

# Negotiating belonging following migration: Exploring the relationship between place and identity in Francophone minority communities

Suzanne Huot

School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario

Belinda Dodson

Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario

Debbie Laliberte Rudman

School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario

*A qualitative study was conducted within the Francophone minority community (FMC) of London, Ontario to explore the integration experiences of French-speaking immigrants from visible minority groups. We address how shifts to place and identity experienced following international migration influenced the study participants' negotiation of belonging within the host community. The ethnographic approach to research was guided by a theoretical framework drawing on geographical and sociological literature critically attending to power and place. Findings focus upon the negotiation of two key tensions influencing belonging. First we address the tension between Canada's official bilingualism and the Francophone immigrants' lived bilingualism within the local FMC. We then discuss the research participants' everyday experiences of displacement and exclusion as embedded within a context of official multiculturalism. The findings serve to illustrate ways in which belonging is negotiated in relation to the politics of place.*

Keywords: belonging, Francophone, immigration, identity, place

## **Négocier l'appartenance après la migration : une exploration de la relation entre le lieu et l'identité dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire**

*Une étude qualitative menée au sein de la communauté minoritaire francophone de London, Ontario, a pour but d'explorer les expériences d'intégration d'immigrants francophones issus des minorités visibles. L'analyse porte sur l'influence qu'exercent les changements de lieu et d'identité vécus par les participants à la suite de leur migration internationale sur la manière de négocier leur appartenance à la communauté d'accueil. La recherche, dont l'approche est de type ethnographique, est fondée sur un cadre théorique se référant aux écrits scientifiques en géographie et en sociologie qui posent un regard critique sur le pouvoir et le lieu. Les constats qui s'en dégagent renvoient à deux tensions principales au cœur de la négociation sur l'appartenance. Il est d'abord question de la tension entre le bilinguisme officiel du Canada et le bilinguisme vécu localement par les immigrants francophones au sein de la communauté francophone en situation minoritaire. Les expériences quotidiennes de déplacement et d'exclusion des participants à la recherche sont ensuite abordées sous l'angle du multiculturalisme officiel. Les résultats ont permis de mettre en évidence des façons de négocier l'appartenance en lien avec les politiques relatives au lieu.*

Mots clés : appartenance, francophone, immigration, identité, lieu

Correspondence to/Adresse de correspondance: Suzanne Huot, School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario, 1201 Western Rd, Elborn College, London, ON N6G 1H1. Email/Courriel: shuot2@uwo.ca

## Introduction

Canadian federal initiatives targeting Francophone immigration seek to support the vitality of Franco-*phone* minority communities (FMCs). Government documents on Francophone immigration are framed at a national scale with resulting policies and practices geared toward FMCs throughout the country (Jedwab 2002; Quell 2002; Canada, Standing Committee on Official Languages 2003; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2003a, b, 2006; Canadian Heritage 2008). However, sustained vitality requires more than increasing demographic weight, as continued community engagement may be contingent upon migrants' sense of belonging at the local scale. International migration entails the movement of identity and belonging over space and their re-creation in new places (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Based on our study conducted in London, Ontario, we argue that research and policy on Francophone immigration should pay greater attention to the complexities involved in local negotiations of transitions to belonging and identity experienced following migration, and to how such negotiation is grounded in the socio-geographic specificities of individual places.

An ethnographic approach (Carspecken 1996; Jamal 2005) was used to explore the experiences of French-speaking immigrants who self-identified as members of visible minority groups. We focus on two issues highlighting connections between place and identity. First, we address the spatial geographies of bilingualism. French and English speakers are unevenly distributed in Canada raising a tension between the country's official bilingualism and people's locally lived bilingualism. Second, we examine how, despite Canada's Multiculturalism Act, these migrants face everyday experiences of social exclusion.

The Multiculturalism Act, passed in 1988, has been described as a "strategic compromise" between three discrete groups: an English majority, a French minority (that had been accommodated through the Official Languages Act), and "other" racialized peoples who later immigrated to Canada (Galabuzi 2011, 59; Kobayashi 1993). Despite this "compromise," Canada continues to primarily be a white settler society with a racially ordered structure that views people of colour as "late arrivals" compared to the Anglo-Franco charter groups (Razack 2002, 3). The focus on ethnic culture within the Act also shifts

attention away from race and overshadows ongoing racism experienced by non-white persons (Sharma 2011). Early tensions between bilingualism and multiculturalism are ongoing. While official bilingualism is geared toward French Canadians, official multiculturalism is aimed at non-charter ethnic minority groups. The result is policy and legislation supposedly representing different social groups in different regions—French-speakers mainly residing in Quebec and ethnic immigrants mainly residing elsewhere (Kobayashi 1993). Our study addresses a group existing in-between: French speaking immigrants from visible minority groups living in FMCs. We aimed to raise awareness of barriers participants faced in negotiating belonging within particular places as they worked toward integration. Drawing on the work of geographers, and others who are addressing the relationship between place, identity, and mobility in critical ways, in this article we underscore the significance of place in understanding how Francophone immigrants experienced and negotiated processes of belonging. We begin by briefly outlining the conceptual framework that both influenced the study's methodology and guided analysis of the findings.

