Supporting Social Integration of Canadian Immigrants: The Impact of Discourses on Immigrants' Lived Experiences

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To mom,
who cheered me on from the very start,
i carry your heart with me.[1]

[1] Reference to poem by E.E. Cummings: [i carry your heart with me] (1952)

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Abstract

Historically unprecedented numbers of immigrants are expected to arrive in Canada in from 2023-2025. Canada has an outward-facing reputation of being welcoming towards immigrants and providing them ample support for their integration, but literature suggests that newcomers to Canada experience discrimination, loneliness, and marginalization (Johnson et al, 2021; Stick et al., 2021). This gap between external perceptions and newcomer experiences indicates a need to better support immigrants' social integration. Social integration includes acquiring social and cultural capital, developing a sense of belonging, negotiating identity, and forming relationships (Ager & Strang, 2008; Ghosh, 2000; Hedetoft, 2002). These aspects of social integration are influenced by dominant societal discourses that define norms and assumptions for immigrants, and shape their experiences. In this study, I explore how societal discourses impact newcomers' social integration in the context of three Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs in Alberta, Canada. The objectives of the study are to understand how discourses advanced through the LINC program influence immigrants' integration and to highlight immigrant stories and perspectives on social integration. Drawing on critical post-structural theories, I used Critical Discourse Analysis and Intersectionality to collect and analyze data over two stages. In the first stage, data was collected from over 40 government and service provider organization websites that inform the LINC program, from over 50 online news articles published in Canada, from interviews with LINC teachers (n = 5) and administrators (n = 3), and from focus groups with immigrants (n = 16). Website and interview data were analyzed thematically; focus group data was analyzed using Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, moving from description to interpretation and explanation. In the second stage, nine interviews were conducted with a subset of immigrant participants to collect life story narratives and perspectives on the data collected in stage one; this interview data was analyzed using an intersectional lens. Findings suggest that dominant societal discourses surrounding immigration in Canada—such as multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance—are not always reflected in the lived experiences of immigrants and may negatively impact their social integration (e.g., immigrants are thought to represent diversity, which is widely considered a positive characteristic of Canadian identity, yet this label sometimes limited participants' access to cultural and social capital). Recommendations are outlined, including the need to reframe harmful dominant societal discourses and reconsider LINC policies and practices to create a

more positive social integration experience for immigrants and work towards more equitable outcomes for immigrants in Canada.

Résumé

Un nombre sans précédent d'immigrants devrait arriver au Canada entre 2023 et 2025. Le Canada projette une image superficielle d'être accueillant envers les immigrants et de leur fournir un soutien suffisant pour leur intégration. Cependant, la littérature suggère que les nouveaux arrivants au Canada subissent de la discrimination, de la solitude et de la marginalisation. Cela indique un besoin de mieux soutenir l'intégration sociale des immigrants. L'intégration sociale comprend l'acquisition d'un capital social et culturel, le développement d'un sentiment d'appartenance, la négociation de l'identité et la formation de relations. Ces aspects de l'intégration sociale sont influencés par les discours sociétaux dominants qui définissent les normes et les hypothèses pour les immigrants et façonnent leurs expériences. Dans cette étude, j'explore l'impact des discours sociétaux sur l'intégration sociale des nouveaux arrivants dans le contexte de trois programmes de cours de langue pour les nouveaux arrivants au Canada (LINC) en Alberta, au Canada. Les objectifs de l'étude sont de comprendre comment les discours avancés dans le cadre du programme CLIC influencent l'intégration des immigrants et de mettre en lumière les histoires et les perspectives des immigrants sur l'intégration sociale. En m'appuyant sur des théories post-structurelles critiques, j'ai utilisé l'analyse critique du discours et l'intersectionnalité pour collecter et analyser des données en deux étapes. Dans la première étape, des données ont été recueillies à partir de plus de 40 sites Web gouvernementaux et d'organisations de fournisseurs de services qui informent le programme CLIC, à partir de plus de 50 articles de presse en ligne publiés au Canada, à partir d'entrevues avec des enseignants CLIC (n = 5) et des administrateurs (n = 3) , et de groupes de discussion avec des immigrants (n = 16). Les données du site Web et des entrevues ont été analysées par thématique; les données des groupes de discussion ont été analysées à l'aide de l'approche de Fairclough pour l'analyse critique du discours, passant de la description à l'interprétation et à l'explication. Dans la deuxième étape, neuf entretiens ont été menés avec un sous-ensemble de participants immigrants pour recueillir des récits de vie et des perspectives sur les données recueillies à la première étape ; ces données d'entrevue ont été analysées à l'aide d'une lentille intersectionnelle. Les résultats suggèrent que les discours sociétaux dominants entourant l'immigration au Canada, tels

que le multiculturalisme, la diversité et la tolérance, ne se reflètent pas toujours dans les expériences vécues des immigrants et peuvent avoir une incidence négative sur leur intégration sociale (p. considérée comme une caractéristique positive de l'identité canadienne, mais cette étiquette a parfois limité l'accès des participants au capital culturel et social). Des recommandations sont présentées, y compris la nécessité de recadrer les discours sociétaux dominants nuisibles et de reconsidérer les politiques et pratiques CLIC afin de créer une expérience d'intégration sociale plus positive pour les immigrants et de travailler à des résultats plus équitables pour les immigrants au Canada.

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Chapter 1: Background and Rationale

1.1. A Mixed Portrait of Immigration in Canada

Canada is an immigrant receiving country, which is apparent in the nation's ever-shifting demographics, with 23% of the population comprised of first-generation immigrants as of 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022b). When global migration slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) prioritized short and long-term strategies for modernizing immigration application processes to prevent interruptions to the supply of immigrants required to meet urgent labour market needs (Griffith, 2022). The projected targets of admitting 1.2 million immigrants between 2021-2023 (IRCC, 2021) and an additional 1.4 million immigrants between 2023-2025 (IRCC, 2023) reflect Canada's dependence on immigrants to support economic development as the Canadian-born population is living longer and having fewer children. In particular, immigrants play an integral role in delivering and improving health and social services and meeting labour force needs. IRCC (2023) states that immigrants are ideal candidates for filling labour force needs because "they contribute more than they receive benefits over their lifetime" (para. 2).

IRCC claims that the services in place for settlement and integration are supporting immigrants in comprehensive ways. The ministry has consistently heralded their achievements in welcoming and integrating immigrants as a "central pillar in Canada's success story" (IRCC, 2018, p. 5). Ahmed Hussen, former minister of IRCC, commented on Canada's reputation and track record of immigration:

> Canada is a recognized international leader in settlement and integration. We firmly believe that when we invest in helping newcomers learn the language, find employment, and build a successful life, all of Canada benefits… Innovative programming helps newcomers make the most of their talents to fully integrate and contribute to the Canadian economy and to their communities. (IRCC, 2019a, para. 8)

IRCC funded over 550 service provider organizations in 2021-2022 to provide language training, employment support, information and orientation services, and community integration (Fraser, 2022). IRCC also set up an Anti-Racism Task Force, which is intended to nurture a more equitable work culture, a representative workforce, and the inclusion of diverse voices in leadership. On the surface, it appears that immigrants' needs are well addressed after they arrive in Canada. The aggrandizing representation of integration in Canada is pervasive on the world stage, but whether integration is as successful as it seems when promoted by IRCC is fraught.

The lived experiences of immigrants in Canada often reflect a different story. Stick et al. (2021) conducted an analysis of the 2018 General Social Survey, revealing that recent and long-term migrants report higher levels of loneliness than their Canadian-born counterparts due to the disruption in their social networks, stress, culture shock, language barriers, and finding employment. Similarly, a study by Johnson et al. (2021) reported that senior immigrants experienced social isolation in disproportionate ways compared to Canadian-born seniors due to factors including "experiences of racism and discrimination, separation from their family, fewer cultural and social connections" among others (p. 269). This data is further supported by anecdotal stories of individual immigrants, such as Selma Kiwirra, a Sudanese immigrant living in Regina. Selma moved to Canada in search of a better quality of life and a peaceful community where she would feel accepted. In a point of view piece published by CBC, she writes:

> When I first came to Canada, I felt very lonely and isolated. It wasn't a language barrier so much as a social aspect. I missed the human level of interaction: familiar faces, greeting people, familiar products in stores, using actual money when buying rather than cards, etc. (Kiwirra, 2019)

She describes how her feelings of isolation intensified as she began a Master's program and searched for a job. Her comments suggest that there are aspects of integration that may not be adequately addressed by IRCC's approaches.

Thus, a mixed portrait of Canadian immigration emerges. While political discourses advance a view on the world stage that Canada's approach to integration is successful and a central aspect of Canadian identity, the barriers and challenges emerging from immigrants' lived experiences reveal a critical need to reconsider and improve approaches for settlement and integration while centering immigrant perspectives, stories, and voices. This is particularly important given the increasingly super-diverse demographics of Canadian immigrants, whose gender and age profiles, migration profiles and patterns, and educational and labour market experiences vary more than ever before (Vertovec, 2007, 2010). To better meet immigrants' diverse social needs and support their wellbeing amid consistently increasing immigration targets in the coming years, there is an urgent need to reevaluate current approaches for integration of Canadian immigrants.

This research applies a critical lens to the misleading ways that immigration and integration are presented in Canada and on the world stage. Although the Canadian government advertises itself as an ideal destination for immigrants, highly welcoming with ample strategies and services

for integration and settlement, once immigrants arrive, many feel misled or betrayed as their expectations go unmet, and as they face systemic barriers in accessing social and economic opportunities. Moreover, the oppressions that Canadian immigrants face are disguised by celebratory nation-promoting discourses—advanced by Canadian politicians, in the media, in daily conversations among Canadians, and peppered throughout service provider organization policies and mission statements—that highlight the success of Canadian immigration. This project set out to explore how immigrants navigate this complex and often unjust system.

1.2. Positionality Statement

To begin, I must position myself in relation to this research, to explain what motivated me to pursue this topic and to address how my identity impacted the research process. As a white Canadian-born researcher engaging in a critical research project, I recognize the complexities and power dynamics inherent in my position while working with immigrant participants. My grandparents settled in Canada in Alberta (Treaty 7) and southern Saskatchewan (Treaty 4), and I have relatives living in Manitoba (Treaty 1). Motivated by my interest in understanding the relationship between identity and power in language learning contexts, the purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences and discursive practices of Canadian immigrants while bringing to focus how larger social structures shape their lives. By addressing my positionality, I aim to enhance reflexivity and ethical integrity, which are central to a critical research project.

I have a deep-rooted interest in others' experiences. As early as elementary school, some of my closest friendships were with children from different cultural and social backgrounds, and forming cross-cultural relationships has remained central throughout my career and research. When I graduated undergraduate studies with a language teaching qualification, I applied for work abroad and began working as an English language instructor in Ankara, Türkiye. Over three years in this position, I began to question the relationship between language identity and power in classroom settings. I eventually sought to explore these questions through graduate studies in Canada, which has culminated in this dissertation. This work is based in my long-standing disposition to learn about others' experiences and my commitment to engage in critical questioning of power dynamics to seek fairness and equality for those whose identities are limited by the broader social structures they inhabit.

I am aware that in the Canadian context, the dominant social structures that afford me privilege and power based on my identity are the same social structures that confine certain identities to marginalized social positions through systemic barriers and discrimination. My identity and lived experience include being born into a white, upper-class, English-speaking and Christian family in Canada. I am an able-bodied straight cis-gendered woman. These factors allow me to benefit from dominant group membership in Canada based on race, nationality, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and socio-economic status. In many ways, Canadian systems are designed for my success, but they are not well-structured for cultural or social others who embody different identity markers.

As such, I approach my work with immigrants in Canada as an outsider, and I have worked to form connections with immigrants through several streams: I am involved in immigrant serving community organizations as a volunteer in Calgary, Alberta, both in supporting newcomers as an English language teacher and employment counsellor. I also organized a weekly conversational English event for immigrants in my community in Verdun (Montreal, Quebec). As I interact with immigrants in these settings, I am intentional about listening to them, validating their existing experience, applauding their multilingualism, and aiming to instill confidence and a sense of self-advocacy.

At the same time as I was forming these relationships with immigrants in my localities, through my graduate work, I had the opportunity to explore how systemic hierarchies in Canada's sociohistorical context have led to continued marginalization of Canadian newcomers. This critical perspective at the heart of my research reflects my orientation towards work that aims to ultimately dismantle systemic oppression and cycles of injustice. In this way I work towards being an ally. Li et al. (2023) define an ally as a person from a dominant group who cares deeply about a marginalized group, provides visible support to that group, and tries to use their privilege and power to respond to and stand against injustice and social oppression. DeTurk (2011) suggests that being an ally entails advocacy, with allies drawing on their social and cultural capital to influence others, often through dialogue that persuades others to rethink their social frames or reconsider their perspectives and positions. The notion of allyship has been problematized as "a performance that is all too often disconnected from action" (Bourke, 2020, p. 180) and for its tendency to privilege the perspectives of dominant group members in identifying problems and solutions on behalf of marginalized people (Jenkins, 2009). Bourke

(2020) emphasizes that allyship is both a process and a goal, and he suggest that allies must root their allyship in action, be ready for discomfort, make efforts to understand their privilege, be present in the community with members of oppressed groups, and educate others. In this vein, I make ongoing efforts to advocate for immigrants in dialogues with other dominant group members by challenging stereotypes and common assumptions; this is aligned to a core goal at the heart of my project: to rethink and reframe discourses with the hope of reversing inequality and improving migrants' lives.

My background and positionality informed my objectives and design for this project. My research is ontologically and epistemologically based in a social constructivist research paradigm. I consider social reality and knowledge to be produced in social interaction/context. My own perception of reality and my experience in the world is unlike that of the participants involved in this study; multiple experiences and perceptions exist. Therefore, learning about the social realities of immigrants in Canada required inviting immigrants into the research process and allowing their perspectives and experiences to inform my research questions. For this reason, immigrant voices feature prominently in the data collection of dissertation, with qualitative methods (i.e., focus groups, interviews) used to position their voices and knowledge as central to this project's contribution to knowledge. My overarching approach to interpretation was critical and inductive, seeking to understand participants' experiences within socio-historical context, while continually engaging in reflexivity on how structures of power (which I benefit from) impact their realities and social integration.

I am an outsider to the experience of immigrating to and integrating in Canada. My outsider positioning impacted the approach and results of the research. For example, since I lack closeness to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants, I was limited in my ability to recruit participants (this challenge is detailed in Chapter 3, where I discuss my methodological process). However, Holmes (2020) points out some advantages of an outsider position, namely, that distance from participants pre-empts interpretive bias or predetermination of participants' thoughts and experiences. As an outsider, critical researcher, and ally, I drew on critical theories to describe and interpret the social integration experience of Canadian immigrants. By raising awareness of discourses, I hope that my work will challenge oppressive structures and amplify the voices of immigrants.

I am immensely grateful to the newcomers who volunteered their time and opened their lives to me through their participation in this study. I hope that by amplifying their stories, their experiences, strengths, and challenges will become known to others. I also hope that readers may be compelled to consider newcomers who they interact with in their own lives and spaces with new understanding, empathy, and perhaps even solidarity. I return to my positionality and remain reflexive throughout this dissertation, but I conclude this positionality statement by reiterating that my interest in conducting this critical research project was motivated by compassion and care for immigrants in my community. It was a privilege to meet immigrants and magnify their voices through this doctoral project.

1.3. A Note on Terminology: Immigrants, Newcomers, Canadians, Indigenous

Central to my project's methodological and theoretical approach is the view that language use—and terminology—is rarely neutral, and therefore must be chosen thoughtfully. The term *immigrant* is fraught with multiple ideological meanings and perspectives. For example, some suggest that aside from Indigenous peoples, every person in Canada is an immigrant since Canada is a settler-nation established by colonizers. A full discussion on race relations and settler colonialism is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but my work is informed by Thobani's (2007) theorization of Canadian national identity as a hierarchy distinguishing white Canadians from "Others" (including both Indigenous peoples and immigrants). Race, status, and other factors play a role in power dynamics and how people are positioned in the Canadian context, informing who has the right to be and belong in Canada, and accordingly, who has access to rights, services, resources, and privileges.

Importantly, systemic racism against Indigenous communities in Canada is deeply entrenched, and the challenges facing Indigenous communities exceed the challenges faced by immigrants. Immigrants are widely *included* in the picture of Canadian identity, whereas Indigenous communities are often not. In this way, immigrants are complicit alongside settler Canadians in suppressing the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous communities, contributing to the historical racism experienced by Indigenous peoples.

Considering this hierarchy, using apparently simple terms to describe a person, for example, as an *immigrant*, at the very least requires a definition of the term. The terms I have selected are defined here; the terms are intended to provide thoughtful yet descriptive ways of

referring to peoples' experiences and backgrounds throughout this dissertation. I use the terms *immigrant* and *migrant* interchangeably to broadly refer to any person who has moved to Canada from another nation. I use the term *newcomer* to refer to an immigrant who has recently moved to Canada. I use the phrase '*settled immigrants'* to refer to immigrants who moved to Canada earlier in their lifetime and have, to varying degrees, adjusted to life in Canada. I use the term *established Canadians* as an umbrella term for both settled immigrants and Canadian-born people (with or without immigrant backgrounds) who have a relatively high level of familiarity with and comfort in the Canadian context. Finally, when it is important to highlight structural inequality, I use the term *White settler-Canadian* to refer to people who hold dominant group membership by virtue of their euro-centric colonial history.

1.4. Integration of Canadian Immigrants

Integration in Canada is alleged in policy as a two-way process, with commitment from immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and commitment from established Canadians to welcome and adapt to new people and cultures (IRCC, 2019b, section 2.3). Integration is a long-term goal that is approached through various settlement programs that address the needs of immigrants before and after they arrive. Settlement programs include: support services like child-care and translation; needs assessment services to provide referrals to other community-based resources; information and orientation services to develop migrants' life skills in Canada; language training programs and services; employment-related program services; and community connection services to provide networking opportunities and mentoring (IRCC, 2019b).

The settlement supports needed vary depending on the four categories of immigration: economic, family sponsorship, refugees and protected persons, and other (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Economic immigrants are selected through a points-based recruitment system that determines "their potential to join the labour force and contribute to Canada's economy" (Bloemraad, 2016, p. 3). Family sponsorship includes those with relationships to a spouse or other relative who is already a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. Refugees include those who are granted permanent resident status because their home country is a site of persecution, war or armed conflict, and/or human rights violations. The 'other' category includes case-by-case scenarios that do not fit within any of the prior categories (Statistics Canada, 2022c).

Most immigrants fall within the economic category, with targets for economic immigrants projected to increase each year—57% in 2023, 58% in 2024, and 60% in 2025 (IRCC, 2022a). To rationalize these increases, IRCC highlights the benefits of economic migrants in Canada, celebrating their economic contribution from filling gaps in the workforce. It is worth noting that the workforce gaps filled by migrants are most often low-skilled jobs; in 2021, immigrants comprised 8% of the total labour force, but accounted for 13% in accommodation and food services and 10% in manufacturing and transportation (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Considering Canada's emphasis on recruiting highly skilled immigrants and entrepreneurs, it is problematic that the percentage of university-educated immigrants working in jobs requiring university degrees decreased from 46% in 2001 to 38% in 2016, all while Canadian-born workers with university degrees consistently represented around 60% of jobs requiring a university level education (Statistics Canada, 2022a). This reflects a systemic problem in the way skilled immigrants are recruited to Canada only to be met by significant barriers finding positions suited to their qualifications and experience.

Given the relatively higher numbers of migrants admitted in the economic stream, the supports in place for settlement and integration tend to prioritize economic integration, focusing on employment skills and counselling, development of language skills for employment, and training or courses for unskilled labour jobs. This somewhat one-sided economic approach to integration is problematic. Reitz and Banerjee (2007) suggest that employment and "higher earnings alone do not smooth the path to integration… experiences of discrimination and vulnerability remain, slowing integration of minorities" (p. 522). A main issue with Canadian immigration policy is that the social needs of immigrants are insufficiently defined and addressed, indicating a failure to adequately support migrants' social integration when they arrive and settle in Canada. Therefore, this study focuses on social integration, which includes aspects such as social engagement, networking, relationships, experiences of inclusion or discrimination, negotiating identity, and developing a sense of belonging.

1.5. Social Integration is more than just Language

Despite the above-mentioned array of social, relational, and experiential factors within the topic of social integration, the Canadian government mainly addresses social integration

through language learning. IRCC (2011) claims language is a barrier or means to social integration:

> Knowledge of an official language is a crucial prerequisite to social integration or acculturation (voting, volunteering, talking to neighbours, etc.). Good second language skills increase non-native speakers' confidence and sense of affiliation, which results in more interaction experiences with native speakers, which in turn enhances language skills. (p. 12)

Consequently, IRCC provides free language programming in both English and French to support social integration among Canadian newcomers. The English program, which is the focus and context of this research study, is called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and the French program is called Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC). These programs are a key element of Canada's integration plan, accounting for between a third and half of integration strategy expenditures, with the exact amount by year (IRCC, 2011). The LINC program has a two-fold mandate: language training and integration.

While being able to communicate and understand a dominant language is certainly helpful for participating with others in society, the LINC program does not appear to be very focused on social integration. Haque (2017) suggests that the program has a narrow focus on language for the workplace. Studies have suggested that the program's approach to teaching English tends to devalue the multilingual backgrounds and identities of learners, rather than view their backgrounds and identities as having potential to support them as they integrate into Canadian communities and participate in life routines (Fleming, 2010; Kubota & Lin, 2009). When interacting with native speakers and participating in Canadian culture are considered the benchmark for socially integrating into Canada, other languages and cultures are devalued or 'othered' as a social hierarchy is defined (Bednarz, 2017; Guo, 2015; Haque, 2012; Kubota, 2015; Sterzuk, 2015). Ricento et al. (2008) also found that newcomers take on a passive role in LINC classrooms as they are taught Canadian culture and ways of using language. Gibb's (2009) analysis of LINC policy also revealed that the program fails to recognize learners' subjectivities and identities in the language learning process.

Another challenge with approaching social integration via LINC programming is that the LINC program tends to endorse a traditional view of language learning, where learners are expected to progress linearly through sequenced language skills that support their life in Canada. However, immigrants' linguistic, personal, and professional backgrounds and goals vary considerably. The integration trajectories of migrants are multiple, varied, and contingent on

context (Jezak & Carrasco, 2017). Therefore, language learners will not necessarily have a shared 'target' (Kramsch, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2006, 2018; Norton Peirce, 1995), and immigrants' emergent and dynamic needs are not likely to be adequately addressed through participation in the LINC program.

Briefly, the LINC program has a way of equating language learning with social integration, but the program could do more by thoughtfully incorporating an understanding of social integration in terms of newcomers' social connections and relationships, their shifting identity, their development of a sense of belonging, and their experiences of inclusion or discrimination. This study explores the extent that these other aspects of social integration are addressed in the LINC program by exploring discourses. The concept of discourse is introduced in the section that follows, along with its relevance to social integration.

1.6. Understanding Social Integration through Discourse

The aspects of social integration that I focus on in this study include how newcomers form social relationships, negotiate their identity, and develop a sense of belonging (note that the rationale for choosing these foci is elaborated in Chapter 2). Relationships, identity, and a sense of belonging are each shaped through daily interactions and activities where immigrants come to understand and re-create their social world and position in relation to others. In such interactions and social activities, immigrants participate in discourses. Participating in a discourse means using language in way that is meaningful to others in social context (Fairclough, 2015; Gee, 2005). Discourses reveal ways that apparently simple language choices actually convey complex social, relational, and historical connotations that represent ideas and to position social actors in non-neutral ways. This study explores how discourses impact social integration; more specifically, how discourses operate in the daily interactions and social practices of newcomers as they build relationships, negotiate identity, and develop a sense of belonging.

Within critical theory, discourses relate to power and positioning in society, and constrain social actors in varying ways (Foucault, 1990, 1991). Working within this theory, I align my work most closely to Fairclough's (2015) theorization of critical discourse analysis in its relation to ideologies. Fairclough suggests that discourses construct and sustain ideologies, which are frameworks or representations that organize how people understand their social world; ideologies are so embedded in sustaining the social world—including relations of power,

institutions, and systems—that they are often widely presumed to be common sense (Fairclough, 2015). Therefore, discourses are ideological as they convey representations of reality that benefit powerful people, systems, and institutions, and continually (re)construct society as we know it.

Discourses span all levels of society. At the highest level, government policy and media disseminate ideologies via discourses that are taken up locally by institutions and also in daily conversations and interactions. For example, a discourse on immigration advanced by the Canadian government portrays immigration as instrumental and integral to Canadian identity; it is both necessary for Canada's economic success and an abiding part of Canada's multicultural national identity. This discourse is widely taken up among Canadians, and immigrants may consequently be positioned primarily as subjects for the labour force and/or an embodied representation of diversity. Another discourse, sometimes advanced through political platforms that leverage anti-immigrant sentiments, advances notions that newcomers take up space in neighborhoods or job markets, or are a threat to national safety (Jantzi, 2015; Thurairajah, 2017). Accordingly, an immigrant may feel their presence is resented, leading to feelings of Othering and discrimination.

It is important to consider that while certain discourses surrounding immigration in relation to Canadian identity may resonate from local to national levels, some discourses vary situationally. Certain discourses surrounding immigration are unique to the context of this study (Calgary, Alberta), and an immigrant's experience in Alberta could differ from another immigrant's experience in Ontario, or especially Quebec. Therefore, analyzing discourses to explore this topic will shed light on pan-Canadian views of immigrants or Canadian identity —-particularly those advanced in the LINC program—while simultaneously observing ways that Alberta's shift towards right of center politics may uniquely be impacting immigrants in this context. This is why discourse analysis focuses across levels and across types of discourses (e.g., news media, daily conversation, institutional policies, national policies).

Briefly, discourses impact the identities and positionings of Canadian immigrants, the process of Canadian immigration and integration, and Canadian identity as it relates to immigration. This research exposes how harmful discourses surrounding immigration and immigrants contribute to reinforcing structures that position immigrants disadvantageously. This research also endeavors to initiate a change in discourse by reframing concepts and ideas so that

unequal power relations are subverted to empower newcomers, thereby improving their integration experiences and outcomes.

1.7. LINC as the Context for this Study

The primary focus of this research is to explore how discourses impact social integration among Canadian immigrants. The study is based in the context of the LINC program because of the program's potential to impact immigrants' integration. LINC receives substantial government funding, and it is widely promoted and well attended by immigrants. Additionally, although this study looks beyond language learning to identify other discursive factors that contribute to social integration, there is an important relationship between language learning/use, power/ideology, and identity (and in turn, social integration). These concepts have been conceptually linked in Bonny Norton (1995) and Ron Darvin's (Darvin & Norton, 2018) work (further elaborated in Chapter 2). Their work demonstrates how language learning is a site of identity negotiation, where learners decide to invest (or not) in the language and practices of a host society. These reasons make the LINC program context a promising context for exploring the discursive aspects of migrants' social integration outcomes.

1.8. Research Objectives and Questions

This research is guided by several overarching objectives. The first is to develop an understanding of immigrant perspectives on what social integration entails and how it is achieved, namely by exploring immigrants' perspectives on their social relationships, identity, sense of belonging, and experiences of inclusion or discrimination. Second, this study aims to explore how the LINC program discursively positions newcomers and impacts their social integration, and to explore how/which discourses are accepted or resisted by immigrants in the program. Finally, the study aims to generate recommendations that transform (i.e., positively impact) immigrants' experiences of social integration both within language learning contexts and beyond.

To address these objectives, this study asked the following research questions. The first question is in two parts, both inquiring into the discourses prevalent within the LINC program:

1. A) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration that are privileged and operationalized within the LINC program?

B) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration that are taken up by immigrant participants in the LINC program?

2. What does social integration mean (entail) to immigrant participants?
3. How do immigrants' experiences and perceptions of their social integration progress in alignment (or in tension) with the discourses they encounter and enact in the context of the LINC program?

The first question necessitates an analysis of discourses, the second question entails hearing and centering immigrant voices, and the third question brings the first two together to understand how the discourses identified support or interfere with social integration.

1.9. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic, rationale, and some key concepts used throughout the dissertation, and provided a statement of researcher positionality. Chapter Two is a literature review that discusses shortcomings in how current research addresses the integration of immigrants in the context of language programming. The literature review also includes the conceptual framework for this study and defines terms related to social integration. Chapter Three presents the research design, including this study's theoretical and methodological framework and the research participants, context, and methods. Chapters 4-5 present the study's findings, with Chapter Four centering on discourse analysis and Chapter Five on intersectional analysis immigrants' perspectives and stories. Chapter Six brings the two analyses together in a discussion about how discourses impact social integration. This is followed by recommendations for immigrants, service provider organizations that offer LINC, policy, and Canadians in general. Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation by summarizing the results of the research questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review is structured in two sections: an empirical review of current knowledge and perspectives on the topic of integration, and a detailed theoretical framework. In the empirical section (2.2), I review various ways that integration for immigrants has been approached to date, and I define three foci of social integration that guide my study's exploration. In the theoretical framework section (2.3), I explain how I draw on critical theories in this study, particularly critical discourse analysis and intersectionality. Next, to further rationalize the use of these frameworks in relation to the topic of the project, I provide explanation regarding how discourses impact social integration (2.4) and regarding the importance of including the intersectional voices of immigrants to support a better understanding of social integration (2.5). Finally, I briefly address the impact of COVID-19 on immigration, integration, and the research process (2.6).

2.2. Empirical Review of Integration: Shortcomings in Current Approaches

This section is organized around three shortcomings in the ways that research has so far addressed the integration of immigrants in the context of language programming. First, integration is usually approached from an economic rather than social focus, resulting in a heightened emphasis on developing migrants' economic capital rather than their social or cultural capital. I outline a more suitable conceptual framework to define social integration that includes newcomers' social relationships, identities, and sense of belonging. These are developed through daily interactions and experiences, and they illuminate the discursive construction of social integration, which remains so far undertheorized, making it the second shortcoming addressed. Third, studies that focus on integration and immigration in Canada tend not to consider the perspectives and voices of newcomers themselves, let alone position them as key informants in self identifying their needs and challenges. Highlighting these three shortcomings paves the way for the subsequent overview of better ways of exploring social integration that feature more holistic understandings of newcomers' experiences arriving and settling in Canada.

The literature cited in this chapter primarily focuses on Canadian contexts. However, some international studies are included because they contribute to understanding social

integration in migration studies. While this study occurs in and informs the Canadian context, the themes may have relevance internationally in contexts where migrants transition or immigrate.

2.2.1. Moving Beyond the Economic Approach to Integration

Integration efforts tend to focus on the economic potential and outcomes of immigrants, resulting in a heightened focus on nurturing migrants' economic capital over their social and cultural capital. This is likely because economic migrants comprise approximately 60% of Canada's immigration admissions, and Canada uses immigration as a tool "to grow our workforce" (IRCC, 2022b, para 10). At the provincial level, several provinces, including Alberta have signed agreements that enable them to select immigrants "to meet specific labour market needs" (Mulholland & Biles, 2004, p. 26). Considering this, workplace integration is prioritized, with programs and policies focused on increasing migrants' employability and putting them in the workforce, and advocating for wage equality. Yet, as Reitz and Banerjee (2007) suggest from their analysis of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, "improvement in immigrants' earnings may contribute to successful integration, but higher earnings alone do not smooth the path to integration… discrimination and vulnerability remain high, slowing the social integration of minorities" (p. 522).

Beyond economic integration, there are also social, cultural, and political dimensions of integration (Penninx, 2005). Broadly, social integration involves becoming involved in the community. Cultural integration involves developing familiarity with systems, norms, institutions, and cultural events (Jezak & Carrasco, 2017), and political integration entails civic engagement (Ilievski, 2015). Ager and Strang (2008) identify ten domains of integration: employment, housing, education, health, social bonds, social bridges, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability, and rights and citizenship. They stress the interconnectedness among domains, claiming the social, political, and economic aspects of integration each impact one another, and that "successful integration depends on the contributions of all sectors of society, including public bodies, community and religious leaders, the education system, voluntary organizations, employers and trade unions" (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 176). Other factors that contribute to integration across these domains include length of stay (Martinovic et al., 2009), and developing autonomy and agency (Swinney, 2017).

2.2.2. Problematizing Language as the Main Pathway to Integration

The Canadian government provides language courses to immigrants as a significant part of its strategy to support social integration. This positions language as a bridge to integration. Some research supports this approach of linking integration to language. For instance, Hammer (2017) conducted a mixed methods study involving a questionnaire and follow up interviews with Polish immigrants in the UK to explore the link between self-reported proficiency in English and various factors indicating social integration. The findings indicated that language played a role in participants' sociocultural integration because it enabled communication and participation in social life, and it conveyed cultural values. Another study by Adamuti-Trache and colleagues (2018) also linked language ability to settlement. In this study, data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada was analyzed to identify issues faced by adult immigrant women within four years of arrival. They concluded that language was a "critical ingredient" (p. 16) in their social integration because it was useful for some steps of participants' settlement, such as finding housing, finding schools for their children, and accessing health services. The authors conclude, "immigrants to Canada understand that second language acquisition is key to equalizing their power relation experiences in the Canadian society" (p. 27).

Despite these studies that suggest language is a useful tool for settlement, other critical social researchers have warned against focusing excessively on language as a means to, and indicator of, integration. Haque (2017) suggests that by positioning language as a main pathway to integration, systems fail to recognize and value newcomers' skills and multilingual practices. Bednarz (2017) explored how policy informed and impacted language classroom practices. After conducting interviews and focus groups with classroom stakeholders, the author criticised how language courses have come to be viewed as a requisite step for integration even as classroom practices tended devalue how newcomers' linguistic practices could foster "social inclusion, professional mobility, active citizenship and participation" (p. 80). Besides this, Fritz and Donat (2017) point out that other (often more urgent) non-linguistic needs must be met if immigrants are to be expected to succeed in language classes, such as recognition of previous work and education, safety and stability, feeling at peace, and having a close personal network. In this vein, Dovchin (2021) points out that emotional and mental health factors (e.g., trauma) can hinder language learning.

Another concerning downside of associating language with integration is that as newcomers are made responsible for their deficits or successes in language acquisition, they also are made responsible for their ability to integrate. Haque (2014) suggests that in Canada, integration "is the sole responsibility and, in the case of a perceived lack of integration, the pathology of immigrants" (p. 207). This type of discrimination based on raciolinguistics is described in Dovchin's (2019, 2022) work; the author suggests dominant ideologies and practices "legitimate, regulate and reproduce an unequal power division between people … on the basis of an individual's language use" (Dovchin, 2019, p. 336). The author states that basic human rights are violated as immigrants' sociolinguistic practices are devalued and dismissed in institutional and interpersonal dominant contexts. In Canada, there is a normative expectation that immigrants must conform by learning English or French, and their success in achieving this is measured against other Canadians whose first language is often English (Li, 2003). As such, while language courses appear to provide peripheral and superficial support for newcomers' well-being, they contribute to devaluing the existing sociolinguistic practices of immigrants.

