available to immigrants, (this includes male and female adults, youth, and children). Another important direction for future research is exploring different ways of enhancing the communication between Canadian-born individuals and newcomers. We must challenge the traditionally held conceptions of Canada as a “white” country and move forward to build a society that is welcoming and inclusive, regardless of ones birthplace, social status, sexual orientation, or ability.

Developing anti-racism strategies and education tools at all levels is another important consideration. Creating educational tools that work to diminish/erase racism is an ongoing process and is necessary as a means of combating discrimination and racism in Canadian society. This is true at all levels of education—elementary, secondary, and
post-secondary. What is more, it is not only students of these institutions that need to be involved in learning how not to discriminate, but rather, it is staff, faculty, and administration as well. An immediate need is for frontline staff at social agencies, transit drivers, and those employed in the public sector to be educated on culturally competent ways in which to interact with Canada’s diverse population. We need to learn how to talk about our misconceptions and stereotypes about people from diverse backgrounds and to move ahead in our understanding of what is fair, just, and equitable.

Furthering my own exploration and analysis of Canada’s white settler mentality, I will be expanding upon my current direction of research in the next stage of my academic journey. I will be examining the experiences and lived realities of racialized immigrant women in smaller cities in Ontario and British Columbia. I will be exploring the various ways in which the dominant majority has socially constructed immigration to Canada, using both historical and contemporary data. My goal is to better understand Canadian discourse around the topic of immigration and to determine how dominant discourse has played a role in shaping current beliefs, trends, and practices. Social change will remain an important focus for me in my future work, and through the use of participatory action research methods (such as photovoice), my aim is to collaborate with racialized immigrant women: those who are most affected by the negative perceptions and misinterpretations that exist at the hands of the dominant majority.

5.6 Concluding Thoughts

Our focus groups in Kingston and Peterborough were comprised of women from thirteen different countries and we successfully interacted with each other while respectfully sharing and listening to what each other had to say. Learning to communicate
in a respectful and inclusive manner is an important challenge for each of us to undertake. In Canada, we all grow up and are socialized in a racist society and it is up to us to challenge and unlearn racism.

The women who participated in the Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place project were courageous in many ways. The women allowed themselves to be vulnerable by sharing their emotions in a group setting and they did this with individuals they did not know very well prior to the onset of research. The belief that it was important to engage in an emotional exploration of their lives was a common thread among the participants. Women knew what their experiences had been, they knew how they felt at the time, but women had never had the opportunity to share and to think about their immigration experiences with a group of women who had all experienced the same life-altering event. The act of voicing their experience was a transformative action that has created social change. Change has come at the level of the community, but perhaps more importantly, change has come at the level of each woman who shared her story for this research project. Women took up the challenge of exploring their emotional geographies of immigration and succeeded in the creation of knowledge that is both personally empowering and transformative, while also being emotionally and socially relevant.
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Appendix A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE for participants

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place: Women negotiating ‘safety’ in the post-immigration phase

Background:

1) Name for this project (pseudonym if desired)_____________________________

2) Year you arrived in Canada? __________________________________________

3) Last country of residence? ____________________________________________

4) Country of birth? ___________________________________________________

5) Year of birth? ______________________________________________________

6) Do you belong to a visible minority?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   If yes, please specify. ________________________________________________

7) What is your ethnicity/ancestral background?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

8) What is your marital status?
   ☐ Never legally married (single)
   ☐ Legally married/common-law (and not separated)
   ☐ Separated, and still legally married
   ☐ Divorced
   ☐ Widowed
   Additional details?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

9) Do you have any children?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
10) If yes, how many children do you have and what are their ages?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

11) Does a health condition (physical/mental) prevent you from, or reduce the amount or kind of activity that you can do?

- Yes, often
- Yes, sometimes
- No

Additional details?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

12) Level of education?

- 0-9 years of schooling
- 10-12 years of schooling
- 13 or more years
- Trade-certificate
- Non-university diploma
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Doctorate

What was your course of study? Additional details?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

13) Current city/town of residence? _______________________________________

14) Current postal code? ________________________________________________

15) What type of dwelling do you live in?

- Apartment
- House
- Other

Additional details?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

16) Do you:

- Share
- Rent
Circumstances on Arrival & Level of Support

17) Before immigrating to Canada, did you live in an urban or rural area?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

18) Did you immigrate to Canada alone or did you immigrate with other family members? Additional details (eg. CIC ‘class’ under which you immigrated).

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

19) Did you have children at the time you first arrived in Canada? If so, did they immigrate with you?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

20) What city was your intended destination at the time of your arrival?

__________________________________________________________________

21) If destination city was different from where you are now, what reason(s) caused you to relocate? Please check those that apply.

- Employment
- Family considerations
- Financial factors
- Safety
- Education
- Other

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

22) Did you have any relatives in Canada at the time of your arrival?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
23) Did you live with your relative(s) when you first arrived?
   - Yes
   - No
   Additional details?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

24) With whom do you currently live with?
   ________________________________________________________________

25) If you live with other family members now, how long have you lived with them?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

26) At the time you immigrated to Canada, at what level could you communicate in English? (Please rank your ability from 0-5, with 0 being no level of understanding and 5 being an excellent level of understanding).

   Understand          0          1          2          3          4          5
   Speak                  0           1          2          3           4          5
   Read                    0           1          2          3          4           5
   Write                     0          1          2          3          4          5

   Additional details?
   ________________________________________________________________

27) At the present time, at what level can you communicate in English?

   Understand          0          1          2          3          4          5
   Speak                  0           1          2          3           4          5
   Read                    0           1          2          3          4           5
   Write                     0          1          2          3          4          5

   Additional details?
   ________________________________________________________________
Employment Factors

28) What was your occupation before immigration?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

29) What was your intended occupation at time of arrival in Canada?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

30) What term(s) describes your current situation?
   - Student       F/T_____ P/T_____ Course of study______________
   - Employed      F/T_____ P/T_____ Occupation__________________
   - Not employed  Looking_____ Not Looking_____
   - Disability/government assistance
   - Volunteering  If yes, where? ______________________________
   - Home-based employment? Please specify_______________________
   - Homemaker
   - Other

   Additional details?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

31) If employed, how many hours per week do you work?
   - 10-20 hours per week
   - 20-30 hours per week
   - 30-40 hours per week
   - 40+ hours per week
   - Employed at more than one job?