## Mobility, identity, and belonging

Belonging is influenced by processes of mobility, identity, and place. It can be understood as a sense of feeling at home, where individuals build an attachment to place over time. This "place-belongingness" alters with migration and if not redeveloped in the host society migrants may feel displaced (Yuval-Davis 2006; Antonsich 2010). This personal dimension is shaped by a social dimension. When belonging is taken up in processes of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion it can be conceptualized as the "politics of belonging." The interrelation between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging is a fluid process that is continually performed through practices and contributes to the embodiment of belonging. One's body and where it is placed on the globe conditions one's belongings (Carrillo Rowe 2005). Thus, senses of belonging are multi-scalar as they are constructed in relation to one's body, household, city, and nation, among others (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Migrants' personal sense of belonging is influenced by the discourses and practices to which they

are subjected in particular places. Socially constructed identity markers including language and race can be used to differentiate those who are not “of this place” (Yuval-Davis 2006; Antonsich 2010). For example, Valentine et al. (2008, 376) showed that language is “a situated practice in (re)making identities in local contexts” because of the role it plays in social interactions (Blommaert et al. 2005; Butcher 2008). Particular sites (e.g., workplaces) are structured by linguistic expectations regarding appropriate communicative behaviours, and those not meeting such expectations may be deemed ‘out of place.’ Language can serve to include or exclude by drawing boundaries between those who understand it and those who do not (Butcher 2008; Redclift 2011).

Alternatively, language can be a marker of belonging when minority communities use linguistic practices to build group identity within sites and to give meaning to place (Butcher 2008; Valentine et al. 2008). Highlighting the fluid nature of belonging, immigrants’ identities continually shift as they move through places characterized by varying linguistic regimes, accordingly feeling or being deemed as in place or out of place. In a study of immigrant youth in Australia, Butcher (2008, 385) described language as “a strategic and mobile phenomenon” that can contribute to a sense of place, but given that language is embodied she found that despite having good language skills, the youths’ bodies and appearance led to their racialization and sense of alienation because they were not perceived as being Australian.

Migrants experience multiple forms of belonging and exclusion, making attention to place and power essential. Gilmartin’s (2008) research has shown how place is negotiated and mutable. Her study illustrated that as the foreign-born population has increased in Ireland, the relationship between identity and place has taken on new forms (e.g., altered meanings of citizenship). The ways in which people’s bodies are performed for, and interpreted by, others differs with regard to the places within which they are embedded (McDowell 1999). Drawing on her study of the labour market position of recent immigrants to the United Kingdom (UK), McDowell (2008) explained that everyday practices operating at different spatial scales serve to maintain varying constructions of difference, whether according to language, class, or other identifiers, and thus to marginalize immigrant workers.

Recognizing the importance of attending to social power relations, our study drew on Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of symbolic capital to examine how conceptualizations of place and belonging, as processes, are experienced in daily life. Symbolic capital is both embodied and emplaced and refers to resources or assets that have different values depending upon context (Moore 2008). Linguistic competencies are a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990) whose value is conditioned by where the speaker is situated, with language being “not what individuals have and don’t have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables” (Blommaert et al. 2005, 197). It is not strictly people’s physical appearance that can set them apart from the dominant social group, but also aspects including their accent that can compound the minoritization they experience (Creese 2010; Ryan 2010). Migrants’ languages intersect with additional identity markers such as race, further complicating their negotiation of belonging following migration. Having built up forms of capital within their home country, migration creates a disjuncture between place and identity as people experience altered social locations. Hence, place is a central site for investigating the shifting relationships between migration, identity, and belonging at various interconnected scales (Gilmartin 2008).

Social constructions of place are an exercise in social power and struggles for place are in essence struggles for spatialized social power (Massey 1994). This is emphasized by McKittrick (2002, 28) who argued that “the spatialization of difference works to regulate the ways multiple identities occupy, or do not occupy space.” Places are not differentiated solely by their particular histories, but also by the unique combination of social relations coming together within them. They are characterized by internal conflicts and a specificity that is reproduced through the geographies of power that shape them (Massey 1996). Like belonging, place is thus a process (Massey 1994; Silvey and Lawson 1999). Places are connected with identities, meanings, and practices that serve to construct “normative places where it is possible to be either ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’” (Cresswell 2008, 137). When the tacit rules governing these places are transgressed by those unfamiliar with normative expectations, they may be subjected to processes of exclusion. However, the socially constructed nature of places also enables

them to be resisted and contested (Cresswell 2008). Through a dialectical process, migrants' identities are influenced by the nature of the places among which they move, and their presence also influences the nature of those places (Silvey and Lawson 1999). As borne out of our findings presented below, "migrants participate in ongoing reworking of their identities, as well as the places and social contexts among which they are moving" (Silvey and Lawson 1999, 125).