The LINC program conveys that it is through acquiring English and adhering to Canadian cultural norms that newcomers gain access to certain social and professional circles in Canada, leading newcomers to become less interested in maintaining or nurturing their home language and cultures, much less passing them on to their children. Guo (2013) also noted that the LINC program trained immigrants to *think* like Canadians through teaching soft skills, which were alleged to help newcomers become more employable. Taken together, these goals of the LINC program reflect a form of integration that puts the onus on newcomers to adapt in multiple ways to learn and hone Canadian ways of speaking, behaving, and thinking. This reflects a unidirectional model of integration that is quite opposite to the widely-promoted view of integration as a two-way effort between Canadians and newcomers.

2.2.3. Investment in Integration to Acquire Capital

A more suitable way to conceptualize integration centers on capital and investment. The concepts are theorized here in relation to both investing in language use and in integration to acquire forms of social, cultural, and symbolic capital, which support integration.

2.2.3.1. Capital. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) theorized four different forms of capital: social, economic, cultural, and symbolic. For immigrants, social capital includes their social

network both in terms of quantity and quality of social ties (e.g., an immigrant may be supported by long-standing relationships with members of their family or community or by establishing a few close connections with coworkers or other new friends). Cultural capital includes a person's knowledge and behaviours, including their educational background, skills, tastes, accent, dialect, and mannerisms. Having the 'correct' combination of social and cultural capital grants increased symbolic capital (i.e., recognition, social prestige, and power). According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), individuals can draw on these different types of capital as resources, which are ascribed value in situated contexts at specific times. Capital is also mediated by access to material needs (e.g., permission to work, access to health care or education), social resources (e.g., family or friend networks), social expectations (e.g., stereotypes of the grateful or hardworking immigrant, assuming 'token' roles in ideological multiculturalism, language ability), technology (e.g., access to technological devices and internet), and mobility (both within Canada and abroad).

Some recent immigration research uses Bourdieu's theory of capital to explore integration. Sippola et al. (2022) completed an ethnographic analysis of minority members' (i.e., Estonian and Russian) participation in social media discussions in Finland. They found that when minority participants drew upon their social and cultural capital—for instance, by mentioning their educational qualifications, that they had begun their family in Finland, or that their musical or literature tastes were aligned with Finnish ones—it contributed to advancing their position in the host society, for example, by distinguishing them as ""good" minority members who had learnt local habits and language properly (or were trying to do so)" (Sippola et al., 2022, p. 43). This enabled them to gain recognition and symbolic capital, which supported upward mobility. This aligns with Wachter and Fleischmann's (2018) notion of "host-country specific capital" (p. 155), which they define as capital gained from interaction with locals and participation in social life to foster "acquisition of the core elements and competences of the host society's culture" (p. 156).

Other scholars suggest that the above studies present oversimplified and unrealistic views of how capital is gained and negotiated. These scholars emphasize migrants' initial or existing capital profiles at the point of arrival in their new country. Chuatico's (2019) thesis analyzed data from the 2001 Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada to explore how immigrants' existing cultural capital impacts the type of social connections they form once they arrive in

Canada. The findings suggest that individuals with similar cultural capital gravitate towards one another. This indicates the need to explore the situational and contingent nature of capital based on newcomers' prior experiences. Huot (2017) explored the experiences of newcomers in Canada and New Zealand. The study highlighted how dominant systemic power relations mediate newcomers' capital. When newcomers' capital was devalued or misrecognized within the system, a "symbolic violence" (p. 44) impeded integration, even when immigrants attempted to achieve integration through the pathways established by the Canadian government. Huot's discussion is consistent with Erel's (2010, 2015) theorization of migrant-specific forms of capital in which he advocates that newcomers do not merely reach into a "rucksack" of capital that they can draw upon as needed; rather newcomers negotiate and create new forms of capital that create "modes of validation alternative to national capital" (p. 642).

In summary, these studies illustrate how capital can impact newcomers' integration. To reflect the complexity of differing starting points of capital within a system of power relations, I will refer to the *development and negotiation of capital* in this thesis. I will turn to a discussion of investment to further elaborate ways that newcomers develop and negotiate capital.

2.2.3.2. Investment. This discussion of investment is rooted in Ron Darvin and Bonny Norton's (2015, 2018) work. They proposed a model of investment in language learning that suggests a person will be more likely to invest in language practices that they deem will enable them to gain capital. While Norton and Darvin's theorization of investment is based in the context of language learning, I will extend their ideas to include social practices beyond the language classroom, namely, how immigrants invest in language use and social practices that contribute to their integration. Expanding their model to include both language use and social practice is appropriate for this study because it builds upon their model's critical power-oriented focus in exploring how people act and interact within structured contexts to negotiate and develop capital. In this way, the model brings together the two theoretical perspectives that I use to frame and approach my research problem: Critical Discourse Analysis and Intersectionality. These are further discussed in Chapter 3.

Norton first introduced her theory of investment in 1995 (Norton Peirce, 1995), and has since developed concepts both in her own research (Norton, 2000, 2018) and in collaboration with others (Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Most recently, Darvin and Norton have considered how identity impacts language use (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2018),

asking questions like "Who has the right to speak?" and "Can the language learner [/user] command the attention of listeners?" (Norton, 2018, p. 243). These questions require attending to the discursive and socio-historical context of language use and social practice.

Norton's work begins with problematizing motivation as the root of language learners' success or failure in acquiring a language. Norton observed that the same language learner may demonstrate differential levels of interest and success in performing or communicating depending on the context of communication. Therefore, she explored how the context of social relations of power creates the possibilities for language learners to speak. For instance, a learner may be highly determined to speak a language in their relatively safe language classroom, but may have little investment in language practices in their workplace which may be perceived as "racist, sexist, elitist, or homophobic" (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 76).

Investment highlights the socially and historically constructed nature of language use. It entails viewing language as a social practice where particular modes of language use are ideologically valued (e.g., assuming a more proficient speaker is closer to being Canadian). The valuation of a person's language use and social practices varies situationally, and complex social identities are enacted depending on context (Norton Pierce, 1995).

The investment model also highlights the concept of imagined identities or communities (Anderson, 2016). An imagined identity or community is how a person expects or hopes they will ultimately engage and connect with a particular group. Their desired or imagined projection creates a sense of solidarity beyond the immediate local context across time and space (Norton & McKinney, 2011). For example, an immigrant who intends to stay permanently and who envisions a future in which they are part of Canadian society has created an imagined community, which will impact how they engage in language use and social practices and the degree to which they invest in developing social contacts. In this way, structure and agency are central to the investment model. On one hand, ideology predisposes learners "to think and act in certain ways, but it is through desire and imagination that they are able to invest in practices that can transform their lives" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 46). A learner's imagined community enables them to "assert their own identities… reframe relations of power and challenge normative ways of thinking" (p. 47), which allows them to claim the right to speak.

To summarize, the investment model connects ideology, capital, and identity. How capital is accumulated through language use and social practices is largely ideological; however,

individuals can enact and assert identities in context that allow for reframing relations of power and transforming normative ways of thinking. Even within structures and institutions, people can draw on language and literacy practices to enhance their possibilities of developing and negotiating capital (Norton, 2000). The model is complex and multi-layered, theorizing how structures and contexts enable or constrain peoples identities and willingness to engage in language use or social practices. This makes the model a very powerful framework for exploring newcomers' integration in the context of language learning programs.

2.2.4. Defining Social Integration

This literature review has so far established that language alone cannot be the only indicator of or pathway to integration, and that focusing solely on economic outcomes does not lead to a balanced approach to integration. Rather, a more illustrative framework for understanding integration is exploring the investment that immigrants make in language use and social practices that contribute to the development and negotiation of all forms of capital. At this point, I will discuss a conceptual framework for social integration consisting of three areas: social relationships and networks, shifting identity, and developing a sense of belonging. These areas are realized through daily interactions and experiences, and they comprise the main foci of this study as alternative ways to understand and support newcomers' integration.

2.3.1.1. Forming Relationships. Ager and Strang (2008) developed their model of integration based on a four-stage research project including (1) a documentary and conceptual analysis of integration as presented/defined in various European documents, (2) fieldwork in the UK among refugee settlements, (3) analysis of cross-sectional survey data from a study on 'Indicators of Integration', and (4) verification through consultation with potential users of the framework both at the local practice level and in wider policy settings. They identified ten domains of integration, three of which center on social connections as having an integral role in social integration: social bridges between communities, social bonds among family or co-ethnic, co-religious and co-national groups, and social links to the structures of the state. These layers of social connection build upon work by Gittel and Vidal (1998), Putnam (1995), and Szreter (2002), who were each involved in theorizing how social connections across levels lead to social capital. This is supported by Pulinx and Van Avermaet's (2017) qualitative study in Flanders, Belgium, reporting on Flemish integration programs. They found that migrants' social networks

are their basis to "provide sufficient social capital to support social mobility and allow them to make use of their own economic, cultural or human capital and to undertake activities to accumulate such capital" (p. 61). Their study indicated that while social bonds were the most important and accessible for newcomers, they needed support to form social bridges and links.

Enns et al. (2013) proposed their own model of social integration based on an analysis of the Ethnic Diversity Survey of 2002. Their model consists of intersecting elliptical figures to reflect the non-linear process of positioning oneself socially among family and neighborhoods, cities and communities, and within the provincial and federal realms. Guven et al. (2019) outline measures of social cohesion in their analysis of longitudinal census data to explore the economic and social outcomes of Australian migrants. They define social cohesion as inclusive of a newcomer's "membership in networks, social solidarities, memberships in clubs/associations, volunteer work, social trust, social order, shared values, civic participation, and place attachment" (p. 289). These aspects are echoed by Handy and Greenspan (2009), who suggest social capital is formed by group membership in "religious organizations, sports associations, social clubs, and professional organizations" (p. 957). They also mention volunteering is a means of increasing social and human capital because it provides social opportunities, enhances employment and managerial skills and increases knowledge (*i.e.,* learning the system, understanding Canadian culture).

In this study, I pay attention to how newcomers' social relationships (bonds, bridges, and links), group memberships, and community involvement impact their integration. Specifically, I explore how their connections and affiliations support their integration goals by proffering them capital that supports advantageous positioning and social world building.

2.3.2.1. Shifting Identity. The notion of identity is commonly used to theorize immigrants' social integration. For instance, Ghosh (2000) and Dib et al. (2008) associate identity formation as part of the process of becoming Canadian. Breton (2019) suggests that immigrants experience a shifting sense of identity as they consider how their ethnic identity (relating to their backgrounds) relates to a new national identity. Moffitt et al. (2020) analyzed the written narratives of Canadian immigrants to explore how they portray their experiences in public narratives. Their analysis focuses identity work, that is, "activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of their self concept" (p. 85). In other words, identity work is a situated practice in which immigrants

continually work to frame their stories to create coherency in their lives, spanning their backgrounds and present day selves; negotiating their ethnic identities alongside Canadian national identity. Therefore, much immigration scholarship holds identity to be a "context-specific, often more consciously created and reflexively understood version of one's self" (Brown, 2019, p. 10).

Identity is a key concept in the investment framework because it links agency and structure, informing positioning and power. On one hand, as newcomers interact with others, they can consciously enact or assert their identities (i.e., consciously created and reflexively understood versions of themselves) to negotiate their position in relation to others. However, at the same time, the national context ascribes a 'Canadian identity' that is imposed on or expected of immigrants. This "socially constructed notion, often informed by centuries of nation building, policies, and events outlines rights and obligations and informs who is included in society" (Moffitt et al., 2020, p. 86). It also informs who is not included in society, and Thobani (2007) suggests that Indigenous people are often excluded from being part of Canadian identity, with newcomers and settlers are united in suppressing Indigenous inclusion. Therefore, as immigrants navigate their own shifting identity within Canada, the process is made more complex as various socio-political expectations and identifications are imposed on them.

Identity is often defined as multiple, non-unitary, a site of struggle, and changing over time (e.g., Norton & McKinney, 2011). Definitions like this lead to the term *identity* being critiqued by some scholars as overly broad, ambiguous and romanticized (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) point out the contradictory conceptualizations of identity: the term sometimes invokes a deep, basic, abiding essence that ought to be "valued, cultivated, supported, recognized and preserved" (p. 7), while at the same time, identity is often viewed as unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented. These scholars suggest that such sharply differing uses of the term may make it problematic for analysis, and they suggest other terms could offer greater potential for analytical rigour, for example, *(sense of) belonging* (described below) is proposed as an evocative and meaningful way to conceptualize integration through identity.

This study uses the concept of identity to highlight the development of migrants' identities from two directions. Identity is constructed from the bottom-up in the sense that immigrants articulate and assert their own sense of self, finding congruency between their ethnic

identity and the context's national identity. This evolves from participation, interaction, and involvement in daily life. Identity is also imposed discursively from the top-down in a national symbolic or historical sense. This exploration into identity is aligned with the poststructuralist perspective on identity which supposes that "individuals are never outside cultural forces or discursive practices but always 'subject' to them" (Baxter, 2016, p. 37). In other words, migrants' identities are somewhat determined by the 'ways of being' which are discursively available to them in social context (and recognized by their community).

2.2.3.3. Sense of Belonging. As mentioned above, a sense of belonging is another concept used to understand social integration. A sense of belonging involves a person's attachment to a group identity and a feeling of inclusion or wanting to draw closer to a desired group (Hou et al., 2018). Hou et al. (2018) draw on a sample of 7,000 Canadian immigrants who participated in the 2013 General Social Survey to explore various acculturation profiles and to identify the determinants of a sense of belonging. They suggest that Canadian immigrants may feel a sense of belonging to Canada, to their source country, to both, or to neither; accordingly, this determines whether they are likely to feel assimilated, separated, integrated, or marginalized. They found that the determinants of a sense of belonging include source country attributes (socio-economic conditions, cultural values, and attitudes), immigrant entry characteristics, post-migration experience (how they are welcomed, treated, whether they experience discrimination), and individual demographic characteristics (ethnicity, race, gender). This illustrates the high variance resulting from the diverse backgrounds and unique experiences of migrants as they develop a sense of belonging to Canada (or not).

Hedetoft's (2002) conceptual article highlights that belonging is formed on the micro level, since sources of belonging are determined locally through context-specific daily experiences and interactions. When contextual sources of belonging are internalized as determinants of home or self-identity, they become feelings of belonging. Belonging is impacted by the macro level, since daily interactions are discursively constructed. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) suggest that one's sense of belonging (or not) to a place is determined "more or less anonymously by discourses… their anonymous, unnoticed permeation of our ways of thinking and talking and making sense of the social world" (p. 16). A newcomers' sense of belonging or not belonging to a community is related to "the language of both politics and everyday life" (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 51) that construct and reproduce inclusive or exclusive norms

(Wodak, 2008). Therefore, exploring sense of belonging requires an understanding of how discourses operate.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

I drew on post-structural critical theories to develop a theoretical framework that combines critical discourse analysis and intersectionality. This framework allows exploration into the currently undertheorized discursive elements of social integration while centering immigrant perspectives and voices to understand the impact of discourses on immigrant experiences. I developed this theoretical framework with the study's research objectives, which are to develop understanding about immigrant perspectives on social integration, explore how the LINC program discursively positions newcomers and advances their integration, and explore how/which discourses are accepted or resisted by immigrants in the program.

2.3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is both a theory and methodology. While the latter is detailed in the next chapter, this section addresses CDA as a theory. CDA builds on critical theory, with its main goal being to reveal and challenge power structures and social inequalities, specifically by exploring how power is exercised through language use. CDA theorists believe that "language is an irreducible part of social life" (Fairclough, 2003), therefore, to understand social life, we must attend to the functions of language. This project draws on CDA for its robust approach for analyzing how language sustains, creates, or limits the social structures, institutions, power dynamics, relationships, and identities.

While CDA is broadly concerned with the connection between language use, power, and social life, theorists have approached analysis in varying ways. Ruth Wodak developed the Discourse-Historical Approach, which emphasizes historical sources to contextualize the social and political fields where discourse takes place (Reisgl & Wodak, 2018; Wodak, 2015). Norman Fairclough has articulated a textually oriented approach that spans three levels of analysis: the text, its process of production and reception, and the structural context (Fairclough, 2003). Tuen van Dijk represents the sociocognitive approach to CDA, in which the relationship between discourse and society is viewed as cognitively mediated (van Dijk, 2009). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of discourse centers on understanding hegemony through contingent

discourses, each seeking to stabilize their particular meanings within the social world (Jessop, 2019; Rear, 2013). Each of these schools of thought has been differentially influenced by early approaches to critical and discursive analysis from the Frankfurt School and authors such as Bourdieu, Gramsci, Althusser, Habermas, Foucault, Jager, and Halliday.

While CDA theorists have defined discourse in overlapping and varying ways, with distinctive iterations of concepts to guide their approach to analysis, this study is most aligned with Norman Fairclough's multidisciplinary textual approach. Fairclough's (2015) overarching objective for CDA is "to analyze, criticize, and ultimately to change, the existing social reality in which… discourse is related in particular ways to other social elements such as power relations, ideologies, economic and political strategies, and policies" (p. 5). Since the LINC program is a product of national policy for the integration of Canadian newcomers, critical attention to the discourses within the program can illuminate power relations and their impact of social actors within the program. In this way, Fairclough's CDA is well aligned with the objectives and context of this study. The key concepts of Fairclough's multidisciplinary approach are described here, and then the process for research is described in Chapter 3.

Key concepts operationalized in Fairclough's approach to CDA are discourse, power, common sense, ideology, social change, and multi-level analysis. In this study, *discourse* is defined as using language in a way that is meaningful to others in social context. A discourse entails using language that is meaningful to those producing it (speaking or writing) and to those receiving it (hearing or reading). Language users do not choose words and syntax at random; they make lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic choices that sustain or construct representations of the world. Through this often-unconscious process, people participate in discourses that are varyingly constrained by social practices, positions, and structures. Thus, analyzing discourses involves paying attention to patterns in language use that reflect systems of power in society.

Revealing and critiquing unjust or hidden *power* behind discourse is a goal of CDA. Those with political, economic, social, or cultural power "shape opinions, attitudes, common sense assumptions and actions in all areas of social life" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 28) and influence language users' positioning as insiders or not. Discourses can position people and construct identities in different ways through normalized patterns of language use (i.e., patterned use of vocabulary and grammar). *Dominant discourses* become naturalized as *common sense* (Fairclough, 2001) – that is, unconscious "everyday thinking" that provides a framework for how

people make sense of the world (Fairclough, 2015, p. 13). Common sense assumptions signal ideological constructions of knowledge and beliefs, social identities, and social positions. By advancing powerful ideologies, discourses sustain or (re)produce the social world. To illustrate, consider a discourse on Canadian immigrants: A common sense assumption that those who are born in Canada should have priority over immigrants (and Indigenous people) when it comes to accessing jobs or health care. This assumption can be observed as a political focus during election periods (i.e., protests about which/whose rights should be prioritized) or it may be seen anecdotally in daily conversations in which Canadian-born people feel entitled, for example, to job openings. This advances an ideology of Canadian nationalism, privileging those born in Canada while constructing newcomers (and original inhabitants) as less deserving of access to economic opportunity and social systems. As another example, consider the assumption that if immigrants work hard, they will succeed in Canada. This view contributes to a discourse of Canadian immigrants that makes newcomers responsible to compete in the free market, advancing an ideology of capitalism.

In line with the research objectives and questions, the discourses that this study explores are a) discourses that construct the identities and positionings of Canadian immigrants, b) discourses that construct the process of Canadian immigration and integration of newcomers, and c) discourses that construct Canadian identity in relation to immigration. Within each of these, common sense assumptions emerge as themes that pattern media, policy, and daily conversation. In this study, these themes are analyzed to determine how underlying ideologies shape newcomers' experiences, identities, and positionings. Salient ideologies surrounding discourses of Canadian immigrants, immigration, and integration include nationalism, capitalism, neoliberalism, democracy, and multiculturalism.

Understanding and mobilizing *social change* is a central goal of CDA. Fairclough suggests that change in social reality is driven by a change in discourse. As such, a Faircloughian CDA is suitable for this research since the goals of the study are not only to identify discourses, but to make explanatory and interpretive connections between discourses and social structures, power, and institutions. By revealing the ideological effects embedded within common sense assumptions and connecting them to broad structures of power, this study contributes to addressing the often unfair and disadvantaged experiences of Canadian newcomers.

Finally, CDA hinges on *multi-level analysis*, from micro, to meso, to macro. Across levels, the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology are examined. Micro level analysis focuses on linguistic features of texts to determine how language choices construct meaning and reflect power relations. Meso level analysis focuses on discursive practices in communities, institutions, and organizations. This level informs how power relations and social norms are maintained through social practices as people enact various identities and activities. Macro level analysis focuses on discourse and power relations at the broader societal level, with attention to how discourses contribute to social structures, cultural norms, ideologies, power relations, and collective identities. The three levels of analysis are interconnected, connecting language use to broader social implications and power dynamics.

2.3.2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a theoretical and methodological approach that recognizes and validates the experiences of people embodying complex layers of difference. Intersectionality is well aligned with CDA in its goals: to critically attend to marginalized voices (Choo & Ferree, 2010) and to remove barriers within social structures that limit opportunities for them (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). Intersectionality also aims to understand the experiences of previously ignored, misunderstood, or invisibilized individuals and groups. In this research project, I apply an intersectional lens to re-center immigrant voices to support the first research objective (to develop an understanding of immigrant perspectives on what social integration entails and how it is achieved). It also informs the third objective (to generate recommendations that transform immigrants' experiences of social integration) because intersectionality "creates knowledge that is crucial to the work of policymakers and contributes to the efforts of social justice advocates and activists" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018, p. 33).

At its inception, Kimberlé Crenshaw used the term intersectionality in the context of legal cases to explore how overlapping categories of social identity created interlocked and overlooked systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1994). The term was taken up in the 1980s in Black feminist studies. Early intersectional studies explored how three principal categories—gender, race, and class—overlapped to create systems of discrimination or privilege. Research has since expanded beyond these original three categories to include ethnicity, nationality, ability, age, migration status, religion, and sexuality, among others (Davis, 2008; Dill & Zambrana, 2020).

This study views categories of difference as creating a multiplicative synthesized identity. Categories of difference are not 'additive' or 'separable' (Jenkins, 2020, p. 265). Therefore, an intersectional analysis should not isolate categories of difference because these elements are inextricable from one another and contextually contingent. As such, this study uses the concept of intracategorical complexity (McCall, 2005), which critically questions boundaries between categories while also focusing on how inequalities are "produced, experienced, reproduced and resisted in everyday life" (McCall, 2005, p. 1783). Intersectionality explores structural inequality, including "naturalization and hierarchical structure" (Hillsburg, 2013, p. 4), by investigating "the links among capitalism, colonialism, racism, and hetero-patriarchy" (Stasilius et al., 2020, p. 10). Note the alignment once again with CDA in the goal to illuminate how ideologies sustain relationships, identities, and positions.

Intersectionality is well-suited to migration research because of the diversity within immigrants' experiences, backgrounds, and identities. Kaushik and Walsh (2018) use intersectionality to explore the experiences of skilled immigrants' settlement and integration in Canada, deeming the approach useful for exploring how multiple differences impact everyday life. Other researchers have found intersectionality helpful in resisting the tendency to view immigrants as a homogenous group (Hancock, 2007) and in theorizing identity (Bowleg, 2008). Intersectionality aligns with the investment model through the notion of capital. Norton and McKinney (2011) suggest, "If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 75). In the same vein, Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) suggest Bourdieu's notion of capital has explanatory value in understanding how people move through these configurations of intersectionality (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). The complex process of accumulating capital in situated contexts suggests that identities and inequalities are in flux (Hillsburg, 2013), and vary from person to person. For this reason, an intersectional lens supports the study's focus on integration by providing analytical attention to the difference and diversity within immigrants' experiences.

2.3.3. Compatibility of the Joint Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws on critical theories to bring together intersectionality and critical discourse analysis, as well as concepts that reflect post-structural

views of identity and investment in language learning and integration. Taken together, the concepts require slightly different methodological approaches, but their aims, core guiding concepts, and philosophical orientations are well aligned and complementary. The frameworks are united in their critical emancipatory and post-structural goals to "plumb the archaeology of taken-for-granted perspectives to understand how unjust and oppressive social conditions come to be reified as historical 'givens'" (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, p. 54). Intersectionality addresses this by magnifying previously unheard voices with the hope for systematic change to reflect new perspectives. CDA achieves this through close attention to language use and its ability to perpetuate ideologies and unequal power relations. The theoretical framework is also rooted in its orientation to side with people and/or groups who are oppressed to disrupt normalized systems and spur social change through awareness of discourses, identities, and recommendations for changes to policy from micro to macro levels.

Another important point of overlap is that both frameworks are epistemologically aligned to social constructivism, in which subjective meanings are "negotiated socially and historically" (Creswell, 2007), and by which researchers inductively theorize socially situated realities and relations founded in data. This study theorizes immigrants' experiences from participants' language use (CDA) and interviews soliciting their perspectives and histories (intersectionality). The point is that within both methods, knowledge is viewed as constructed by people based on their lived experiences. Kaushik and Walsh (2018) reflect, "An individual's worldview is shaped by her/his standpoint in the matrix of domination" (p. 32). Multiple perspectives and interpretations are possible.

The relation between agency and structure is also theorized in both frameworks. Post-structural critical discourse theorists, following Foucault (1991), are hesitant to credit subjects with free will, believing they are constrained and constituted by discourse, institutions, and structures. Other articulations of CDA leave more room for subject agency. For instance, Gee (2005) suggests that while participating in discourses, 'agents' have some flexibility in taking on social roles, which then somewhat constrain their choices of ways of behaving or speaking. Fairclough (2015) similarly theorizes social agents as "active and creative" (p. 69), able to draw on discourses resourcefully and in new ways to challenge the boundaries of their social role(s) and position(s). On the other side, while intersectionality centers participant perspectives, in so doing it "[explicates] multiple identities, interlocking systemic inequalities due to social

structures, as well as various social, historical, and cultural discourses" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018, p. 29). Briefly, both frameworks offer a way to understand and investigate the relationships within social systems.

Another area of compatibility is the intentional focus on power relations in the research process and the need to consider insider/outsider issues, positionality, and researcher reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a white English-speaking Canadian researcher who is an outsider (i.e., non-immigrant) to the participants in this study, I carefully considered these topics throughout this project by continually returning to the critical purpose motivating my work, by prioritizing ethical considerations to support participants' involvement (e.g., building rapport, consulting with insiders), by considering how my position might impact participant involvement throughout the data collection, as well as how my position and associated biases might shape my analysis.

In summary, CDA and intersectionality are highly compatible and complementary approaches to address the research objectives of this study. Both approaches provide tools for data collection and analysis that contribute to better understanding social integration in Canada than is currently presented in the literature. These tools are further outlined in Chapter 3.

2.4. The Discursive Nature of Social Integration

I have established three concepts used to explore social integration in this study: social relationships and networks, shifting identity, and sense of belonging. I have suggested that each of these develops from on-the-ground daily experiences and interactions, which are broadly influenced by the socio-historical context. What connects the two levels is discourse (i.e., language use that is meaningful to others in social context). The language use of daily interactions and experiences is enabled or constrained by language use within surrounding policies and systems. When newcomers establish relationships, assert their identities, negotiate their positions, and develop a sense of belonging, their language use somehow relates to, reflects, or sustains language used in media and policy. As such, attitudes towards and about immigrants and immigration and assumptions about what it is to be Canadian (or to be a Canadian immigrant) will impact how immigrants integrate. That is why discourse is central to understanding immigrants' social integration.

In this section, I outline how discourses operate across levels: On the ground, discourses impact newcomers' positioning(s) and create their social world. At the highest level, perceptions and attitudes surrounding immigrants, immigration, and Canadian identity are conceptualized and circulated.

2.4.1. Discourses on the Ground: Shaping Migrants' Positions and Worlds

Language and power are closely related. Dominant ways of using language delineate norms, and knowledge of the normative ways of using language positions language users as insiders or outsiders in a social context (Foucault, 1991). In other words, language use signals inclusion and exclusion in society because people have varying degrees of access to and use of dominant language patterns (Gee, 2004). The most prevalent ideologies operate through dominant discourses, which signal power as privilege or oppression. Speakers' ways of valuing and participating in language determines their relation to their social world. As such, paying attention to discourse informs how individuals positions and identify themselves (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), as well as how they are positioned and identified by others.

Discourse varies by the social context in that language use cannot exist independent of the function of language and the intention of speakers (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak, 2001). In specific social contexts, ideological viewpoints are produced and reproduced (Rogers, 2004). For instance, in the context of language programming, discourse often operates to position language learners as cultural others. Lee (2015) conducted a case study of a Canadian English language program, analyzing program documents and classroom interactions to explore how culture was dealt with in the classroom. Their findings suggest that cultural othering was discursively produced in language classes in instances where learners tended to revert to or embody cultural stereotypes to distinguish themselves and one another in relation to the "target culture" (p. 85). Citing data from classroom interactions, Lee illustrates how students were called upon to represent their home country's perspectives on topics ranging from political relations to pet loss, thus equating and essentializing culture, ethnicity, and language. This study illustrates how newcomers are often forced to play the role of 'other' in contrast to normative (i.e., Canadian) ways of speaking and behaving, which are held as ideals that learners are supported in working towards (Barker, 2021; Guo, 2015). Briefly, culture, race, and ethnicity are often oversimplified in problematic ways in language classrooms.

On the ground level, discourses are constructed from "the vast array of meaning-making resources available to us" (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 2). This includes words, pictures, symbols, gestures. How people use language to make meaning distinguishes who they are as they enact socially situated identities, and this enacted identity "produces and reproduces, moment by moment, our social, political, cultural, and institutional worlds" (Gee, 2004, p. 48). To illustrate, a person may participate in an anti-immigration discourse by borrowing language used in political campaigns and applying it in daily conversations among colleagues or friends, perhaps citing their sense that increasing numbers of immigrants contributes to reducing the number of jobs available for Canadian nationals or mentioning a link between immigration and homeland security. These conversations may signal a view that (usually white) Canadian-born people are more deserving of opportunities, power, safety, and rights. Therefore, a person who participates in this discourse, even unconsciously, simultaneously reconstructs and upholds a hierarchy that likely positions them nearer to the top as insiders. The discourse (re)produces a social and political reality based on a nation-state model, which (re)constructs powerful systems and institutions that support this worldview (e.g., workplace policies that prioritize Canadian nationals by imposing assessments to exclude those who do not meet language standards). Paying attention to immigrants' experiences encountering and enacting discourses has the potential to contribute to our understanding of social integration by exploring which identities and positionings are available to newcomers and which they enact. Discourses operate at the ground level in largely unconscious ways, so critical analysis of discourse has the potential to transform society by improving the lives of those who are marginalized by the effects of language use (Fairclough, 2015). This kind of analysis requires oscillating between the ground level and the macro-level, where dominant discourses are created and imposed.

2.4.2. Discourses at the Highest Level: Canadian Identity

Immigration is an integral component in crafting Canada's national identity. The Canadian government promotes the diversity in the nation's demographics as representative of Canadian identity. By highlighting the religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity through statistics, Canada is portrayed as inherently inclusive, a claim which is discursively reinforced. For example, citing data from the 2021 census, Statistics Canada (2022d) claimed, "Canada has a rich linguistic diversity. The languages known and spoken here are closely linked to the identity

and culture of Canadians and to their relationship with their community" (para. 5). This dominant discourse is prevalent and widely adopted, as suggested from results of the 2020 General Social Survey, where "92.0% of the population aged 15 and older agreed that ethnic or cultural diversity is a Canadian value" (Statistics Canada, 2022d, para 1).

Canada's international reputation for inclusion and diversity is further established through its multiculturalism policy, which aims to ensure "all citizens keep their identities, take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging" (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 1). This reputation is supported by Canadian scholars like Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor, who hail "the success of multiculturalism" (Taylor, 2016) for its recognition of diversity within liberal democracy. They claim this distinguishes Canada from other nations (Kymlicka, 2003). This view is broadly taken up in society, where support for multiculturalism is high. Berry (2013) suggests that 82% of Canadians feel multiculturalism is something to be proud of and that it is an "instrument for integration" (p. 666).

Mulholland and Biles (2004) also point out that integration has discursively penetrated the Canadian mindset, such Canadians tend to believe integration is well accomplished through a two-way model, yet they suggest the need for increased cohesion in the ways that regional and national goals are shared and supported. Millar (2013) completed a critical discourse analysis on the dominant discourses surrounding integration and found that there is a discursive relationship between language, nationalism, and national identity. Migrants learn the dominant language in order to present themselves as legitimate candidates for citizenship. Millar suggests that viewing language ability as a determinant of integration validates the government's focus on language efforts among immigrant integration and reinforces their deficiency and need to continually position themselves as learners. This illustrates the capacity of discourses to construct reality and position migrants.

Liberal multiculturalism advances a view that recognition of diversity equates to validation and equality. This discursively advances "openness to the diverse array of collective and individual rights demanded by Canada's various citizens while promoting allegiance to the national state" (Redhead, 2002, p. 2). The problem is that merely recognizing particularity while promoting unity enables the state to tolerate and acknowledge voices and concerns at a surface level, while simultaneously dismissing them or accommodating them only insofar as they do not interfere with dominant national norms. The pervasive representation of Canada as multicultural,

welcoming, and diverse also enables discourses that downplay and deny instances of racism or discrimination through "disclaimers, mitigation… excuses, blaming the victim… face-keeping, and positive self-presentation" (van Dijk, 1992, p. 87; see also Gulliver, 2018). In sum, Canada's thin version of multiculturalism means that immigrants can enjoy cultural expression on a surface level while in economic, social, and political capacities, they suffer "severe and institutionalized forms of exclusion" (Hansen, 2014, p. 85).

In addition to connecting macro and micro levels, discourse also connects past and present. Pashby et al. (2014) explore Canadian citizenship by illuminating how contemporary discourses "reflect, revise, or reassert those that were prominent in the past" (p. 2). They suggest that since its origins, nation-building in Canada has centered on admitting and including those whose race and culture have best suited a white European English-speaking ideal. Even with the inception of the multiculturalism policy, Canada began to acknowledge the need for accommodating diversity and inclusion of a plurality of peoples, while continuing to privilege those who adhere most closely to colonial ideologies (see also Day, 2000; Haque, 2014; Thobani, 2007). Pashby et al. (2014) suggested that a commonwealth discourse "reasserts Canada's early British colonial history and reconceptualises Canada's leading role in the larger global community" (p. 16), while neoliberal discourses ignore differences, fail to address systemic inequalities, and perpetuate the privileging of the dominant culture.

As can be seen, discourses operate by constructing representations of reality that subsequently position migrants in varying ways. Omidvar and Richmond (2003) summarize the issue well: "We are all witnesses, therefore, to a real and growing contradiction between Canada's official policies of multiculturalism, anti-racism, and immigration citizenship acquisition, and the growing reality of social exclusion for Canada's newcomers" (p. 12). While language training and employment support are provided to immigrants to support their integration, these do not address the systemic issues that are continually discursively constructed and upheld. Spanning a historical and multi-level analysis, this study explores discourses that impact the social integration of newcomers and in so doing, attends to an undertheorized area of integration research, one with potential to illuminate systemic barriers, highlight how these barriers negatively impact migrants' positionings and reality, and carve out a need for discursive changes to improve migrants' lives.