   Additional details?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

32) Does your job(s) require you to work shift work?
   - Yes
   - No

33) Approximately how far away from where you live is your workplace?
__________________________________________________________________

34) What is the postal code of your workplace? ______________________________
35) How do you travel back and forth to work?

- Walk
- City transit
- Taxi
- Drive with others
- Drive own vehicle
- Other

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________

36) What income bracket best describes your current household income?

- Under $20,000 per year
- Between $20,000-40,000 per year
- Between $40,000-60,000 per year
- Between $60,000-80,000 per year
- Between $80,000-100,000 per year
- Over $100,000 per year

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________

Issues of Mobility

37) How frequently do you travel to purchase groceries?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Bi-weekly
- Monthly
- Other

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________

38) How far do you have to travel to get to the grocery store where you usually shop? Please estimate.

- Under 1 km
- Between 1-2 km
- Between 2-3 km
- More than 3 km
39) How do you travel to the grocery store?
   - Walk
   - City transit
   - Taxi
   - Drive with others
   - Drive own vehicle
   - Other

Additional details?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

40) Do you attend religious services?
   - Yes, often
   - Yes, sometimes
   - No

Additional details?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

41) If yes, how far do you travel to get there?
   - Under 1 km
   - Between 1-2 km
   - Between 2-3 km
   - More than 3 km

Additional details?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

42) How do you travel to the location where you attend religious services?
   - Walk
   - City transit
   - Taxi
   - Drive with others
   - Drive own vehicle
   - Other

Additional details?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

43) Who in your family is responsible for ensuring that your children get to school and back safely?
44) How do your children get to school?
   - Walk
   - City transit
   - Taxi
   - Drive with others
   - School bus
   - Other
   Additional details?

45) Do you regularly travel to any other parts of the city?
   - Yes, often
   - Yes, sometimes
   - Almost never
   - Never
   Additional details?

46) What is your usual method of transportation? Cue: If participant replies that they travel mostly by car, this ‘cue’ will lead me to enquire further and ask questions such as: do you own a car? How long have you had your driver’s license? Etc.

47) How many times per month do you travel outside the city?
   - Regularly
   - A couple times per month
   - Almost never
   - Never
   Additional details?

Experience of ‘Place’

48) Where are the places where you spend the majority of your time? Cue: If participant responds that they spend most of their time at home, I will ask why,
and explore the reasons (childcare, unemployed, fear, etc.).

49) Are there any places that were a regular part of your everyday routine prior to immigration, that you stopped going after immigration? For example; shopping alone, travelling to work, school, etc.

50) In what way(s) are the places where you currently spend the majority of your time different from before immigration?

51) To what extent have the following areas of your life changed? Feel free to elaborate. **Cue: circle degree of change.**

- Employment
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Family
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Health
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Education
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Career
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Living arrangements
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

- Financial situation
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
52) Are there ways these factors are different now than prior to immigration? Please provide additional details.

53) Considering all of the changes that you have experienced since immigrating, which change was the most difficult/most unexpected?

Places of Safety and Vulnerability

54) Since coming to the city/town in which you currently live, where are the places you feel most comfortable?

55) What do you think are some of the reasons you feel that these places make you feel comfortable?
   - I feel confident that I am in a safe place
   - I am surrounded by people who care about me
   - I do not worry about violence
   - People are friendly and welcoming
   - I feel confident in my abilities
   - Other
56) Since coming to the city/town in which you currently live, where are the places you feel most uncomfortable/vulnerable?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

57) What do you think are some of the reasons you feel these places/times make you feel uncomfortable?  
Cue: Do not read out the responses below but wait to see how the participant responds and only check if appropriate.

☐ My neighbours are not very friendly
☐ I feel socially excluded
☐ I worry about what I should or should not do
☐ I feel confused because there are still things I do not know how to do
☐ I am concerned about my financial situation
☐ I live in a bad neighbourhood and fear for my safety because of violence
☐ Other

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

58) Can you provide me with some examples of things you perceive as positively affecting your sense of physical, social, or emotional safety?  
Cue: what are the things that help women to feel secure, comfortable, etc.

☐ Family
☐ Friends
☐ Neighbours
☐ Location of my residence
☐ Language abilities
☐ Other

Additional details?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

59) Are there any types of places in which you frequent/travel that make you feel uncomfortable or vulnerable, but that you do because you feel you have to?  
Cue— if participant says that when
they go somewhere alone they feel vulnerable but that they sometimes have to do this, I will ask for further information; such as, have they had a bad experience? Why do they think they feel this way? Have they developed any strategies for lessening their feelings of vulnerability? Etc.

60) Are there places that you go now where you once did not feel comfortable/safe to go? If yes, what do you think made that feeling change?

61) What types of places do you consider to be unsafe or risky? Cue—if participant states that walking alone is risky for them I will ask why they feel this way? Was there a time and a place when they were made to feel uncomfortable? Did they have a bad experience? Etc.

62) Do you feel vulnerable under any of the following circumstances in public places? Please rank from 1-5 (1 being least vulnerable and 5 being most vulnerable). Cue: if there is an area that ranks particularly high on the vulnerability scale, I will ask further questions in this direction. For example, if grocery shopping makes a participant feel especially vulnerable, I will ask what it is about this activity that causes this feeling of vulnerability.

- Travelling to work or school 1 2 3 4 5
- Grocery shopping 1 2 3 4 5
- Attending religious services 1 2 3 4 5
- Department store shopping 1 2 3 4 5
- Riding on the transit 1 2 3 4 5
- Walking along city streets 1 2 3 4 5
- Going to the bank 1 2 3 4 5
1. Driving a motor vehicle
2. Riding a bicycle
3. Speaking a language other than English
4. Other (example and additional details)

63) What are three factors about a place that help you to feel safe?

64) If you could give advice to a woman who has just immigrated to Canada about how to feel more safe and secure (less vulnerable) in her new country, what advice would you give her?
Appendix B

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place

Focus Group 1

Introduction: why we are here. Provide a rationale for bringing everyone together: what the purpose of the project.