### Research location and methodology

Given that our focus is upon the specificities of place in shaping experience, our aim is not to generalize but instead to reflect Kobayashi's (1993, 208) call for cultural geographers to "initiate small-scale analyses of very particular sites of struggle." An iterative process of data generation and analysis was implemented in London, an FMC with a population of approximately 350,000, of which the majority are Anglophone (Table 1). Despite increasing research on the capacity of FMCs to host immigrants (FCFA 2004) and the push toward immigrant regionalization (Canada 2006), there remains a lack of research on southern Ontario. London is a second-tier city in southwestern Ontario and is one of 25 designated FMCs in the province. To be designated, Francophones must account for 10 percent of the popula-

**Table 1**  
2006 and 2011 Canadian Census data on language in London

	2006	2011
<b>Mother tongue</b>		
English	271330	282840
French	5115	4755
Non-official languages	71615	68980
English and French	630	865
<b>Knowledge of official languages</b>		
English only	317345	331275
French only	275	235
English and French	26710	26245
Neither English nor French	4355	4595
<b>Languages spoken most often at home</b>		
English	306350	314620
French	1605	1445
English and French	425	490
French and non-official language	45	85
English, French, and non-official language	50	235

SOURCE: Statistics Canada (2007, 2012)

**Table 2**

Visible minority population characteristics among the London population

	Total	%
<b>Total population</b>	348690	100
<b>Total visible minority population</b>	47955	13.8
Chinese	6270	1.8
South Asian	6195	1.8
Black	7620	2.2
Latin American	7730	2.2
Southeast Asian	3700	1.0
Arab	7715	2.2
<b>Not a visible minority</b>	300735	86.2

SOURCE: Statistics Canada (2007)

tion or number over 5,000. The city's official language minority population numbered 5,645 in the 2011 Census. Of the total population in 2006 (348,690), 75,620 were immigrants, 12,240 arrived between 2001 and 2006, and just over 4,000 were non-permanent residents. The majority of Londoners identified as "not a visible minority" (Table 2), yet diversity in the city is slowly increasing. The visible minority population rose by 2.9 percent between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada 2007). The main industry sectors in London include: health care and social assistance (14.8 percent), trade (14.3 percent), manufacturing (12.4 percent), and education services (9.6 percent) (London Economic Development Corporation 2013). While the unemployment rate was 6.5 percent in 2006, it rose to an estimated 8.9 percent in 2011 (City of London 2012).

The primary author, who resides in London, began immersing herself into the FMC in September 2008 when she met with representatives from community organizations to discuss the research. She volunteered for two organizations, regularly participating in community events over the course of the research to achieve prolonged engagement. After receiving ethics approval from the University of Western Ontario, participants were purposefully recruited with the assistance of a gatekeeper who sent study information to the clients of an organization offering settlement and employment services. Hard copies were also left at this organization and at a Franco-phone sexual assault centre.

Study participants included eight French-speaking immigrants, four females and four males, who came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3), Egypt (1), Russia (1), Rwanda (1), as well as countries in

Latin America (1) and North Africa (1). Two respondents asked that their countries of origin not be named. The participants immigrated through different categories, some as skilled migrants (as, or with, primary applicant), provincial nominees, asylum seekers, and through family reunification. They had arrived in London between 2000 and 2009, and all had obtained permanent residency or citizenship. The respondents all had at least one child. Only three moved directly to London from their point of entry, while five had previously lived in Montreal for varying lengths of time. One participant had also lived in other provinces and cities before settling in London. All respondents spoke French prior to arriving in Canada, yet all had a different mother tongue. None were fluent in English preceding their immigration.

Three stages of data collection encompassing 37 sessions were conducted by the primary author between April 2009 and January 2010. Stage one entailed a narrative interview addressing the participants' experiences as migrants (eight sessions). Stage two involved creating a mental map of London serving to identify the places participants' regularly frequented and to discuss what they did there. Participant observations then occurred while engaging in some of the participants' routine occupations (e.g., preparing meals, attending church) (13 sessions). This stage entailed the compilation of an observation record consisting of descriptions and additional field notes when audio-recording was not possible. Stage three consisted of two separate in-depth and follow-up interviews enabling the ongoing co-construction of knowledge (16 sessions).

All sessions were conducted in French and recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the primary author. The French transcripts and observation record were used for analysis. The process began with whole-text analysis, then moved to low-level open coding, and proceeded to high-level theoretical coding of all data (Sandelowski 1995; Carspecken 1996; Ryan and Russell Bernard 2003). Analysis of the mental maps consisted of a detailed description of each and then comparisons across the maps.

## Findings

All participants framed their integration experiences as an ongoing process of starting over, characterized

by a sense of feeling out of place and of being excluded that they worked to overcome. "Starting over at zero," as expressed by Marie, was identified as a key challenge to integration—in part because it required learning the unwritten norms characterizing new places encountered and reconciling these with one's own identity and pre-migratory expectations. The participants' development of a personal sense of place-belongingness over time was influenced by the politics of belonging occurring within the socio-geographic contexts in which they were embedded. In particular, findings highlight language and visible minority status as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

### Official versus lived bilingualism

The successful integration of Francophone immigrants into FMCs has become a federal policy goal. Yet French-speaking immigrants face challenges given the ways official bilingualism is practiced in Canada. The Official Languages Act, first passed in 1969 and then expanded and passed again in 1988, gives equal rights and privileges to both languages within all Parliamentary institutions; these rights are protected by the Constitution Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Yet individuals may encounter obstacles to living daily life in the official language of their choice at the local scale, particularly given the shifting value of linguistic capital in different places. Basic English skills are often necessary for participating in society and especially for entering the labour market within FMCs. Language is a key dimension of integration as immigrants need to be able to communicate within their linguistic environment (Quell 2002). The findings presented below support the contention that Francophones living in cities like London are marginalized within the Anglophone environment to the point that they are obligated to live linguistically segmented lives, and highlight the importance of language in relation to place-belongingness (Korzemo and Stebbins 2001).