2.5. Including the Voices of Immigrants

I have established that discourses impact migrants' positioning and perceptions of their social world, but the ways that discourses impact migrants' integration vary based on the unique configurations of their background, identity, and relationships. To date, qualitative studies infrequently feature the voices and perspectives of immigrants themselves in shaping the field's understanding of social integration experiences. This may be because: 1) Newcomers have other priorities as they adjust in their new home, making it potentially difficult to recruit them; 2) Some newcomers may not be culturally aware of the reason for (or value of) participating in research; 3) Newcomers represent diverse linguistic demographics, which adds complexity to the methodological feasibility (e.g., needing translation services); and 4) especially for critical research, the inherent power dynamics involved in immigration research add complexity in addressing ethical concerns for involvement in research and considering questions such as who has the right to conduct research, and whose voices/ideas are represented?

Considering my positionality as an outsider to the research, and considering that there are more pathways and outcomes for integration than ever before, it is critical to explore these divergences by including migrants' perspectives in identifying needs and new areas of support.

2.5.1. Integration is a Moving Target

There are increasingly diverse pathways and goals of integration. Jezak and Carrasco (2017) highlight "the unpredictability of integration pathways" (p. 97) which are "multiple, varied, and often surpass the preconceived frame" (p. 102). Block (2015) agrees that the current diverse nature of immigration precludes the possibility that all migrants are on the same trajectory. There appears to be no determined model to which newcomers aspire or at which point it can be concluded that they have achieved integration. Blommaert (2016) suggests that the idea of progressing towards an end result, i.e., somehow achieving integration, is ideological and unrealistic. In this study, I view integration as a process that unfolds in unexpected and new ways through newcomers' unique experiences and social interactions.

In the language classroom context, scholars have problematized the term 'target language' (Kramsch, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2006, 2018; Rymes, 2014), suggesting that migrants' language goals are not the same; there is no single determined end goal for language use across contexts. Rather, each language user can have a different approach to interacting in

and impacting their environments based on their "unique plurilingual blueprint" (Galante, 2020, p. 240). Galante (2020) suggests that language users can be viewed as plurilingual agents, with their language practices evolving and self-organizing based on their background and the context. They have agency in adapting how they use English and/or their other languages based on who they are speaking to, how they want to present themselves, and their understanding of the Canadian context. Dovchin (2019) suggests that language users participate in linguistic crossing in various ways, for example, to resist dominant norms and standards or to 'pass' as a dominant group member. Osberg (2008) suggests that language courses and curricula need to be designed to reflect this dynamism and complexity since curriculum outcomes are rarely predictable based on a step-by-step deterministic process. Both integration and language learning are better viewed as complex nonlinear processes contingent on learners' diverse backgrounds, identities, and environments (Garcia & Otheguy, 2019; The Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Wei, 2018).

Accordingly, the needs of immigrants and their reasons for participating in language classes differ. Nieuwboer and van't Rood (2016) conducted a study with 16 Arabic and Berber migrant mothers in Sweden and the Netherlands with the aim of identifying an "alternative to language oriented curricula" (p. 31). Their study is founded on a critique of how the current approach to integration fails to reach all immigrants, particularly those who lack functional literacy or who are unemployed (or not searching for work). They suggest "legislation and course providers set the same standards for all people, as if migrants have the same starting point and capacity for learning" (p. 30). They problematize how classroom-based programs that support integration tend to have fixed curriculums that are taught didactically, mostly by dominant group members of the host country. A more effective alternative would be to use participatory approaches in the classroom that focus on the inclusion of diverse perspectives and interactions among learners. By attending to the "tensions between values and different cultural subsystems" (Nieuwboer & van't Rood, 2017, p. 205), migrants' needs can be better addressed. This would support equalizing the learning space such that "the main goal is not dominance of one culture over another" (Nieuwboer & van't Rood, 2016, p. 31).

North and Piccardo (2017) make similar claims using a language socialization lens. They suggest being socialized into communities of practice requires attention to more than just linguistic outcomes; it also requires cultural, cognitive, relational, and multi-modal mediation skills. They suggest these skills can be brought into the language classroom to better support the

overall integration of participants. For instance, relational mediation would include establishing a positive, safe, and friendly classroom atmosphere and facilitating collaboration among classroom participants. Cognitive mediation would include stimulating the development of ideas and being able to interpret data. This indicates the need to broaden the view on what constitutes and contributes to integration in language learning contexts.

2.5.2. Centering Immigrant Voices

In this study, integration is explored in the context of language programming with the assumption that the participants in these programs have varying goals and experiences based on their backgrounds and identities. As such, it is essential to center voices of newcomers in learning about their integration experiences. The literature indicates that this has been a failing of both policy and research. On the policy side, Denzin (2017) claims that policy may "fail to take the perspective and attitude of the person served… The perspectives and experience of those persons who are serviced by social justice programs must be grasped, interpreted and understood if solid, effective, applied programs are to be created." (p. 12)

Even in research, Pulinx and Van Avermaet (2017) point out that "in most (mainly qualitative) research on this topic, the voice of the immigrant is absent" (p. 64). This study addresses this gap by incorporating immigrant voices to determine ways to improve the programs that intend to serve migrants when they arrive in Canada. This study has critical social justice aims. By centering and empowering the voices of immigrant participants, it will identify ways that their experience(s) of social integration can be improved. This is particularly important considering my position of privilege as a White English-speaking non-immigrant. As an ally and researcher, placing immigrants at the center of the inquiry was a key consideration for the research design of this project. Immigrant perspectives supported co-constructing an understanding of social integration to meet research objectives. This research is social, political, and critical, meaning it seeks to subvert unequal power relations to make society more equitable (Freire, 1970).

2.6. Research with Immigrants during COVID-19

This doctoral study occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had sweeping implications for immigration policies and settlement services, social integration, and

discourses surrounding immigrants and COVID-19, and the research process (further discussed in Chapter 3: Research Design).

The pandemic temporarily closed borders around the world, resulting in disruptions and delays in processing times for all categories of immigrants to Canada (Zahid, 2021). At the same time, settlement service providers across the nation rapidly adapted by moving services online, including delivery of the LINC program along with other training and counselling. However, the impact of this urgent relocation to remote spaces had varying effects on Canadian immigrants (see Barker, 2021). For example, for those with lower levels of digital literacy and less access to technological tools and the internet, there was a partial or complete interruption of immigrant services. Additionally, migrants were at a disproportionately higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 due to their presence in frontline positions in the labour force (OECD, 2022).

Regarding social integration, opportunities to form bonding and bridging relationships with community members outside of migrants' homes dwindled during COVID-19, which was particularly challenging for those whose migration trajectories led to emotional instability, homesickness, or trauma as they adjusted to life in Canada. Banerjee & Rai (2020) reported that the pandemic disrupted social integration because its resulted in an increase in loneliness and isolation for immigrants. In addition, discourses operated to associate immigrants and COVID-19 in ways that negatively impacted sense of belonging and integration. For instance, Liu et al. (2020) reported that Chinese immigrants were increasingly becoming victims of misdirected blame, with people scapegoating them as responsible for the virus. As well, travel restrictions and regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 reinforced a notion that Canada must be protected from 'others' who could bring the virus across borders. This impacted peoples' sense of who had the right to be (and belong) in Canada.

2.7. Summary

This literature review has attended to shortcomings in ways that integration of Canadian immigrants has been addressed so far. I suggested moving beyond primarily economic approaches to support integration towards more social foci, such as how migrants form relationships, negotiate their identity, and develop a sense of belonging. I suggested these aspects entail investing in language use and social practices that reflect integration, and that ultimately allow immigrants to gain social, cultural, and symbolic capital. I also suggested that these

aspects of social integration are enacted discursively as migrants make meaning with others in particular social contexts. Therefore, discourses are a principal point of entry for understanding integration in this study, and I use critical discourse analysis to explore how language use reflects assumptions, ideologies, and power that impact social integration from the micro level (i.e., on the ground) to the macro level (i.e., national discourses of Canadian identity).

Since discourses impact integration by positioning immigrants and building their social realities, I suggested that the voices and perspectives of immigrants should be placed at the center of the inquiry in order to better understand how discourses are experienced and enacted to support or limit integration. In the next chapter, Research Design, I outline the methodological approach used in this study. I detail the research context, process, and methods, with attention to how the design of the project brings together the post-structural critical theories described above.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1. Research Context and Participant Recruitment

This study took place in Calgary, Alberta, where over a quarter (29.4%) of the population are immigrants, which is higher than the national figure (21.9%) (Statistics Canada, 2016). Data was collected from participants at three Calgary immigrant service provider organizations in Calgary: The Newcomer Support Centre, the Welcome Institute, and the Bridges for Immigrants Society (pseudonyms). These organizations offer Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) courses, with full-time and part-time enrolments scheduled across mornings, afternoons, evenings, and weekends. The Newcomer Support Centre offers LINC Home Study and Blended programs to learners with higher English language proficiency levels, which provides increased flexibility for newcomer students to study online if they have conflicting work and/or personal schedules, illnesses, or disabilities that limit their attendance. Recruitment and data collection for this study occurred from September-December 2021, a period when all LINC programming was being offered online due to COVID-19. As such, all participants were recruited online, and the interviews and focus groups took place remotely by video conferencing.

I recruited participants through points of contact I had established at each of the service provider organizations involved in the study. I connected with managers at the Welcome Institute and the Bridges for Immigrants Society and with the research director at in The Newcomer Support Centre. Through these connections, I asked to be connected to teachers, other administrators, and students so that I could extend my invitation to participate in the study. Administrators and teachers were invited by institutional email (i.e., through their respective service provider organization). Teachers then assisted me with inviting immigrant student participants by forwarding emails to students' organizational email addresses and by posting the invitation in LINC's online learning management system classrooms.

Since my research aims to center the voices of immigrants sharing their own experiences of social integration, I aimed to recruit immigrants in the LINC program. Considering that this is a somewhat vulnerable population, I carefully prioritized their comfort and convenience throughout the process of inviting and involving them in the study. I obtained approval to conduct my study through McGill University's Research Ethics Board (REB), which guided ethical considerations for participants' involvement in the study. Immigrant participants were recruited from LINC level 4 and up, which corresponds to intermediate language proficiency

(i.e., 4-5 on the Canadian Language Benchmark scale). Only inviting students with this minimum proficiency in English enabled me to collect data through interviews and focus groups in English, without the need for a translator. As the sole researcher conducting this study with limited funding, I was unable to hire interpreters or translators, so I could not offer participants an option to participate in other languages. However, to ensure their comfort participating in English, I used straightforward language in all my communication, reassured them of my own background as an English language teacher, provided clear information about the immigrant-centered purpose/topic of the study and my intention to support better outcomes for Canadian immigrants, and gave clear information about the type of involvement I was requesting. Participants were informed from the beginning that they did not need to participate as part of their LINC class, and that participation would have no impact on their progress in the LINC program. They were also informed that if they chose to participate then changed their mind, they could back out at any time.

To my dismay, I had a difficult time recruiting immigrant participants, which led me to reflect on my recruitment strategies "from the participants' point of view" (Morgan, 2019, p. 57). To do so, I consulted with my contacts in the service provider organizations. They helped me realize that many LINC students were not proficient with using emails, especially their institutional emails, as a mode of communication, rendering my main strategies for recruitment ineffective; instead, they recommended using WhatsApp which was students' most common means of online communication. I also realized that students were unfamiliar with research processes and lacked motivation to participate considering their other significant priorities as they settle in Canada. After drawing these conclusions, I adjusted my recruitment strategy, and applied for an REB amendment so that I could invite LINC students using a video recorded invitation that teachers could share in their classes, and by popping into online classes to briefly meet students, explain my research, and provide them with my email and phone number, asking them to send me an email or message on WhatsApp if they were interested in participating. I also added a $25 compensation for immigrant participants. Once the amendment was approved, I implemented my new recruitment approaches, and I began to garner interest from participants. The new approach proved particularly successful in recruiting students from the LINC Blended and Home Study classes at The Newcomer Support Centre, where I recruited most immigrant participants for this study (n = 12).

The remaining immigrant participants (n = 4) were literacy learners with limited English proficiency who were recruited through the Bridges for Immigrant Society based on conversations with my point of contact in this service provider organization. While I planned to only recruit immigrants who could participate in English due to my own language abilities and logistics, my contact at the organization offered to provide interpretation services so that my research could capture the stories and perspectives of a group of LINC students who very much needed to be heard. My contact helped me recruit 4 Arabic speakers from LINC classes and they provided an interpreter at no cost to facilitate and translate during the focus group. Since the purpose of my research is to feature immigrants' perspectives on social integration, I was grateful for their collaboration and support, which allowed the voices and experiences of these four participants to be heard. Immigrant participant demographics are detailed in Table 1. Participants' real names have been replaced with pseudonyms throughout this dissertation.

The challenges I faced in recruiting immigrant participants incited self-reflection about the study and my positionality. Although I had hoped that the original invitation would spark interest as an appealing opportunity for newcomers to share their stories and opinions, this was not the case as newcomers' priorities were understandably elsewhere. I became aware that newcomers faced more pressing burdens or stress related to family, (un)employment, health, and finances. Unsurprisingly, an optional research invitation from a stranger ranked low amid the other more immediate needs of newcomers in Canada.

This sheds light on why research on newcomers so often leaves out their voices. Also, although I was fortunate enough to have the support of a contact who could organize the Arabic focus group with literacy students, gaining access to students in this group would typically require a researcher to have specialized language abilities or to access costly translation services in multiple languages. As a white English-speaking Canadian researcher, I sensed that some immigrant students did not seriously consider the invitation, perhaps because they were not familiar with this type of research invitation, or because they did not want to participate in English, or because they felt intimidated or uncomfortable at the prospect of sharing their thoughts with me for fear that I might be offended or that I could impact their progress in the LINC program or even their immigration status in Canada.

The divide between insider-participants and myself as an outsider-researcher was palpable. In the planning stages of this research, I had planned to lessen this divide with in-

person intentional relationship-building over multiple meetings, events, and meals taking place on-site surrounding their LINC classes. By the time the study was underway, these plans were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I brainstormed moving meetings outdoors, but winter was fast-approaching. I contemplated hosting gatherings via Zoom, but participants were experiencing Zoom fatigue alongside the rest of the world coping with COVID-19 realities, and their priorities came into play once again; asking them to give me *more* of their time via computer screens while they were at home seemed insensitive and unlikely. As a result, I accepted that I would provide participants as much support as I could within their commitment to participate. I listened attentively to their stories and ideas, responded with empathy and compassion, and offered my gratitude. I also ensured participants that they could reach out to me at any time to assist them with language goals or other favours, an offer a couple of participants took me up on (e.g., resume writing support, job search help).

Table 1

Immigrant Participants

Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Age Range*	Sex	Participation
Nirha	Pakistan	31-40	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Sofia	Ukraine	41-50	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Valeria	Mexico	41-50	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Najah	Syria	51-60	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Farah	Jordan (born in Palestine)	41-50	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Emma	China	21-30	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Aaron	Eritrea	31-40	Male	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Alina	Romania	41-50	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Awla	Iran	41-50	Female	Focus Group (English) and Interview
Jagvi	India	31-40	Female	Focus Group (English)
Sun-Young	South Korea	31-40	Female	Focus Group (English)

Mei Lin	China	31-40	Female	Focus Group (English)
Yusra	Iraq (then Lebanon)	51-60	Female	Focus Group (Arabic)
Ashraf	Syria (then Lebanon)	51-60	Male	Focus Group (Arabic)
Dounia	Palestine (then Lebanon)	51-60	Female	Focus Group (Arabic)
Amal	Syria	51-60	Female	Focus Group (Arabic)

* Due to an oversight, I did not collect data on participants' ages. An age range has been estimated based on participants' life story narratives provided in one-on-one interviews.

Interviews were also conducted with administrators (n =3) and teachers (n = 5) working in either service provider organization. Administrator and teacher participants were recruited separately from immigrant student participants, and therefore, participants in this study were not necessarily familiar with one another in their LINC roles. This data provided contextual information about the LINC program and clients. Table 2 provides information about teacher and administrator participants. Participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms. Five of the administrator and teacher participants are 'insiders' to the immigrant experience, with first-hand experience as newcomers or as children of immigrants (Sandra, Jessica, Lisa, Lailah, and Feyza).

Table 2

Teacher and Administrator Participants

Name	Length of LINC Employment	Role(s) in the LINC program
Sandra	2 years	Administrative. Currently a settlement practitioner, and previously worked as a LINC assistant in the classroom.
Darrin	2 years	Administrative. Student support specialist, language program coordinator (handling student issues, collaborating with SPOs)
Jessica	2 years	Administrative. LINC registrar (handling registrations, referrals, coordinating with CLERC)
Lisa	7 years	LINC instructor
Lailah	11 years	LINC instructor
Hannah	5 years	LINC instructor
Feyza	4 years	LINC instructor (in Home Study program)
Curtis	11 years	Senior LINC Instructor, PBLA (Portfolio Based Language Assessment) Lead

3.2. Overview of the Research Design

This research took place over two stages, with the second building on the first. The first stage aimed at uncovering and identifying discourses that are privileged in the LINC program and taken up by immigrant students (RQ 1). After stage one, I analyzed data and generated preliminary findings to share with a subset of participants in stage two. Stage two focused on centering immigrant voices in understanding what social integration means to them, and how the discourses identified in stage one impact their social integration. The two stages are summarized in Table 3, and then discussed in detail.

Table 3

Overview of Research Design

Stage 1: What are the Discourses		
Research Question	**Data Source & Timeline**	**Analytic Approach, Focus & Timeline**
Which discourses are…		
(a) … privileged and operationalized in the LINC program, and	- Government websites (*n* = 31) - Service provider websites (*n* = 14) - Online news media (*n* = 55) **(May – Aug 2021)**	Thematic analysis of broad contextual discourses. **(May – Aug 2021)**
	- Interviews with LINC teachers (*n* = 5) and administrators (*n* = 3) **(Sep – Oct 2021)**	Thematic analysis of LINC institutional discourses. **(Oct – Nov 2021)**
(b) … taken up by immigrant participants in the LINC program.	- Five focus groups with immigrant students (*n* = 16) **(Sep – Oct 2021)**	Critical Discourse Analysis to examine relationship between language and power. **(Oct – Nov 2021)**
Stage 2: Immigrant Perspectives on Social Integration		
Research Question	**Data Source & Timeline**	**Analytic Approach, Focus & Timeline**
What does social integration mean (entail) to immigrants?	- Interviews with a subset of immigrant participants (*n* = 9) to collect life story narratives and perspectives on social integration. **(Nov – Dec 2021)**	Intersectional thematic analysis. **(Jan – Mar 2022)**

3.3. Stage One: Collecting and Analyzing Discourses

The first stage of this study focused on identifying discourses. This addresses the first research question in its two parts:

a) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration in Canada that are privileged and operationalized within the LINC program?
b) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration in Canada that are taken up by immigrant participants in the LINC program?

3.3.1. Data Collection for Stage One

Data was gathered to explore which discourses surrounding Canadian immigrants, immigration, and integration are used in LINC programs, and to determine which discourses are taken up by newcomers participating in LINC programs. Discourses were gathered from the following sources: (1) Online news sources from CBC; (2) Government websites at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as websites of the service provider organizations involved in this study; (3) Interviews with LINC administrators and teachers; and (4) Focus groups with newcomers.

The web pages selected for inclusion in the analysis were exported using NCapture, an extension of NVivo that captures and imports web pages and online PDFs to NVivo for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software that facilitates researchers in managing and analyzing data (Creswell, 2007). The search of online documents was systematic, evolving from the objectives of my inquiry and guided by search terms derived from the literature; search terms are further detailed below. Throughout, I remained attentive to "the accidental uncovering of valuable data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 175) by tracking down leads and remaining open to new insights linked in the web pages.

3.3.1.1. Online News Sources from CBC. The purpose of analyzing online news articles was to generate a broad overview of discourses in media to contextualize and inform the critical discourse analysis that follows. The intention was not to form an exhaustive report of every instance that immigration is mentioned in the news. Selection criteria limited the number of included online news articles:

- Source – Only one news source was used: CBC News Online. CBC earned the Journalism Trust Initiative Certification from Reporters without Borders (2022) for being

an overall accurate, credible, fair, and reliable source of local, provincial, and national news.

- Keywords – Guided by the literature review, search terms included: Canadian immigration; immigration in Canada; social integration; integration of immigrants; multiculturalism; Canadian identity; LINC program. The searches for these keywords yielded over 1000 results, which were further reduced by the following criteria.
- Depth – Articles were chosen if they had a substantive focus on one or more keywords in the content of the article; they were excluded if the keyword only appeared once or in passing.
- Immigrant classification – Articles were included if they focused on adults who were economic migrants, family reunification migrants, or refugees. Articles were excluded if they focused on temporary residents or students or children/adolescent migrants. This criterion reflected the participants involved in this study.
- Format – Only text-based articles were selected, excluding video and audio.

3.3.1.2. Government and Service Provider Organization Websites. The purpose of the search of government and service provider organization (SPO) websites was to gather discourses used at the organizational and policy level that informs the LINC program. Since I did not have access to the decision makers and curriculum designers at the highest levels of LINC policy and planning, I followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) suggestion that when exploring "an institution or program, documents would be the best source of data, particularly if persons associated with the institution were not available for interviews" (p. 182). Being unable to access government officials and policymakers involved in the conception of the LINC program, online documents proved an effective way to explore the program's conception, structure, and priorities.

I began my analysis by searching for information about the LINC program through federal government websites (Canada.ca or cig.gc.ca - Canada.ca is the official website of the government of Canada. Cig.gc.ca is the website for Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada). To focus the search, I used the search terms 'LINC program' and 'Language' to identify websites with information informing LINC programming across Canada. I limited my search to 2010 onwards. NCapture was used to collect 15 websites at the federal level. The analysis continued with provincial web pages from the government of Alberta website (alberta.ca). I navigated to the menu item *Moving to Alberta* and then to *Immigrate to Alberta*,

where I limited my search to web pages pertinent to immigrants/immigration in Alberta, social integration, and language programming; five web pages were saved using NCapture. Municipal government websites included a search of the official city of Calgary website (Calgary.ca), from which I located the *Welcome to Calgary* page, where a navigation menu featured links for newcomers. I searched for web pages pertinent to immigrants/immigration in Calgary, social integration, and language programming; 10 web pages were saved using NCapture. For SPO websites, I captured each organization's mission statement, information about their settlement services, information about their language program offerings, and annual reports from the last two years. NCapture was used to save seven pages from The Newcomer Support Center, six pages from Welcome Institute, and one page from Immigrant Services Calgary, the organization responsible for language assessment.

3.3.1.3. Interviews with LINC Administrators and Teachers. I invited teachers and administrators in the LINC program to participate in a 60-minute interview via a recruitment email sent through each service provider organization. The purpose of the interviews with administrators and teachers was to eventually understand which discourses were operationalized in the context of the LINC program. Eight interviews were conducted with participants at both The Newcomer Support Centre (1 administrator, 2 teachers) and the Welcome Institute (2 administrators, 3 teachers). Consent was obtained from participants via email prior to scheduling the online interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, using the interview guide in Appendix A: Questions for Interviews with Administrators and Teachers. The interview contains open-ended questions to solicit participants' understanding and evaluation of the LINC program. I asked participants to articulate their understanding of the LINC program's overarching mission, core values, expected outcomes for LINC students, the program's positive and negative impacts, and whether the program could do more to support immigrants in the program. I used the same interview guide/questions for both teachers and administrators because the goal was to collect data regarding how those on the front-lines of LINC policies and curriculum enacted (or did not enact) the program's overall purpose. This data was collected to learn which discourses were operative within the social and organizational practices of LINC program implementation.

3.3.1.4. Focus Groups with Newcomers. I invited newcomers from LINC classes to participate in focus groups for the study. The purpose of focus groups was to elicit discourses that newcomers use to discuss topics like immigration and social integration. Focus groups were

an effective method because they provide a setting to bring together groups to spark dialogue among participants. As participants create a communal space to explore shared "experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 5), the focus group presents opportunities for noticing and questioning social structures, giving it transformative potential (Chiu, 2003). Specifically for my research that focuses on discourses, focus groups (rather than individual interviews) provided an ideal context for participants to dialogue such that dominant discourses, along with others' responses to these discourses, could surface organically among participants rather than being solicited by the researcher. For instance, participants could state an opinion, and then others can react by agreeing or disagreeing, or adding. With multiple participants in each focus group, participants were influenced by one another's ideas and views, which contributed to my understanding of which discourses were dominant and widely accepted among LINC students. Once I collected data through the focus groups to inform the discourses that were prevalently used among LINC students, I completed a critical discourse analysis (described in detail below), then conducted interviews with a subset of the immigrant participants to follow up on focus group themes.

The focus group guide, found in Appendix B: Questions for Focus Groups with Newcomers, was designed strategically to solicit discourses about immigrants and immigration in Canada. It includes five questions to probe newcomers' perceptions of Canada, stories of immigration to Canada, and experiences of feeling welcomed (or not) while integrating into Canadian society. As an outsider who lacks first-hand experience of participants in responding to these potentially sensitive topics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I recognized the challenge of conducting cross-cultural focus groups, which "present situations that are … less familiar to the researcher, which can greatly increase the complexity of designing and executing" data collection (Morgan, 2019, p. 103). To mitigate this challenge, I followed Creswell's (2007) recommendation to "refine the interview questions and procedures further through pilot testing" (p. 140). A pilot focus group was conducted with four international students in the Faculty of Education at McGill University, who were recruited via an email invitation sent through the departmental email lists. I chose to pilot with international students because they recently experienced moving to Canada and adjusting to life in Montreal. Four international students expressed interest in participating; they were from Iran, Singapore, the Caribbean, and the USA. I chose not to exclude the American international student because I thought their experience

moving to Canada and their related research interests would be helpful for this stage. During the pilot focus group, participants trialled each of the five questions, and then provided feedback on their experience. Their feedback supported revisions to the questions and structure of the focus groups. I modified the wording of some questions to clarify their focus. For example, my first question was originally worded, "What does it mean to be Canadian?" Two pilot group members said they drew a blank and were uncertain how to answer the question, either because it was not something they had considered or because the question was too broad. They suggested making the question more specific and relevant to the target group. I adjusted the wording to, "How would you describe Canada (or Canadians) to your friends and family in your home country?" I also included follow-up prompts, such as: How is life different in Canada compared to life at home? Is there anything you really like (or don't like) about living in Canada? Based on the pilot group's feedback, I also changed the question order, increased the planned amount of time allotted to each question, added follow-up prompts to extend the discussion if participants were unsure of how to answer, and became sensitive to potential cultural considerations in the organization/logistics of the focus group (i.e., offering gendered focus groups to participants, and giving email notice in advance about the topics discussed in the groups).

When it came to the focus groups with immigrant participants, sixteen newcomers participated across five focus groups. I moderated four groups alone, and was joined by an interpreter for the focus group that occurred in Arabic at Bridges for Immigrants Society. The interpreter was an administrator in the program who had formed close relationships with the four Arabic learners in the group. Over their months in Canada, she had provided emotional and tangible support to each of them, evidenced by her intimate knowledge of their stories, journeys to Canada, frustrations with the Canadian system, and even familiarity with their children's lives.

Each group lasted 90 minutes, with time dedicated to carefully reading through the consent form with participants, and then to the five questions that elicited discourses surrounding immigration and social integration. The consent form was written in straightforward English, and in the Arabic group, the interpreter provided direct translation as well as cultural interpretation of the research process for the entire form. Participants were given time to ask questions, as needed.

3.3.2. Data Analysis for Stage One

I used two analytical methods to identify discourses from the data sources. First, I analyzed websites and interviews with teachers and administrators thematically to identify discourses (as patterns). Second, I analyzed focus groups with newcomers using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015). As part of the explanation stage of the critical discourse analysis, I compared findings from across data types to understand how discourses were patterned across levels.

3.3.2.1. Thematic Analysis of Websites and Interviews. In the thematic analysis of websites and teacher/administrator interviews, my aim was to identify discourses that would contextualize the experiences of participants in the LINC program. As such, I developed codes that would allow me to generate an inventory of immigration-related topics and perspectives that the government prioritizes, that are advanced through media streams, and that are reiterated/resisted by LINC teachers and administrators on the front-lines of LINC program implementation.

The thematic analysis was inductive, with open codes emerging from the data (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Creswell; 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Morgan, 2019). In the process of developing the initial inductive codes, I aimed to locate topics and perspectives related to immigration, immigrant settlement, and integration. I grouped together related emerging codes to develop discursive themes. Each discursive theme comprised a group of data that reflected one or more common-sense assumptions about immigrants, immigration, or integration processes. The common-sense assumptions reflect ideologies, social practices and social relationships, which are discussed in the findings in Chapter 4 (Fairclough, 2015). The initial open codes and emerging themes for government and service provider websites are listed in Table 4, and codes for the online CBC media sources are listed in Table 5.

The themes generated from the interviews with teachers and administrators included: Training, Teacher/administrator values, Teacher/administrator challenges; Students' needs/goals/expectations; LINC program's shortcomings; Perspectives on immigrants and immigration; Social integration in terms of identity, confidence, relationships, sense of belonging; and LINC program goals. These are discussed in Chapter 4 as well.

Table 4

Open Codes and Emerging Themes for Government and Service Provider Websites

Initial Inductive Open Codes	**Emerging Themes: Key topics and perspectives (i.e., discourses) addressed in government and SPO websites**
Racism, discrimination Difficulties finding a job in Canada	Systematic challenges faced by newcomers
Language as a problem Language as a means for integration	Language as a barrier for newcomers
Presence of qualified teachers Logistics of classroom scheduling Assessment and learner level	LINC Program Operations
Help with social integration Help with language Help with employment Help with day-to-day life Help with citizenship	Types of Settlement Support
Funding Source (i.e., IRCC) Free language programming service	Language as a settlement service
Canadian identity Albertan identity Calgary's identity	Identity
Benefits for immigrants Benefits for Canada and/or Canadians	Benefits of immigration

Table 5

Open Codes and Emerging Themes for Online CBC News Websites

Initial Inductive Open Codes	**Emerging Themes: Key topics and perspectives (i.e., discourses) addressed in news media**
Political leaders speaking about immigration Immigration in political campaigns	Immigration as a political topic
Language level Language needs	Language in relation to immigration
High Number of immigrants in Canada Immigrants cause increased pressure on Canadian systems (healthcare, education, service provider organizations, etc.). Immigration as a process / procedure	Immigration as a process / procedure

Refugees Family reunification Labour / economic migrants	Differences by category of immigration
Two-way street attitude Tolerance Assimilation Anti-immigrant sentiment Immigration as part of 'Canadian Identity'	Canadian identity vis-à-vis attitudes towards immigrants
Benefits to newcomers themselves Benefits to Canada and/or Canadians	Promoting the benefits of immigration
Afghan, Syrian, or Ukrainian refugees COVID-19 and its impact on immigration	Trending issues in relation to immigration

3.3.2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis of Focus Groups. This study uses CDA to analyze focus group data because CDA provides a robust set of concepts to theorize the relationship between language and social practices, and therefore can contribute to understanding the how social integration is discursively shaped.

The analysis of focus groups began with the transcription process. I used the Microsoft Office transcription tool to generate a rough draft, then I listened to each recording several times to create a verbatim transcription that included speech functions such as repeated words, false starts, and filler words (e.g., uh, um), as well as laughter and grammatical errors. Focus group transcripts were then uploaded to NVivo, where I began thematic coding. Since I had already identified some emerging themes in the above steps (i.e., in the analysis of websites and interviews with teachers/administrators), I began my analysis of focus groups somewhat deductively, by drawing on themes I had already noticed in discourses across data sources so far. After all, the intent of the focus groups was to explore which already-uncovered discourses were taken up by newcomers in the LINC program. Even so, I remained inductive, open to new themes that might emerge from focus group data. I read through transcripts several times until all data was categorized into codes (see Table 6 below for a list of the main codes and sub-codes). Within each code, I analyzed data using a Critical Discourse Analysis, which proceeded in three stages: description, explanation, and interpretation (Fairclough, 2015).

The description stage focuses on formal features of the text (i.e., grammar and vocabulary) to understand the construction of power relations and ideological processes at text level. Descriptive analysis attends to the experiential, relational, and expressive values of the

grammar and vocabulary used. Experiential values are ways in which the social and natural world are represented ideologically. Relational values are ways in which social relationships are enacted. Expressive values comprise the way the text evaluates reality (e.g. social identities and positioning). To illustrate these values, consider the statement, "Immigrants must have proficiency in English in order to integrate in Canada." At the descriptive analysis stage, the analyst can make a case that the declarative present form, the modal verb (i.e., "must"), and the cause-effect structure of the sentence (i.e., must have A "in order to" reach B) indicate that the sentence is acting as a fact, taken for granted truth, or even a rule. An experiential value is at play in constructing the social world as English-speaking and expressively positioning migrants as constrained to fit within the 'rule' of society, perhaps by positioning themselves as learners. This apparently simple sentence demonstrates how impactful the grammar/vocabulary at text level can be in impacting meaning and implications.

There are some considerations of using a critical discourse analytic approach with participants whose level of English is not fluent as well as for language that has been translated by an interpreter. For participants whose proficiency in English was lower, having relatively less control of the English language may result in their selecting language that does not reflect their intended meaning. Even so, the selected language and way of articulating ideas will reflect, to the extent that they are able, their unique representation of their social world based on what discourses are available to them. Similarly, for language translated by an interpreter, the data may reflect translation challenges surrounding culturally specific words or concepts, and the interpreter may impart some bias or interpretation. Therefore, it was critical to consider the multiple levels and perspectives of meaning-making present within the data, and to bear these factors in mind during the description stage of the analysis.

In the second and third stages of CDA, interpretation and explanation, the focus of the analysis expands beyond the text to consider the context and to theorize how a text (re)produces social reality and people's positionings. The interpretation stage analyzes how a text is produced and received as it is mediated through the cognitive processes of the people involved. This stage considers how discourses are mediated by participants' backgrounds, worldviews, and common-sense assumptions. The explanation stage draws upon the broader social context to explain the relationships social structures and social practices. The broader context, including how discourses are repeated across genres and time, helps explain the common-sense assumptions

that sustain ideologies. For both interpretation and explanation, the analyst is tasked with theorizing interpretations of complex and invisible relationships to understand how texts are made meaningful in the way they are mediated by participants and in social context. Briefly, these steps entail "unveiling, or demystification" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 155) by the researcher of processes that are not generally obvious to discourse participants. For instance, the ways that multiculturalism has been problematically ideologically associated to Canadian identity since its inception in the 1970s.