Ground-rules—guidelines for the group:

- Explain tape recorders
- One person speaking at a time (b/c of trying to keep track of what is said…)
- It is important to give everyone an opportunity to speak, as each of you have particular knowledge on the subject.
- Raise awareness that there may be many different opinions on an issue and that is okay (in fact, sometimes this is the best part about group discussions)!
- Indicate that although there are some questions that we want to try and cover, the main point of this exercise is for women to engage in discussion and to share their views and opinions with one another.
- Talk about photographs and different ways of “reading” them. Maybe say a bit about how photographs are not just “windows on the world” but can have very personal meanings for people. Photographs (just like places) can represent different things to different people.

Ask if there are any questions before we begin.

Proceed with opening questions…

List of questions and possible topics of discuss:

- 1. Please describe the photograph(s) that you have brought to share with the group. Take your time. Focus on one photograph at a time.
  
  - Which theme does this image represent?

  - Can you describe the context for us? Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with?

  - How does this photograph illustrate comfort/safety/vulnerability?

  - Who took the photograph? What was the occasion?
• 2. Can you describe for the group one place in Peterborough where you have experienced a sense of discomfort because of either the place you were in or because of other people’s words or actions.

• 3. What have you found to be the most difficult aspect of negotiating safety after immigration?

• 4. Describe one or two things that bring you comfort. Do certain places help you to feel comfortable, and if so, how do they do so?

• 5. What type of strategies have you employed to create a sense of comfort/safety in your life after immigrating to Canada? Is this different from before immigration?

• 6. How have your everyday mobility patterns changed since immigration?

• 7. To what extent does a sense of familiarity positively affect the ways in which you experience place?

• 8. How do you think that feelings of safety or danger impact on your day-to-day life?

• 9. Can you think of an example of a time when you experienced a strong emotion in a particular place since coming to Canada? Please tell us more about this experience….can anyone else relate to this experience?

• 10. Where has your happiest moment since arriving in Canada taken place? Can you tell us more about this place?
Appendix C

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place

Second Focus Group

Topics for session two include: safety, vulnerability, comfort, community/belonging, isolation, and fear.

1. Sharing photographs. Please share with the group your thoughts about the photographs you have chosen for today’s meeting.

   • Which topic does your photo represent or illustrate?
   • Where was your photograph taken?
   • How does it make you feel?
   • Anything else you would like to add to describe your photograph for the group.

Possible discussion points:

❖ What does community mean to you?

❖ In what ways do you think your community could be made to feel more safe or inclusive?

❖ What types of places or situations create the strongest sense of belonging for you?

❖ What helps create this sense of belonging?

❖ At what times, and under what types of conditions have you felt isolated?

❖ Where is the safest place you can imagine being in Canada?
Appendix D
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Appendix G

Focus Group #2—Mapping Exercise—Directions

- On the map, mark the places you go in an average week in the Kingston area.
- Mark these ‘places’ with an X.
- Use the colours red, green, or yellow to indicate how you feel in these places, for example:
  - Red=this place is unsafe and makes you feel vulnerable
  - Yellow=I sometimes have felt unsafe or uncomfortable here, or I have had a bad experience.
  - Green=this place feels safe and I feel good when I am here.
- You can also circle areas or neighbourhoods on the map that you simply avoid because of safety concerns or bad experiences.
Appendix H

Focus group #3—Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place

Points of discussion:

- Favourite place, object or place that reminds you of your first days in Kingston/Peterborough/Canada, place you feel most vulnerable/uncomfortable.

- What feelings are evoked by your favourite place and how did it come to mean what it does to you?

- Describe the object or place that reminds you of your first days in Kingston/Peterborough/Canada. How does this place make you feel?

- How has participating in this project affected the way(s) you perceive your immigration/international student experience? Has your participation given you any new insights into your own experiences?

- Have you learned things during the course of this project that you did not expect? If so, what?

- Are you surprised by the responses/interpretations/perceptions of other participants? If yes, in what way(s)?

- How do you think things such as race and class affect women’s experiences of place?

- What has been the most meaningful aspect of this project for you personally?

- What do you think are the most important means by which people can attempt to assist others in feeling comfortable in ‘places’.

- We ended session one with a question about attributing a word or phrase that describes your migration experience and I am curious as to how that same question of applying a word or phrase, would work if I asked your to attribute a word or phrase to describe your experience in this project.
Appendix I

Emotional Places, Paradoxical Spaces

WHEN: October 27, 2007 to November 1, 2007
WHERE: Kingston Arts Council Gallery, 126 Wellington Street Kingston, Ontario (please use Johnson St. entrance)

The exhibition is a compilation of photographs taken by women who (im)migrated to Canada, and who participated in a photovoice research project coordinated by a graduate student in the Geography department at Queen’s University. The project focus involves mapping the spaces and places of emotions (vulnerability, fear, safety, comfort, belonging, among others) as experienced by women in the post-(im)migration phase. Come and view the images, read the accompanying text, and imagine the experience as seen through the eyes of participants.

- SATURDAY OCTOBER 27th — 6pm-9pm
- SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28th — 12-3pm
- MONDAY OCTOBER 29th — THURSDAY NOVEMBER 1st — 1-5pm
- Evening viewing on TUESDAY OCTOBER 30th — 6-8pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheryl Sutherland
cj_sutherland@hotmail.com
YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

EMOTIONAL PLACES, PARADOXICAL SPACES

WHEN: December 6 to December 13, 2007
WHERE: New Canadians Centre, 205 Sherbrooke Street, Peterborough, Ontario

This photography exhibition is a compilation of photographs taken by women who immigrated to Canada, and who participated in a photovoice research project coordinated by a graduate student at Queen’s University. The project focus involves mapping the spaces and places of emotions (vulnerability, fear, safety, comfort, belonging, among others) as experienced by women in the post-(im)migration phase. Come and view the images, read the accompanying text, and imagine the experience as seen through the eyes of participants. All are welcome to attend.

- **OPENING DAY—DEC. 6, 2007—10AM-6PM**
- There will be a short presentation by the researcher at 11am and 1pm on Opening Day.