Several participants mentioned a disconnect between their expectations and experiences of Canadian bilingualism. While some were aware prior to migrating that Francophones are concentrated in certain places, many participants originally understood bilingualism differently. Danielle thought "that all of Canada spoke French. And when I came, I expected to find a country where I could

blossom in French.” Gilberto described learning how bilingualism meant that people could speak either official language, rather than meaning all people spoke both as he initially assumed:

When they speak of official languages, they say it's official, everyone must speak the two languages, but when we face reality, it's only the, like they say on paper that it's the official language, it's the choice of each to learn the two languages or not...but here it's only English and there's very, very few people who choose to learn French.

Rose shared a similar sentiment: “Here it's really an official language in terms of rights, but in terms of social recognition we are always in the minority.” The realization that French was minoritized socially and demographically led many to describe feeling deceived, such as Danielle who stated: “If I thought that I will use one language, and I find that I have to study another language, that's a total deception.” French language skills as a form of linguistic capital in Canada were not as highly valued as many had anticipated. Surprisingly, this was even the case for many who had also lived in Montreal.

Participants who immigrated to Montreal and later moved to London for a variety of reasons compared their experiences between the two cities. Paul came to London to learn English so that he could obtain a higher skilled bilingual position in Montreal and eventually planned to return to Quebec. Makane lived in Montreal when he first immigrated alone, but came to London when he later returned to Canada with his spouse who did not speak French. He had secured full-time employment within London prior to moving. Gilberto had difficulty finding work in Montreal, in part due to emphasis upon English skills in his chosen profession. His family came to London because they had an acquaintance in the city that could help them upon arrival. Rose and Marie were fleeing experiences of violence and came to London after learning about the city's Francophone sexual assault centre. This summary does not capture the complexity of the participants' experiences but helps to contextualize their lived bilingualism further discussed below.

Paul expressed a stronger sense of place-belonging in Montreal than in London due to the predominance of French:

...we feel closer to Quebec than to Ontario, because in Quebec, if you come from Africa today, already you

have the facility of hearing people, the language. You enter into a same language. The people, when the people communicate, you can find yourself. Whereas when you come to Ontario, you know something is severed. You come into another world.

Despite having lived in Canada for three years, moving to learn English led Paul to feel displaced:

The experience of coming to London was really an experience, it was really a challenge, a big challenge... it's like as if I have to start over at zero. It's a new experience. And the language I have to learn ABC, and the community I have to confront a new community, Francophone which is minority and Anglophone which is the majority. It's a new life. Some new behaviours, a lot of things to learn, learning everything, the language to learn, people's behaviours to learn, people's habits to learn. In any case, another lifestyle to learn.

He enrolled in English courses but his social integration within the city occurred primarily through the Francophone community. This was highlighted by his map, which besides the school and public library, consisted largely of Francophone organizations.

Not all participants shared Paul's perspective that French-speaking immigrants were more at home in Quebec. Marie came to Canada to join her husband who had previously migrated and told her that Montreal was predominantly French-speaking: “Well I knew that, like we said Quebec is really a Francophone province. I was sure that we were really the privileged ones, we had the facility of finding a good job being Francophone” but went on to stress that “on the ground it's not evident.” Among other challenges, she described difficulty understanding the local accent. Differences in spoken French were also an obstacle for Gilberto who had learned French in school but did not use it regularly back home. He struggled with how quickly people spoke and with their use of colloquial words. As in Montreal, language served to both include and exclude within London.

French-speakers settling in London became part of the linguistic minority where their development of a sense of place and belonging was partly enabled by having something in common with members of the FMC. Gilberto described how shared language served to build initial ties to his new community:

[I]t's a bit difficult, but in knowing people we start to talk, well first with people in our own language, own

culture. But, then after with the people from here. Little by little we must enter into the places or into the Canadian culture to know people. It could be in the workplace or in the environment at school that we start to know people, and, in talking with people we start to make, or to like build friendships with the people from here.

Makane further discussed the importance of Francophone institutions in London for creating a sense of community and helping to promote a sense of place-belongingness:

I think that schools, the services in French are essential. When you have people who are there like [organization], just people who are there to help you to find housing, sometimes people who are there that, you know, that maybe give you a little bed or an object, there is always someone to listen to you. When you come there are people who are there to listen to you, the first days, it's very important in the life of an immigrant.