The stages of description, interpretation, and explanation may begin sequentially, but the analytic process eventually becomes iterative. In my analysis, I moved between stages. For instance, as I conducted my critical discourse analysis, I noticed patterns in the text (description), which I then tried to interpret by analyzing data that informed participants' mediation of the language functions in play (interpretation), while simultaneously trying to understand where these language functions originated and how they became familiar to or assumed by participants (explanation). At the same time, there were cases where thematic analysis of news sources informed societal themes that I saw echoed in the participants' language use (explanation), so I then looked closely at the language forms to understand the function of this language (description) and then tried to understand how these language functions were made meaningful by participants and others they came into contact with (interpretation). Moving back and forth between these three stages as well as across levels of analytic focus (i.e., micro, meso, macro) is part of the CDA process to map and understand the relationship between language and power.

Table 6

Thematic Codes for Initial Analysis of Focus Groups

Top-Level Code	Sub-Codes
Social Integration	Sense of Belonging Identity (assertions of identity) Social connections (bonds, bridges, links) Language as a means/barrier to integration Civic participation
Immigration to Canada	Process of moving to Canada Perceptions of being an immigrant
Perspectives on Being Canadian	Being/Feeling Canadian Perceptions of Canadian culture (e.g., values, weather)

There are some analytic tools from the field of CDA that I used to support my analysis during the interpretation and explanation stages. At the interpretation stage, the analytic tools were:

- *Intertextuality* – Applying a socio-historical perspective to understand how the text or utterance fits or is reflected in existing texts (Fairclough et al., 2011; Meyer, 2001). This includes exploring how the text under analysis borrowed ideas, words, or even chunks of language, from other spoken or written sources in media, government, or grassroots movements, both local and global.
- *Ideological Effects* **-** Exploring how ideological assumptions impact social life, reality, and positioning. Critical discourse analysts aim to denaturalize texts to see how power operates through unconscious common-sense assumptions (Gee, 2005; Luke, 1996; van Dijk, 2005).

At the explanation stage, the analytic tools were:

- *Local Coherence* – Exploring the local coherence of texts informs how they fit together in a cohesive way to take a position.
- *Situational Context* – Considering how the function/contents of a text (activity, topic, purpose), evokes subject positioning(s) and relations of power or social distance; this also entails considering the role language plays in making meaning connections between things (Fairclough, 2015).
- *Discourse Types* – Observing how grammar and vocabulary is patterned to advance normative ways of using language, such that it resonates with and shapes the opinions and attitudes of those hearing/reading the text.

To summarize, the analysis of focus groups with newcomers began with description by attending closely to the data to consider the relational, experiential and expressive effects of the (sometimes unconscious) choices language users make when producing a text/utterance. Continuing with interpretation, I considered participants' mediating processes through attending to local cohesion, situational context and discourse types. And with explanation, I related the discourses to the broader social context using intertextuality and ideology as guiding tools. Although these stages were approached sequentially initially, once analysis was underway, I

moved back and forth between stages to understand how particular comments fit in to discourses, and simultaneously how discourses (and their effects) were constructed through comments.

At this point, some reflexivity on researcher positionality is called for to address what qualifies a researcher to make interpretations about participants' use and mediation of discourses, particularly for myself as an outsider to my participants' experiences as immigrants. Fairclough (2015) states that an analyst only has access to the processes in other peoples' heads "through her capacity to herself engage in the discourse processes she is investigating" (p. 175). I am engaging with discourses of Canadian immigration as a white English-speaking Canadian, and my perspectives are likely shared, in a social cognition sense, by those in similar positions. My goal is to thoughtfully and carefully identify ways to improve experiences of immigration from a social discursive theoretical perspective. As an ally to newcomers, I approach this work with my participants' best wishes in mind. As a researcher, I maintain a critical orientation towards social change, and I used analytical tools that helped ground my analysis in this social framework.

3.4. Stage Two: Highlighting Intersectional Voices

An intersectionality framework was used to guide the collection and analysis of data during stage two to address this study's second research question: What does social integration mean (entail) to immigrants? Interviews with a subset of immigrant participants (n = 9) were conducted within a month after the focus groups. The purpose of the interviews was to bring my preliminary analysis and reflections from the discourse analysis stage (i.e., stage 1) to share them with immigrant participants so that they provide their reactions and perspectives so that I could center their voices in identifying themes that mattered to them.

3.4.1. Data Collection for Stage Two

To address this research question, I used methods that focused on participants' stories and perspectives. I conducted 90-minute interviews with immigrant participants. The interviews had two sections, outlined in the interview guide found in Appendix C: Questions for Interviews with Newcomers. In the first half of the interview, I invited participants to share their life story narratives, guided by questions about their background and childhood, current challenges and values, and goals for the future. The questions for the life story narratives section were adapted from Atkinson (1998). I used a flexible structure, where participants' guided the conversation. I

offered participants a break prior to beginning the second half of the interview, which was dedicated to asking participants questions about their social integration experiences so far in Canada. The questions for this section were derived based on literature, and I followed a semi-structured approach, asking every question, but allowing the order to be changed with the flow of conversation. The questions covered what social integration means for participants, what daily challenges participants face, whether participants felt a sense of belonging and at home in Canada, how their identity has changed since arriving in Canada, and which of their social relationships supported their integration. The questions in this section were open ended to allow for in-depth responses. As needed, I asked follow-up questions to develop a fuller picture with the participant as the direct source and mediator of their own information (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were a rich source of intersectional data because they allowed me to capture "the story behind a participant's experiences" (McNamara, 1999, p. 1). Further details and justifications for the use of these two methods within the interviews are detailed below:

3.4.1.1. Life Story Narratives. Life story narratives were solicited in the first half of the interview to set the tone of the interview as centering entirely on participant experiences. Listening to participants' stories can provide information "about the everyday lives of research subjects and the meanings they attach to their experiences" (Elliot, 2005, p. 26). How participants articulate their stories reveals how they viewed their relationships and sense of self (Christensen & Jensen, 2012). Life story narratives are a way of approaching both identity constructions and the role that structures (and discourses) play in shaping people's lives (Prins, 2006). Yet, life stories allow us to see participants' enacted narratives, where they play an active role in performing and narrating their identities. Inviting participants to share their life story narratives centers them as individuals "capable of action who possess knowledge-building assets" (Prados Megías at al., 2016, p. 963). Aligned with social constructivism, life story narratives position participants as knowledge holders whose subjective narrations of their own experiences and identities constitute meaning.

I followed Atkinson's (2007) suggestions as to the role of the researcher, who is positioned to "learn from their [the participant's] voice, their words, and their subjective meaning of their experience of life" (p. 233). I asked open-ended descriptive questions to enable depth in response. I listened responsively, aiming to show interest, empathy, care, warmth and acceptance (Atkinson, 1998). Questions were asked about participants' past, present, and hopes

for the future to give a broad view of their life trajectories. In this project, I could not collect complete life story narratives of participants; this would have required multiple meetings with each participant. However, I used questions that elicited the life stories that were pertinent to participants' experiences as immigrants in Canada with the aim of appreciating their intersectional backgrounds and identities.

3.4.1.2. Interview Questions about Social Integration. Naturally leading from the life story narratives section of the interview, at the halfway point of the interviews, I shifted to ask questions about the immigrants' experiences with social integration. In keeping with an intersectional approach, Bowleg (2008) recommends that interviewers ask questions "about experiences that are intersecting, interdependent, and mutually constitutive, without resorting, even inadvertently to an additive approach" (p. 314). Therefore, I avoided designing questions that might imply that aspects of participants' identities could be isolated and ranked as contributing more or less to their experiences of social integration or discrimination. For instance, I avoided questions like, *How do you feel your language ability impacts your experience in Canada? Have you experienced discrimination based on your skin colour?* Rather, I followed Bowleg's (2008) recommendation to ask questions about participants' experiences and processes more generally, allowing participants to decide how to respond based on the totality of their experience. For example, *Does Canada feel like home to you? Why/why not? What are some of your day-to-day challenges in Canada*? Hillsburg (2013) recommends asking open-ended questions that allow participants to self-identify and discuss their own experiences. For instance, rather than asking "Tell me about your experiences dealing with racism" it would be better to ask, "Tell me about your experiences of discrimination." I used these guidelines to design questions probing participants' social connections and sense of belonging.

3.3.2. Data Analysis for Stage Two

To analyze the first part of the interviews, life story narratives, I began with reading through the section of the interview that solicited participants' stories. Following Horsdal (2012), I paid attention to events, relationships, ordering, and how participants narrated their life stories as actors in control or as passive objects of circumstances, or perhaps as a mix of both. I paid attention to where participants "pause and linger and elaborate events" (Horsdal, 2012, p. 89) and I gave attention to those instances as important components of participants' life stories.

Along with this, I noticed ways that certain themes dominated narratives, including "loss, death, playful interactions, survival strategies, close relationships, etc." (Horsdal, 2012, p. 97). In re-telling narratives, I followed a chronological order while mirroring aspects that participants magnified or lingered on during interviews, indicating their significance in the life stories.

Life stories are "expressions of a person's experience" (Brotman et al., 2020), which are filtered through my own interpretation and representation as the researcher. Being ontologically rooted in social constructivism helped mitigate some potential bias in my analysis because the theoretical framework and research design prioritized stories as contingent to socio-historical context. Therefore, I aimed to report contextual details as I re-constructed participant narratives. This is a key tenet of intersectionality: attending to the interplay between lived stories at the micro-level and structures and institutions at the macro-level (Christensen & Jensen, 2012). Therefore, life stories were analyzed to see how participants constructed their own identities while also attending to the role social structures play in their lives in the analysis and discussion.

To analyze the second part of the interviews (i.e., immigrant perspectives on social integration), I began with an inductive content analysis of data. Content analysis is used "to create concepts, categories, and themes, which can be extended to create models, conceptual structures, and conceptual maps" that address research goals (Kyngãs, 2020, p. 13). This was suitable for my research since my objective for this stage was to highlight immigrant perspectives and map their immigrant-informed approaches to social integration. In brief, this approach enabled (re)thinking a conceptual framework for social integration, informed from immigrant perspectives.

As I began reading the data, I used an inductive approach to develop open codes of concepts and perspectives related to social integration. Following Bowleg (2008), the analysis involved careful and multiple readings of data from interview transcripts. As patterns began to emerge, my analysis shifted towards developing analytic codes with an intersectional lens. An intersectional focus guided my analysis as I began to theorize social integration based on the experiences and realties described by participants (Davis, 2008; Marfelt, 2016). Specifically, I focused on ways that intersectional identities shaped participants' experiences, perspectives, and social positioning. I also focused on participants' challenges and experiences of marginalization or discrimination in the social context. The analysis was also intersectional in that I aimed to understand findings as situated in context; the first stage of the project contributed to informing

the social, cultural, and historical contexts that shaped participants' experiences. Finally, my intersectional lens included interpreting data with a view to how power relations, social norms, and institutional practices impact participants' identities and experiences. Open and analytical codes for this part of the analysis are presented in Table 7, with the left column organizing the table according to comments participants made about home, factors that lead to integration, sense of belonging, being and feeling Canadian, and relationships.

Table 7

Coding Scheme for Interview Data

Group of Data	Open Coding	Analytical Coding
Comments on Home	Having roots in Canada (Family in Canada; children are integrating well, making memories in Canada) Having friends in Canada Having positive feelings towards Canada (happy, comfortable) Feeling community members treat you well; feeling welcomed and accepted by others	Experience-based sense of home
	Appreciating democracy, tolerance, women's rights/freedoms, safety, stability, peace Feeing well supported by government Sensing that you're being treated fairly	Trust in the Canadian context, constitution, system
	Having a dwelling in Canada (i.e., a home) Feeling at home in two places (i.e., in Canada and country of origin) Enjoying the natural beauty in Canada	'Being' in Canada
	Gaining familiarity to current neighborhood, stores, Canadian processes and policies, etc. Learning where to access food/goods from country of origin	Having knowledge and understanding
Comments on factors leading to integration	Requires being proactive to work/study (find training programs, courses) Improving and practicing English skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking) Language issues can lead to bullying or discrimination Reducing Accent Volunteering Learning about the Canadian culture	Constant learning, involvement, and effort

	Being adaptable, open-minded Having a positive perspective Confidence and independence 'Treating others how you want to be treated' Being willing to compromise, being realistic about outcomes	Personality traits
	Getting a Driver's license Getting a PR Receiving opportunities for work	Logistics of lifestyle (access to and inclusion in public systems)
	Age (being younger might help) Having fewer attachments in home country (i.e., property, finances)	Life circumstances
Comments on Sense of Belonging	Feeling 'part of something', connected, attached (not isolated) Feeling Canada wants you here (indicated by processing PR and citizenship) Feeling like more than a tourist Feeling comfortable, peaceful	Belonging as a feeling
	Belonging comes with confidence Gaining independence/autonomy, taking on new household roles	Belonging as confidence
	Getting used to new cultures, habits, etc. Speaking English (accurately) Being *in the know* about what's going on (e.g., in news, politics)	Belonging as knowledge
	"This is my home, so I belong." Getting the PR helped Choosing to participate in the workplace/community	Belonging as a decision
Comments on being and feeling Canadian	Doing what 'feels Canadian' with family (i.e., hockey) Feelings (of appreciation) towards Canada (e.g., wanting the best for Canada; feeling defensive of Canada; feeling grateful to Canada). Being two nationalities at once; taking on an 'immigrant' identity as between two places. Interacting with other Canadians	Nationality (Being Canadian means *identifying* as a Canadian)
	Plans for citizenship Desire to vote in Canada Getting passport as a goal (a symbol of freedom)	Citizenship (Being Canadian means *officially* being Canadian)

	Canadian worldviews are different Feelings that Canadians prefer to interact/work with other Canadians over immigrants Feeling that since you weren't raised in Canada, there are differences in thinking that make 'being Canadian' out of reach Adjusting to a shift in identity from country of origin (change in status, position, lifestyle, power)	Feeling like an outsider (not feeling Canadian)
	Not feeling Canadian; but maybe kids will feel/be Canadian May move again in the future Just living here is enough	Distinguishing *being Canadian* vs. *being in Canada*
Comments on Relationships	Immediate family (spouse, children) support mental health, gives a sense of purpose, provides love/support Having extended family in Canada provides support Being in touch with family members outside of Canada provide moral support Long-term friends in Canada help with feeling settled	Closest family/friend connections
	Making friends with co-nationals once in Canada Co-national immigrant neighbours are helpful sources of support Inherently feel closer to co-nationals; helpful to share a language and culture (to better understand experiences) Having co-national coworkers and doctors.	Ease of connections with co-nationals
	Acquaintances made at church, work, through kids' schools, programs (classes) of SPOs. Cultural differences make friendships with other immigrants challenging Having good professional relations with employers helps with furthering network and career.	Broader personal and professional network
	No (or very few) 'Canadian friends' Canadian friends would be helpful (to ask questions, learn about Canada, practice English) Friendships are difficult to form (because of COVID-19 or being unsure how to make friends as an adult)	Friendships with white-settled Canadians
	Meeting with counselors from SPOs A need for more professional logistical help (i.e., with understanding documentation)	Accessing services, professionals

3.4. Summary

In this chapter, I outlined this project's research design, spanning two stages of data collection and analysis. While the first stage focuses on identifying the discourses surrounding immigration and immigrants, the second stage re-centers immigrant voices in sharing their stories and perspectives. By designing the study in this way, bringing together CDA and intersectionality, the aim was to shine a light on systems of power and social norms and relations in Canada, while simultaneously centering immigrant-informed approaches to explore immigrants' agency and experiences on their own terms.

I bring the findings into focus over the next three chapters. In Chapter 4, I present findings and discussion from the critical discourse analysis that occurred in stage one. In chapter 5, I present findings and discussion from the intersectional interviews with immigrants that occurred in stage two. In chapter 6, I bring both stages together to address the third research objective of this study (i.e., making recommendations to transform immigrants' experiences of social integration in language learning contexts and beyond).

Chapter 4: Discourses of Immigration and Social Integration

4.1. Power Within and Behind Language

Language is a powerful tool. When people speak or write, they create something – an idea, a meaning, a will to action. Consciously or not, people choose and order words in a way that is somehow meaningful or interpretable to the people they expect their words to reach. When people read or hear something, their brain quickly taps into their understanding of their sociocultural context to make sense of the information, or even feel a particular way, based on their knowledge and perspective. Consider this quotation from Canada's first prime minister, John A. MacDonald: "Let us be French, let us be English, but most importantly let us be Canadian!" Readers may have rather different interpretations of the quotation depending on their perspective and position. One reader may feel that the quote gives a nice message about Canadian identity and nationalism. Another reader may be aghast at the exclusion of Indigenous people or immigrants from this early description of being Canadian. In either case, the quotation uses language to *construct* Canadian identity by *creating* an image of Canada, and it *positions* people as included or not. This capacity for language to create, construct, and position demonstrates the power within and behind language; this is language as discourse.

My project is concerned with how discourse impacts the social integration of newcomers in Canada. In other words, how language *does something* as newcomers integrate—how it positions newcomers, signifies relationships, forges a 'Canadian identity', and enshrines Canada's approach to immigration. Discourses may create, sustain, or change power structures, institutions, and social systems. Exploring discourses reveals how ideologies are continually (re)constructed through daily interactions and experiences (Fairclough, 2015), which reveals areas where unfair systems could be changed by interrupting dominant discourses.

This chapter addresses the first research question of this study, in two parts:

a) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration in Canada that are privileged and operationalized within the LINC program?
b) What are the discourses surrounding immigration and social integration in Canada that are taken up by immigrant participants in the LINC program?

For the first sub-question (A), to identify discourses that are privileged and operationalized in the LINC program, data included eight interviews with administrators (n = 3) and teachers (n = 5) in the LINC program, and an analysis of online websites. One hundred web

pages were downloaded and analyzed, including government websites informing LINC programming at the federal (n = 16), provincial (Alberta, n = 5), and municipal (Calgary, n = 10) levels; web pages from Calgary-based service provider organizations offering the LINC program or assessment for the LINC program (n = 14); and CBC online news articles related to immigration and social integration (n=55). The above data was analyzed thematically, using an inductive approach with open codes emerging from the data, informed by themes in the literature review (Creswell, 2007). For the second sub-question (B), to identify discourses taken up by immigrant participants in the LINC program, data included five focus groups with immigrants participating in the LINC program (n = 17). The data from focus groups was analyzed first thematically, then through critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015).

This chapter is organized beginning from the highest contextual level and working towards the local ground level. In other words, I first outline macro level societal context by focusing on discourses prevalent in Canadian policy and media, then I identify meso level discourses that are privileged and operationalized in the LINC program, then I look to the micro level at discourses taken up by newcomers on in specific LINC program localities. In closing this chapter, I identify patterns appearing across levels and data sources. While this chapter addresses the study's first research question, principally concerned with identifying discourses and theorizing how they position newcomers and change/sustain ideologically derived social structures, in the next chapter, the findings are further nuanced through attention to the intersectional identities of newcomer participants, including their insights on social integration shared through interviews.

4.2. Macro Level: Canadian Discourses surrounding Immigration

To briefly review what was discussed in the literature review, discourses play a role in portraying immigration as an integral component of Canada's national identity, while also defining and positioning immigrants within society (Day, 2000; Haque, 2012; Thobani, 2007). Dominant patterns of language use allow Canada to present itself on the world stage as a multicultural welcoming nation where immigrants are easily integrated into the Canadian mosaic (Berry, 2013; Kymlicka, 2003). Canadian integration is thought to be a two-way process where immigrants and settled Canadians adjust to accommodate one another, and immigration is alleged to be desirable both for immigrants and for the Canadian economy and identity (Li, 2003;

Mulholland & Biles, 2004). Positive attributes like tolerance, acceptance, diversity, and respect are characterized as Canadian attitudes towards immigrants to the point that negative attitudes towards immigrants and instances of discrimination are downplayed (Gulliver, 2018). Negative attitudes include apprehension about shifting societal demographics, concerns that Canadian-born people could be unfairly displaced from work or public systems, or worries that immigration could be linked to increasing crime or to terrorism. Briefly, migrants encounter a range of discourses that shape how they perceive Canada, how they are positioned (or how they position themselves) in various social contexts, and how they behave and use language.

As official languages, English and French are discursively positioned as dominant, resulting in an implicit socio-cultural hierarchy (Guo, 2015; Kubota, 2015; Sterzuk, 2015). Being a native-speaker of English and/or French is held as the ideal target for immigrants to become fully integrated citizens. Immigrants' language ability is considered an instrumental part of their integration, and immigrants are expected to learn Canadian language(s) and cultural norms to function in society, to enter the workforce, and to pursue other goals. At the same time, newcomers are encouraged to fit in, feel at home, belong, participate, get involved, make friends, learn Canadian culture, and other such initiative-taking activities that would enable them to position themselves as ideal Canadians (Haque, 2014; Li, 2003).

This section considers these themes from the literature while expanding on them through analysis of discourse in online news articles and in government websites.

4.2.1. Discourses in the News

The analyzed online news articles reflected diverse viewpoints, topics, and stories, including: government decisions promoted by leaders and supported or criticized by the public; individuals' varying opinions and attitudes on immigrants; anti-immigrant sentiments contrasted with anti-hate activism; surges of support and public attention for specific groups of immigrants (e.g., Syrian, Afghan, Ukrainian); and stories of individual migrants' accomplishments and struggles. A list of the online news articles can be found in Appendix D: Online News Articles. The analysis of online news provides an overview of surrounding discourses as a basis for informing the critical discourse analysis that follows. Four analytical themes emerged from the inductive analysis: Discourses that inform Canadian identity; Discourses surrounding immigrants' integration; Discursive patterns across categories of immigrants; and the Discursive

portrayal of immigration as a process and political token. Within each theme, common-sense assumptions are highlighted that signal discourses with underlying ideologies and discursive effects as to how social actors are represented and positioned in news media.

4.2.1.1 Discourses Informing Canadian Identity. Throughout the articles, Canadian identity was discursively (re)constructed in connection to immigration. Certain values are presented as taken-for-granted Canadian norms, such as diversity, tolerance, inclusion, a vibrant community, a welcoming environment (Rieger, 2019a; McGarvey, 2021). Multiple times, Canada has been recognized for its multiculturalism and promotion of cultural and racial diversity (Aldous, 2015; CBC Communication, 2022; 'Millions in multiculturalism funding going unspent', 2013; Zeidler, 2016). Canada is presumed to be a great place for newcomers to 'build new lives' and contribute ('Growing number of newcomers settling in Calgary 'a blessing' and a challenge', 2018; Levitz; 2019; Lirette, 2022). Statements indicate immigrants should enjoy human rights (Valiante, 2016), experience independence, empowerment, respect, and dignity (Toory, 2021), and maintain and celebrate their culture (Proctor, 2016). Some articles advance the notion that newcomers benefit by having the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their families ('Our New Focus is on Integration', 2009), while Canadians benefit from the efforts and contributions of immigrants (McGarvey, 2020; Toory, 2021) who "make our country better" (Levitz, 2019, para 21), particularly through improved economic outcomes and a stronger workforce (Fletcher, 2019; Harris, 2020).

4.2.1.2. Discourses Informing Immigrants' Integration. Cumulatively, the articles reveal some assumptions about the expected process of Canadian immigrants' integration and present roles played by both immigrants and Canadians in achieving integration. The articles suggest that on one side, newcomers are responsible for learning Canada's cultural norms (Aldous, 2015) and language ('Our new focus is integration', 2009) to hold up their end of the 'two-way' integration model (Proctor, 2016). On the other side, government, and community organizations are responsible for identifying and supporting the personal, social, emotional, mental, and relational needs of newcomers through local initiatives, courses, and recognition of their experiences ('Growing number of newcomers settling in Calgary 'a blessing' and a challenge,' 2018). The articles presented differing assumptions as to how immigrants should behave culturally, whether by adhering to learned Canadian norms or celebrating their backgrounds.

There was a general sense that immigrant identities and stories should be heard and celebrated without them facing discrimination, but at the same time, other articles suggest immigrants should get used to and respect Canadian culture. Bringing the two together, it was expressed that newcomers should prioritize being 'Canadian first' and their immigrant culture second (Rieger, 2018). Along with this, several articles reported on the stigmatization of newcomers living in "segregated" communities of "ethnic enclaves," indicating anxieties or fears surrounding changing community demographics (Fletcher, 2018). Perspectives on integration are presented from the perspectives of both immigrants and members of the host society (including Canadian-born community members and government leaders). In Table 8, a comparison chart provides an overview of these perspectives on integration. The chart illustrates the depth and breadth of complex factors spanning daily activities to systemic barriers. It highlights how contrasting worldviews and experiences create (sometimes conflicting) discourses that support or limit integration, marked by differing priorities and approaches.

Some news articles presented host communities as highly supportive of and involved in newcomers' integration. Articles feature caring community members and local problem solvers mobilizing to support the specific needs of communities and individuals. For instance, Calgary's Ethiopian and Eritrean communities mobilized to train leaders as first responders for the community's mental health issues (McGarvey, 2022). A Calgary organization responded to a gap in the food security system at the onset of the pandemic by providing "culturally appropriate food" to immigrant families (Zapata, 2021). Free haircuts were provided by a local Calgary salon to support arriving Afghan refugees (Underwood, 2021). An Afghan community in Calgary spent the month of Ramadan gathering donations for Ukrainian refugees (Lirette, 2022). Taken together, these illustrate how community members are positioned to provide support and make a difference in the lives of newcomers.

In stark contrast, some articles presented a discursive theme of anti-immigration sentiment. This discourse was signalled by language that negatively portrayed a 'change in the cultural character and social fabric of our society" (Levitz, 2019, para 23). In these articles, a common-sense assumption emerged: Canadian-born and more settled Canadians deserved priority for representation and resources and that migrants should wait "until we can take care of our own" (Rieger, 2018, para 13). This is reflected in articles that report upsurges in white supremacist behaviour (e.g., "Maxime Bernier photographed with members of an alleged hate

group in Calgary" by Rieger, 2019b) and xenophobic attitudes (e.g., "Advocates condemn xenophobic op-ed by Calgary instructor calling for an end to diversity" by Rieger, 2019a).

Table 8

Comparison Chart of Factors Impacting Newcomers' Integration in Online News Sources

Topic	Immigrant Perspectives	Host Canadian / Government Perspectives
Feelings or attitudes that negatively impact integration	Feeling lost, uncertain, frustrated, lied to (false hopes or promises), angry, disrespected, lonely, infantilized, in fear, sensing a lack of empathy or support. Suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, poor mental health. A sense of loss in leaving behind achievements, family, community, everything.	Feeling they don't belong. Negative attitudes create barriers; distrust, feeling immigrants don't have much in common with host Canadians.
Experiences that negatively impact integration	Experiencing discrimination (by race/nationality), or systemic racism (long application times, a ban on cultural identity markers). Inability to find meaningful work or have education recognized; financial difficulty. Facing personal challenges (dependents, disabilities, not having a driver's license).	'Segregating themselves' / Being surrounded by 'a community that resembles their parents' homeland' / Being in a 'silo community' / 'Ghettoization' of immigrant populations / Self-imposed 'ethnic enclaves' or clusters. Discrimination, racism, not hiring immigrants. Not truly welcoming them into our communities. Inequality, misrepresentation.
Language Ability	Feeling you lack language skills or the correct accent. Taking efforts to improve language and communicate with people helps.	Not taking advantage of free language training will negatively impact integration outcomes; Improving language will support integration outcomes.
Relationships	Making friends, helping others, meeting people from other cultures, forming a 'heart' connection, becoming 'family', experiencing love, kindness, compassion.	Relationships between immigrants and Canadians should be more meaningful friendships. Newcomers should be included in community events, involved as collaborators on projects.
Cultural balance	Getting used to (and having respect for) Canadian customs. Maintaining home culture: having cultural and linguistic resources available.	Being 'Canadian first' - Developing a Canadian identity, 'do as Canadians do', 'try to change to be more like most Canadians', have Canadian values.

	Asserting Identity: "assert your voice and claim your space" – be visible by creating platforms for community members, promote who you are, share contributions and experiences.	Retain customs, language, culture. Allowing immigrants to assert their identities, use their language, foster a 'dual identity', celebrate their stories and contributions and diversity, be proud of their heritage, recognize national heroes, honour legacies. Cultural classes (to teach gender norms, traffic, pets, personal hygiene, greetings, tax/medical systems, etc.)
Work	Applying for work, getting jobs, and doing trainings.	Getting a career that aligns with background.
Personality	Gaining confidence. Having resilience – overcoming change, dealing with regret, feeling safe, feeling grateful.	Immigrants should be open-minded and understanding. Emotional wellness and resilience helps.
Other		Immigrants should take personal responsibility to work towards goals, make a better life for themselves, fit in, learn about the new place. Government should provide services, settlement support, funding, homes, and should work to reduce systemic barriers for newcomers. Newcomers need resources for handling stress, trauma, and shifting family roles; having opportunities to talk about it.

4.2.1.3. Discursive Patterns Across Categories of Immigrants. In Canada's immigration policy, migrants are categorized into economic, refugee, and family reunification. The news sources reflected common-sense assumptions related to these categories, with two discursive patterns: The privileging of economic migrants and the neediness of refugee and family reunification migrants. The economic stream of migrants is prioritized as the most desirable in comparison with other streams of migrants, with calls to "give priority to Canada's own economic and workforce needs" rather than "to people in crisis abroad" (Proctor, 2016).

There are calls for more funding, clear action plans, and concrete numbers. Applicants in this category are described as "skilled, highly educated" (Wong, 2022) "business-oriented people" (Harris, 2016), and as "talented newcomers from overseas" (Anderson, 2019). The goal is to "bring workers here more quickly" (Osman, 2022) by "easing rules" and "reducing red tape to attract and expedite entry for foreign talent" (Harris, 2016), granting them "express entry" (Osman, 2022) so that they can "contribute to productivity and growth" so that "we will really benefit" (Harris, 2020). Evidently, on the labour front, a need is discursively created and systems are discursively constructed to make space for economic migrants.

On the other hand, the news articles constructed a different image of refugee and family reunification migrants, which are lumped together in news articles (i.e., the reunification of migrant family members who remain in unsafe or turbulent areas of the world). Migrants in these categories were described as arriving in waves or influxes as they "evacuate" or "flee" chaotic and heart-wrenching situations (e.g., Lirette, 2022). They are "coming with nothing" and "vulnerable" (Kost, 2021), unprepared and "unkempt" (Underwood, 2021). Their situation is "complex" (Kost, 2021). A discursive need is constructed for settled Canadians to pity and feel moved by their stories, and to take responsibility for welcoming them with basic necessities like household items, food, and shelter. Providing this aid is portrayed as the right (and Canadian) thing to do. Since the support needed is often very tangible and straightforward (i.e., donations of items or money, volunteering some time), providing this support creates a sense that benevolence is central to Canada's identity. In sum, the news articles discursively position migrants as adding to (economic) or taking from (refugee and family reunification) Canada's resources, which prompts varying attitudes and actions from host-Canadians.

4.2.1.4. Discursive Portrayal of Immigration as Process and Politics. Immigration was emphasized in some news sources as a process that posed a clear challenge as to how Canada would "handling a backlog" of immigrants (Osman, 2022). This language portrays immigrants in terms of unmanageable quantities causing strain on the Canadian system and resulting in inevitably long wait times for applicants. This functions to dehumanize the real experiences of those moving through their Canadian immigration application as individuals become subsumed as contributors to a problematic entity causing a burden on the nation's capacity.

Some news sources presented political leaders' perspectives on immigration, such that approaches to newcomer integration were described as "a political and social minefield" and as a

topic "masked by political correctness" (Fletcher, 2018). Additionally, some news articles provided a platform for politicians to voice their perspectives on immigration. These platforms amplify the voices of those in prominent or powerful positions. For instance, in one article, Jason Kenney, immigration minister of Canada at the time of quotation, stated: "Children of immigrants could integrate better if they grew up in a community that does not resemble their parents' homeland" ('Our New Focus is Integration', 2009). The article goes on to state, "Jason Kenney also said it's a challenge to get immigrants to fit into society when only one-quarter of them take advantage of free language training" ('Our New Focus is Integration, 2009). This article also reported on an announcement that $9.5 million in federal funding would be provided for service provider organizations in Calgary to offer more language training programming. The article advances a fear-driven assumption that newcomers who live near one another and fail to learn English will not assimilate, and by extension, Canada will increasingly no longer look or feel like Canada. The article further quotes Kenney: "We don't want to create a bunch of silo communities where kids grow up in a community that more resembles their parents' country of origin than Canada." The language draws problematic divisive lines between *us* and *them*, and this language reaches a broad audience through political and media streams. The overgeneralized statements tend to omit the complexity and full reality of migrants' lived experiences, and supporters of a political affiliation may ascribe to the viewpoint by association. It is notable that the local community (including immigrants themselves) must navigate these discourses disseminated by high profile individuals, while local discourses that better reflect daily lived experiences, successes, and hardships of newcomers go unheard at higher levels. Their systemic and discursive barriers limit the scope and impact of local initiatives.

In summary, this online news source analysis illuminates discourses surrounding Canadian immigrants, integration, and identity that enable or constrain social positions. Positive national characteristics and values suggest Canada is a hospitable place for newcomers to settle, while undercurrents of anti-immigrant attitudes reinforce ideologies of nationalism and recreate associated hierarchies. Roles are constructed for immigrants and host organizations, legitimizing the ideal of a two-way process of integration. Local communities appear actively involved even as they shoulder dominant discourses disseminated by regional or national political leaders that generalize immigrants' experiences, dehumanize migrants as part of a process, and privilege immigrants in economic streams of migration.

4.2.2. Discourses in Government and Service Provider Websites

Building on the discourses delineated above, this section focuses on which discourses of immigrants, immigration, integration, and Canadian identity are privileged in/through government websites and the LINC program. Data is presented from the analysis of federal, provincial (Alberta), and municipal (Calgary) government websites, as well as service provider organization (SPO) websites that inform the LINC program's mission, goals, and operating procedures. Data is also presented from eight interviews with administrators and teachers employed in the LINC program.

As with the online news analysis, government and SPO website analysis began with inductive open coding, which led to the generation of analytical codes (with a discursive focus). The analytical codes included assessment of language ability, discursively linking language and citizenship, promotional language to justify the LINC program and immigration, economic benefits of immigration, welcoming immigrants into the diverse communities of Canada, and socio-cultural needs of immigrants. These themes emerged in varying ways and degrees in federal, provincial, local, and SPO websites, and findings are discussed from the top-down. The parenthetical numbers referenced in the following sections correlate to numerated links in Appendix E: Government and SPO Websites Included in Analysis.

4.2.1.1. Federal Government Websites. Fifteen federal government web pages were included in the analysis. Four of these web pages provided information to an immigrant audience, including logistical information about choosing a LINC program, information about the benefits of the program for clients, and some frequently asked questions. Eight web pages provided information to the public or LINC stakeholders. Two web pages provided information to service provider organizations, including operational bulletins and other updates (e.g., surrounding COVID-19).