For more information please contact Cheryl Sutherland: 0car@queensu.ca
CONSENT FORM

I ___________________________ have volunteered to participate in the research project titled, *Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place: Women negotiating 'safety' in the post-immigration phase.*

I have read the Letter of Information and have also had it explained to me in person. I understand what is required for participation in this project. I understand that my participation will involve four primary components: taking part in a tape-recorded interview; taking photographs to share with the researcher and other participants in the project; participating in group workshops where the photographs will be discussed, as well as participating in a group exercise during the workshop in which we will ‘map’ our ‘comfort’ and ‘danger’ zones. I understand that my participation in the project is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. I understand that my confidentiality will be protected and that I have control over the level of identity masking I wish to use for this project.

Should I have any further questions, I understand that I can contact any of the following individuals: Cheryl Sutherland (researcher) at email: ocar@qlink.queensu.ca, (613) 533-6000 ext. 75936, Dr. Audrey Kobayashi (project supervisor) at email: kobayasi@post.queensu.ca or (613) 533-3035, Dr. Anne Godlewska (Department Head) at email: godlewsk@post.queensu.ca or (613) 533-2903, or Dr. Joan Stevenson (University Ethics Chair) at email: stevensj@post.queensu.ca or (613) 533-6000 ext. 74579.

Please choose and initial the following:

1) I permit the use of direct quotations from my interview: Yes_____, No______

2) I chose to use a pseudonym______, remain anonymous ________, or to use my real name______

3) I permit the researcher to use photographs that I have taken for this project in the final write-up: Yes_______, No_______

Signature_______________________________________

Date______________________________
LETTER OF INFORMATION

Cheryl Sutherland, BA
MA (Candidate)
Queen’s University, Dept. of Geography
Kingston, Ontario

Dear Participant: Thank you for your interest in this project.

This research involves collecting information to be used in my Master’s Thesis in the Department of Geography at Queen’s University in Kingston Ontario. My research project is entitled: Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place: Women negotiating ‘safety’ in the post-immigration phase, and is being supervised by Professor Audrey Kobayashi of the Department of Geography at Queen’s University. My goal for this project is to learn more about the ways women negotiate safety after immigrating to Canada, the places where women feel most comfortable and vulnerable, how issues of mobility are dealt with, as well as how the everyday places where women spend their time is experienced on an individual level. I am scheduling one-on-one interviews with participants to discuss each woman’s background and experience of immigration to a new place. I will also conduct workshops in which participants will be using photography and maps as a way to represent certain themes, thoughts, and emotions about their new place.

I will be conducting this research project with two different groups of women. One group will be located in Kingston Ontario and the other group will be located in Peterborough Ontario. In total, approximately 25-30 (12-15 in each location) women will participate. The information to be obtained will be based on participants’s subjective interpretation of their experiences. During the interview portion I will be asking for information about things such as: when women entered Canada, did women immigrate with their family(ies), what are their daily/weekly mobility patterns, how old they were at the time of immigration, and other related issues. The interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis and will be taped (if agreed to), in addition to my taking notes. The interview should take approximately 1-2 hrs. During the interview we will work together at completing the questionnaire component, and women will be encouraged to discuss their experience and feelings of safety and vulnerability. We will also discuss issues involving the group workshops. Women will be asked to select a picture or photograph to bring with them to the first workshop session. The workshops will occur over the course of approximately 4 months and will involve a group discussion. We will have a total of 3 workshop sessions. Women will use cameras to take photographs of different aspects of their lives and during each workshop session women will choose 3-5 photographs that they wish to share with the group, and we will then discuss the photographs and map the places they show. Using photographs and based on the interview and our discussion, a ‘safety’ map will be created. Cameras will be provided to those participants who do not already possess one.
The following steps will be taken to protect your confidentiality. Names and contact information of participants will be kept separate (not with the rest of my thesis material), and only I will have access to this information. The participant can chose to use her real name, remain anonymous, or chose to use a pseudonym. If you are in agreement, I will use quotations in the final paper, as well as photographs that have been selected by the participant. Each participant will be provided with a copy of their transcript to read over before the final copy is written, and if they wish to delete or add to a comment, they can do so at this time. If the document is published, I will obtain formal permission from you, after showing you a copy. In addition to the written material, we will also discuss the possibility of exhibiting some of the photographs taken during the course of this project. If you decide to participate in this aspect of the project, you will choose the photographs that will be included in the exhibition.

There are no known physical, economic, social or psychological risks to your participation in this questionnaire and interview process. However, when discussing issues that delve into personal aspects of your life, certain emotional issues could arise. I am aware of this possibility and would encourage you to bring this to my attention if it should occur. If it were to occur, we could discuss what option would best remedy this situation. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the project or decide not to answer particular questions at any time.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this project, please contact my supervisor, Dr. Audrey Kobayashi at 613-533-3035 (kobayasi@queensu.ca), Dr. Anne Godlewska (Dept. Head) at 613-533-2903 (godlewsk@queensu.ca), or contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at 613-533-6000 ext. 74579 (stevensj@queensu.ca).

Thank you for your participation in the project.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Sutherland
Appendix N

Schedule of Events—Photography Exhibitions

October 27-November 2, 2007—
Kingston Arts Council Gallery, Kingston, ON

December 6-13, 2007—
New Canadians Centre, Peterborough, ON

January 25-27, 2008—
World Traveling Community Film Festival,
Showplace Theatre, Peterborough, ON.

February 10-April 14, 2008—
Ban Righ Centre for Continuing University Education,
Kingston, ON.

March 3-4, 2008—Healing Gender Violence-“Out of the Shadows,”
Sister’s of Providence Bi-annual conference,
Kingston, ON.

May 2008—
Immigrant Services Kingston and Area,
Kingston, ON.

August 27-30, 2008—
British Royal Geographical Society/
Institute of British Geographers annual conference,
London, UK.

Radio Interviews—

“Women’s Word,” CFRC Radio,
Queen’s University, Kingston, ON.

“Women’s Word,” CFRC Radio,
Queen’s University, Kingston, ON.
Newspaper Articles—


Newspaper Series: Kingston Whig-Standard


“Immigrant women are experiencing acts of racism all around the city.” Page 2 Peterborough This Week. By Lindsey Cole. August 8, 2008.