Belonging can also be limited or restricted by the devaluation of linguistic capital and a marginalization of linguistic identities through the politics of belonging within the FMC and broader community. Rose had several negative experiences within an English shelter that initially made her feel unwelcomed in London: "...the lack of respect. Maybe because I'm Francophone. Because if I spoke English well, and if she knew that I was Anglophone maybe she would not dare say things like that to me."

Danielle addressed discrimination that also existed within the Francophone community:

[A]s long as we make the selection of Francophones, there are Francophones and the people from elsewhere. As long as there will be people from elsewhere who speak French, 'immigrants', if we are not considered as Francophones, then it will always be difficult to integrate into this community in terms of employment. It will always be a heavy burden to receive them and it will always be, a large task to always fight to be heard, saying we are Francophone. Why do we have to continue to scream that we are Francophones?

Her comments stem from the earlier official definition of Francophone in Canada, based on mother tongue. This definition has since been expanded to include those whose first official language spoken is French, yet Danielle felt the results of this change had not taken effect in daily

practice. She felt the FMC was divided, with some people believing themselves "to be more Franco-phone than the others," but that change was slowly taking place. In the meantime, she explained that some migrants were taking things into their own hands: "There are immigrants who try to create things here, associations here to defend their interests. When there is a group that says 'we have to defend our rights also as Francophones.' That's a sort of division also. Since they feel discriminated against." As implied in this example, forms of exclusion with the Francophone host community were not strictly related to language but also to other aspects of identity including race. This is further addressed in the next sub-section.

Reflecting the unequal spatiality of language, many of the participants felt marginalized due to their linguistic minority status at multiple scales. Marie expressed that in North America more broadly "If you're not at least bilingual, especially with English, you are like colonized or, you see yourself always under everyone else." She went on to state that "... being a minority is, it's as if you are the last ones served. Yes. All the time you have to push, push, put a lot of effort, more than the Anglophones to obtain the necessary services. Even if we know that it's our right or you should have them, but it's like they forget you somewhere." These examples reflect Antonsich's (2010) argument that political institutions alone are insufficient to support belonging if immigrants are not accepted by the receiving community. The participants faced challenges to feeling at home and to being accepted in both Anglophone and Francophone environments at local, provincial, and national scales. The minoritization they experienced with respect to their language was further compounded by its intersection with other aspects of identity and the additional forms of discrimination they faced.

#### Official multiculturalism versus everyday experiences of displacement and exclusion

Since the 1990s, the majority of French-speaking immigrants to Canada have been members of visible minority groups, leading to socio-cultural change within FMCs. Ryan (2010) found that the geographical relocation associated with migration led people to encounter different social groups and to experience their own identities in relation to new and different places and social interactions. While immigrants might identify as being Francophone,

identity is intersectional and language cannot be separated from other markers like race and gender (Dei 2005). In addition to their varying modes of self-identification, immigrants may be viewed differently by others within the host society. The increasing diversity of FMCs raises tensions between official bilingualism and multiculturalism, with immigrants being viewed by some as a potential threat to the “notion of Canada’s two founding peoples” (Jedwab 2002, 36). The FCFA (2004) found that a majority believed their FMC would be prepared to receive more Francophone newcomers, but were less receptive if immigrants were from visible minority groups, and over one third believed increasing multiculturalism would encourage resistance to immigration. In this section we address the participants’ everyday experiences of displacement, discrimination, and social exclusion.

Francophone immigrants face challenges related to the intersection of their embodied linguistic identity and capital with other aspects of identity, and can experience a “double-minority status” (Canada 2003b; Daniel 2005; Madibbo 2006). Like the participants in research by Creese (2010; Creese et al. 2011), participants in this study were characterized by both hyper-visibility, given the small percentage of visible minorities in London, and invisibility due to their low overall numbers. Danielle addressed the tensions she felt as a “minority within a minority,” arguing this led to a “third place” ranking for immigrant groups:

The challenges are numerous...we are firstly a minority, and like the other Francophones is the added way that we are Francophones from elsewhere [...] we aren’t situated in the majority community as a majority, and we aren’t even situated in the minority society like the Francophone society. It always creates problems for settlement... We are third in that community, which becomes the issue.

Her comments reflect Redclift’s (2011, 39) findings that negotiating multiple identifications could lead to a “complex emotional ordering of belonging.” She went on to describe the challenges of being “visible” within a minority setting: “We are visible unfortunately. On the inside you feel alienated. Outside too they see you as someone else. That’s the other. We have a colour that betrays us. They will always consider us as the other.” Likewise, other participants described difficulties they felt trying to “find their place” within London.

Khalil explained how integrating into a new community could threaten one’s existing identity; he felt that a negotiation occurred between preserving particular aspects of one’s identity while adapting others in an attempt to belong. He described a liminal existence, using metaphors to illustrate his lack of place-belongingness to the host society. He felt he was in the “middle of the ocean,” no longer in his home country but still “far from the coast we are heading to.” This was reflected in his map, which was sparsely drawn, centring on his home and a nearby park and featuring only a few additional places. He mentioned that after migrating, one has to “penetrate” a new society:

Penetration is putting one’s feet on the ground where we are not familiar. That is not ours. That is foreign soil. Everything is new, the odours, the air, the people, the dress, the cars, all is new. And, integration, integration is becoming part of the landscape after. It’s to belong to the crowd, belong to the people, better understand their habits, their ah, how they eat, how they dress.... And I don’t believe that we integrate at the end of five years, it is really long term that we can say we are integrated. And we never, never integrate at 100%. I think that we are never integrated at 100 percent, because there is always the little accent... there is the color of our skin that is there.