Formal assessment of language ability was foregrounded as prerequisite for joining a LINC class and progressing through the program. In the web pages for newcomers (01, 02, 06, 07), language standards and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) were linked to citizenship: "If you complete a CLB level 4 or higher in speaking and listening, you can use that certificate as proof for meeting the citizenship language requirement" (01). Additionally, the evaluation of migrants' language ability was discursively linked to the evaluation of their citizenship eligibility: "A citizenship officer will make the final decision if you have adequate

knowledge of English or French" (07). The use of standardized assessments is justified with a claim for fairness and consistency: "We use this standard to make sure we evaluate everyone in the same way" (07; see also 09). This standardized approach to assessing language (and gatekeeping citizenship) positions Canada's official languages as a standard measurable requirement for newcomers to work towards. In the web pages for SPOs and LINC instructors (09, 10), the LINC program's approach to Portfolio Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) is explained and rationalized. Clearly, assessment in the LINC program is a top priority at the federal level.

Federal websites for the public and for stakeholders (03, 04a/b, 05, 08, 11) invoked a business-like promotional language to legitimate the program and claim its efficacy through research yielding measurable outcomes. The LINC program is positioned as a product for immigrant "clients", with language as the deliverable. Statistics and promotional videos are used to justify the program (08, 11). By pointing to the success of the program, the need for language training is reinforced, and the program is positioned as worth the funding it receives as a key element of the approach to settlement. Economic aspects and outcomes of immigration and the LINC program are also prioritized at the federal level. Websites containing the IRCC mandate and strategic planning for the LINC program (12, 13, 14) emphasise how immigration leads to the economic advancement of Canada (and migrants).

4.2.1.2. Alberta Government Websites. The Alberta government home page does not appear to feature information for immigrants or about immigration, but clicking *Moving to Alberta* in the navigation menu opens a web page with a further link to *Immigrate to Alberta.* Once there, web visitors can navigate to nine menu items. The menu items are overwhelmingly focused on promoting the economic aspects and outcomes of immigration. Two web pages— *Alberta Immigrant Mentorship Innovation Grant* (15) and *Alberta Settlement and Integration Program* (16)— provide information to organizations to apply for funding to support newcomers, particularly in providing language support and career mentorship opportunities for workplace integration. The *Alberta Advantage Immigration Program* (17) is an economic program aimed at diversifying the Albertan workforce by attracting and nominating skilled immigrant workers to live and work in Alberta permanently if they can fill job shortages or plan to start a business. *Resources for Immigrant Workers* (18) is a collection of links to policy documents pertaining to settlement strategies and statistics. Two of the links regard recognizing and assessing credentials

and qualifications of newcomers' previous education and experience—*Innovation Fund Project Grants* (19) and *International Qualifications Assessment Service* (20)—which is rationalized as a priority due to the untapped financial value of newcomers (i.e., credentials put them in the workforce, which means they pay more taxes). Taken together, these web pages reify a discursive need for Alberta to attract and retain newcomers with high levels of knowledge and skill in order to contribute to and benefit the Albertan economy.

The *Opportunity Alberta* web page (21) highlights the province's high median income, low tax rates for business owners, study opportunities, and appealing natural parks. A document is further linked (*Opportunity Alberta Guide,* 22*)*, which begins by discursively reinforcing Alberta's alignment with Canadian identity by highlighting its "welcoming communities" and "diverse set of culture and communities." This is followed by language predominantly signalling the economic focus of immigration, including information about finding work, starting a business, earning high wages, and streams of entry for workers and entrepreneurs, as well as general information about transportation, education, childcare, and housing. Overall, the Alberta web pages are promotional, using language to attract migrants to choose to settle in Alberta, targeting prospective, rather than current, immigrants in Alberta.

Information pertaining to the LINC program is scarce, appearing only on the web page for *Refugee Supports* (23). LINC is presented entirely in policy style language (i.e., referring to refugees in third person) with a link to the federal website's information about LINC, and a link to language assessment and referral that, when clicked, misdirects users to the *Alberta Advantage Immigration Program Resources* (17). This vagueness and misdirection seem to indicate a lack of attention to migrant's prospective pathways to integration at the provincial level; efforts are more focused on recruitment of primarily economic migrants to Alberta.

4.2.1.3. Municipal Government Websites. Compared with the information provided on the provincial web pages that mostly featured attracting prospective immigrants and an economic focus, the Calgary municipal website provides much more in terms of recent, comprehensive, and navigable pages for current newcomers. The *Welcome to Calgary* page (26) is user-friendly, with links to services for Calgarians: a guide for getting started in Calgary (25), a link to a website with a list of organizations to help newcomers settle including those offering the LINC program or other language programs (26), a link to a program for local immigration partnership (27), information for refugees (28), as well as links to a list of free social activities in the city, a

list of programs and services for low-income Calgarians, information about social programs and services, getting prepared for emergencies, a guide to the Calgary Police Service, and links to the Calgary Public Library and to Alberta Health services. Most of the links connect newcomers to resources, service providers, and community services they may need, which supports newcomers in gaining familiarity with their local surroundings.

The Calgary web pages present the local government as playing a huge role in integrating immigrants into the community and providing resources. This is seen through municipal efforts and initiatives like the *Welcoming Community Policy* (29) and the *Calgary Local Immigration Partnership* (27). These initiatives appear to be mostly led by immigrants, guided by immigrant perspectives based on immigrant needs with the goal of helping newcomers succeed in their new community. The websites for many of these local initiatives refer to the lived experiences of difficulties, problems, barriers, and daily struggles of newcomers. In brief, the socio-cultural needs of migrants appear to be more comprehensively targeted through local initiatives that are well supported and promoted by Calgary's municipal leadership.

4.2.1.4. Service Provider Organization (SPO) websites. I analyzed websites for immigrant service provider organizations to gain insight into their mission, priorities, values, and LINC offering. The organizations' mission statements stated their aim to serve, support, and benefit immigrants in Calgary. They listed a wide range of services and opportunities for newcomers beyond language classroom offerings, including counselling services, financial advice, information about available services, including a live chat about settlement services, a mentoring program, information about a newcomer community cookbook project, and details about free childcare during LINC classes. These extensive offerings indicate that these service providers put immigrants first and take their needs and barriers into consideration.

The link between language and integration seen in policy on government level websites was discursively reproduced in SPO web pages. On The Newcomer Support Center website, the LINC program goal is stated to help immigrants learn to learn to speak, read, listen, and write in English, and that the English classes "help learners integrate in Canada." On the Welcome Institute's website, the LINC program is presented as targeting adult migrants "who need to develop necessary language and life skills to actively function in Canadian society." To that end, both SPOs emphasize the role of assessment in the LINC program. On The Newcomer Support Centre website, information about language levels and Portfolio Based Language Assessment is

provided; the Welcome Institute website includes links to information about the Canadian Language Benchmarks, which are the basis for assessment in the LINC program.

To summarize and compare across levels, the federal web pages primarily focus on articulating policies that foreground the economic aspects of immigration and discursively link assessment, language ability, and citizenship. A promotional style of language legitimizes and promotes the benefits of immigration and establishes the value of the LINC program. Provincial websites carry forward this economic focus and the promotional style, attracting and recruiting immigrants to Alberta's workforce. Calgary websites appear more attentive to the sociocultural needs of migrants once they arrive, and the local government is portrayed as active in integrating and supporting immigrants through local programs and initiatives. The SPO websites bridge the federal and local levels, linking language use to integration but also recognizing the many other supports and resources needed.

4.3. Meso Level: Findings from Interviews with LINC Administrators and Teachers

Data collected in interviews with LINC administrators and teachers revealed how some of the discourses discussed above are operationalized, privileged, and sometimes resisted in the LINC program. The inductive thematic analysis began with open coding, then participants' comments were analytically coded according to their discursive effects of how they construct, represent, and position immigrants, Canadian immigration and integration, and Canadian identity. Findings are organized into three sections: Discursive effects of an imposed 'immigrant label,' Pathways to Social Integration, and LINC's Mandate to Construct and Assess English-Speaking Canadians.

Note that some LINC teachers and administrators are immigrants had experienced the LINC program as both a learner and an employee. During the interviews, some participants shared personal stories and insights from their own experiences in the LINC program and integrating in Canada. These experiences surface throughout these findings since they are relevant in shaping their current involvement and approach to their role in the LINC program.

4.3.1. Discursively Imposing an 'Immigrant Label'

Several qualities emerged when teachers and administrators described the learners in their program. First, teachers and administrator participants mentioned that LINC learners tend to

have received low or non-existent levels of formal education in their home countries, and they used language to describe LINC learners that portrayed them as victims: giving up everything to start from nothing, having experiences of hardship or trauma, having tumultuous upbringings and difficult (sometimes deadly) journeys to Canada, and facing stressful personal challenges. The trauma or "*heavy loads*" carried by LINC learners led teachers and administrators to view them as "*bottled up*," ashamed, and unaware of how to seek support. Jessica (LINC administrator) said that as she was trying to enroll a student in the program, the student told her that although he wanted to take language classes eventually, he had a more pressing priority: "*I want to feel like I'm a human being again.*" Lailah (LINC instructor) said that her students "*are going through a lot. They have lots going on in their mind, they are traumatized, they are worried*." Examples were shared throughout the interviews of students who work to send money to family abroad, or new mothers navigating motherhood in an unfamiliar context, or students enduring domestic abuse. There seemed to be an expectation or hope that newcomers would move beyond these negative circumstances towards achievement in their careers and goals, and towards self-empowerment. Nevertheless, at the time of arrival, they were thought to be coping with significant challenges, trauma, and stress.

Teachers and administrators who themselves were immigrants mentioned a tendency to feel their language ability/level was conflated with their identity, intelligence, and background. When they were not able to speak in accurate or pragmatically 'Canadian' ways, they were construed as unintelligent or inept. Along these lines, teachers and administrators observed that their LINC learners' identities appeared fragmented between past and present. Their learners experienced disorientation as they adjusted to a new reality in which they felt they had lost credibility, resources, and status. Jessica said that many LINC learners seemed to have lost their sense of self in this process. She stated that they are:

> *…not aware of, even, you know, knowing themselves…. I believe a person—for a person to say, "I want to do this and I—I have this," they have to know who are they. Because the identity is lost in between.*

Amid this disorienting sense of loss and uncertainty, Jessica suggested that newcomers are ascribed a new identity, an immigrant label, that overshadows their past selves. This immigrant label constructs subjects as dependent, traumatized, and victimized. Over time, newcomers might work to re-claim aspects of their past identity, but this requires effort on the

part of the immigrant. Jessica described how her own success overcoming her 'immigrant label' had informed her approach for helping newcomers along on a similar trajectory. She said:

> *To live beyond the status of immigrant… We have to excel, be like, above the title we have. Yes, I am immigrant, but I'm a professional woman… This is what I tell them. Don't be home, like, because you haven't gone to school—you can do a training, do a course, and move! Don't be stashing that mentality, you know, 'I'm an immigrant, there's nothing I can do, I can't speak English.'*

The quotation suggests that discarding or overcoming the immigrant label requires immigrants to gain knowledge and skills through training, courses, and improving English. These are discussed in the following section on pathways to social integration.

4.3.2. Pathways to Social Integration in the LINC Program

Teachers and administrators identified three pathways to social integration along which they guided and supported their learners: (1) Integration through the acquisition of language and culture; (2) Development of a sense of belonging through experiencing commonalities among shared/sharing experiences; and (3) social integration through unofficial and relational roles taken on by teachers and administrators.

4.3.2.1. Integration through Acquiring Language and Culture. Language learning and cultural knowledge were repeatedly discursively linked to integration outcomes ranging from survival to confidence, independence, and contribution. Feyza (LINC instructor) reasoned, "*You come to Canada, you got to learn English, right?*" Jessica (LINC administrator) said, "*If I have limitation with language, it will be very difficult.*" This assumption that language is a means to integration was explicitly stated by Lailah (LINC instructor), who emphasized the need to "*give them enough time to integrate into the system and the language.*" At one level, language learning is expected to enable migrants to just 'survive' in their new home. Darrin (LINC administrator) described the goal of the LINC program: to provide the "*linguistic communication they need… to be able to survive or blend into the society. We call it like 'Survival English.'*" He said that to achieve this, the program takes a student-centered and communicative approach, where learners progress through assignments and assessments centered on daily activities. Curtis (LINC instructor) complained that this often meant teaching formulaic chunks for specific situations instead of language systems that would support a broader range of situations. Nevertheless, specific language is taught to support real-world scenarios and basic life tasks. Examples include language for finding housing, going to the bank, talking to the doctor, booking

appointments, shopping, going to the gas station, filling out a government form, setting up online accounts, finding information online, taking city transit, operating an ATM, or doing a citizenship interview. Curtis stated that the LINC program is distinguished from regular ESL teaching because of its goal "*to get them ready to adapt to life in Canada and get used to the real-life skills that we eventually assess them on.*"

Along with this 'survival' goal, teachers described their role to teach Canadian culture and to provide information about Canada, ranging from the nation's geography and history, phone numbers or emails to contact for help and services, crime and police services, and bylaws in Calgary (i.e., handling waste). Some participants mentioned their desire for students to take an interest in Canadian politics, democracy, and the education system, and some viewed the classroom as a place to introduce their students to Canadian multiculturalism. For instance, Sandra (LINC administrator) said one of her goals is "*teaching that Canada is a place that accepts people from, like, all over the world… [teaching] them how to respect others' culture.*" Depending on teacher initiatives, LINC clients may also have opportunities to join field trips to learn about real-life Canadian activities and events, such as going to the Calgary Zoo or participating activities like the Calgary Stampede, which is an annual summer festival featuring western-themed cultural events.

Participants stressed that learners' ability to complete daily tasks in English "*on their own*" or "*by themselves*" (without the need for a translator or other language support) would allow them "*to be independent enough to survive on their own*" (Lailah, LINC instructor). Hannah (LINC instructor) illustrated:

> *They are a 45-year-old woman. They want to go to the doctor by themselves and not have to take their husband. They are a 75-year-old man who wants to go to Tim Horton's and order his own coffee without having to bring his grandchildren.*

Beyond survival, teachers and administrators expected that language would support immigrants' confidence, independence, and ability to contribute to society. Participants observed that when immigrants could complete daily tasks and activities, they gained confidence. Confidence resulted from knowing English (and not feeling worried about making mistakes), learning about Canada, understanding cultural norms, and feeling others had a positive perception of their ways of speaking and behaving. Jessica (LINC administrator) stated: "*[Immigrants] have to give back. [They] cannot just be taking.*" This illustrates the massive role that language is expected to play in helping learners shed their immigrant identities by gaining

confidence and giving back as members of society. Briefly, acquiring socially and culturally appropriate ways of speaking, behaving, and thinking is seen as giving newcomers access to induction into Canadian society, enabling survival and bolstering independence, confidence, and contribution in Canadian society.

4.3.2.2. Sense of Belonging through Shared Experiences. A theme established in administrator and teacher interviews was that social integration was nurtured or hindered through newcomers' social experiences and interactions in and beyond the LINC program. Establishing common ground with others led to feeling connected and involved, which resulted in positive feelings about society or within/among the community and gave newcomers a sense that they could become a part of it. For instance, Sandra, a LINC administrator, reflected on her own time as a student in the LINC program:

> *We were very happy for sure and, uh, [participating in LINC] helps people to feel more involved at the beginning. Yeah, like, you don't feel like you're alone here 'cause you have so many people who have similar, like, experience with you.*

Darrin (LINC administrator) also observed that students enjoyed connecting with each other:

> *You got the diversity of—of culture and different backgrounds and people from different countries. And now they get to learn from each other. And it's good because, um, at the end of the sessions, they have these dinner or lunch parties in the classroom, and these guys are just laughing at each other and they're talking to each other and sharing their food, and [saying] "this is what we eat in our country," and it's good to see that.*

Lailah (LINC instructor) shared several initiatives she had taken to nurture positive social experiences for her learners through activities that extended beyond the classroom walls, including raising money through a bake sale for International Women's Day and putting together a garage sale to fundraise for Alberta's Fort McMurray fires in 2016. She reflected:

> *So, we do lot of these activities at our Center to make sure that our students know that these are the—how you can get involved in community… So, they enjoy that they can—They're doing something for community.*

These experiences led to positive feelings associated with developing a sense of belonging, such as feeling that immigrants' cultures and backgrounds were valued, that they had something in common with those around them, that they could be involved and play a role in helping others, or that they could laugh together, share food, and feel happy, proud, and comfortable. Briefly, the positive social experiences and interactions facilitated through the LINC program (even beyond classroom walls) were meaningful ways for LINC learners to develop sense of belonging.

On the other hand, LINC teachers and administrators observed that negative experiences in the LINC program or in society could have the opposite effect. Participants mentioned that in social contexts that were less hospitable and welcoming, newcomers could feel othered when facing unfair treatment, discrimination, or racism. These experiences resulted in negative feelings towards people, communities, or society. This was evidenced in Sandra's own experience as a newcomer working at Starbucks. She felt that her coworkers treated her in demeaning and disrespectful ways due to the lack of common ground between her experience and theirs:

> *It's like something that in your blood that you just like somebody who's similar to you more than someone who's different from you. So, I think it's probably something really in, like, in someone's blood… So, when they have more conversations between each other, they like each other more than they like someone who doesn't have such many things in common with them.*

This led to Sandra closing herself off:

> *I was open to different culture and then after working at Starbucks I—like, I'm like—I'm not interested in Canadian culture that much. And I start to think, like—in my mind, I start to think, well, I don't really like Caucasian sometimes.*

This situation illustrates how Sandra felt positioned disadvantageously, as a culturally distinct other, or outsider, when her cultural and linguistic profile was brought into comparison with White native-speaking and culturally socialized Canadian coworkers. Her sense of *not* belonging developed from interactions where she felt she lacked cultural commonalities with other Canadians. This shaped her representation of herself and others, constructed a gap between them, and solidified her feelings of exclusion. This contrasts with the experiences described above where newcomers find commonalities (even in their differences) and feel they can play a role in their social context. This experience led Sandra to reflect that the LINC program should be preparing learners to face such experiences beyond the relative safety of the LINC classroom, for instance, by teaching learners how to stand up for themselves when facing discrimination.

Teachers and administrators also highlighted values like empathy and respect for LINC clients, which stemmed from *shared* experience (i.e., teachers with similar migrant backgrounds as their learners) or *sharing* experiences (i.e., telling stories and having the chance to feel seen and heard). In terms of shared experience, Lailah (LINC instructor) said, "*I think that helps me a lot—being an immigrant teacher—Because I had some of the—I was not a refugee, but I had a first-hand experience of moving to a new country and learning everything.*" Sandra also said that

it is helpful when LINC employees "*have the understanding of how hard immigrant life can possibly be.*" Teachers and administrators expressed the importance of newcomers feeling they can share their experiences and culture with others in the classroom and in Canada.

Taken together, these comments from administrators and teachers indicate that a sense of belonging is experientially derived in contexts where newcomers feel accepted and even valued for their backgrounds and ways of being in society. This approach to nurturing a sense of belonging through shared experiences highlights how diversity discursively constructs migrants' identities in distinct ways depending on the context. Diversity in the LINC program can lead to feeling included because learners find commonality in their differences, but migrants' diverse identities are more fraught when brought up against the normative socio-cultural hierarchy in Canada, where interactions can lead to feeling excluded. This contradiction calls into question how diversity operates as an alleged core value within Canadian identity. It may not be that merely acknowledging diversity leads to inclusion, but that *commonality* is a more operative way to understand newcomers' experiences of inclusion or exclusion. While the LINC program may offer a safe space for newcomers to connect with others and nurture sense of belonging through commonalities, the program does not appear to effectively equip immigrants beyond the classroom walls to negotiate or leverage commonalities or overcome discrimination.

4.3.2.3. Social Integration through Unofficial Relational Roles. Teachers and administrators felt that their relationships with their learners supported LINC learners' integration. Teachers and administrators speculated that their learners had strong social bond connections beyond the classroom (i.e., with their family and co-national community), but participants did not perceive that LINC learners had many opportunities to interact with other Canadians in their daily lives outside the LINC program. Teachers and administrators mentioned that within the classroom, relationships among learners did not always form naturally or easily. They observed that students would greet one another, laugh together, have fun together, and share their culture with one another, indicating that positive surface-level relationships were formed (i.e., establishing acquaintances). However, when I asked whether the LINC program setting allowed students to develop friendships and relationships that supported LINC students' integration, the teachers and administrators overall indicated that they had not observed close connections being formed in the classroom. Rather, students tended to keep to themselves. The teachers and administrators pointed out that the level of interaction and connection had worsened

with the shift to online classes during COVID-19. Not having the moments before, after, and in between classes limited social interactions, since students were unlikely to initiate personal conversations with one another through their screens.

Teachers and administrators described their relationships with newcomers in varying ways. One administrator viewed himself as a professional authority figure in the program. Several others viewed themselves as resource providers, especially in referring mental health counselling, settlement or employment counsellors, or training opportunities. Some described their role in relation to students as a trusted acquaintance, which entailed being a good listener, patient, and gradually building up trust so that that learners could feel they had a safe person to talk with. Jessica (LINC administrator) described her role as a "*listening ear*" for a range of concerns, struggles, and challenges. Other teachers were not hesitant to point out their close friendships with their learners, evidenced through hugging, care for leaners' well-being, crying together, sharing life stories and events with one another (e.g., one teacher mentioned that she attended her student's wedding), and staying in touch after the class ends. For Lailah (LINC instructor), the stakes of the teacher-student relationship were even higher, such that she viewed herself as a lifeline for her learners, feeling a "*duty*" to help them, to "*go the extra mile*" or "*go beyond my boundaries to help them*." Feyza, a LINC instructor, viewed her role as much bigger as well, saying she felt she was her students' entire representation of Canada ("*their whole Canada world*"). Some teachers took the initiative to facilitate volunteering or community activities to help students become involved and familiar with Canadian holidays, local events, and cultural norms (e.g., Halloween, Calgary Stampede, Pyjama Day at school).

As can be observed, teacher and administrator roles stretched beyond official titles and responsibilities outlined in LINC's official policies and goals. Participants expressed varying personal convictions and goals:

- To create empathetic spaces in which students can share their lives and overcome challenges, and process trauma.
- To create interactive, friendly, fun-filled, comfortable, and enjoyable classroom space, marked by laughter, personal connections, activities, engagement, and participation.
- To view the learner as a whole person and make efforts to understand their experience, their workload, their background; to work with learners to find ways to overcome household/personal challenges support their individual integration.

- To bolster learners' identity, pride, and self-confidence by empowering them and motivating them to reach their goals and find a sense of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction with life.
- To prepare students to face experiences of discrimination or for real-world scenarios; to give them tools to stand up for themselves.

This list points to the contribution of attentive, compassionate, and hard-working teachers and administrators who support their learners' in personal and robust ways. Their 'unofficial' work in the LINC program stems from compassionate allyship, and they play a role in holistically supporting their LINC students' wellbeing beyond official LINC outcomes. The teachers and administrators that I interviewed extended personal support to students outside of the LINC program, and they seemed to work towards building students' confidence while problematizing dominant norms and discourses that were not serving students (e.g., immigrant labels). While the program's policies advance integration through language and cultural adaptation, social integration also emerges behind the scenes, in fluid, relational, and experience-based ways. Working within the scaffolding of LINC program policy, LINC employees are guided by their experience, positionality, and teaching philosophy, to continually respond to emerging situations and diverse learners in realistic and empathy-based ways.

4.5.3. The LINC Program's Mandate to Assess Immigrants

When asked about the goals of the LINC program, teachers and administrators recurrently mentioned four priorities: Teaching language for integration, teaching skills and tools for integration, teaching Canadian culture and providing information about Canada, and resource referral. It is note-worthy that participants stressed the interconnectedness or concurrent nature of the goals, which is in clear alignment with how LINC policy is outlined by the federal government. Lailah (LINC instructor) stated, "*Integration, settlement, and language. They go hand in hand.*" Similarly, Curtis (LINC instructor) said, "*A very big part of it is not just language learning, it's to get them to adapt to life in Canada and get used to the real-life skills...*" Sandra (LINC administrator) further expressed the relatedness of the two as she tried to identify the main goal of the program: "*If it's just the language, then it's going to be hard for them to understand the society, but … if I say the top goal is for integration or understand the society,*

but without the language, they can't." The way that integration and language are linked to this extent emphasizes the prevalence of this dominant discourse.

In describing the LINC program, assessment was an overwhelmingly common theme, mentioned by every participant. The program's objectives were resoundingly linked to assessment, which was mentioned 37 times throughout the interviews, including mentions of testing, placements in levels according to the Canadian language benchmarks, percentages and grades/scores, criteria, objectivity, and fairness. The use of Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in the LINC program suggests integration is a measurable outcome. Lisa (LINC instructor) described the PBLA approach:

> *How do we integrate them into the community, right? So we need to give them a sense of what they need to know and what they can do… what are their abilities - and what they cannot do, and then how can we bridge that gap, right?*

The program tracks integration through standardized rubrics and criteria, which contrasts with how integration is theorized in this study as occurring dynamically through negotiating and developing identity in socially contingent ways.

Some teachers even described how the high emphasis placed on assessments can get in the way of learning. Hannah (LINC instructor) described her frustration as she guided students to compile 'evidence' of their learning into their Portfolio Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) binders. She explained that the PBLA binders did not support learners or learning at all, but needed to be maintained for possible visits or audits from IRCC representatives, who she mockingly referred to as the 'binder police':

> *[I] have to prove to the binder people, you know [laughs]… 'The binder police are coming! Put your notes in the [binder]!' You know, that's kind of a bad threat that I've used before: 'Organize your binders! The police are coming!" Not a very good Canadian message. But hey, it gets things hole punched on the right side of the page.*

She described feeling that the PBLA approach meant a constant race to complete and compile assessments in a binder that she felt certain students would never look back on. Lisa (LINC instructor) also felt that the assessments were problematic: "*The learning gets compromised… They just come to class, make sure they do their assignments, do the practice, do the test, done…. They are just training themselves for those tests.*" Briefly, assessments dominate the focus in LINC classrooms, with learners constantly evaluated to achieve higher and higher language benchmarks and to perform tasks that are thought to signal their integration.

In this analysis of interviews with LINC employees, I have suggested that immigrants entering the program are discursively positioned as 'unintegrated' as they are given an immigrant label, which constructs their identification as new arrivals facing difficult circumstances, challenges, and stress as they 'start from nothing' in a new place. The LINC program is thus positioned to help newcomers become integrated and overcome this immigrant 'starting point' through several pathways to integration. LINC policy and operations explicitly support integration by providing instruction on socially and culturally appropriate ways of speaking and behaving. At the same time, integration is nurtured through unofficial liminal processes within LINC classrooms, namely in the tangible, emotional, and relational support LINC learners receive from teachers and from feeling a sense of commonality among other learners. These supports appear to affirm their identities and bolster feelings of belonging within the program. It is less clear whether these effects extend beyond the program to support learners in society and in daily life to find and/or create similar safe spaces and relationships.

4.4. Micro Level: Discourses Taken up by Newcomers in the LINC Program

Sixteen newcomer participants from LINC classrooms (14 female, 2 male) participated in 90-minute focus groups (n = 5). They were asked five questions that were designed to stimulate discussion surrounding their immigration experience, perceptions of Canada and Canadians, perceptions of social integration, their experience of feeling welcomed (or unwelcomed) in Canada, and their experience in the LINC program. Nine of these participants would later participate in follow-up interviews, but the discourse analysis centered on the data collected during the five focus groups.

This stage of analysis used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 2015) to explore ways that language operates in social contexts to position newcomers, construct relations, and advance ideologies. The discursive themes were: (1) Immigrants' Subjectification into an 'Immigrant Identity' and Deficiency. In this theme, participants constructed their own positions as Canadian immigrant subjects with deficient levels of language, knowledge, or cultural awareness. (2) Immigrants Staking their Identities, where despite immigrant identity labels, participants make claims to assert their own sense of their professional and personal identity and goals in Canada. (3) Building Canada via Immigration, in which participants' language use reflected the positions and roles they felt expected to play in contributing to and

participating in Canadian society and systems. For each theme, a narrative unfolds to reveal discursive effects that impact migrants' social integration. Data is presented to explicate the experiential, relational, and expressive values within the formal features of the language (description), and to uncover the effects of discourses for migrants and social reality (explanation and interpretation). Throughout this section, parts of quotations have been underlined to facilitate the discussion by highlighting patterns in language use.

4.4.1. Subjectification into an 'Immigrant Identity' and Deficiency

This section reveals how immigrants enact an identity marked by a deficiency in their language ability, in their knowledge of Canadian culture or systems, and in their qualifications and experience. Throughout the focus groups, participants continually positioned themselves as immigrant subjects with insufficient language ability. Over 40 comments indicated that participants perceived they lacked speaking skills or communicative ability or felt that a language barrier existed. Another 19 comments indicated participants felt they lacked understanding of the Canadian system or had cultural distance/barriers between themselves and other settled Canadians. This is exemplified in the following quotations, where participants indicate their need to improve their language. Ashraf said, "*Um, get my language improved. This is the main—main obstacle here.*" Farah stated, "*The big problem, I always think about that—it's my language. Uh, I don't feel confident*." Nirha said, *"… when your communication is improved and you don't feel ashamed while speaking or communicating with people…*" And Aaron stated, *"… even though you have the language barriers…*" The words that participants used in these excerpts to describe language ability (e.g., "*big problem*," "*main obstacle*," "*barrier*") and the negative feelings associated with speaking English (e.g., "*feel ashamed*," "*don't feel confident*") reflect an expressive evaluation of negative emotions associated to newcomers' sense of their own language ability. The grammatical use of the possessive pronoun "*my*" in the first two quotes functions to indicate that the speaker possesses a problem. This is seen again in the third quote, where the possessive pronoun "*your*" is used (i.e., "*your communication*"). This grammatical choice suggests speakers are responsible for improving a problem that they are responsible for. Similarly, the fourth quote conveys ownership of a problem as well, as Aaron's uses the main verb "*have*" indicates possession (i.e., "*you have the language barrier*"*)*. Although language and communication are shared among social actors, each of these excerpts indicate

participants tended to take ownership for their perceived deficits in language and for the associated negative feelings.

Participants taking responsibility for their language (in)ability led them to hold language as a gatekeeper for their settlement in Canada, restricting their access to citizenship. Speaking for Dounia, the interpreter translated, "*Um—we didn't get enough education yet. Uh, citizenship—to obtain it, you have to have CLB 4, so this is a long way to go yet—for them, as basic learners yet.*" The grammatical construction linking the clauses is a subordinate clause (i.e., "*to obtain it…*"), which indicates the result of meeting the prerequisite presented in the main clause (i.e., "*you have to…*"). The modal of obligation 'have to' underlines the conditional nature of eligibility. The resulting goal of citizenship is inaccessible without the required condition of first reaching 'CLB 4'. Displaying her understanding of this eligibility criteria, Dounia inferred, "*We didn't get enough education yet,*" which brings to light a classification scheme within the vocabulary she used. She identifies her sense of being positioned as a "*basic learner*" in need of "*education*" on the track to "*citizenship*." This creates a relational value between newcomers and more established Canadians in which a power and knowledge differential exists. The newcomer does not know and is positioned to learn from another who knows. This quotation reveals that Dounia believes her role is to participate as a learner to improve her language, which stands in the path of becoming Canadian (i.e., citizenship).

Many participants expressed that language was a barrier to their ability to access work and training opportunities. All four of the participants in the Arabic focus group, plus Farah and Alina, expressed needing to improve their language level to find jobs. Farah stated: "*I have to get HCA certificate to be OK with that job. Uh, I think about it, but I have to improve my language first. That's why I'm working about my language now.*" The interpreter translated a similar comment by Ashraf: "*[We] are learning English as well and we're improving our language right now and he feels that he will find more work opportunities. Once he's done with his English classes, that will open more opportunities.*" The grammatical linking between clauses positions language as a prerequisite to jobs, qualifications (i.e., a certificate), and opportunities. In the first quotation, we see a cause-and-effect relationship in the dependent clause with "*to*" (meaning *in order to*). Farah outlined the necessary sequence: getting a job requires an HCA certificate which requires language improvement. In the second quotation, "*once*" functions in the same way.

These excerpts show participants' understanding of a linear step-by-step trajectory where language is the first step.

The phrase "*open opportunities*" in the quotation by Ashraf evokes the metaphor of open doors. It suggests that language ability is a sort of key to unveil previously unseen or inaccessible futures and options, ones that remain out of reach without English. Taken together, immigrants are discursively positioning themselves at/near the start of a trajectory on which they can then take steps to achieve opportunities that are just out of reach until some progress is made by learning English.

The idea that a better future and more opportunities were yet out of participants' reach was resoundingly reinforced by language to indicate newcomers feel the need to start over in Canada. Six participants explicitly mentioned a loss of their status since moving to Canada, as illustrated in the following quotations. Sofia said, "*I used to work as a doctor and I had, uh, some social status and role. And in Canada it's—I need to begin everything from—from very beginning.*" Emma said, "*Move to a new country means you have to give up something—give up what you had before. I—I was a doctor candidate before, like you.*" Ashraf expressed that her main hope was "*to build ourselves in here brand new.*" Similarly, Alina stated, "*Everything you have to start from zero … You have experience from your country? Doesn't matter, you know.*" The phrases "*from the beginning*," "*from zero*," and "*building yourself brand new*" indicate the troubling discursive effects of migrants being ascribed an identity as immigrants. Participants seemed to have internalized that their backgrounds and existing experiences are of no consequence (i.e., "*doesn't matter*") as they begin a new life from what they had before immigration. The modal verbs of obligation "*have to*" and "*need to*" in these quotes, along with the declarative sentence form, indicate that participants have accepted their new reality as inevitable outcomes of their decision to migrate. In the final quotation, the phrase "*give up something*" suggests yielding control or surrendering. Mei Lin also expressed her opinion that immigrants must "*lose something*" of themselves. This compromise on life plans and goals is further illustrated by Najah, who admitted, "*I find work immediately. OK, not by my university degree, but I find work immediately here.*" These examples illustrate how, even to their own disadvantage, participants drew on dominant discourses of what it means to be an immigrant in Canada to define and position themselves.

Some participants considered language learning to be an obstacle that was intertwined with other personal barriers. For instance, Yusra's mental health issues limited her ability to progress in her LINC classes. Her frustration came through as the interpreter translated, "*she cannot retain that information into her head clearly… so it's just gonna stay in that level forever.*" Valeria also indicated that she could not realistically pursue the same career she had as a psychologist in Mexico. She stated, "*I know I can try in here, but it's—from where I am, it's a lot of money and a lot of time that I don't have.*" These barriers indicate that integration felt out of reach for participants who did not feel they had adequate social and economic reserves to invest in overcoming systemic barriers (like language requirements for citizenship) and discursive ones (like the perception that a deficiency in language was cause for shame in daily interactions). The analysis so far suggests that newcomers feel they may not, or cannot, move beyond the immigrant label. This label positions them as distant from being or feeling Canadian, as seem in Amal's comment:

> *I think it's impossible for me to be part—or be like the rest of the Canadians. Because of the language, many things, jobs. It's—It's long way… I believe my daughter will be. She's very smart. Now she reads and speaks. She's fluent.*

Valeria made a similar observation:

> *For me it was very important that my kids feel that—I didn't want them to feel immigrants like I was feeling. I didn't want them to feel like, 'Well, Mexico is my—Mexico is my real home.' No, no, no, no. This is their home. I'm the immigrant, not them.*

These quotations illustrate that being Canadian seems far off for these LINC participants, and they show how problematic the immigrant label/position is for integration. Valeria's comment shows how unideal being an immigrant had been as she settled in Canada. Both women express their desire for their children to have a different experience, one not marked by a troublesome and limiting identity. The distance between migrants and Canadians is further realized in the participants' language which creates relational gaps between migrants and other Canadians.