Conference and other public presentations—

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place
Speaker Series Presentation
Ban Righ Centre for Continuing University Education
(Paper presentation)
November 12, 2007

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place: The use of photovoice to explore place
American Association of Geographers Annual Conference
Boston, MA
(Paper presentation)
April 19, 2008
Co-presented with project participant

Emotional Places, Paradoxical Spaces
Ban Righ Centre for Continuing University Education
Queen’s University
(Paper presentation)
April 23, 2008
Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place
Immigrant Services Kingston and Area
Kingston, ON
(Paper/Presentation)
May 29, 2008
Co-presented with project participant

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place
New Canadians Centre
Peterborough, ON
(Paper/Presentation)
August 7, 2008
Co-presented with project participant

Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place
School of Rehabilitation Therapy
Seminar Series
(Paper presentation)
October 16, 2008
Appendix O

Kingston This Week

“Discrimination: Sting felt in smaller centres”

As perhaps her name would suggest to some, Gamila Abdalla is what the
government calls a visible minority in Canada. Originally from Sudan, Abdalla has
been living in Kingston for 15 years. Last year, out on the street, she was told by
random strangers to “Go home, go back where you came from.”

Miao Li came to Kingston from China for postgraduate studies in 2004 and is
now pursuing a PhD in French literature at Queen’s University. She recalls being hit
by stones thrown by kids while walking with a Korean friend in a park.

For Li, the attack ended when she and her friend fled. For Abdalla, “I cried all
day because it kind of makes you wonder what people really think of you that they are
not saying out loud.”

Stories like these are not unheard of across the country; police receive reports
of racial discrimination every year. However, a research project to be presented at the
North Kingston Community Health Centres May 29 finds immigrant women in
smaller cities such as Kingston much more visible and hence vulnerable.

In researching “Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place,” Kingston-native
Cheryl Sutherland explored immigrant women’s experience through a group of 18
participants that included Abdalla and Li. They come from 11 countries, eight in
Kingston and 10 in Peterborough.

“I wanted to see where women experience different kinds of emotions and
why. I was interested especially in what kinds of situations or interactions invoke
vulnerability,” says Sutherland, a MA candidate of geography at Queen’s.

“There are a lot of differences but what’s similar is that they all experienced
immigration. One of the main findings is the fact that minority women in
Kingston and Peterborough have had a lot of negative experiences because of the fact
that we live in smaller cities.”

The worst scenario to come out of her project, Sutherland says, is with city
buses.

“In some cases, it’s not just the verbal discrimination on the bus but that the
buses just don’t stop for them. There’s a whole series of places where women have
had that experience, it wasn’t just one woman and it wasn’t just in one city,” she says.

Sutherland’s research also identifies that, in general, immigrant women choose
to come here because Canada is a safe place in relative terms.

“There’s no civil war, there’s more attention paid to human rights, so in a lot
of ways they do feel safe here and they don’t regret coming over,” she says. However,
“There’s still that underlying, sometimes unspoken, sometimes overt feeling of being
different. Especially in a smaller city — it’s more obvious.”

Surtini Moore didn’t participate in the research project, but she knows the
feeling only too well.

The part-time cooking instructor at Loblaws came to Kingston in 2004 from
Bali, Indonesia. She has since married a Caucasian Canadian and this year obtained
her permanent residency status.
“When I first came here, my English was very broken and it was very confusing for people. So some people didn’t understand me and didn’t treat me very nice,” she says.

That has changed as Moore’s English improved over the years. But while she says her overall experience in Kingston has been good, “When I go out with my husband to social gatherings and parties with his friends, I still feel that sometimes they try to avoid me or don’t want to talk to me because I’m the only Asian in the room.”

This is partly why Sutherland doesn’t like the term visible minority, which “places the white body as the body that’s normal and someone who doesn’t fit that definition becomes a visible minority.” White, she adds, may be the visible majority in North America now, however, it was the Aboriginal Peoples who were the dominating race before.

“What I want to get out there are some of the realities for immigrant women,” Sutherland says.

“One of the things I like to see happen is for more attention to be paid to that and to try and take steps to increase people’s awareness of differences and trying to develop some strategies that are anti-discrimination to make it a more accepting environment for newcomers.”

Meantime, despite Kingston’s increasing whiteness during summertime with many international students gone, Li says it is the most stable home she’s ever had and that “I almost feel more comfortable here even though it’s just temporary.”

Abdalla, on the other hand, is firmly settled in Kingston. “I resist to move out of here,” she says. “My kids like their schools, it feels like home.”

Presentation of “Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place” takes place Thursday, 12:30-1:30 p.m. (bring your lunch), at 400 Elliott Ave. To RSVP, e-mail Paula Andrews at paulaa@iska.kchc.ca

Posted By L. H. Tiffany Hsieh
Appendix P

Kingston Whig Standard

Article #1

First of a series of stories that look at the experiences of immigrant women in Kingston.

Hersh Sehdev recalls the day not long ago she went to visit a friend at Kingston General Hospital. When she arrived, she asked at the main desk for the room number of the person she wanted to see. She went to the floor, where she paused at the nurses' station to double-check. The nurse there told her she had the wrong number. She should go instead to Room 7.

"Room 7 was somebody of Indian background," she said, "but a different person." A native of India, Sehdev found it disturbing that someone would take one look at her and, without fully listening to her question, assume she could only be looking for someone of Indian descent. "Don't talk to me as if I'm stupid," she said. "People continue to do that."

Sehdev said there's no room and there's no excuse for the assumptions that still exist in Kingston. "My main message has always been: Don't assume, ask," she said. "Ask the person. Listen carefully, just as you would work with anybody else." After 38 years in Canada and eight in Kingston, she is surprised still to have to deal with such things.

“We all have our prejudices and we have to confront our prejudices,” Sehdev said. “That’s something we’re trying to do.”

Maria Cordeiro, a native of Portugal who has been here since 1960, said Kingston’s racial landscape looks different than it used to, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s better.

With more people arriving from a wider variety of places and with more of them falling into the category of visible minority, the negative attention she faced growing up has shifted.

“We’ve almost become white in a weird way,” she said. “We don’t get targeted as much as we did when we are growing up.”