Makane also expressed a sense of unease when interacting with members of the host community, despite having been in Canada longer than most other participants:

Frankly, I understand, the man from Eastern Europe, after a word, two or three, I can guess the rest or I will come to it. I can extrapolate with a certain degree of, a very high probability what he means. You know, but, the people from here, from here, ah, I’m not very sure of my way of acting, of doing, of talking. If it’s the way of doing in their way, I’m not sure. At 90, more than 90 percent I’m not sure.

Participants sought to maintain particular aspects contributing to their identities, while also adapting others in order to work toward integration. Makane described “acting how they act and not how you perceive things” in his attempts to better fit in.

For others, being in a new place presented particular opportunities for belonging. Rose and Marie discussed that despite now facing several challenges as single mothers, they had also gained newfound independence. Marie felt she had more potential



here than in her home country: "Because we, even if you are 40 years old, 50 years old especially if you are a woman you will stay with your parents. If you aren't, as long as you are not married. So it's difficult to liberate yourself, and if you study, you won't even go to work, you will always remain dependent upon your parents...." Similarly, Rose described having adopted a different mentality over time:

The mother here is autonomous. But if I go with that discourse back home, they will say 'Ah! She has become insensitive to our problems'. So, here the daughter is not obligated to help her mother.... Because the mother is already autonomous. And the mother has saved, has saved during her whole life so that at retirement she can have her bread. So I now speak of that mentality.

While her family members back home criticized her for this, she explained that migration changed the way she saw herself because it "strengthened her character" and she stated: "I think that I've found my place. I am very comfortable."

In renegotiating place-belongingness, the participants' experiences were shaped not only by their initial sense of unease at being in an unfamiliar place and having to re-position their intersecting identities, but also by everyday forms of "othering" they faced in their daily lives, which negatively impacted them. Participants described the multiple and ongoing forms of discrimination they experienced from people of their own source country or ethnic group and other immigrants, from the Canadian-born population, and within different places. Gilberto discussed potential tensions existing between different waves of immigrants:

What I have noticed is that people who are here since, for example 20 years, they look at someone who arrives... they don't have enough money to support their family so they ask Ontario for help. And they say, "ah, when I arrived here, that didn't exist, yes, that didn't exist before. And, I had to learn English a little bit and after find myself a job. Now I work, and the taxes that I pay are just to support you? Who just arrived? And that money that should come to me I have to give it so that you can find an apartment, so that you can pay electricity, food." So, that becomes a form of racism....

Several participants described experiences of racism, such as Rose who shared an example from her first days in Montreal:

A shock as soon as I had arrived... I went to church, they say "the peace of Christ, shake each other's hands". I turn to shake a woman's hand. She refused. She looked like that [up and down], I said, my God there's the question that I had asked myself, will they accept me, there's a sign, that I will really live a life of difficulty here. I returned home that day where I lived at the shelter, I was really disappointed, completely, I said my God, it was a sign to say that you will not be accepted here.

Participants particularly emphasized subtle and structural forms of discrimination based on aspects of their identities marking them as being 'from elsewhere' to employers, whether it be their race, family name, accent, or foreign credentials and work experience. In describing the multiple and indirect ways racism can operate in the labour market, Makane's comments reflect how markers of difference can exclude immigrants: "...racism is a lot more in people's minds. Because when you send the CV a thousand times and no one calls you, the people just look by family name. You don't have any chances. It's a lot more things of that nature." He also felt Canadian employers preferred particular people for certain jobs and that people from visible minority groups did not have the same access:

The market is not the same market for visible minorities...you come from somewhere I don't know, the Congo, you come, you want to do management, administration, you could have ten doctorates but you won't find work, you have to be rational. If you want to return home, so much the better, but here it's not those jobs, it doesn't reflect your portrait.

This shaped his strategic approach to job searching in stressful professions with higher turnover rates that he felt would be more likely to hire immigrants due to labour force demand. He returned to university to obtain specific Canadian credentials, nonetheless experiencing deskilling and a loss of capital as he worked in a profession below his degree of qualification. Halima also faced challenges to securing employment and felt that her niqab was a primary obstacle to her labour force integration because her appearance was not mainstream:

You won't find a job. Because you know, when I had an interview at [organization], I wasn't alone; there were a lot of candidates with me. I saw, when you compare, why will they choose a woman with all black like that,

and it was the position of secretary, receptionist. Why would they choose ah, there are others with hair, makeup and all that, why would they choose this.