To summarize the data presented so far, through close attention to the formal features of language use, I have suggested that newcomers internalize a sense of deficiency in their language ability and cultural knowledge and see themselves as responsible for making up for this deficiency. This was evident within the local coherence of migrants' narratives (i.e., how their comments fit together to frame their positioning) and realized in situational contexts (i.e., through relationships that indicate power differences or social distance). The system that awaits newcomers when they arrive in Canada positions language as a gatekeeper for their integration

(including their citizenship and their perceptions of which opportunities they have access to). It appears participants drew upon dominant discourses, reflective of those used in news media and by LINC teachers and administrators, to discursively position themselves as taking on the immigrant label. They viewed themselves as beginning a new life with a long trajectory towards the distant goal of integration. There are clear resonances across data sources and levels, suggesting a dominant discourse of how *immigrantness* is constructed in Canadian society. The immigrant label poses an unavoidable identification for new arrivals.

This discourse connects to the broader social context. First, regarding language learning, it is worth noting that the focus group questions were designed to broadly stimulate discussion on social integration and that participants were *not* explicitly asked any questions about language use and ability. Yet, participants consistently brought up language as a means or barrier to integration, which indicates the pervasiveness of this dominant discourse. The way participants constructed their own deficiency in language ability and positioned themselves as language learners reflects an internalization of the discourses systemically advanced through the LINC program's focus on assessment and evaluation. Since participants were indoctrinated into a discourse that commodifies and essentializes language learning, they have learned to continually evaluate, critique, measure, and compare their own language use, and view this constant (self-) critique as indispensable in discussing and understanding their progress and integration. Drawing on intertextuality as an analytical tool, it becomes clear that at the local level, participants borrowed language and adopted social practices that originate in government policy.

Further, discourses related to "*opportunities*" and "*starting over*" can be contextualized in a broader social and historical discourse surrounding immigration. The phrase "land of opportunity" was historically used to describe immigrating to North America and its potential for success for newcomers (Golijanin, 2022). This is a promise still hoped for by new arrivals and is a possible reason immigrants take the risk of starting over in a new home – to reap the potential benefits of their new country's systems, communities, and economy. This idea of taking a risk and starting over is borrowed from official documents (see Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012; ImmigToronto, n.d.). When these phrases are reproduced by newcomers, a historical promise is brought into modern times, making migrants feel their 'giving up' on a past life will lead to worthwhile rewards in their new life. In reality, as can be seen from the comments above, the discursive effect of positioning learners as "*starting from zero*" as immigrants with

associated immigrant label characteristics mean they give up symbolic capital as they enter an unfamiliar ideologically neoliberal landscape that is mostly concerned with subjugating immigrants as learners to make up for their deficiency on the track to integration.

4.4.2. Life Before and Life Now: Finding Continuity

As discussed above, LINC teachers and administrators who participated in this study expressed a desire to see newcomers move beyond their 'immigrant' label to excel, thrive, and achieve their goals in Canada. In the focus groups, newcomers asserted their professional and personal identities and goals, indicating a perceived difference between life before immigration and the immigrant identity they had been ascribed since moving to Canada. They drew attention to this divide between their past and current life, identifying aspects of their identities they felt were lost in the process of immigration, including their social and career status, and they indicated a desire to bridge life before immigration to their life in Canada. This included wanting to make friends and feel included in the community, getting a job aligned to their qualifications and career path, and guaranteeing good conditions and a better future for their children.

A language use pattern emerged that signaled a divide between life *before* immigration and *now*, with time phrases (i.e., before/then, now) that marked a pivot point between what appeared to be two entirely different lives. This is seen in Najah, remarking, "*But now, I have a different life.*" The disconnection between the past and present, and between migrants' home country *(*"*our world*") and Canada ("*here*"), indicate that participants appeared to set aside their past in the process of immigration ("*when you come here, you have to start from zero*"). This construction of a discursive interruption in the trajectory of migrants' lives entails a disruption where their existing experience, knowledge, and skills feel "*very far away.*" This is further established in data where participants describe how their jobs in Canada are "*not the same level*" as what they had before. This disruption or regression is illustrated in several quotations. Valeria said, "*I am happy with the job I have… even though it is not the same level that I had in Mexico.*" Najah said, "*I miss my profession. I miss medicine and my practice. But now, I have a very different life… I find work in McDonalds. This is very far away from my certificate.*" Awla expressed her frustration:

> *I'm looking for a job as an electrical engineer and also I'm working Kumar as a retail job…. One of the things that is very disappointing for [my husband and I], um, finding a*

> *job as a professional is really challenging here in Canada. It's not the thing we expected before.*

Another iteration of Awla's situation was voiced by Alina, who felt that everything from her Romanian education to her driver's license were of no value in Canada. She stated, "*I took a job as a cleaner because I want to work… but I know in my heart that if I work as a cleaner, soon I will be something else.*"

Even as participants expressed varying degrees of regret, frustration, and coming to terms with compromising on their prior qualifications and skills, there were instances in which they asserted their desired identities. In the present tense, using simple declarative statements, participants made claims during the focus groups about who they really are, which emerged from a sense of who they once were and perhaps who they hoped to become. Take, for instance, this comment by Najah:

> *I am not a cashier or customer service, uh, I am a teacher and I should be go back to my work. I'm a teacher for a middle school, and uh, you know, this is, uh, not my job as a customer service cashier.*

Alina asserted, "*I'm very educated myself. I have a high university degree in Romania*." Awla claimed her value in no uncertain terms: "*I'm working Kumar… it's not my professional job… it's a waste of resources.*" Similar assertions were echoed throughout the focus group that occurred in Arabic. The interpreter advocated on Dounia's behalf: "*She is really ambitious.*" These present simple 'be' statements signify fixed states. They function to anchor speakers within a more enduring sense of themselves, which often contrasts with current circumstances and concessions in their 'new' life in Canada.

Identity assertions using a *before/now* language pattern not only centered on professional desired identities, but also signaled participants' sense of their existing abilities, accomplishments, and competence as they navigated life in Canada. For instance, Najah said, "*Now, I trust myself more… before I called my niece. Now, no problem. Everything I can do it by myself now.*" This growing level of self-assurance while navigating the disconnection from the past to present was expressed by several participants through a few grammatical constructions. First, the verb *become* was used, which can indicate change, transformation, or development. This is seen in Sofia's comment: "*I think I became more confident.*" Awla said, "*I mean a little by little I can have steps and become more familiar to this society and become a part of Canadian society.*" The sense of *becoming* more adjusted to life in Canada was also seen in the

use of present continuous, which functions to show an ongoing action that extends into the present and future. For instance, Najah said, "*I am working on myself… because now I will be one of the Canadian people.*"

This ongoing process/transformation is further demonstrated through the vocabulary that participants used. Najah said, "*I should improve myself to the best.*" Mei Lin stated, "*Most people learn English because they want to find a job in Canada.*" Farah said,

> *We work on our personality a lot… I feel my personality here, it's getting better and better, stronger than before. In our world, everything, my husband do it, not me. But here… I have to work to do everything by myself.*"

The verbs used in these quotations (i.e., *improve, learn, work on*) indicate the efforts made to expand abilities, knowledge, and potential, and to move towards their own betterment, strength and confidence, and career goals.

In summary, participants distinguished their life *before* immigrating with their life *now* in Canada, constructing a need to repair the disruption in both their career trajectories and personal roles. Participants made assertions to reclaim aspects of their past selves and bring those qualities into their life in Canada. Participants discursively positioned themselves as responsible for re-connecting the two segments of their pre- and post-migration lives, by working and learning to add continuity and sow coherence across their experience.

4.4.3. Doing Their Part to Integrate and Contribute

As established in the literature review and analysis of government and media websites, immigrants are thought to contribute to the economic and social fabric of Canada. This notion of contributing also featured prominently in immigrant participants' comments, indicating that their perceptions of their roles in Canada have been shaped in part by the broader discourses. For instance, Valeria directly linked contributing to the workforce with belonging to the community; she said, "*When you work, you know that you are part of the community too…. Being a productive element of the society also makes me feel that I'm part of here.*" Awla also related having a job and societal involvement: "*When you do not have a job in then you do not get involved in the society.*" Sofia also expressed her desire to contribute: "*I need job. I very—I want to work and to do something useful.*" Dounia also said that to eventually feel like she is part of society would involve working, participating, and being able to share her insights and ideas with others. Their comments uphold capitalist and neoliberal ideologies that suggest workers are ideal

citizens. Migrants' desire to fit in by working resonates with the way economic migrants are prioritized and privileged in society, such that working has become nearly synonymous with integrating.

Participants expressed that finding ways to contribute to society was their own responsibility. They conveyed this in various ways: "*you need to be proactive,*" "*you need to do your part*," "*I'm really willing*," "*I'm studying*," "*I work on myself*," "*improve yourself*," "*to progress and develop myself,*" "*taking steps*," "*pushing myself to learn*." Taken together, their comments suggest that constant learning, especially language learning, was positioned as their way to achieve this. For instance, Alina said, "*I read a lot <u>every day</u>, and <u>every day</u> I practice, you know, even with my coworkers, but I came home and <u>write, write, study, study</u> you know… it's not very easy.*" Dounia (via the interpreter) said,

> *Learning language—even the more you get older—it's a bit more difficult. You know, we are getting older and we're not getting younger, so how—what shall we do in the future? Are we going to keep just <u>learning, learning, learning</u>, and till when, you know?*

The repeated words in these quotations ("*write, write, study, study*" and "*learning, learning, learning*") reflect the experiential monotony and unendingness of the learning process. Najah described a persistent urge to advance herself, saying, "*<u>All the time</u> you should improve yourself.*" This language use pattern positioned newcomers as responsible for their own contribution outcomes, successes, and failures. Participants even mentioned that government resources and services were available to them, reinforcing their sense that not succeeding would be their own fault. Considering the situational context with an intertextual lens, this repeats language used in online news sources, where political leaders suggested that migrants were to blame for their lack of integration if they were not accessing programs like LINC.

Yet, even for these participants who were participating in LINC, they mentioned ways they felt the program did *not* accommodate them. This is seen in Dounia's quotation above; she felt that language learning had become a monotonous challenge given her age and mental state. This suggests her integration could be better supported in ways LINC was not addressing. For different reasons, Awla stated that she felt she could not benefit from the LINC program and that she was "*wasting government resources*" by participating in a program that was too easy for her. What Awla really needed was support developing professional networks or with academic English, which are not covered in the LINC program. Thus, although participants felt responsible

to improve themselves to the point they could contribute to Canada, a few of them felt stuck, confused, and frustrated with their individual needs unmet by the program.

In summary, participants felt that contribution was an essential element of their social integration, and many joined the LINC program to support this goal. Yet, some participants felt unsupported within this mainstream pathway of integration. This suggests that there is an ideal immigrant candidate who fits within the LINC program's goals. Namely, the program appears to narrowly support those with low or intermediate language needs, and who have citizenship or workplace goals. Beyond the LINC program, immigrants who fit these criteria may be more easily accommodated into available jobs and embody types of 'others' that Canadians feel more comfortable with in their communities. In other words, they more easily assume roles immigrants are expected to play to build Canada's economy and identity. However, other participants in this study did not appear to fit the type of immigrant that the LINC program best serves. Dounia and Awla, for different reasons, felt they could not be helped by the program. As an older literacy level learner with mental health challenges, Dounia struggled to adjust as an ideal language learning subject in the LINC program. For Awla, her professional goals were beyond the scope of the program. Briefly, the LINC program appears best suited to the clients willing to perform as neoliberal subjects by working, learning, and improving their way towards inclusion in society, but only insofar as their inclusion also matches Canada's expectations of newcomers. In this way, the LINC program supports the construction of 'ideal' immigrants who contribute to building the nation while fitting within (and reinforcing) hierarchies of race, culture, and language.

4.5. Summary

This chapter set out to delineate discourses surrounding immigrants, immigration, integration, and Canadian identity that are privileged, operationalized, and taken up by newcomers in the context of the LINC program. Patterns and discrepancies occur across online media, government and SPO websites, LINC administrator/teacher interviews, and newcomer focus group data sources.

Immigrant participants internalised and rationalized their loss and lack of status as resulting from their deficiency in cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills. The LINC program is discursively established to assess and evaluate migrants as they work towards

integration. It is advertised that by accessing government services, newcomers can expect to gain access to opportunities and integration, and it is implied that not accessing government services means that failure to integrate is newcomers' faults. At the same time, broad dominant discourses impose a socio-cultural hierarchy, reinforced in the LINC context, in which newcomers are expected to slot in as ideal immigrants whose very presence contributes to Canada's workforce and identity. In this way, migrants are positioned as language learning subjects who must take responsibility for their own progress and adaptation in Canadian society.

Integration is positioned as a two-way process in government websites and online news, but it appears the significant efforts made by immigrants are reciprocated only in official and institutionalized forms. Canadians are discursively positioned as welcoming and hospitable in the news, upholding Canada's benevolent national identity, yet interview and focus group data indicates migrants have very few interactions with settled Canadians in daily life beyond the LINC program's walls. Discursively absent from this entire discussion are the roles expected of settled Canadians in supporting migrants' integration. Rather, what emerges is the reality that newcomers are tasked for their own social integration.

Differing discourses of social integration emerged on the ground level compared to the macro-level. First, on the ground, social integration was seen as developing through teacher and administrators' creation of safe spaces that affirmed diverse identities while establishing common ground. While teachers and administrators nurtured this aspect of social integration by their own motive, LINC program policy and planning do not address it. Second, immigrant participants asserted their own identities in subtle and explicit ways. This was also seen in some online news articles that also recognized newcomers in the community, and in teacher and administrator comments regarding creating opportunities for immigrants to feel seen/heard. However, at the federal and provincial levels, there is scarce mention of newcomers' identities. The economic goals and outcomes are a much more prominent focus. All data sources linked economic outcomes and language learning to social integration and language learning, which, for LINC learners, was thought to be measurable through assessments that signified progress.

In the next chapter, I present findings from the interviews with immigrant participants, presenting their intersectional stories and views on their social integration in Canada. The presentation of immigrants' stories spotlights the lives and agency of migrants to Canada. Then, I present participants' unique insights about what it means to belong in Canada, varying views on

whether being/feeling Canadian is part of integrating, and which relationships support integration the most. A discussion section follows to examine how immigrant experiences map onto the discourses identified above.

Chapter 5: Immigrant Perspectives on Social Integration

5.1. Introduction

While the previous chapter used thematic and critical discourse analysis to examine discourses that illuminate how immigrants are positioned and represented in the integration process, this part of the study adds nuance and depth by centering immigrant perspectives, experiences, and narratives in the exploration of their identities and experiences. This chapter addresses the second research question: What does social integration entail for immigrants? The theoretical and analytical lens for this part of the study is intersectionality.

Intersectionality attends to the wholeness of individual identities. Rather than isolating individual factors, intersectionality highlights the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender, among other factors, in shaping a person's positioning (Davis, 2008; Dill & Zambrana, 2020). Intersectionality attends to the complexity of a person's experience. In the analysis that follows, the diverse stories of nine participants are narrated to showcase their unique circumstances and needs as they settle in Canada. Following these narratives, a thematic analysis further elucidates their experiences of social integration. In line with intersectionality, the act of sharing (and validating) the stories of participants is intended to help with identifying social barriers that disadvantage newcomers. This analysis also draws on notions of cultural and social capital in theorizing how newcomers' social integration relates to power structures and relations within LINC. Since this study occurs in the context of immigrant service provider organizations, the analysis is oriented to consider how these organizations can better serve newcomers.

Data presented in this chapter originates from interviews with nine immigrant participants. During the first half of each interview, life story narratives were elicited by asking participants questions about their background and upbringing, their greatest challenges in life and how they overcame them, and their worries and hopes for the future. Participants' responses indicate how they attach meaning to their experiences (Elliot, 2005), how they view their relationships (Christensen & Jensen, 2012), and how they understand the coherency between their past and current selves (Prins, 2006). Life story narratives were analyzed through multiple readings with attention to how participants narrated and constructed their life stories through prevalent themes, relationships, and ordering. This analysis attended to contextual details to highlight the socio-historical contingency of participants' experiences. The second half of the interview was dedicated to questions about how participants understood their social integration

in Canada. The questions were derived from social integration literature (i.e., regarding their relationships, identity, and sense of belonging) and designed using an intersectional lens. Data was analyzed using inductive content analysis to reconceptualise social integration from migrants' perspectives. Numerous open codes were generated and then categorized into analytical codes to describe and define social integration in ways articulated by participants.

5.2. Telling Stories

In this section, I narrate the stories of those who participated in the study. The stories reflect participants' unique trajectories, resilience, and varying ways of 'being' in Canada. Telling their stories also contextualizes the social integration perspectives outlined later in the chapter, enriching and nuancing the intersectional analysis and recommendations that follow.

5.2.1. Valeria

Valeria was born as an only child of a single mother who worked long hours over decades at a textile factory to make ends meet in their home in Mexico. The two were very close, relying on one another in many ways. To ensure Valeria made friends, her mother brought her to a local Baptist church, where she developed a strong faith and found an accepting community and close friends. At church, Valeria met a man who she dated and eventually married.

Valeria described their status as low-middle class. She started working at age 15 during high school, cleaning houses on weekends to help pay for groceries. She took a job as a secretary after graduating high school, but she craved something more. With the encouragement of her boyfriend (now husband), she applied to do a degree in Psychology, and was supported by a scholarship for low-income students. Her university degree was a challenging 5-year endeavor. Despite her goal to specialize in clinical psychology, she lacked a professional network in the field, so she settled on human resources as her specialization and found work before graduating.

A few years later, in 2006, Valeria and her husband decided to move temporarily to Canada "for an adventure." They planned to stay for two years. They applied for work visas and prepared diligently in the years leading up to their departure. They saved money, and Valeria went to English school and read many online blogs about Canada. At last, they moved to Canada, and about one year later, they decided to stay permanently because their friends in

Mexico informed them that back in Mexico, civil stability and the job market were worsening. When Valeria became pregnant, their decision to stay in Canada was cemented.

Valeria began life in Canada cleaning houses (while her husband washed cars) to make ends meet. She later worked in a daycare, then found a job working with adults with disabilities. She eventually managed to find a position in her field as a social worker doing home visits. With her two children, a stable job, and many fond memories made with her family in Canada, Valeria expressed feeling happy and settled now.

Valeria said the initial stages of adjusting to life in Canada had been her greatest challenge in life—torn between two places, being away from her mother, going through a pregnancy, and having to negotiate expectations for what life might look like moving forward. Through it, she took steps to improve her life by seeking opportunities and developing a network. In our interview, I was struck by Valeria's resourceful, realistic, flexible, and discerning approach to seizing social and professional opportunities when they arose and adapting her life trajectory with shifting circumstances.

5.2.2. Alina

Alina was born in Romania into a large family as the oldest sister to four younger brothers. Her father was a miner and her mother worked as a nurse. Her childhood was marked by lots of activity and socialization among family and other children in the apartment complex where she grew up. However, she said that life was not easy growing up in communist Romania, where at times, there was no heat, no electricity, and no food. She described this stage of life as the most challenging.

Alina went to university in Romania, earning a degree in psychology. She worked for 22 years in sales in Romania. Alina's husband was recruited to a Canadian construction company thanks to a referral by her older brother who went before them, and the couple lived apart from one another for three years before Alina decided to move to Canada to join him, a decision she said aligned well with her adventurous and adaptable personality. Her family and friends thought she was crazy to give up everything she had worked for in Romania, but she had a desire to explore the world, so it was an opportunity she wanted to take. Once in Canada, she began working as a cleaner—a more labour-intensive job than she had had at home in Romania. Over time, she proved her value in her company and became a supervisor. She said she felt happier

with this partly administrative position, but she mentioned that she hoped to find full-time office work once she improved her English.

Alina liked Canada as soon as she arrived, and she adapted quickly. She mentioned enjoying outdoor hobbies in Alberta, like hiking. She said her life in Canada was always improving as she continually learned and took opportunities to connect with others. When I remarked that she seemed to take every opportunity that she came across, she said, "*Oh yes, you have to … with both hands, you know, 'cause you never know when I'm gonna find another person like you, Marianne, to have the— even the patience with—to talk with me!*" This attitude shone through the interview, which was marked with laughter and intentionality that seemed to reflect her character.

5.2.3. Aaron

Aaron was raised in Eritrea by his grandparents after both of his parents passed away before he was 12 years old. He said his grandparents gave him a good childhood, and he worked on their farm until he graduated from high school and then began his military conscription. He took a course in mechanics and applied his skills working at a military base on the border with Ethiopia. He described his experience living in a corrupt totalitarian dictatorship that created unpredictable and unsafe lives for Eritreans, recalling that the government would arrest, detain, or kill citizens with little reason or accountability. In explaining his decision to leave in 2009, Aaron said, "*We don't have a future there.*"

His journey to Canada was tumultuous and challenging. He flew to Ethiopia and then commenced a 10-day journey by foot to Sudan with others fleeing Eritrea. This incredibly risky journey required travellers to face dangerous river crossings and hunger, with only the contents of a small backpack to sustain the journey. He said that by the end of it, "*all of us were almost dead.*" He remained in Sudan for six years working as a cleaner and feeling like a "second citizen" as an undocumented Eritrean. His uncle sponsored three of Aaron's siblings to immigrate to Canada, including his eldest sister, who later sponsored the remaining siblings. Now Aaron and his five siblings are all in Canada, as well as three of his cousins.

His Eritrean family all live in Winnipeg, where Aaron first lived when he arrived in Canada. He moved from Winnipeg to Calgary because he felt the quality of living was better (more job opportunities, lower cost of living, lower taxes). Since moving to Canada, Aaron has

worked in a lot of positions: landscaping, building refrigerator chambers, part-time work in convenience stores and hotels, sheet metal manufacturing, and UPS delivery. At the time of the interview, he worked as a security guard and also delivered mail for Canada Post during their busy seasons. Aaron said he was still searching for the ideal permanent position, since neither of his jobs offered many benefits or opportunities for growth in the company. Aaron said he considered himself a hard worker, and he expressed frustration that his experience so far in "survival jobs" seemed to confine him to only applying for other labour-intensive jobs. He said he hoped that he might find a better option someday.

At the time of our interview, Aaron was in Canada with his wife and baby daughter. After night shifts at his security job, he looked after their daughter while his wife took English classes during the day. He attributed his being in Canada to luck and his ability to persevere. Despite the harrowing journey to Canada, he felt he did not let trauma impact his daily life, though he said the fear-filled memories sometimes surfaced in his sleep. In his words, the memories "*didn't get out of my dream, but from daytime I think I'm OK.*"

5.2.4. Emma

Emma said she was from a small city in China, where her mother, father, and younger brother all still lived. Her brother was in high school, her father worked for the government, and her mother was a teacher who always impressed upon the family the importance of education. Emma went to university in Shanghai, got married, and completed a master's degree in 2018. She found work after graduating, but her husband did not. Eventually, her husband applied for and was hired to work in a position in Canada's oil industry. He moved to Canada on his own, and after a year of long-distance, Emma moved to join him in 2019.

Being in Canada was Emma's first experience living outside of China, and she said the first year here was the greatest challenge she had faced in life so far. Shortly after arriving, she had her first child, far away from her support network in China. She said she struggled with her mental health issues and has felt lonely since arriving. She has been a housewife since arriving in Canada, which she described as a very different life to the one she had in China. Emma mentioned that she missed her job, and that she felt constant pressure from her mother and friends back home to advance her career. At the same time, she said she was facing family role expectations from her husband to remain at home and look after the house and children. She

expressed how much she had given up in moving to Canada, and said she felt anxious about what the future may hold (with what she felt was low language ability and no suitable job positions for her in Canada). She said that her friends in China who had children resumed work after some time, but that for her, "*my life stopped there*."

During our entire Zoom meeting, Emma cradled her three-month old second-born child in her arms. She said her children were a source of strength for her, but that she did not want to be a housewife forever. After our interview, we brainstormed together to consider work options she could pursue. Emma stated she had so far felt unable to balance family expectations, career goals, and establishing a social life in Canada.

5.2.5. Sofia

Sofia was raised in Ukraine in a Russian-speaking household with her mother and younger brother. Both of her parents were doctors (her mother a dermatologist, and her father an anesthesiologist), but her parents got divorced, and then her father passed away when she was studying in university. Sofia and her brother each followed in their parents' footsteps, becoming doctors as well. Sofia enjoyed working for 12 years in a regional hospital, gaining experience and some medical specializations. She met her husband in Ukraine. He is originally from Kazakhstan, and they speak Russian in their household together.

She described life in Ukraine as good until political change and war began. The political situation became increasingly difficult for Russian speakers, and they faced discrimination and economic hardship. Ultimately, they felt they could no longer safely speak their mother tongue and maintain their culture, and Sofia could not imagine a way forward in Ukraine. They decided to move to Canada, leaving behind her mother. She described that stage in Ukraine facing oppression and judgement as the most difficult challenge she faced in her life.

Since arriving in Canada, she gave birth to a daughter and has not been working. Life in Canada has been challenging without professional or social connections. Sofia said she has felt depressed at times as she has navigated major life changes and social isolation during COVID-19. She has slowly been figuring out what her next career steps could be. She said she could not imagine resuming work as a doctor because licensing exams are costly, the wait for residency is long, and there appears to be no guarantee of success. She said she felt overqualified to consider working as a nurse, but that she was equally hesitant to begin studying in an entirely new field

because she did not want to carry student debt, and she felt she might be too old for it. She was relieved to discover some free Information Technology courses offered through The Newcomer Support Centre. The courses were interesting to her, and she felt that there may be some promising work options after completing the course.

Throughout the interview, Sofia maintained a positive attitude. She especially lit up when reporting that her daughter was quickly adjusting in daycare, and she appeared to feel optimistic about her future, even as she pivoted her career in a new direction.

5.2.6. Nirha

Nirha grew up in a large well-educated family in Pakistan, with 10 siblings. Religion was an important priority for Nirha, and we paused our interview briefly to accommodate a prayer break when the Call to Prayer sounded in her household. Her father was a school principal, and she followed in his steps, becoming a school principal at a public high school. She got married, and in 2014, she pursued doctoral studies, which were interrupted by her move to Canada in 2019 because of her husband's work. Once in Canada, she faced significant personal challenges, including depression and stress amid troubling relationship dynamics. After enduring five years of physical and mental abuse from a controlling husband, she sought a divorce and gained full custody of their son.

Although it took time for Nirha to feel settled, safe, and comfortable after her divorce, she felt well supported by caring counselors who made great efforts to help her. She began to volunteer and found employment in retail stores. As she expanded her network through volunteering and work, she began to feel much more at home in Canada. In time, she also resumed her PhD work, and despite the fact that her ex-husband had burned all her educational documents and certifications, she defended her thesis just weeks before our interview took place. At the time of the interview, she worked at a daycare, and she anticipated that improving her language ability would lead to even better job prospects. She mentioned her goal to become a settlement counselor for future newcomers. I was struck by Nirha's desire to become a leader and give back to her community, and by her courageous spirit that helped her overcome stressful circumstances. She secured a brighter future for herself and her son by making the brave decision to seek a separation from her husband that she described as culturally unacceptable. However,

she said that at every turn, she gained confidence; this was certainly conveyed in her self-assured reflection on her life trajectory and her optimism for the future.

5.2.7. Farah

Farah was born in Palestine, and moved to Jordan when she was in grade eight. She completed an undergraduate degree in Jordan in Finance and Banking Science, but she never worked in her field because she married a man who preferred to singlehandedly support the family through his own work as a restaurant owner. They had two kids, and as a stay-at-home mother, Farah spent her time visiting both sets of grandparents and supporting her children with their schoolwork. Things changed for the worse when both Farah and her husband lost each of their parents in quick succession. Shortly after, a personal dispute arose with a supplier at her husband's restaurant, and they needed to leave Jordan in a rush, hastily selling the restaurant and arriving in Canada as refugees. Farah described the move to Canada as very difficult for her children, who were 10 and 13, since they left behind their friends, school, and community. Farah struggled with anxiety about their uncertain future.

After arriving in Ontario, they moved to Calgary, where a family friend employed Farah's husband at his construction company. Farah began studying English and taking other courses (including a customer service course) to improve her chances at employment. She eventually signed a 3-month contract as a care giver in a senior's home. Through that position, she found another permanent position as a home caregiver. Farah's family had met some supportive community members through attending an Orthodox church made up of mostly Syrian and Lebanese people, but Farah wished that her family had more close friends or family support. Even so, Farah exuded inner strength and determination.

5.2.8. Awla

Awla was born in Iran to well-educated upper middle-class parents. She and her two siblings became engineers. Awla earned a BSc, a Master's, and a PhD in electrical engineering. After finishing her PhD, she achieved her "*dream* job" working part time in industry while simultaneously working as a faculty member at a university in Iran. Her husband had a similar arrangement. While they recognized that moving to Canada would mean giving up their ideal circumstances, they wanted to live closer to Awla's entire family who had already moved to

Canada, and they expected they could find similar work in Canada, which they perceived as a more stable and more democratic place to live.

Unfortunately, their expectations had not been met since arriving in Canada. Awla and her husband had not found jobs in their field. Both worked as tutors for undergraduate or grade school students. She described her job as "*better than nothing*" but said the income was low, the hours were long, and she was overqualified. Awla said she sometimes regretted coming to Canada, leaving a comfortable home and esteemed job in Iran to live in a small condo with still uncertain job prospects. Yet, she said the decision was not reversible, so she hoped they would feel more settled soon. She said that she felt glad to raise her daughter in a place where women's rights were not oppressed and where she was not required to adhere to religious beliefs she did not relate to. Nevertheless, her frustration at not finding work commensurate to her knowledge and skills remained a major hurdle to her feeling settled in Canada.

5.2.9. Najah

Najah was born in Syria, and family was a high value throughout her upbringing. Her father was an international lawyer, and her mother did not work, but stayed home to raise their children. Najah was the oldest of three siblings (a sister and two brothers). Her parents were well-enough-off, with adequate income to support the family. During university, she met her husband, who was earning an engineering degree. She had her first child in her third year of university, requiring her to repeat the year of study, then she had her second child in her fourth year. She completed her university degree, earning a BA in English Literature.

Her husband was unable to find work as an engineer in Syria, so he moved to Saudi Arabia for a job. Najah followed him there six months later with their two sons. As a Christian family, they experienced discrimination and financial stress in Saudi Arabia. They had to put their children into private schooling because a registrar at one of the public schools informed them that they would not be allowed to study in Arabic schools as Christians. When her first son finished high school, they deliberated as to whether he should attend university in Saudi Arabia, which could be problematic given the Islamic class requirements. Najah emphasized that her family were very open to learning about Islam, but the Arabic school system was likely to be biased, limiting the likelihood of his graduation. For this reason, her first son returned to Syria

for university. The war escalated in Syria around this time, and her son tragically died when a building at his university was bombed, a heartbreak Najah carries with her constantly.

Her second son studied at a private American university in Riyadh. When he graduated, Najah supported him in moving to America to complete his residency in family medicine. In the meantime, after the death of their first son, her husband developed some psychological problems, ending up in hospital twice. He stopped working while Najah carried on with a heavy load to afford sending their son to university in the U.S. She worked three jobs: teaching Arabic to Westerners in an expat community, running a gift shop inside the expat compound, and managing a salon. For six years, she worked from 7:30 in the morning to 9:30 at night. Some of the money she earned was invested in three properties in Syria, building her dream home to retire in some day. In the war, the properties were bombed and the investment lost. Through these immense losses, she remained optimistic and tried to find enjoyment in her work with students and clients.

Her brother encouraged her to move to Canada, saying "*[with] your Syrian passport, my sister, you will not meet your son again.*" She completed paperwork to get to Canada. Within two months after arriving, she found work at McDonalds, then at Walmart. When these shut down during COVID-19, she received EI and then found work afterwards at Superstore, which she liked better. She would prefer to work in a receptionist position doing administrative work, but said she could not waste time being selective because money was scarce – affording rent and food left very little money for other costs.

She said she was happy overall, feeling settled, safe, and at peace in Canada. She was grateful that the medical system gave them access to a specialist who monitored her husband's health condition. In the whole interview, Najah did not complain about her circumstances. She said she has always needed to be the strong one for her family, holding them together through grief and struggle. She said God gave her the strength to endure the worst pain imaginable in the death of her son: "*Nothing will making you worst than when you are losing, oh, what−what I shall say— a piece of your heart*." With every hardship, she appeared to focus on what she *could* do, not what she had no control over. Najah said she found hope in the prospect of eventually being reunited with her second son in the U.S.

5.3. Findings: Social Integration from the Perspectives of Immigrants

5.3.1. Perspectives on Social Integration

Participants emphasized a drive for **constant learning, involvement, and effort** in their social integration. Valeria mentioned "*being proactive on trying to belong here*" by putting time and effort into finding opportunities to connect with others and push herself to become part of the community. She sought out and attended neighborhood events with her children to make memories in her new city. Similarly, Alina strove to constantly connect with others, taking every opportunity to develop relationships with clients at her cleaning job or with strangers during her weekend hikes. For Nirha, participating in volunteer opportunities helped her establish a network, and for Sofia and Farah, joining free courses helped them develop skills and expand their knowledge of informational technology or human resources. For all participants, LINC language classes, along with other resources and supports accessed through SPOs, were considered helpful overall in progressing their integration.

Principal among these efforts, **learning English and Canadian culture** were singled out as important facilitators for social integration. Participants mentioned improving English language fluency and accuracy, reducing accent, and improving communication skills, as well as their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. They believed that improving in these areas led to more confidence and opened social and work opportunities. Valeria stated that behaving in alignment with Canadian culture meant learning how to "*play the game*" in Canada. For instance, she had deduced that attending social events at work was an expected behaviour for many Canadian employees, even if not explicitly required in their job descriptions.

Another effort that participants related to integration was working on one's *personality*. Certain personality traits were thought to support integration. These included being optimistic, seeing oneself as capable of achieving goals or making progress, and developing self-esteem and ambition. For instance, Aaron said, "*there is a lot of opportunity. If you work hard, you get something out of it. That's why it doesn't—I don't worry much. I'm happy here.*" Najah said, "*I will be proud of myself to be a Canadian. I feel by—by a peace inside my heart.*" Sofia highlighted how optimism and self-assurance motivated her as she pursued of a new career path in Canada. She reflected on her participation in some Information Technology courses:

> *I work in studying very hard. It was really hard for me because it's all new. But now I'm glad about my—I'm happy about my progress, and I think it's a field that I can study, and I will be able to work.*

Others mentioned the importance of being open or open-minded (to arising opportunities or learning moments). When Alina and I were discussing how she had overcome her challenges in life, she reflected, "*I'm very open… I want to learn. I open to talk with people. I open to everything.*" Both Sofia and Emma each described themselves as open-minded as well, and they linked this trait to supporting their integration.