Though she spent less than three years in her native country—and has been a Canadian citizen since she was 13—Cordeiro has always considered herself an immigrant. She doesn’t feel she’s been spared the challenges faced by those who come later in life.

“There’s always a lot of discrimination. People call you names. That was a regular part of our lives.”

Her family lived on Wellington Street in a poor neighbourhood inhabited mostly by Portuguese immigrants, “almost like an enclave.” She was very sheltered, she said, growing up in a community of only a handful of families.

“I mainly associated with Portuguese families,” she said. “It was a very tight community.”
Now those concentrated pockets have dispersed and newcomers live and work side by side with native Kingstonians, but that doesn’t necessarily indicate an overall improvement, Cordeiro said.

“Some people are perceived as more obviously different,” she said. “If something is more different, that’s usually what they go after.”

She said the city needs to make residents better aware of diversity of the population and it needs to use more than just a tagline.

The word “diversity” is thrown around too much,” she said.

“People use it and abuse it and it loses its meaning. You have to invent another word.”

Cheryl Sutherland, a graduate student at Queen’s University, said the city should focus on creating cultural competency within all of the services it provides.

More than diversity or sensitivity training, she said, and more specific education could help bridge the gaps that still exist between Kingstonians and newcomers.

“It really gets at all the different aspects of a person’s cultural identity.”

Sutherland wrote her Master’s thesis on the experiences of immigrant women in Kingston. She found the city could start by improving the quality of its social services. She said many migrants had bad experiences navigating social service agencies, often due to language barriers.

“There were a lot of bad experiences on the buses,” she said. Several participants described having been left standing at bus stops as the bus drove by or being verbally abused by drivers.

To collect her information, Sutherland recruited a group of 18 women from both Kingston and Peterborough from 13 different countries of origin. They had been in Canada for between four months and 48 years.

She used individual interviews, group discussions, and a concept called photovoice. The women all brought photographs of places that, for them, represented vulnerability or unease and places that were safe and happy.

Sutherland found women were uncomfortable before learning about simple customs like dress and etiquette.

“All of the things that we take for granted having grown up here are all new experiences for them.”

Most of her findings from Kingston were reflected in the information collected from Peterborough, a city of similar size. She said the consistent thread, regardless of background, was community.

“I think the bottom line is places where women felt comfortable were places where they felt welcomed.”

By Erin Flegg
Appendix Q

Kingston Whig Standard

Article #2

“Immigrants long to belong: Finding a sense of community outside of school or work can be difficult”

(Second in a series of stories that looks at the experiences of immigrant women in Kingston).

When Miao Li arrived in Kingston four years ago, she spoke decent English and had an undergraduate degree in French literature. For the most part, she has enjoyed living and studying here and she's considering staying after she finishes her PhD. She pauses before deciding whether she would recommend Kingston to a friend or family member looking to emigrate to Canada.

"Kingston is a good place for older people," she said, "but for people looking for a job, there's maybe not as much opportunity."

Immigrants made up the vast majority of the population growth in Canada over the last census period. Fifty per cent of the population of Toronto, the Canadian city with the largest immigrant population in the country, was born outside Canada.

In Kingston, immigrants make up less than six per cent of the total population. But while a direct comparison is impossible, according to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Kingston isn't a priority.

In 2007, the Government of Ontario announced a $29-million investment in immigrant worker services for areas both in and outside Toronto, including Peterborough, Hamilton, Guelph, Windsor and Ottawa. Kingston wasn't on the list.

Hersh Sehdev, who came to Canada from India 38 years ago, has been in Kingston for the last eight years but she still finds herself frequently reminded of how far Kingston has to go before it can truly call itself an immigrant-friendly city.

"People speak so slowly and loudly who don't know me or what I do," she said. "They speak slowly and loudly, as if I don't speak English."

Sehdev is the director of Kingston Community Health Centres, which includes Immigration Services Kingston and Area, an agency that offers programs to help newcomers meet people and find proper housing. It also serves as a gateway to other services and opportunities in the city.

Sehdev had an easier time adjusting to the city, she said, than people for whom Kingston is their first Canadian home. "I was pretty much totally acclimatized to Canada by the time I came here," she said.

Sehdev came to Kingston with a job in place and that gave her a place to start, she said, but it by no means fulfilled all of her needs. "Outside of my job, it was pretty lonely," she said. "It wasn't easy."

Getting to know people outside her professional sphere made life better, but finding what the city offers is harder here than in bigger cities.

"For newcomers, I would say there are not the natural connections, the places you would have in places like Toronto. There's no Chinatown or little India, or little Italy," she said.
"The stuff that makes you feel at home -the language, the music, the colours -many of the foods are missing in Kingston, so it is harder for immigrants in Kingston."

Despite its problems, Sehdev said, she thinks Kingston has reached a turning point. She said the growth pattern of cities across the country has put Kingston in a position to offer something the mainstay cities can't.

"Cities like Toronto are becoming very confusing for newcomers because they're getting so huge," she said. "I think Kingston is ripe to take advantage of many things for its size, its location and the soft service industry."

Sehdev said Kingston's educational institutions have the potential to attract a highly educated population of immigrants. The health-care and corrections fields also offer plenty of opportunity for skilled workers.

Now, she said, the city just needs to focus on better supporting newcomers.

Sehdev, for instance, was forced to redo her master's degree before being given a licence to work as a dietitian. "I could afford to do that, but not everyone can."

She said there's a balance between teaching new workers to adapt to the Canadian work environment and creating space for new cultural norms.

During research for her master's thesis, Cheryl Sutherland found meaningful employment was one of the keys to a positive transition to a new city.

Li was one of the participants in Sutherland's study. A big part of Li's decision to study at Queen's was the chance to work as a teaching assistant. She said that job and another, working part time at the Queen's International Centre, gave her a purpose that helped her adjust to the social aspects of living in a foreign country.

"I know I can do something for [the students]," she said. "I usually get respect from them."

Many residents talk of enjoying the city more in the summer when the students have gone home, but Li said she feels more vulnerable without them. She found support within the university community, she said, living first in the residence on west campus, where many of the international graduate students, including many Chinese students, live. While she still considers the university campus a positive place for her, one of her most negative Kingston experiences happened there in first year while she was walking with a friend near the residence building.