Our findings emphasize that French-speaking newcomers from visible minority groups do not have to contend solely with the challenges associated with being situated within a minority language context, they must also negotiate the intersection of their identities, whether linguistic, racial, gendered, or otherwise, within these communities. These intersections are experienced daily as people work toward integration at the local scale. Not only do they have to negotiate their own shifting identities as these become differently emplaced following migration, they must also deal with how their identities are perceived and reacted to by others. As the quotations above attest, visible minority Francophone immigrants' integration experiences are shaped through the ways they navigate the contested politics of identity, place, and belonging.

### Negotiating belonging

While federal policies are enacted across the country, their implications are experienced at micro-geographic scales. McDowell (1999, 30) conceptualized place as being constituted by relations cutting across spatial scales and argued that researchers must focus on a specific locality for such interconnections to be analyzed: "places, in other words, touch ground as spatially located patterns and behaviours." Hopkins (2010) further highlighted that it is within sites of cultural contact, resulting from processes like migration, that identity is renegotiated. Given the instability of processes of identity, place, and belonging, her study signalled that immigrants do not simply resettle within and orient themselves toward a particular location, but must re-learn how to "be" within place at specific moments in time. The enactment of belonging occurs through varied practices that reposition or reaffirm identity within place and contribute to multiple belongings. Throughout this process, migrants may experience a sense of "in betweenness" as they are "constantly juggling here and there, now and then, with constant interplay between local and distant influences" (Hopkins 2010, 533). It is not strictly the physical relocation associated with international migration that prompts alterations to

identity and belonging; instead it stems from the ways in which migrants interact with the dynamic components of place (Hopkins 2010).

Our research examined how the politics of place and identity following international migration influenced the belonging of French-speaking immigrants within London. The integration process experienced by participants signalled the tension between official policies and rights, and the differential materialization of those rights with respect to place. Danielle described the challenge of raising a family in London's linguistic minority environment: "I had as a responsibility to help them integrate into the Francophone language. There where there was also an Anglophone exterior. And, playing with that tension was really too much work with four children who were learning two languages at a time. And who had to keep their mother tongue."

Processes of belonging were experienced on a daily basis within specific sites (e.g., workplaces, shelters) where the participants encountered different forms of inclusion and exclusion and differentially negotiated their identities within varied places.

There were similarities characterizing the participants' experiences. For instance each faced a range of transitions, all described having to start over upon arrival and all experienced forms of othering; however they responded to these challenges differently. Several adopted some characteristics of the host community while forgoing others, and discussed the varied ways they negotiated belonging. For instance, Paul described himself as being adaptable in all situations: "I adapt, I am not exacting, I adapt according to the place." Khalil adopted a slightly different approach, stressing that: "In life you have to be flexible, but you shouldn't also twist yourself in every direction." Processes of belonging were mediated through acceptance of, or resistance to, the dominant norms they encountered. Negotiations of identity did not occur merely upon arrival; rather, they were ongoing through social interactions in varying places within the city.

While London is a designated area under the province's French Language Services Act, the participants became linguistic and visible minorities in a small FMC embedded within a largely Caucasian and Anglophone population. As the participants sought to develop a personal sense of place-belongingness their experiences within the community were shaped by the politics of belonging at the local scale, and by the place-based forms of discrimination and racism

to which they were subjected. This included the marginalization of the participants' symbolic capital. It was not simply that they were expected to acquire new forms of capital (e.g., "Canadian experience") in order to work toward integration in London. What frustrated many is that the embodied capital they had upon arrival and acquired following migration was diminished through processes of racialization. Not only were their linguistic skills not as valuable as many had assumed prior to settling in London, but the intersections of language with other aspects of identity served to further marginalize their skills as they experienced multiple forms of discrimination.

The stories shared by the participants reflect McDowell's (1999) assertion that power relations defining spatial and social boundaries and rules serve not only to construct places, but also to define who belongs within them and who can be excluded from them. Policies attending to Francophone immigration must, therefore, move beyond overly simplistic conceptualizations of place as strictly *location* to consider how the politics of place at the local scale serve to shape immigrants' integration.