Finding work and earning income was also thought to support integration. Emma and Farah both mentioned that finding work would provide them with a sense of purpose and financial independence. Nirha and Awla mentioned their desire not to rely on the government for support. Najah stated that she valued this as well, which was clearly evidenced by her willingness to work night shifts on minimum wage to support herself and her husband.

Access to public systems also facilitated social integration. Newcomers mentioned the importance of obtaining their Permanent Residencies (PR) upon arrival. Two participants mentioned their satisfaction with how quickly the Canadian government provided this official documentation that gave them direct access to health care and receiving the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit during COVID-19. The PR removed limitations and barriers and eased life for newcomers.

In summary, factors that participants felt contributed to their social integration included making efforts to get involved in community events or volunteering; learning about Canadian culture; developing language skills; finding work (to earn money and feel independent); nurturing personality traits such as optimism, self-confidence, open-mindedness; and having access to public systems. It appears participants saw themselves as capable of advancing their own social integration in many ways provided the Canadian government (and SPOs) facilitated access to services, supports, and opportunities.

5.3.2. Perspectives on Sense of Belonging

Valeria described her sense of belonging as her "*oxygen mask*." She asserted that without it, she could not stay in Canada for long. She said that a sense of belonging was essential for understanding life around her, feeling fulfilled and happy, being able to advocate for herself and her children, and her improving quality of life. Similarly, Aaron said that for him, a sense of belonging meant being in-the-know and being connected to others, which facilitated living a "*fun life.*" For Sofia, it meant having freedom to live her life and seek her own goals. Nirha said that

developing a sense of belonging increased her confidence, and Farah said that it enabled her to live comfortably with an awareness of her rights. Eight of the participants expressed a desire/need to develop their sense of belonging; only Emma did not feel it was important for her. Participants' varying understandings of the concept are presented in four analytical thematic categories: Belonging as a feeling, belonging as confidence, belonging as knowledge, and belonging as a decision.

5.3.2.1. Belonging as a Feeling. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to a sense of belonging as a feeling, that is, as an emotion-based or intuitively derived sense that they belong in Canada. Valeria said, "*I feel that I love this place already.*" Alina said, "*I feel like I'm part of something, you know? I'm from this society—I'm like, I'm a Canadian*." Valeria and Alina mentioned hopeful sentiments about her future in Canada: "*I'm gonna be pretty amazing*." Najah, Farah, and Aaron each mentioned positive feelings they associated with belonging in Canada, including feeling comfortable, safe, stable, at peace, or at rest. Aaron said, "*There is challenges, but most part, I feel good. I'm happy here.*" Emma said, "*In Canada, actually, I feel more relaxed.*" On the other hand, negative feelings seemed to hinder belonging. Nirha mentioned that having to work as a cleaner despite being highly educated made her "*feel very bad*" because of the lost status. She also mentioned that you would "*feel stressed*" if you do not have good relationships in Canada. Nirha also mentioned missing her family in Pakistan, a sentiment echoed by Farah, who said, "*we feel lonely*" during holidays. All of these "*feel*" statements suggest belonging can be theorized as a feeling, as a sense or experience of emotion. Several factors contributed to participants' feelings of belonging (or not). Sofia said that having a job, earning money, making social connections, and improving status all affect "*how you feel*." This was supported by Nirha, who said getting involved and expanding her network resulted in her "*feeling good*." She said, "*How you will feel integrated? When you will have more friends and… by doing all those training program… I also did volunteer with [The Newcomer Support Centre].*" Valeria said she was intentional about doing what "*feels Canadian*" for her kids, such as registering them in hockey, going to local parks for picnics, or attending Calgary Stampede events. By participating in Calgary-based activities that felt Canadian, Valeria felt her family's sense of belonging was nurtured.

For Valeria, *feeling* Canadian was more important than *being* Canadian. She commented, "*I don't think it [citizenship] will make me feel, 'now I belong because I can say I'm Canadian.'*

No, I already am… I don't feel that it will improve my love for Canada or my happiness for being here." She explained that feelings of belonging derive from participation and making efforts to "*improve the land where you live—like, you pay your taxes, you try to be a good neighbor, you volunteer.*" In this sense, belonging is an actionable feeling by which Valeria positioned herself as an insider, even mentioning a time she had felt defensive when some of her migrant friends critiqued Canada.

On the other hand, some participants mentioned that official documentation and citizenship were important sources of feeling Canadian. Najah mentioned the quick processing of her PR paperwork reinforced her sense that she had a place in society: "*you can feel that [you're at home] because they will prepare all your paperwork immediately.*" In the same vein, Awla said the fact that newcomers can apply for citizenship five years after arriving in Canada "*is a positive point about Canada... It shows that they want you.*" Awla further speculated on whether she felt more Iranian or Canadian. She said that although she currently felt like an Iranian (not Canadian) living in Canada, she speculated, "*I'm not sure about future. Maybe my feeling change*." This comment indicates that feelings of belonging are contingent and in flux, depending on circumstances, perceptions, and experiences.

5.3.2.2. Belonging as Confidence. Confidence, or developing trust in one's capabilities, was mentioned in seven of the nine interviews. It was most prominent in Nirha's interview, where she mentioned confidence 16 times. She described how confidence increased with her participation in training programs, through volunteering, by meeting people and expanding her network, and through developing rapport with employers and coworkers. She also said her confidence was boosted when she completed her PhD and that she gained confidence from some of the counselors who supported her during her divorce. Nirha's experience suggests confidence contributes to bolstering the positive feelings associated with belonging, and these stem from one's own efforts and from key supports/relationships.

Some newcomers (i.e., Farah, Najah, Emma) described how their confidence increased as they gained independence. Farah said she had taken on new roles in Canada that would typically have been filled by her husband in Jordan, such as handling government applications, making phone calls, booking appointments, and paying bills. Because of these actions, she reflected: "*That's helped me a lot. I feel more confident now myself. I can do it. I can do all of that in a new country. That's wonderful for me.*" Similarly, as Najah supported her husband with his

health conditions throughout their time in Canada, she reported that "*you feel more trust in yourself*." Emma said, "*at the beginning… when I need something, I will ask my husband. I will let him to do something instead of me. But now I will—I will think, 'oh, I can do that.*'" These comments indicate that being able to accomplish daily tasks is a source of confidence, particularly for participants who traditionally would not have been the ones in their families to take on these tasks in their home countries. For some participants, this meant taking on new roles that rendered them more power or autonomy in their daily activities and in their relationships. These shifting household roles that subvert traditional gender expectations gave some participants new-found confidence that bolstered their sense of purpose, self, and belonging in Canada.

5.3.2.3. Belonging as Knowledge. Several participants mentioned that gaining/having knowledge was an important aspect of belonging. Valeria commented on the importance of cultural knowledge:

> *…you have that feeling of not belonging during your first months or years, because you speak and nobody understands you, because they're celebrating something that you don't know what they're celebrating. Um, they celebrate in a way that you are not used to, so you feel like you don't belong because everything is different.*

Aaron suggested that being knowledgeable about ongoing events and news facilitated discussions and interactions with others, which was important for feeling he belonged in his workplace:

> *If I don't have the sense of belonging—If I isolated myself from people around me, it's not fun life. If I go to work, and … I don't communicate with my coworkers, or if I—I didn't engage with them… it's not nice. If I go to work, I share my idea, they share, they ask me a question, I ask them a question… And then, in that case, I feel, 'this is my workplace; I have the same right as you.' Or, 'this is my country; I have the same as right as you.' Or something like that. It's very, very important for me.*

Aaron further reflected on how acquiring knowledge of his rights was an important component of establishing his belonging. Through instances of trial and error, he had come to learn about the rights and rules for life in Canadian society. He laughed as he recalled a story where he had been cycling in a vehicle lane rather than the bicycle lane. A driver honked at him, and Aaron was initially outraged, feeling that he had the right of way and that the driver was in the wrong. Upon recounting the incident later that day to his coworkers, they told him that he actually should have been in the bicycle lane. This incident allowed him to learn more about Canadian behaviours and rules, giving him experiential knowledge. Aaron concluded:

> *Knowing your rights is very, very important. All the time, uh, if you don't know—If I don't know something, I feel 'these people are abusing me. They—these people are—they treat me bad.' Maybe they treat me good too! But I don't know.*

Aaron's experience suggests that the more knowledge newcomers have at their disposal to interpret the behaviours of others, the better they can navigate the cultural and social interactions in their daily life.

5.3.2.4. Belonging as a Decision. Some participants felt they had some agency in *deciding* to belong, or in deciding to accept the realities of immigration and to be in (and stay in) Canada. All participants felt they had the ability to make a decision, whether migration was necessitated by circumstance (in the cases of Farah, Sofia, Aaron) or a free will decision to join a spouse (for Alina, Emma, Nirha) or for the sake of family-related goals and hopes for a better life (for Awla, Najah, Valeria). Most participants (except Emma and Alina) felt that their migration to Canada was irreversible, either due to circumstances in their home country (e.g., Aaron and Sofia would not return to the discrimination they escaped in their home countries), or due to already having established roots in Canada. As such, each participant felt attached or committed to their new life in Canada for multiple and varied reasons, motivated by their expectations and hopes of the possibilities and benefits of life in Canada.

The decision to invest in their future in Canada was most evident among participants who were raising children in Canada, particularly where they had observed that their children were happy, making friends, and speaking English. This was the case for Sofia, who reported with relief that her 3-year old was thriving in daycare. Farah also spoke proudly of her two children who had made friends and gained confidence since arriving in Canada. Valeria said, "*My kids were born here, and I decided this is going to be their future, their life, we're going to make it work in here*." Later she said, "*my kids are going to be adults in this place.*" Their decisions to stay in Canada motivated their actions and cognitive orientation towards successfully integrating. Najah was motivated to succeed in Canada since citizenship would provide her mobility to visit her adult son in the United States. Parenthood and the circumstances of immigration are important intersectional categories that shape newcomers' decisions and determination to belong. I further elaborate below on how these factors, among others, impact newcomers' outlook, life prospects, opportunities, and mobility.

5.3.3. Perspectives on Canada as Home

During interviews, participants I asked participants if Canada felt like home to them. Without much hesitation, all participants responded, "*Yes*." When I asked them why Canada felt like home to them, and their responses varied considerably. For Aaron and Najah, Canada felt like home because of the safety, stability, and trustworthiness of the system. Similarly, Farah, having left Jordan in unsafe circumstances, said that she felt unafraid these days. Both Aaron and Najah appreciated the predictability of outcomes in Canada; for instance, they perceived that studying would make them more hirable, that the most deserving candidates would be selected for hire, and that working would reliably result in a paycheck. Najah also felt she was treated fairly and respectably because of the reliable support she received from the government. These participants' previous experiences in their home countries navigating unpredictable systems and unstable conditions seemed to have made them more appreciative of the relative stability and comfort they experienced so far in Canada, where the system and constitution contributed to Canada feeling like home.

For other participants, associating Canada with home appeared to be more experience-based. Valeria and Awla both mentioned that as they oriented themselves to the city by exploring new areas and making memories with their families in these spaces, they have felt more and more at home (e.g., Awla recounted spending time with her family in a café they discovered in Calgary's Kensington district, and Valeria described skating with her kids at Bowness Park). However, missing out on experiences in their home countries appeared to be a barrier to feeling at home in Canada. Farah and Sofia mentioned their sadness at not being able to experience cherished holidays and family celebrations (i.e., birthdays) with extended family. Farah mentioned feeling especially lonely during Christmas in Canada. For Emma, experiencing motherhood for the first time away from close friends and family was also a barrier to feeling at home. Participants mentioned that Canada would feel more like home if they could recreate their networks of loved family members and friends that they had before immigrating.

Another aspect of feeling at home was understanding how to navigate documents, letters, forms, and processes to access necessities or desires for daily life. Aaron recounted how an immigrant friend of his had unknowingly *leased* a car that he thought he had *bought*. After six years of payments, his friend was shocked to learn that he needed to return the car. Aaron said that being blindsided by a misunderstanding like this can greatly diminish confidence, and that

being unfamiliar with life processes like this led to vulnerability, confusion, and frustration. Aaron suggested that immigrants need more support in learning about these systems in order to feel more at home.

For Emma, feeling Canada was home simply entailed being in Canada with her family. Her place-based iteration of home was clearly articulated when I asked her if Canada felt like home, and she responded:

> *Yeah, it's like a home to me because my family there. My kids, my husband, yeah, they are the only family here… So if—if our small family in different country… where we live, where is my country, where is my home.*

In asking follow-up questions, it became clear that Emma considered herself very mobile. Although Canada was home for now, she felt she could move anywhere in the world with her family and feel equally at home there. This led to a long discussion about her perspective on being and feeling Canadian, which is taken up in the next section.

In sum, feeling-, experience-, and place-oriented understandings of home impacted participants' symbolic construction of Canada as their home. These understandings varied based on past experience, current reality, personality, and values, all of which entail intersectional factors that are further discussed below.

5.3.4. Perspectives on Being Canadian

Unlike in the previous section, where participants all considered Canada home in some way, when asked to reflect on whether they considered themselves Canadian, their responses were more varied. Even those who felt very at home in Canada were hesitant to say they felt (or needed to feel) Canadian. The extent that participants felt Canadian depended on their views on nationality and citizenship, and the extent that they felt like outsiders in Canada. One participant (Emma) also distinguished *being Canadian* from *being in Canada*, stating that the latter was enough.

5.3.4.1. Nationality. Valeria defined a Canadian as someone who was born in Canada and whose (grand)parents are in Canada. She said, "*I'm Mexican and I think I will die feeling that. I'm a Mexican that live in and love Canada*." However, when it came to discussing her children, she said that her kids should feel they can belong here and succeed here without the immigrant identity that she has had to shoulder. Awla expressed a similar sense that she is an Iranian woman first, who lives, works, and raises kids in Canada. However, she supposed that

her daughter would feel more Canadian, even with Iranian parents and heritage. Alina felt slightly differently, expressing feeling divided between being Canadian and being Romanian:

> *I'm here, I'm Canadian. If I'm gonna go to my country, I'm gonna be Romanian. But all the time, even if I'm gonna go back or come here, I'm going to be Romanian, I'm going to be Canadian. I'm gonna be like, half and half in my mind, you know?*

These quotations show the tension faced by some participants' as they negotiate their own identity against Canadian national identity. Nation state identifications led some participants to identify themselves according to the nation they were born in or identify most with. For Alina, her time spent in Canada and in Romania have led her to associate or identify as both Canadian and Romanian.

5.3.4.2. Citizenship. Opinions on citizenship ranged among participants. Valeria felt that citizenship was not important for her feeling Canadian, while Aaron speculated that he might feel more Canadian when he obtained his citizenship and passport. Farah said obtaining citizenship would feel like succeeding, and Najah stated that getting a Canadian passport was her dream and her goal. For Najah, obtaining a Canadian passport meant more than holding onto her Syrian one, evidenced by her not renewing her Syrian passport when it expired shortly after arriving in Canada. To her, a Canadian passport symbolized being permanently "*on the land of peace*," and it would grant freedom and access to visit other countries, particularly to visit her son in the United States, which was the reason for her immigration to Canada in the first place.

5.3.4.3. Feeling like an Outsider. Some participants felt that their cultural background and experiences were too different or distant from Canadian culture, such that they may never be or feel Canadian. Aaron mentioned that he still felt very Eritrean in that he senses a strong connection to his upbringing there. Emma felt certain that she would never be Canadian: "*I know I'm not Canadian, I'm—I never— I—I can't be a Canadian because I'm not grown there*." She later said that she had "*a different culture that [she] can't overcome*," and said, "*I can't think like a Canadian*." She felt that experience in Canada had been marked by cultural barriers and discrimination:

> *For me, I think only people born there, educated there—they are Canadian. Yes, because when people see me, they will see, 'oh, Asian,' right? It—it's not just my choice… Other people will never treat me like Canadian. There's—there's the point.*

Emma went on to describe an incident in which she faced discrimination in a Canadian doctor's office. She said the doctor spoke down to her using emphatically slow and loud English. She also mentioned being afraid that her children might face racism in school, even from teachers. She

said, "*sometimes they just don't like Chinese*." Emma's identity as ethnically Asian and nationally Chinese led to negative experiences and feelings in Canada that have resulted in her being relatively unattached to Canada. She has come not to expect much from Canada or Canadians, and ultimately views *being in Canada* and *being Canadian* as two different things, and she concluded, "*I'm living here, so I am part of the society*."

Awla felt similarly in her professional job search in Canada. She said that not having an established educational and cultural background in Canada put her at a disadvantage in job interviews:

> *When I say that I studied abroad, not in a Canadian university, my chance is lower… I feel that it is not a—an equal chance between different competitors. I think that they prefer someone they can talk to him, for example, about the, uh, hockey… But when—when they talked with me they said that, "No, no, she is not very good at this job because—She's good at electrical engineering, but she cannot speak very good and we do not have any common with each other.*

Awla and Emma's experiences suggest that when factors like educational background from another country, minority cultural background, nationality, and/or race converge, migrants are disadvantageously positioned by systemic barriers. Some participants in this study saw themselves as cultural outsiders, distant from feeling or being Canadian. Below, it is further delineated how intersectional categories overlap to disadvantage newcomers and restrict their access to fair treatment in social and professional contexts.

5.3.5. Perspectives on Relationships

When participants were asked about their significant relationships, six out of nine mentioned immediate family as the most supportive and important relationships, including spouses, children, and siblings/parents who are in Canada with them. Six newcomers also mentioned relationships with coworkers (or spouses' coworkers) as supportive, though less close, relationships. Three newcomers mentioned that their broader local ethnic communities or neighbors provided some solidarity. For instance, Emma said she appreciated the number of Chinese families in her neighborhood with whom she could socialize her children and seek advice about various topics like vaccinations, where to buy winter boots, or recommendations on home repair companies. Aaron mentioned the Eritrean community were well connected in Calgary, and Valeria said she connected with other Mexican nationals at community cultural events. Participants' comments about relationships are discussed below under the terms social

bonds, social links, and social bridges (Ager & Strang, 2008), though these categories are problematized in the discussion in Chapter 6.

5.3.5.1. Social Bonds. Participants' social bond relationships in Canada included spouses and children, siblings, parents, extended family, and friendships within co-national communities. Social bond relationships were described as easier, stronger, and more long-term connections thanks to having shared experiences and things in common, including a similar background, culture, language, appearance, worldviews, or interests. For instance, Emma said that being Chinese was a visual marker of similarity among herself and other Chinese in her community: "*I just look the face, and know we are from the same country, so that makes us closer*." Nirha said that some of her cultural views and behaviours could only be understood by those who shared her culture, and she gave the example of her family counsellor who, being an immigrant from India, was able to understand the cultural biases associated with Nirha's divorce. Since India and Pakistan share cultural common ground, her counselor was able to understand her experience and provide culturally suitable support for her.

Participants expressed that social bonds supported their mental health and sense of well-being. Awla said that having her family nearby in Canada provided significant support in tangible and emotional ways, including help finding an apartment, locating necessities like groceries and furniture, discovering other services in Calgary like libraries, and, importantly, sharing experiences including the birth of her daughter and subsequent birthdays. Awla reflected, "*I think life is easier for me in Canada in comparison with the immigrants that—who don't know anybody in here*." Several participants relied heavily on their spouses for tangible and emotional support and companionship throughout their immigration and life in Canada.

Unanimously, participants relied on the solidarity and comfort experienced through social bonds. The commonalities and shared experiences inherent in social bonds appeared to provide foundational and significant social support for navigating life in Canada, and thus, facilitating social integration.

5.3.5.2. Social Links. In addition to their involvement in the LINC program, participants in this study sought other forms of support through SPOs, such as professional counselling support and free or low-cost training programs. Valeria said that the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) job search programs had helped her find work. Sofia felt she was benefiting from some courses provided by The Newcomer Support Centre that were helping her

to increase and improve her skills. Nirha elaborated on ways that she had received support from SPOs over the previous years: access to family and outreach counselors at CIWA helped her gain confidence to separate from her ex-husband; child services support helped her gain custody of her son; social support helped with rent, security, and even acquiring needed furniture; and a counselor from King Sheriff Shelter provided emotional support counsellors. These examples illustrate that diverse supports are available through SPOs for those who wish to access them. It is important to note that since all the participants involved in this study were recruited through their participation in the LINC program, they represent migrants who are aware of where/how to access these types of social supports, which may not be the case for *all* Canadian migrants.

5.3.5.3. Social Bridges. Participants described their limited quantity and quality of social bridge connections as disappointing. Social bridge relationships appeared to be tenuous surface-level acquaintances and friendships, established through work (mentioned by four participants), church (two), participation in programs (three), with neighbors (two), or through their kids (two). On the whole, participants did not seem satisfied with their friendships so far in Canada.

By and large, participants voiced that they had struggled to find friends in Canada (Awla, Sofia, Farah, Najah). Some attributed this to the COVID-19 pandemic limiting opportunities to find or nurture friendships. Other participants felt their personal circumstances limited their capacity to seek new friendships, such as Najah's personal obligation to care for her husband and mother in Canada. Participants mentioned having difficulty befriending other Canadians, which they loosely defined as more settled immigrants or people who were born in Canada. Farah said, "*Until now, I don't have Canadian friends*." Awla also said she had not had the chance to make Canadian friends, though she speculated that it would be nice. Alina supposed that deeper friendships would come with time, but that Canadians seemed to be difficult to make friends with. She struggled to pinpoint exactly why this was the case but suggested it could be because more settled Canadians seemed to be working a lot, or wrapped up in their own lives. Emma said that making friends was difficult because it was rare to find people who had a lot in common to the point that they could share time, interests, and private feelings. Sofia said it was difficult to establish friendships as an adult, particularly when her conceptualization of friendship felt different to how she perceived Canadians' relatively more superficial approach to friendship. Sofia preferred more genuine and deeper friendships like the ones she had in Ukraine. Briefly,

some combination of logistics and perceived differences in cultural values and personalities meant making friends with Canadians was challenging.

When asked why they desired friendships with more settled Canadians, participants expressed wanting to draw on the knowledge, advice, and expertise of those who had lived in Canada longer, as well as to gain opportunities for language practice. This motivation for seeking friendships appears to be in tension with participants' definitions of friendships founded in commonality and connection. That is, there is a discrepancy in where/how/with whom participants sought support for their integration through social bridges. While they hoped to leverage friendships for cultural and social capital, their desire for familial two-way support was mis-placed, and they appeared not to know how to nurture their existing relationships with Canadians.

5.4. Discussion

5.4.1. Intersectional Experiences of Integration

Using an intersectional lens reveals ways that participants' unique circumstances and backgrounds impact their integration. The findings include instances where participants' experiences in Canada were impacted by their race, gender, and class—which are three key foci of intersectionality—as well as other intersectional categories. Regarding race, Emma said she felt that Asians were disliked in Canada, and Awla mentioned feeling discriminated against based on her race during her job search. Gender came into play in some participants' comments about the new roles they had adapted in their households and in society. Class was also involved in participants discussing their sense of loss in economic and social status through immigration. Other salient intersectional categories apparent in the data were language ability, immigration status, religion, age, generation, ability, skill level, and education (see also Kaushik & Walsh, 2018; Stasiulis et al., 2020). In this discussion, I identify instances where intersectional convergences among these categories illuminated relatively positive or negative experiences of integration in Canada.

5.4.1.1. Language Ability, Education, and Skills. Participants related language ability, education, and skills as intersecting in significant ways. Since arriving in Canada, participants appear to have been driven by the goal of constantly (im)proving, i.e., both proving and improving, their language ability, knowledge, and skills through programs and courses that they

perceived would enable them to reach a social and professional status comparable to their life before immigration. (Im)proving language, education, and skills were thought to demonstrate and validate their social and professional value in Canada, rendering them increasingly eligible to participate and succeed in Canadian systems. Gaining abilities and having valid credentials is thought to provide access to better work prospects, even if those prospects are not quite in alignment with their educational and professional background. This implies that they do not already have sufficient skills to offer Canadian society, which points to "a deficit model of lifelong learning" which "seeks to assimilate immigrants to the dominant social, cultural and educational norms of the host society" (Liu & Guo, 2021, p. 738). In brief, Canadian systems position newcomers as in need of (im)proving themselves, lest they be limited in what they can expect to accomplish in Canada. This social reality is founded on ideologies of nationalism and normative language use that privilege representations of apparently *ideal* Canadians (i.e., white English-speaking Canadian-born people), while requiring others to (im)prove their suitability and positioning to gain access to capital and power.

5.4.1.2. Cultural Othering. The findings indicate that participants' cultural backgrounds and differences are an extremely important axis for intersectional analysis of their integration. Participants experienced cultural barriers in social and work life. In terms of friendships, while most participants desired to have more Canadian friends, their comments indicated that cultural gaps hindered such friendships. Alina supposed there may be some difference of values between herself and other Canadians, and Sofia felt that her understanding of friendship was culturally different to that of Canadian friendships. In terms of lifestyle, several female participants expressed how their cultural expectations for their gender roles had expanded since immigrating, with a set of roles more robust than they previously experienced in their home countries. In terms of life events, Nirha's divorce led her to realize the differences between Canadian and Pakistani perspectives and stigmas surrounding marital separation. Furthermore, culturally specific ways of celebrating holidays created tensions and sadness for Farah and her family, who felt isolated celebrating Christmas on their own in Canada. And Aaron grappled with feeling vulnerable as he learned the expected cultural behaviours and norms within Canada.

In the domain of work, Awla perceived that her failure to find work was mostly related to cultural distance than anything; she believed that if a Canadian employer was given a choice between equally qualified Canadian and Iranian candidates, they would choose the Canadian

candidate because of the ease that comes from sharing a common culture, hobbies, interests, and conversation. These examples point to the inextricability of culture from other axes of intersectional identity. Differing cultural worldviews, expectations, traditions, and backgrounds compounded with other factors (such as educational background, race and nationality) to make newcomers feel like cultural outsiders, thus limiting possibilities for them to access social circles and workplaces dominated by normative Canadians.

5.4.1.3. Generation and Immigration Status. Findings in this study indicate that a spade of factors coalesce to make integration most difficult for first-generation immigrants, while barriers are expected to decrease in subsequent generations. Participants spoke very differently about their personal experiences integrating in Canada compared with what they observed or expected their children would experience. Valeria said of her kids, "I'm the immigrant, not them." Participants seemed to perceive that their inherent proximity to their own backgrounds and first-hand lived experiences elsewhere meant they were further from being Canadian than subsequent generations, who are thought to have increased entitlement to *being Canadian* and greater access to Canadian systems. Since participants were themselves were not born and raised in the cultural, linguistic, and geographical context of Canada, they seemed to feel a gap existed that may never completely close; a gap rooted in their own *immigrantness.*

5.4.1.4. Mental Health Issues. Another clearly significant axis for intersectional analysis was mental health issues. Findings from both focus groups and interviews pointed to the trauma experienced by newcomers who have faced "loss of homes and livelihoods" (Stasiulis et al., 2020, p. 4). The refugee migrants in the Arabic-speaking focus group mentioned significant obstacles, challenges, and pain in their backgrounds, including the loss of family members through abduction into terrorist regimes, imprisonment, and torture. Sharing their stories elicited emotions and tears. In the same vein, Najah mentioned how she handled the loss of her son mostly privately, crying into a towel behind locked doors while trying to appear strong when in the presence of her living son and husband. Aaron said his trauma catches up to him in his sleep, bringing him back to the unsafe feelings of Eritrea and his escape to Sudan.

These stories are confirmed by an administrator's comment about LINC learners: "*They don't speak about it, but they have trauma.*" And later, "*They have mental illness which is not being addressed… they go to class and teachers does not know what is going with this student, but she can actually see there is something going on – that the student is not OK*." Either due to

cultural stigmatization surrounding poor mental health or not knowing where/how to seek resources or support, newcomers remain "*bottled up*" (according to Jessica, one of the LINC administrators), with few opportunities to share their experiences. In the Arabic speaking focus group, the interpreter emphasized, "*They really appreciate it—that you just give them the chance to vent and talk. We could do this every week… they're feeling good already just to talk, to be heard.*"

In other ways, mental health issues affected participants who had relatively safer and less tumultuous experiences in their home countries. As they discussed their lack of support and familiarity of loved ones amid coping with massive life changes, homesickness appeared as grief, triggering sadness, loneliness, and stress. Intersecting with other categories of their identities, mental health issues were a barrier for many participants in this study. However, it appeared that accessing mental health supports was challenging for participants who did not know which supports would benefit them, nor how to access them. Accessing support may be a low priority among other goals that take precedence in the first months surviving in Canada, namely language learning and employment services.

5.4.1.5. Mobility and Rootedness. The findings in this study offer some evidence that newcomers' experiences with social integration are contingent on their migration occurring by necessity or by free will. This distinction seemed to impact how participants perceived their circumstances, life prospects, opportunities, and mobility. However, intersectional migration scholars warn that "binaries such as forced vs. voluntary migration fail to capture the nuanced complexities of mobile lives across space and time, reworked and recategorized in new locations" (Stasiulis et al., 2020, p. 5). Indeed, whether forced or by free will, the participants in this study voiced varying degrees of wanting/hoping to stay in Canada and, by extension, varying degrees of likeliness that they would move elsewhere. While Alina and Emma immigrated by free will and both felt they could potentially live elsewhere in the future, others expressed feeling more *stuck* in Canada for one reason or another. Awla and Valeria felt rooted in Canada because of their families and children. However, the participants who arrived in Canada as refugees felt less mobile. Aaron and Farah discussed their future in Canada with some amount of acceptance of the permanence of the move. It appears that rootedness or mobility are determined not only by the circumstances of migration (i.e., as forced or voluntary), but intersectional categories including personality and parenthood.

5.4.2. Social Integration Via Cultural Capital

The findings from this study indicate numerous ways in which participants worked to advance their social integration by taking steps to increase their cultural capital. Bourdieu's framework for cultural capital includes three designations: embodied, objectified, and institutional. Embodied capital refers to a newcomers' socialization into society's "normative, often unwritten, rules, patterns of thinking and behaving" (Sippola et al., 2022, p. 40). Valeria's reflection on learning the rules for "the way the game is played here" included figuring out the unspoken expectations and outcomes (e.g., attending non-mandatory work-related events leads to positive impacts on networking) which can increase one's cultural capital and grant upward social mobility. For other participants, embodied cultural capital increased over time through proactive involvement in community activities and events, by gaining friends and acquaintances, and by raising children in Canadian systems. Embodied capital was also observed through participants' delineations of personality traits they developed to support their integration, including optimism, self-efficacy, open-mindedness, and flexibility. These attributes suggest that forms of "migration specific cultural capital" (Erel, 2010) support integration.

Objectified cultural capital includes expressions of taste through dominant music, books, and other cultural outputs (Sippola et al., 2022). This was exemplified in Valeria putting her children in activities that "feel Canadian" to them, like hockey. Valeria also mentioned learning about Canadian artists, such as memorizing Shania Twain's lyrics, gained her cultural closeness to a client at her work. Finally, institutional, and cultural capital includes educational qualifications and background. None of the participants in this study had received recognition of their education from their home countries by the Canadian government, so participants were actively involved in gaining new skills and learning English through classes, with the expected outcome of gaining recognition for their knowledge and abilities (this is consistent in other studies, see Chuatico, 2019; Erel, 2010; Nohl et al., 2006). In brief, Bourdieu's conceptual framing of cultural capital is instrumental in showing how participants in this study acquired and validated cultural capital to better align themselves as ideal Canadian immigrants.

5.4.3. Social Relationships

Social links provided some support for handling personal stresses, healing traumas, and building human and cultural capital, as seen in the way participants accessed service provider

organizations to draw on the professional guidance of settlement counselors or to join language programming and other training opportunities. Social bonds among participants constituted a significant form of foundational support for newcomers' integration, providing them tangible, moral, and emotional support. Social bonds were also seen to provide some form of cultural brokering to bridge worldviews, behaviors, and expectations between home country and Canada. The fact that social bonds were far more prevalent connections for newcomers while social bridges remained somewhat elusive can be understood through Bourdieu's notion of habitus, as defined by Chuatico (2019):

> The experiences and social environment of people results in the "homogenizing of a group of class habitus" (Bourdieu 1990:58), which makes their practices and behaviours correspond to each other without direct or deliberate reference to rules or norms. Thus, the views of an individual will coordinate well with a co-member of their group or class due to their common habitus… In other words, the more similar people are in cultural capital and social status, the more alike they are to each other and the closer they are within the social space. (pp. 12-13)

Habitus has explanatory value in understanding why participants struggled to establish friendships with more settled Canadians. Participants hoped to make friends with more settled Canadians because they expected that they would be able to leverage friendships with Canadians to advance their integration by having increased access to more cultural information and more opportunity to practice speaking English. Yet, they remained distant and estranged from more established Canadians, feeling that more settled Canadians did not reciprocate their efforts or support their integration. Participants viewed friendships with white English-speaking Canadians as desirable but out of reach. As such, Canadians remained largely uninvolved in supporting the social integration of newcomer participants. Immigrant groups are varyingly estranged from the habitus of Canadians, with diverse practices, behaviours, and views reflecting different understandings of the rules/norms that govern behaviour and speech. This generates social distance between groups with dissimilar cultural capital and social status, reinforcing a social divide and, in Canada's case, hierarchy.

5.5. Summary

This chapter set out to explore the question: What does social integration entail for immigrants? Through sharing the life story narratives and social integration perspectives of nine immigrant participants, their highly varied circumstances and unique trajectories were

highlighted. An intersectional lens highlights how their experiences were shaped by multiple personal factors (Taha, 2019).Voiced in their narratives, their decisions, attitudes, and goals interplay with the macro level structures, institutions, and discourses surrounding migration to Canada. This chapter showed how participants' construct their identities and narrate coherency in their lives even as they come up against social structures and power relations in their daily interactions. Therefore, answering the question, "What does social integration entail for newcomers?" requires bringing a critical social lens to understand participants' experiences in sociocultural historical context.

First, and entirely unanimously from all participant accounts, social integration entailed work and effort on the part of newcomers to be able to access employment and social opportunities. Through continual participation and engagement over time, participants felt they eventually gained an understanding of and access to services, systems, and circles. Their work and effort involved two major categories: constantly (im)proving their level of education, their skills and their language abilities through courses and trainings and striving to position themselves as 'insiders' in experiences and interactions mediated by power. The latter entailed their efforts to gain knowledge of news and norms, do Canadian activities that made them feel more aligned to Canadians, establish networks, gain confidence and autonomy, and even work on their personalities to nurture traits thought to support their integration. In these ways, to be/feel Canadian, participants accrued cultural capital to move towards apparently more desirable forms of *Canadianness*, which they perceived would grant them access, privilege, and power in society. Indeed, Canadian systems tend to privilege English or French speakers who are born in Canada, while excluding others and diminishing the value of other backgrounds and identities. For instance, the institutional language and employment courses accessed by immigrants through SPOs provided settings in which newcomers could work to gain dominant skills and abilities that were perceived as more valuable than their existing skills and abilities, even though their existing skills and abilities may have proffered them status before moving to Canada.