"We saw a group of local kids and they started saying discriminatory words at us," she said. Li has also had racial slurs yelled at her from car windows on Princess Street. Li is part of a supportive Chinese community, she said, but she often prefers to look outside what's familiar to her.

"I want to experience something outside my root culture," she said. "I lived in China for so long." She said finding a sense of belonging outside her home country is an accomplishment in itself. "I'm trying to find ways to connect."

A social connection won't be enough for her to stay after she finishes her degree. She has friends who graduated from Queen's and spent several months looking for a job in Kingston before moving to Toronto to work. There's a gap, she said, between government policies on immigration and the reality of the situation.

"[Immigrants] know these policies. They come to this country maybe to start a new life and the reality didn't turn out that way."

Kingston isn't the ideal place for young immigrants to start their careers, she said.
The latest generation of immigrants -those like her, looking to continue their education or make use of a degree earned elsewhere -have a stronger base in English than those who immigrated before her, but they lack the work experience necessary to get a secure job in their field.

Her forebears, however, tended to emigrate with more work experience but faced a much greater language barrier.

She said the key to better integration of immigrants into the city is to recognize that the changes shrinking the globe, bringing more and more people to Canada, aren't slowing down. "Canada is changing because of globalization."

By Erin Flegg
“City must open arms a little wider: mayor: Kingston can do more to embrace immigrants, Rosen says, including changing our attitudes.”

Last in a series of stories that looks at the experiences of immigrant women in Kingston. Mayor Harvey Rosen said there's no excuse for Kingston not to be known as one of Canada's go-to cities for newcomers. Kingston was left off last year's list of places to receive government support to assist new immigrants, and Rosen wasn't pleased. "I was disturbed by that," he said, adding that even though Kingston has not been known historically as one of Canada's pre-eminent immigrant destinations, the makeup of the city is changing and it will inevitably change its persona.

"The fact that Kingston elected a Jewish mayor in 2003 is seen by some as an indication of the maturing of the population over time, of becoming more cosmopolitan, more tolerant," he said. "I suppose the fact that I thought I was electable speaks to my attitude toward the community. I felt it was willing to consider a mayor whose background was not white Anglo-Saxon." The latest of several generations of his family to have grown up and then stayed in Kingston, Rosen said his own family history is telling of the way the cultural landscape has changed. "There was a time when the Jewish community was an almost invisible part of this community."

He said the city and its people react to change the same way everyone else does. "Change is part of culture," he said, "It's a challenge for people in every community to accept changes to the community they grew up in." He said the speed of change seems to be increasing, with a generation of young people who are more accustomed to frequent cultural shifts than their predecessors. "I think future generations will be much more flexible," Rosen said.

He's aware of Kingston's lack of concentrated ethnic communities, places like the Little Italys and Chinatowns of Toronto and Vancouver, but he says that isn't necessarily a detriment. "It's probably a good thing that we have a more diverse but homogenous spread throughout the city," he said. "The trend today, as opposed to when those communities were developed, is more about fusion."

Kingston has Italian, Portuguese and Jewish communities, he said, but they're primarily residential as opposed to the more concentrated commercial ex-pat districts in other places. As a result, the city's immigrant communities are more spread out and less visible.

Rosen said one of the major challenges Kingston faces in attracting newcomers is its location. "Kingston is relatively close to three major communities: Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal," he said. "The gravity is more pulling out than attracting people inward." Kingston, then, needs to find other ways to sell itself. One way to do that, Rosen said, is to make the city known as a place where newcomers can get a job.
"We certainly could make use of an influx of skilled worker immigrants," he said. "We do, I think, have a labour shortage in Kingston, and it's a Canadian tradition to address that labour shortage through immigration."

According to Jeff Garrah, president of the Kingston Economic Development Corporation, there are anywhere between 400 and 600 jobs in Kingston today that need to be filled.

Rosen said he also recognizes there are barriers to employment in Canada that are largely out of the hands of individual cities. He's concerned mainly with the problems immigrants wrestle with to be certified to practise their chosen profession. Hearing of the racial discrimination still faced by some, he acknowledged there is more work to be done at the municipal level. He said it's disturbing to think there's still racism within city services. City policy states the municipal workforce must represent the diversity of the community.

Small-scale community building and the attitudes of community leaders are the best way to combat the problem, he said. "I've always thought the best way to change attitudes is by example," Rosen said, adding that details like recreational spaces and food make a big difference to the feel of the community.

"I know we could really use a good cricket pitch in Kingston," he said. He said he would like to see part of the baseball diamond in City Park returned to its original function as a cricket field and the building on Bagot Street made into a clubhouse.

He said adapting to waves of diverse new residents is primarily a matter of people management. That means creating a transit system that's effective and efficient and ensuring housing needs are met and continue to be met in the years to come.

Sharryn Aiken, a professor in the Queen's Faculty of Law, believes the attitude is more important than the economics of the problem. "It's not just a matter of what resources Kingston can offer to newcomers," she said. "It's also the attitude of the general population. I think Kingston has a lot of work to do in that regard." Aiken knows you don't have to come from another country to find this city tough to crack. Even for native Canadians, she said, settling in Kingston from another place is a challenge.

"There's a lot of old stock Kingstonians who have lived in the city for many generations who are not so receptive to outsiders, never mind whether they're immigrants or not," she said. "I've been working in Kingston for six years now and I've found it incredibly difficult to make friends." She now spends her summers back in Toronto, a decision based on her experience during her first few years in the city. "Kingston is not an easy place to move to."

From her personal experience, Aiken said outsiders find welcome in unexpected places. She said cities such as Winnipeg and Toronto, though they are very different in size and cultural makeup, do a great job of showing newcomers they're a welcome and even desirable addition to the community through strong settlement services and a more open attitude than Aiken found in Kingston. She said it's a myth that large cities are unfriendly. "I have a sense of community in Toronto. I know my neighbours all around me," she said. "I can tell you that, despite the cold weather, many newcomers that I've spoken with are very happy in Winnipeg."

Improvement, she said, is often a matter of breaking through the traditional stereotypes attributed to immigrant populations. She used restaurant etiquette as an example. "The server talks to the person with the white skin instead of the person with
the brown skin," she said." It's assuming that the person who is a different colour doesn't speak English."