## References

- Antonsich, M. 2010. Searching for belonging—An analytical framework. *Geography Compass* 4(6): 644–659.
- Blommaert, J., J. Collins, and S. Slembrouck. 2005. Spaces of multiculturalism. *Language & Communication* 25(3): 197–216.
- Blunt, A., and R. Dowling. 2006. *Home*. New York: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *Language and symbolic power*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Butcher, M. 2008. FOB boys, VCs and Habibs: Using language to navigate difference and belonging in culturally diverse Sydney. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34(4): 371–387.
- Canada, Standing Committee on Official Languages. 2003. *Immigration as a tool for the development of official language minority communities – Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages*. Ottawa, ON: Standing Committee on Official Languages.
- Canadian Heritage. 2008. *Roadmap for Canada's linguistic duality 2008–2013: Acting for the future*. <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/slo-ols/pubs/08-13-ldl/08-13-ldl-eng.pdf>
- Carrillo Rowe, A. 2005. Be longing: Toward a feminist politics of relation. *NWSA Journal* 17(2): 15–37.
- Carspecken, P. F. 1996. *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2003a. *Strategic framework to foster immigration to Francophone minority communities*. Ottawa, ON: Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee.
- . 2003b. *The next act: New momentum for Canada's linguistic duality. The action plan for official languages*. [http://www.cpfnb.com/articles/ActionPlan\\_e.pdf](http://www.cpfnb.com/articles/ActionPlan_e.pdf)
- . 2006. *Strategic plan to foster immigration to Francophone minority communities*. Ottawa, ON: Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee.
- City of London. 2012. *Local statistics*. [http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/About\\_London/localstats.htm](http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/About_London/localstats.htm)
- Creese, G. 2010. Erasing English language competency: African migrants in Vancouver, Canada. *International Migration & Integration* 11(3): 295–313.
- Creese, G., E. N. Kambere, and M. Masinda. 2011. 'You have to stand up for yourself': African immigrant and refugee teens negotiate settlement in Vancouver. Working Paper Series 11–16, Metropolis British Columbia.
- Cresswell, T. 2008. Place: Encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography* 93(3): 132–139.
- Daniel, B. J. 2005. Researching African Canadian women: Indigenous knowledges and the politics of representation. In *Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies*, ed. G. J. S. Dei and G. Singh Johal. New York: Peter Lang, 53–78.
- Dei, G. J. S. 2005. Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies: An introduction. In *Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies*, ed. G. J. S. Dei and G. Singh Johal. New York: Peter Lang, 1–28.
- FCFA (Fédération des communautés francophone et acadienne du Canada). 2004. *Evaluation of the ability of minority Francophone communities to host newcomers*. Ottawa: Prairie Research Associates.
- Galabuzi, G. 2011. Hegemonies, continuities, and discontinuities of multiculturalism and the Anglo-Franco conformity order. In *Home and native land: Unsettling multiculturalism in Canada*, ed. M. Chazan, L. Helps, A. Stanley, and S. Thakkar. Toronto: Between the Lines, 85–101.
- Gilmartin, M. 2008. Migration, identity and belonging. *Geography Compass* 2(6): 1837–1852.
- Hopkins, G. 2010. A changing sense of Somaliness: Somali women in London and Toronto. *Gender, Place and Culture* 17(4): 519–538.
- Jamal, S. 2005. Critical ethnography: An effective way to conduct anti-racism research. In *Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies*, ed. G. J. S. Dei and G. Singh Johal. New York: Peter Lang, 225–240.
- Jedwab, J. 2002. *Immigration and the vitality of Canada's official language communities: Policy, demography and identity*. Ottawa: Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.
- Kobayashi, A. 1993. Multiculturalism: Representing a Canadian institution. In *Place/culture/representation*, ed. J. Duncan and D. Ley. New York: Routledge, 205–231.
- Korazemo, C., and R. A. Stebbins. 2001. Les immigrants francophones de Calgary: Leurs problèmes d'insertion dans les communautés francophones et anglophones. *Cahiers Franco-Canadiens de l'Ouest* 13(1): 37–50.
- London Economic Development Corporation. 2013. Industry sectors. <http://www.ledc.com/main/term/industry-sectors>
- Madibbo, A. 2006. *Minority within a minority: Black Francophone immigrants and the dynamics of power and resistance*. New York: Routledge.
- Massey, D. 1994. *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- . 1996. Politicising space and place. *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 112(2): 117–123.

- McDowell, L. 1999. *Gender, identity and place: Understanding feminist geographies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- . 2008. Thinking through work: Complex inequalities, constructions of difference and trans-national migrants. *Progress in Human Geography* 32(4): 491–507.
- McKittrick, K. 2002. "Their blood is there, and they can't throw it out": Honouring Black Canadian geographies. *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 7: 27–37.
- Moore, R. 2008. Capital. In *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*, ed. M. Grenfell. Stocksfield, UK: Acumen, 101–117.
- Quell, C. 2002. *Official languages and immigration: Obstacles and opportunities for immigrants and communities*. Ottawa, ON: Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.
- Razack, S. H. 2002. When place becomes race. In *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a white settler society*, ed. S. H. Razack. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 1–20.
- Redclift, V. 2011. Subjectivity and citizenship: Intersections of space, ethnicity and identity among the Urdu-speaking minority in Bangladesh. *International Migration and Integration* 12(1): 25–42.
- Ryan, G. W., and H. R. Bernard. 2003. Data management and analysis methods. In *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*, ed. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 259–309.
- Ryan, L. 2010. Becoming Polish in London: Negotiating ethnicity through migration. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 16(3): 359–376.
- Sandelowski, M. 1995. Qualitative analysis: What is it and how to begin. *Research in Nursing and Health* 18(4): 371–375.
- Sharma, N. 2011. Canadian multiculturalism and its nationalisms. In *Home and native land: Unsettling multiculturalism in Canada*, ed. M. Chazan, L. Helps, A. Stanley, and S. Thakkar. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 85–101.
- Silvey, R., and V. Lawson. 1999. Placing the migrant. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89(1): 121–132.
- Statistics Canada. 2007. *London, Ontario (Code3539036) (table). 2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>
- . 2012. London, Ontario (Code 0480) and Ontario (Code 35). table. Census Profile. 2011 Census. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?>