She said part of the problem is likely that Kingston hasn't traditionally been a major immigration centre, meaning the community often doesn't realize there are more similarities than differences between the old stock and the new blood. "Most newcomers that arrive as skilled workers come speaking either fluent English or French and with far more education than most Canadians," she said.

Potential newcomers are judged on a merit system; points are given for level of education and work experience. Those who are deemed useful to Canada are let in. Aiken, who holds a master of laws and studies the impact of policy on immigration, often has her law classes take quizzes designed to judge a potential immigrant's qualification to be allowed entry into the country. "Maybe two out of 50 qualify," she said.

She said the expectations placed on immigrants are much higher than those placed on natural-born citizens. That law students, most of whom have at least one degree to their name already, are unlikely to meet the cut-off is an illustration of how stringent the tests are. "[Immigrants] shouldn't seem so different from your typical middle-class Kingstonian, but I don't think the local population really appreciates that perhaps as much as could be."

She said it's not a question of what level of service should a city the size of Kingston provide to immigrants. "Kingston needs to ask itself whether it wants to be an immigrant centre," Aiken said. "Kingston will need to choose to make itself more receptive to newcomers."

"Change is part of culture. It's a challenge for people in every community to accept changes to the community they grew up in."

-Mayor Harvey Rosen

By Erin Flegg
"Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place study looks at racism facing visible minority women in Peterborough"

For women of visible minorities, riding the city bus or even strolling the streets downtown can put them at risk for racism-fuelled harassment and derogatory comments, say participants in a recent research project.

Queen’s University master’s degree student Cheryl Sutherland presented the project, Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place to about 20 people Thursday at the New Canadians Centre on Sherbrooke Street. The project, which sought to map safe and unsafe places in smaller cities, reported on the experiences of 18 immigrant women in Peterborough and Kingston from February to November 2007.

Sutherland said she used Peterborough and Kingston because both cities are similar in size, are home to a university and have low immigrant populations. “Many women who participated in this project said they felt discriminated against in public spaces,” said Sutherland, who conducted the study for her master’s degree in geography. “There were some really overt racist comments that some people experienced.”

The study, which included 10 women from Peterborough and eight from Kingston, had them share past experiences through three focus groups and keep track of the “unsafe” places in the city.

The most common places the participants cited as unsafe included city buses, bus stops, coffee shops, shopping malls, hospitals, areas around social service agencies and government buildings, Sutherland said.

“One woman described a time when the bus driver screamed at her to read the rules written on the back of her transfer,” Sutherland said. “She said the incident would probably not have happened if she was not wearing a head scarf.”

Along with unsafe areas, she said, the women also identified places where they felt comfortable, a sense of belonging and were welcomed as community members. The “safe places” the women identified included waterfronts, the New Canadians Centre or international centres, and public libraries.

“I think all city frontline staff, such as bus drivers, need better education in issues of accessibility and cultural understanding,” Sutherland said. “It has been identified as a problem, so now it’s a matter of talking about it to find a solution.”

Jim Kimble, the city's transportation services manager, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

As part of the project, Sutherland said, the women took home a map of their city and were instructed to mark the places where they felt unsafe over a one-week period.

“The closer I stayed to (Queen’s University) campus, the safer I felt,” said project participant and Queen’s University PhD student Miao Li. “For me, the library was a safe place.”
In Peterborough, Sutherland said, the areas the women identified as “unsafe” included the majority of the downtown, and more specifically around bars and nightclubs.

Robin Steed, who was listening to Sutherland’s presentation, pointed out that many of the “unsafe” areas are places that are potentially unsafe for all women, not just immigrant women.

“The women were called racist names and the harassment was linked to their minority status,” Sutherland said.

According to Statistics Canada's 2006 census population numbers, released in December, about 12,450 immigrants live in Peterborough and the surrounding area. “It’s important to enhance communication between Canadian-born people and newcomers to challenge the conception of Canada as a white country,” Sutherland said.

Sutherland said she made a similar presentation in Kingston on May 29.

By Andrea Houston
Appendix T

Peterborough This Week

“Peterborough's immigrant women are experiencing acts of racism all around the city”

Facts revealed in the study
- 2.6 per cent of Peterborough's population are visible minorities
- Two women in Peterborough reported being discriminated against on City buses
- The waterfront was a calming area for some of the women studied

- Women have experienced acts of discrimination along Sherbrooke Street during various hours of the day. "You feel them, you live them and it stays with you." The quote flashes on the screen at the New Canadians in Centre Peterborough, as Cheryl Sutherland and Miaol Li present the findings of a project entitled 'Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place.' It highlights areas in both Peterborough and Kingston where women feel safe and where they also feel vulnerable.

On the screen, a map of the city pops up. Large red circles are strategically placed on Sherbrooke Street, the downtown core and East City. Within these spots are city buses and bus stops, Tim Horton's establishments, department stores, social service agencies, bars, nightclubs and grocery stores. Women have either witnessed or experienced acts of discrimination in these areas. "It was words that were said by other people. There were overt racial comments."

The study itself was conducted by Ms Sutherland, as part of her studies at Queen's University. It began in 2007 and documented 18 immigrant women's experiences in spaces where they felt safe or vulnerable in Peterborough and Kingston. The women ranged from 24 to 49 years of age at the time of their immigration and have been in Canada anywhere from four months to 46 years. These women came from 13 different countries including Albania, China, Columbia and Iran.

Each woman was asked to take pictures of places where they felt the most at ease, as well as areas that made them feel less so. The photos were shared in focus groups, which brought forth a number of similarities. "Not only do they learn from participation but they learn from each other," says Ms Sutherland.

For Ms Li, a participant from Kingston, it was an enlightening experience. "I felt a little bit uneasy about sharing my feelings with a group of others. All the participants were helping the newcomers in this country."

Participants also felt safe in a number of areas around the city. The waterfront by Little Lake, libraries and immigrant service centres were places where women could just be themselves.

"It was a very provocative discussion. There is definitely some huge room for improvement," Ms Sutherland says.

For Ms Li it comes down to respect. "Maybe sometimes a single smile or a friendly 'hello' would be enough for us."

By Lindsey Cole