Yet, newcomers seemed to have internalized their own *immigrantness* as an unshakeable aspect of their identities as they integrated into Canada. Many participants expressed that they would always perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as immigrants. Canada was certainly considered home by participants, and some even hoped to obtain citizenship, but all

participants described instances of cultural othering in work and in social life in which they felt positioned as outsiders. These were internalized as social realities and participants assumed outsider positions as intersectional categories coalesced to systemically position them in the margins. Their language ability, education and skills were positioned as inferior to Canadian standards, they experienced discrimination in social and work spaces, and their mental health needs were largely neglected.

Last, participants in this study did not expect that social integration entailed much effort from Canadians as long as the government provided the 'scaffolding' for immigration and integration. That is, newcomers expected that the government would process their paperwork and provide access to services for newcomers, but otherwise, the majority of participants' support came from social bonds. While migrants did express some amount of frustration that they could not seem to form relationships with more settled Canadians and the broader Canadian community was largely excused from participating in the process of Canada's integration formula.

The next chapter will bring together the discursive analysis from chapter 4 alongside this thematic analysis of immigrant perspectives to make recommendations that disrupt systemic discursive structures, with the goal of making newcomers' social integration more equitable and reflective of their lived realities.

Chapter 6: The Role of Discourse in Social Integration & Recommendations for Discourse and Practice

This chapter brings together findings from the first and second research questions to address the third question: How do immigrants' experiences and perceptions of their social integration progress in alignment (or in tension) with the discourses they encounter and enact in the context of the LINC program? In other words, how are the discourses identified in chapter 4 supporting or interfering with immigrants' experiences of social integration presented in chapter 5? The first part of this chapter addresses this question with a discussion of how discourses impact migrants' integration. Flowing from this, the second part of this chapter centers on making recommendations that could bring about positive change in newcomers' social integration outcomes moving forward. Recommendations are made for rethinking and interrupting harmful dominant discourses that do not support immigrants' integration, refining approaches used in the LINC program design and classroom, and reevaluating how the provincial and federal government could better support local LINC programs.

6.1. A Discourse that Supports Integration

As has been established throughout this dissertation, a dominant discourse exists across levels to represent Canada as a nation highly dependent on and welcoming towards immigrants. At the broadest level, Canadian identity was discursively connected to immigration in news media sources and on government websites that staked an economic need for migrants and promoted the economic benefits of their presence and contribution to Canada. On the ground level, immigrant participants mentioned that gaining access to public services, quick processing of PR documentation, and a relatively short track to citizenship indicated that Canada 'wanted' them to stay and settle. Teacher and administrator participants (and news sources) asserted the opportunities for immigrants to build new and better lives for themselves in Canada.

Across all levels, physical and symbolic spaces are discursively carved out for immigrants to feel they belong in Canada. Physical spaces include the LINC program and other programs/services oriented to supporting newcomers. When newcomers register to join a LINC program, they are given a physical (or online) seat in a classroom, which is an official indicator of their belonging in a classroom space. Symbolic spaces refer to how space is reserved for 'others' in Canadian identity. Concepts like multiculturalism and diversity make symbolic space

for Canadian immigrants from cultural backgrounds. Through both positive and negative interactions with others, immigrants come to terms with their own 'being' in Canada and their right to belong in the same spaces as their more settled Canadian counterparts.

Even their identification in Canadian society as 'immigrants in Canada' affords them some systematically assigned space in society. Of course, exactly where that space falls within the social hierarchy in Canada is fraught, making association with this identification complicated as visible and/or cultural intersectional markers of 'otherness' affect migrants' positioning and access to power. Even so, as a base line, no matter one's experience in social settings and interactions with others, a discursive and symbolic space is carved out in society, establishing their right to be an immigrant in Canada. As seen in Chapter 5, for several immigrant participants in this study, just having a safe and stable place to live is enough for feeling a sense of belonging in Canada. Emma accepted that a space existed for her in Canada even if she did not feel welcomed by, or similar to, others ('being in Canada' vs. 'being Canadian'). When a coworker insinuated that Alina was "just an immigrant," Alina rebutted that Canada was a nation of immigrants, explicitly staking her inclusion in this symbolic discursive space. Therefore, it appears that the discursive connection between Canadian identity and immigration creates space(s) for migrants to settle and assert their right to inhabit physical and symbolic spaces in society. However, as suggested in Chapter 4, the creation of this discursive space may inhibit belonging in other ways, namely when migrants feel negatively characterized by their immigrant identity. In other words, in cases where they feel culturally othered and excluded.

6.2. Tensions between Macro Level Discourses and Local Social Integration Experiences

6.2.1. Ghettoization vs. Social Bonds

One discourse identified in some online news sources drew on fear-based attitudes rooted in maintaining the status quo of Canadian communities to suggest that newcomers should not live in neighborhoods or areas with a high concentration of other immigrants from a similar national background. News sources advanced an idea that close-knit newcomer communities would impede integration into the broader apparently 'more Canadian' community. However, by immigrant participant accounts, high value was given to social bond relationships with those in their households, with relatives living nearby, and with co-national neighbors and cultural community members in Calgary. The findings indicate that immigrant participants received

significant social, emotional, moral, and tangible support from these connections that they are not receiving in other streams. Therefore, higher-level discourses that decry their 'ghettoization' or 'segregation' imply that migrants should cut out a significant source of solidarity and support, and by extension, a means they have of accessing cultural and social capital.

These findings are supported by existing literature. Walks and Bourne (2006) explain that the term 'ghettoization' is a social concept that has been borrowed from U.S. contexts and inappropriately applied in Canadian settings. The term describes areas and neighborhoods into which the host society intentionally coerces a group, leaving them limited choices for accessing resources, education, or housing. The term is associated with serious systemic social issues such as cycles of poverty and youth criminalization, conjuring an image that Hiebert (2015) refers to as "the stereotypical American view" (p. 6) of enclaves. Hiebert (2014) analyzed census data related to the ethno-cultural landscapes of major cities in Canada to explore patterns, factors, and effects of increases in concentrated social groups. His report concludes:

> We appear to be witnessing a general reconfiguration of the social geography … towards a new residential order that is comprised of more enclaves and also more micro-level diversity… Enclaves do not appear to contribute to the challenge of socio-economic integration for newcomers or members of Visible Minority groups in Canadian cities. In fact it may be possible that they foster socio-economic integration. (p. vii)

Chuatico and Haan (2022) discuss embodied cultural capital and habitus to explain why migrants may gravitate toward members of their own or similar cultural groups. They suggest "immigrants who are of similar social status… are more likely to bond with their group" (p. 1704) as a source of culturally sensitive information, opportunities, and resources, as well as in-group solidarity and potential to maintain and nurture culture, ethnic identity, and language. This was certainly the case in the current study, where numerous examples illustrate the importance of close social bonds. Emma felt a sense of solidarity among neighbors of shared Asian background in her neighbourhood. Valeria mentioned her closest and most comfortable relationships were with other Spanish speakers. Nirha received support through her divorce from a counselor of similar background. Participants in the Arabic speaking focus group united to support each other by listening to one another's stories and apparently finding solidary through expressing similar experiences of trauma. An immigrant teacher participant also mentioned that her own immigrant background created a deeper empathy than what a Canadian-born teacher may be able to offer.

These examples illustrate the critical and indispensable nature of migrants' relationships with those who have similar social or cultural backgrounds as them.

This study adds to literature that problematizes how social relationships are theorized in migration literature. This study was conceptualized using the terms bonds, bridges, and links to explore social relationships (Ager & Strang, 2008). Bonds have traditionally been presumed to help migrants 'get by' while bridges have been through to help them 'get ahead'. However, the findings of this study suggest that it is not so straightforward. Participants' social bond connections enabled them to get by *and* get ahead, provided them with social and cultural capital, and supported their adjusting to and belonging in Canada. Therefore, the concept of habitus is a more suitable concept for understanding migrants' social relationships. A shared habitus—that is, having been socialized into similar social and cultural norms, attitudes and behaviours—impacts how/which relationships are formed, which disproportionately impacts access to resources and opportunities. As has been seen, the resources and opportunities afforded by social bond or bridge relationships are not straightforward; they are unpredictable given they are highly contextual and intersectionally impacted by habitus. This resonates with Akkaymak's (2016) claim: "Networking experiences of immigrants are therefore affected by the fit of their habitus within their new social context. This suggests that immigrants are more likely to develop networks in the host country with individuals sharing a common or similar habitus" (p. 2614). Therefore, bonding and bridging appear to be overly simplistic representations of migrants' relationships. Capital and habitus (i.e., having commonalities, shared interests and experiences) are a better way to theorize newcomers' relationships (see also Ryan, 2011).

In summary, intolerant fear-mongering discourses that highlight the *un-Canadianness* of 'ghettoized' communities that threaten the status quo of Canada pose a serious barrier to potential integration outcomes in migrants' lived experiences. The relationships migrants form among those of a similar habitus appear to be the most effective (and sometimes the only) way for them to access information, opportunities, and emotional support, making these relationships crucial to their success and wellbeing.

6.2.2. Assessment and Evaluation

At the macro level, assessment, and evaluation are imposed upon the LINC program design via policy and the use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks to standardize the program

and promote fairness and objectivity. At the ground level, LINC teachers and administrators complained that continual assessments resulted in busy work that compromised other kinds of supports newcomers actually needed. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that when newcomers adopted this discourse of evaluation and assessment and applied it to themselves, they internalized a sense of deficiency and positioned themselves as less deserving of access to resources enjoyed by Canadian-born or more settled Canadians.

Participants in this study exerted seemingly unending efforts to improve their language skills to better position themselves for future opportunities. This reflects findings in other studies that suggest immigrants are portrayed as deficient to create a need for inducting them into a social system that reinforces a hierarchy based on language and culture (Fleming, 2015; Pashby et al., 2014). The use of established benchmarks and standards constitutes "scientific justification" (Extra et al., 2011, p. 18) to highlight what newcomers lack.

As a result, assessment and evaluation appear to lead immigrants to internalize their own deficiency in language use. This internalization of language deficiency is consistent with literature that discusses internalized oppression or internalized racism (David & Derthick, 2013; Lee et al., 2018). Internalized oppression refers to individuals accepting "negative messages about their own abilities and self-worth" (Lee et al., 2018, p. 6). This reflects a learned tendency for members of minority groups to see the world through the perspective of dominant group members and conclude that is not desirable to be a visible minority, to have intermediate language ability, or even just to be an immigrant. This was clearly seen in Emma's self-reflection on how she perceived herself as being in a low position in society, and it is also reflected in Valeria's comments about wanting to distance her children from having to feel like immigrants as she did. Migrants' tendency to internalize their own deficiency, especially in language ability, was exacerbated by pervasive cross-level fixation on assessment and evaluation.

6.2.3. Multiculturalism and Discrimination

Multiculturalism was discursively upheld as a positive aspect of Canadian identity across levels. On government websites and in news media data sources, multiculturalism was promoted as a priority. LINC teachers and administrators also suggested that LINC classrooms were places where migrants were introduced to a variety of cultural backgrounds, which a couple of participants suggested was representative of Canadian society. Immigrant participants in this

study also adopted this discourse, expressing their sense that a positive aspect of being in Canada was its multicultural orientation. However, their narratives of their lived experiences revealed a conflicting image, with instances where migrants' *diversity*, held by multiculturalism as a positive attribute, was portrayed negatively as *difference*, leading to othering and exclusion. This suggests a tension when the discourses and expectation of multiculturalism fails to align with experiences and interactions with others in society.

This tension adds to the ongoing scholarly discussion of the legitimacy and future of Canadian multiculturalism. Experts in academic and political spheres have endeavored to describe and explain 'Canadian exceptionalism' on the world stage in relation to immigration and multiculturalism policies. Canada is unique in the way these policies appear to be effective and broadly supported by the Canadian public. Trebilcock (2019) outlines reasons for Canadian exceptionalism, citing Canada's unique geography and history, its economic need for migration, and how political leadership has strategically promoted multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was established in the context of immigration policies that permitted entry of predominantly white immigrants. Immigration and multiculturalism policies have historically discriminated against and excluded visible minorities, as is well documented (Haque, 2012; Thobani, 2007). Multiculturalism was introduced in such a way as to appear unthreatening to the dominant white and culturally European foundations of the nation. In essence, multiculturalism was promoted through covertly assimilative means, and to this day, immigration policy prioritizes admitting newcomers best suited for indoctrination into Canadian culture and systems through provision of programs and services (i.e., through language training, translation services, bridging programs to validate credentials and qualifications, employment counseling, resource provision for immigrants). The 'success' of the Canadian approach to immigration and multiculturalism is based on programming that targets immigrants' assimilation, rather than integration, in Canada.

Literature suggests that multiculturalism coexists with, and even supports, discrimination in Canada. Donnelly's (2021) study presented results from a 2017 panel survey to the Canadian public with questions about immigration and identity. The survey suggests that "despite a normative assumption of non-discrimination in the intellectual framework and policy rhetoric of multiculturalism, the public can support discrimination while also supporting multiculturalism" (p. 166). Donnelly revealed that "about half of Canadians see multiculturalism as a key aspect of Canadian identity, even while three quarters of Canadians believe that ethnic groups should

blend into Canadian society" (p. 175). This suggests support for multiculturalism is symbolic and not reflective of substantive support for the principles underlying it.

Tridafilopoulos (2021) suggests that Canadian support for multiculturalism exists largely due to the nation's rigorous approach to managed migration, which entails "strict control of unselected, unwanted migrants" (p. 4). Canada's immigration policy prioritizes highly skilled and well-educated migrants, which enables political leaders to "convince democratic publics that immigration is in the national interest" (p. 12). Pacquet (2021) interviewed IRCC employees, who indicated that a substantial part of their work is "selling immigration to the native population" (p. 69) by making the argument that it is well-managed. Continued support for this opaque and partial form of multiculturalism is well described by Kymlicka (2021) in his article on the "precarious resilience of multiculturalism in Canada" (p. 122). Multiculturalism holds strong to its symbolic position as a tenet of national identity (as seen in this study's web news and online government data sources), but its very presence does not signify an absence of discriminatory attitudes that periodically rise to the surface (as seen in this study's web news sources reporting on anti-immigrant perspectives, and in immigrant participants' descriptions of discrimination).

In summary, this study adds to amassing evidence revealing how a multiculturalism discourse constitutes little more than *smoke and mirrors* to promote Canadian exceptionalism. Guo and Guo (2011) suggested that Canada is "moving backwards toward more assimilative and coercive multicultural policies and practices" (p. 78) and that reclaiming a truer form of multiculturalism would require adopting a framework that cuts through the "superficial rhetoric of difference and diversity" (p. 78). This discussion highlights the tension between the national shared identity and the ethnic identities of migrants. This clash of identities incites a "crisis of belonging" (Vipond, 2021, p. 57) for migrants. It is problematic to construct national and ethnic identities as mutually exclusive because it poses a challenge for migrants to feel they belong (Ang, 2014). Therefore, Ang (2014) suggests belonging would be better theorized through "more processual and flexible understandings of identity, ethnicity, and nation" (p. 1194). This aligns with Vipond's (2021) observation that a national identity may appear "narrow, exclusive or inaccessible" (p. 41) to migrants (in vastly varying ways considering the intersectional factors that impact migrants' experiences and interactions after arriving in Canada).

In my view, multiculturalism fails to support migrants' integration. The concept has historically masked discrimination through policies that exclude 'less desirable' races, cultural and educational backgrounds, etc. In this study, migrants struggled to reconcile their own sense of identity with national ideals, and their life story narratives indicate they experience disadvantage depending on the extent that they adhere to (or acquire) ways of speaking and behaving that are held as ideal by dominant Canadian standards; they are therefore varyingly accepted by others as valid members—at least immigrant members—in society. Abandoning the concept of multiculturalism seems improbable, given it is engrained in Canadian identity and receives widespread support. Therefore, there is a need to reframe multiculturalism to better reflect the social and cultural realities of migrants' lived experiences. Below, I outline a way to discursively reframe multiculturalism moving forward.

6.3. Multi-Level Alignments in Discourses that Undermine Integration

In this section, I synthesize the discursive themes that are present in the findings in top-level data sources (i.e., government websites, web news media), further institutionally disseminated through policy and leadership in the LINC program, and also taken up by newcomers in the program. These pervasive multi-level discourses include: viewing immigrants as learners, responsibilizing immigrants for their own success or failure to integrate, elevating language as the main means to integration, and the notion that migrants 'start a new life' and 'build a better future' in Canada. Despite their ubiquitous presence across data sources, these discourses appeared to impede integration for immigrant participants.

6.3.1. Viewing Immigrants as Learners

This study demonstrated how immigrants were portrayed as learners of language, norms/rules, and even personality traits as a means to integrate. The migrants in this study continually mentioned assuming their posture as learners, both within and outside of the LINC program. For instance, many participants joined classes through service providers to gain new skills and knowledge, Aaron mentioned he was constantly learning about his rights and about the laws in Canada, and Emma mentioned learning information from neighbors about where to find household items for her family. At the institutional level, LINC teachers and administrators unsurprisingly referred to immigrants as learners of English and of Canada. Teachers varyingly

described learning objectives including Canadian norms, expectations, behaviours, and even ideologies (e.g., Canadian democracy) and systems (e.g., citizenship processes). In web news, immigrants were also portrayed as learners through articles that established a need for programs to help immigrants overcome educational or linguistic barriers, and in statements of political leaders suggesting language learning as a means to integration.

By casting newcomers as learners of Canada, they are positioned as having inferior types/amounts of knowledge, skills, abilities, and even personalities compared to more established or settled Canadians. As many examples in this study suggest, in both social and professional contexts, migrants may feel bullied, demoralized, devalued, discriminated against, or excluded. Consider Awla's job search, Emma's experience in the doctor's office, Alina's experience of feeling belittled due to her immigrant status, Sandra's experience with her coworkers at Starbucks, among others. These examples illustrate that when newcomers' knowledge and skills are portrayed as inferior or in need of improvement, they are positioned in undesirable ways in their interactions with others.

6.3.2. Responsibilizing Immigrants for Success or Failure in Integration

Across levels, migrants were blamed if they did not *do* or *learn enough* to integrate. This was seen in news sources that implied Canada had done its part to support integration through providing services. In one article, politician Jason Kenney stated that while language services were made freely available, only a small portion of migrants were accessing the LINC program. The statement clearly implicates an attitude idiomatically aligned to the notion that 'you can bring a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.' These statements misrepresent reality through omission of information. There are henceforth unmet prerequisite needs of migrants over language (recall the migrant wanting to "*feel like a human*" again before enrolling in a language program). Such statements fail to acknowledge that some migrants may feel that the way the LINC program addresses language development does not reflect their goals or reality. Even so, participants in this study appeared to have adopted a similar attitude as Kenney's. Valeria explicitly stated that there *were* services available to migrants who come to Canada and that not using them is the fault of the migrant.

Merely offering language programming and alleging that this is the best that can be done to support migration (so any failure to integrate is therefore the fault of migrants who did not

access the programs) reflects a serious problem with Canada's approach. The types of support provided may not be well aligned to the intersectional experiences and needs of all migrants. Canada has established a scaffolding, and newcomers are expected to find their place within it as they endeavor to become more integrated. The scaffolding includes policies that denote terms and parameters for how immigrants should advance from new arrivals toward fully realized 'ideal' Canadians. Newcomers are expected to 'plug in' to the scaffold and move along predetermined pathways, with the LINC program established as a 'catch all' for integration needs. Yet, this study showed that despite participants' best efforts, in some cases, the predetermined pathways did not serve them well. Awla felt she was wasting the LINC program's resources, while Yusra felt she could not progress in the program due to learning constraints. Thus, there is a significant problem with the way integration is supported through programs for migrants, exacerbated by a discursive tendency to responsibilize migrants if they fail to fit within the available programs. In my view, there is an obligation for Canadian systems and services to expand to accommodate and support *all* migrants admitted into Canada, even those who do not benefit from programs like LINC, rather than suggesting it is a failing of immigrants who did not join or benefit from the programs.

6.3.3. Elevating Language as the Main Means of Integration

Along with the above point, language learning programs, specifically, are expected to play a massive role in integration. As outlined in chapter 5, the expected outcomes of the LINC program articulated by teachers and administrators ranged from survival to full induction into society. Online news, government websites, and migrants themselves also conveyed a widespread expectation that language was a guaranteed approach to integration. Improving language fluency and accuracy was hailed as the ultimate integration approach, perhaps partly because it is relatively easy to address through creating programs and courses. It is simple to prescriptively diagnose issues in language systems, but it is more challenging to address how other factors shape newcomers' integration. The findings of this study suggest that factors and barriers to integration vary and are more complex, including migrants' culturally unique ways of interacting with others, feelings of dissimilarity to other Canadians, and sense of estrangement from normative ways of speaking and behaving (not only vocabulary or grammar, but pragmatics

and discourse). These reveal aspects of integration that are not as well supported through programs or services, while language programming receives considerable funding and attention.

6.3.4. Migrants 'Starting New Lives' and 'Building Better Futures'

Across levels, a discursive theme of "starting a new life" or "building a better future" in Canada was established (through the before/now language used by immigrant participants, and through news sources and comments made by LINC employees that pointed to a sense of optimism surrounding the opportunities and prospects of immigration). These discursive patterns implied a turning point, or a complete levelling of existing experience, which failed to support migrants because it positioned them as needing to repair and rebuild following a fracture, or even erasure, of their past. This discourse situated learners as needing to make coherent two apparently disjointed sections of their life.

When the idea of starting over or building a better future (for migrants themselves and/or for their children) is articulated as a goal, it implies a need to adopt new or different ways of being on Canadian terms, adhering to a Canadian national identity and ways of being, rather negotiating a sense of compatibility between their past and present selves. Migrants seem to discard their ethnic identities that they feel impede belonging; yet, discarding these identities is, in fact, what impedes belonging. They seem to perceive an irreconcilability between their own and Canadian ways of being, evidenced by several immigrant participants suggesting they would never feel Canadian, or that they would always feel like an outsider, though some did hope that their children would feel differently.

6.4. Recommendations

The discursion above gives an overview of this study's contribution to understanding how discourses impact integration. For the most part, discursive tensions or alignments across levels have a negative impact on migrants' integration. The discussion points to a need for a change in how we conceptualize belonging, what it means to be Canadian, what it means to be a Canadian immigrant, and what the future of multiculturalism looks like in Canada. The remainder of this chapter draws on these concepts in formulating recommendations for discourse, policy, and practice.

6.4.1. Recommendations for Macro Level Discursive Change

In media, institutions, and government policies, there is a need to rethink how language use impacts social practices and subject positions. The following recommendations for discursive change are geared toward reevaluating terms and concepts advanced via powerful institutions that have come to be taken as common sense. By revealing problematic assumptions underlying these terms that negatively impact the integration experiences of immigrants, these recommendations contribute to generating discursive change, which leads to social change (Candlin et al., 2017; Fairclough, 2015).

Recommendation 1: Rethinking Diversity and Tolerance

In the data in this study, the term diversity was invoked to construct migrants' identities, with varying effects depending on the social context. Within the context of the LINC program, relating immigrants with diversity seemed to have a positive impact on belonging because immigrants bonded over sharing their diversities. However, migrants' diversity was more fraught in contexts where they interacted with others occupying different positions in the socio-cultural hierarchy. In interactions with those who were thought to hold more cultural capital (i.e., who had what was deemed to be the 'right' educational background or the most suitable ways of speaking and being), immigrants were more likely to experience discrimination, bullying, othering, or exclusion. This suggests the mere presence of the concept of diversity does not equate to inclusion or belonging, as it is often promoted in institutional and media streams. Newcomers who are culturally or linguistically further from normative expectations are categorized as 'diverse others,' and are marginalized from participation in some contexts. Furthermore, the discourse that relates *diversity* and *difference* in discussions of Canadian immigration is often linked to *tolerance*. Tolerance implies accepting something even though it may not be well aligned to one's desires or values. Diversity, difference, and tolerance are associated in fear-based assumptions that entail some 'Canadian' obligation to accept the presence of migrants even though they are thought to change Canadian communities and embody non-normative standards. Tolerance implies partial, not full, acceptance of the presence of migrants. Unsurprisingly then, migrants receive partial, not full acceptance in contexts where they are present. This study suggests that migrants did not receive full consideration in job competitions, were not given full respect in professional or social contexts, were not provided a

full understanding of their rights, and overall, were not given a full chance at integration across contexts.

I suggest there is a clear need to rethink how the concepts *diversity* and *tolerance* are used in policy, institutions, and conversations surrounding immigration and integration. As it stands, diversity highlights difference, which reconstructs hierarchies; tolerance highlights an obligation to permit the presence of migrants in partial ways. I suggest the introduction of language that highlights the *unique capabilities of migrants*, and the *commonalities in shared goals and experiences among all members of society*. Examples of language that highlights migrants' unique capabilities might include valuing migrants' multilingual competence, resilience, determination, and problem-solving abilities. These sorts of concepts ought to be carefully thought through with immigrants in mind among employers and recruiters, such that immigrant applicants' experience will receive fairer consideration. Highlighting the commonality in shared experiences and goals among all members of society could entail celebrating immigrants' accomplishments in workplaces or in advances to research, and reflecting more on the ways *all* members of society (and especially migrants) supported one another during the COVID-19 pandemic. These enable inclusive reimagining of ways that migrants and others can support one another through shared experiences, emotions, and goals.

Recommendation 2: Promoting Continuity in Immigrants' Lives in Canada

This study has resoundingly demonstrated how Canadian immigrants are subjected to problematic labels that highlight their alleged deficiency and loss of capital through the immigration process, where they are discursively positioned as starting "*from zero*" to begin a new life where their past experiences (for better or worse) are of little consequence. I suggest a need to reframe this discursive label using language that signifies the additive nature of migrants' experiences. There is a need for discourse and services to better support a sense of continuity between life before and after immigration. Of course, there are programs to support bridging migrants' educational and experiential backgrounds to their lives in Canada, but there remains a need for a discursive shift where employers, service providers, professionals, neighbours, and whole communities learn about, value, and recognize the past experiences of migrants.

Part of this involves a shift to highlighting the moral responsibility of Canadians to support the integration of migrants. In response to shifting global and national circumstances, Canada intends to admit increasing numbers of migrants in coming years. Currently, newcomers

are socialized into a neoliberal economic model of citizenship where ideal citizens are those who can quickly contribute to and not be a 'burden' for Canadian society and economy (Mezdour, 2020). However, as Hébert (2013) suggests, creating a truly open society "necessitates national and global systems sensitive to human rights" and cultures (p. 4). There is a need to change the discourse in conversations about Canadian immigrants to include more compassionate and positive representations of their entire experience. Some examples of how this could occur are sharing stories about immigrants' experiences through media, social media, and in community events, and finding official streams to build awareness about immigrants' experiences in Canadian society (i.e., in educational curricula or hosting public webinars to share insights about the topic).

Recommendation 3: Dethroning Language Learning

This study emphatically demonstrated that language learning is held as the most important means of integration for immigrants. Migrants feel compelled to join language classes in order to address their shortcomings and improve their chances at integration. Yet, several participants in this study felt rather unsupported by and disappointed in the LINC program, expressing that they had other more pressing needs over language classes. These alternative needs and barriers appeared to be largely unaddressed or misunderstood. Thus, there is a need to conduct a more general needs assessment for the LINC program intake; rather than focusing only on language proficiency, service providers should work with immigrants to identify their needs and goals holistically, leading to more suitable service recommendations or perhaps to exploring new program offerings to support more immigrants.

On this topic, it is helpful to revisit the notion of investment, which theorizes the connection between power, identity, and language learner. Norton Peirce (1995) suggested in addition to language learner, learners hold various subject positions ranging from worker, parent, spouse, and immigrant. Norton Peirce reminds us that in each of these positions, learners are both "subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community, and society: The subject has human agency" (p. 15). Thus, immigrants draw upon their various social subjectivities to position themselves in differing ways. In this study, when Awla asserted her need for recognition as a professional, or when Yusra staked her desire to belong despite her frustration with language learning, these speakers were resisting their positionings as learners in the LINC program and expressing a sense of who they are beyond the classroom walls. It is

crucial that service providers and policy makers remain attentive to these identities. Language learning, while the default approach to integration, may not match with every immigrant. Service providers and LINC teachers and administrators should remain highly receptive to the unique needs of those they serve, paying attention to their assertions, frustrations, and goals, which may be better addressed through alternative streams and approaches of integration support.

Recommendation 4: Reframing Multiculturalism

As outlined above, multiculturalism as originally conceived is no longer reflective of the reality in Canada. The multiculturalism policy masks and enables discrimination at policy level, which trickles down to affect migrants' lived experiences. Therefore, I suggest that multiculturalism be reframed to accommodate more flexible views of national and ethnic identity that account for the social and cultural realities and lived experiences of immigrants. Canada's national identity in relation to immigration has traditionally been framed and promoted on economic grounds. There is a need to recognize that many significant changes in Canada's demographic and political landscape are a response to shifting global circumstances, particularly as numbers of immigrants admitted from the family reunification and refugee classifications rise. The prevailing discourse that prioritizes immigration for their economic contribution should be reframed to focus on immigration as a global moral imperative. Reframing Canada's national identity to include a sense of shared responsibility in protecting human rights and identifying common goals. It means moving beyond national ideologies and increasingly inclusive immigration policies.

It would be naïve to presume that it is possible to dismantle a global system where nation states, sovereignty, and power dynamics are so unbendingly enmeshed. However, by bolstering public understanding of social inequalities in society and of the challenges and barriers faced by immigrants, a more critical view of multiculturalism could support migrants' integration into a more inclusive society. This study highlighted the value of forming relationships and fostering empathy rooted in shared experiences or sharing experiences. Beyond symbolically sharing cultural tokens and emblems, food, traditions, and festivals, multiculturalism policies should be adapted to encourage more authentic two-way integration, where the host society can begin to more holistically understand and appreciate Canadian immigrants' experiences and contributions. This could entail developing programs that enable neighbours to meet one another, facilitate community members to share life together, and allow immigrants to feel seen and

heard. Such programs could be aimed at addressing differences in how national identity is promoted versus the lived experience of those living in Canada. In sum, new approaches in programs and services that meaningfully support newcomers as they settle in Canada could allow Canadian-born and more settled Canadians to play a bigger role in supporting critical multiculturalism and authentic two-way integration, as opposed to passively subscribing to a concept that does more harm than good.

6.4.2. Recommendations for the LINC Program

Local LINC programs are positioned in complex ways. As the hinging point between federal policy dictating program mandates and operations, they are charged with enacting policy on the local level. As such, they advance integration through language as they follow established curriculums that aim to train and prepare 'Canadian citizens' to speak, behave, and even think in Canadian ways through various tasks. LINC programs are also required to report their success back to the federal government, hence their immense focus on assessment and evaluation through PBLA. However, in daily occurrences on the local level, teachers and administrators in this study, many of whom are themselves insiders to immigrants' experiences as immigrants themselves, expressed that federal goals are sometimes incongruous with migrants' actual integration experiences. For example, evaluation and assessment was found to be too intense a component of the LINC program, such that it obstructed program objectives and integration outcomes. Additionally, compared to policy makers, LINC teachers and administrators were much more aware of the extent that immigrants participating in the program may be experiencing trauma. These examples indicate that the LINC program is critically positioned to provide feedback and advice on the improving operations and goals of the program.

The following is a list of recommendations for LINC program managers, coordinators, administrators, and teachers. These recommendations include changes to program operations and suggestions for establishing patterns and principles that could lead to an atmosphere more conducive of social integration.

Recommendations for Language Classrooms with Immigrant Students:

- Generate community within classrooms, encouraging learners to establish common ground among one another and feel a sense of solidarity in their integration process. The LINC program appears to already be a place where immigrants find community, which

boosts their sense of solidarity, confidence, and capabilities. It is worth maximizing this through activities that bring together classmates and teachers to hear, see, and support one another.

- Validate learner backgrounds and give them chances to share experiences with one another.
- Offer opportunities for bridging immigrants and the broader community; creating tasks or activities that include meeting community members, sharing experiences in non-unidirectional ways (i.e., immigrants share their stories with community and vice versa). Generate a sense that immigrants add to the broader community's shared goals through unique backgrounds.
- Foster 'in between' moments of social interaction marked by curiosity toward one another, where student interaction (among one another) is encouraged; for instance, during breaks, at lunches, before and after classes, or during class excursions.
- The findings of this study suggest that there are culturally unique ways of approaching interactions that lead to feeling a sense of dissimilarity to other Canadians and a sense of estrangement from normative ways of speaking (not only vocabulary or grammar, but pragmatics and discourse) and behaving. Thus, in LINC classrooms, it may be beneficial to nurture newcomers' capacity to consider how their own unique identities and approaches to accomplishing tasks taught in the program impact their experiences and understandings of life in Canada. If LINC teachers had space and time to validate the culturally influenced ways that newcomers approach tasks, this may move the marker on how newcomers perceive their own experiences in comparison with apparently 'normative' Canadian ways.

Recommendations for LINC Curriculum and Programming:

- Reduce the focus on assessments and evaluation, which have been shown to both impede genuine learning objectives and lead to immigrant clients perceiving themselves as deficient. Instead, the LINC program could develop new ways of reporting on immigrant learners' progress through the program, such as learners' self reflections on their progress and satisfaction with the program.

- Bringing an awareness of mental health needs into the program by including mental health resources and referrals, training for teachers to recognize indicators of and be sensitive to poor mental health.
- Put measures in place to ascertain which immigrants may not be best served by participating in the LINC program. Alternatively, offer specified curriculums to better serve particular needs (i.e., English for professionals; English for academic purposes). While various LINC offerings do already exist, not all participants found a place in the program.
- Incorporate into the curriculum an objective to prepare immigrant students for potentially facing discrimination beyond the classroom walls by leveraging their shared experiences and advocating for their unique capabilities (rather than reiterating differences). Additionally, immigrant leaners should be made aware of their rights, other services that can support them, and laws that can protect them.

Recommendations for Optimizing Program Efficacy

- Teachers and administrators in the LINC program go above and beyond their job descriptions to support their immigrant clients' integration. Management in the program would be well advised to solicit teacher and administrator's input and advice as to what supports are needed to continue their work. Furthermore, the full extent of teacher and administrator roles should be reflected in accommodations for the time invested, and in provision of professional development opportunities or modules to support the emotional labour associated to their job (i.e., handling trauma).
- Teachers and administrators with lived experience as immigrants should be approached (and compensated) to share their experience and knowledge with others. Along with this, cultivate a reflective practice of professional development among employees and encourage dialogue on activities and problem-solving from multiple perspectives.

6.4.3. Recommendations for the Government

This study elucidated two main recommendations for members of government agencies (i.e., federal and provincial) responsible for enhancing the design and potential of programs like LINC that are intended to support migrants' integration:

Recommendation 1: Reverse Streams of Discursive Flow

There is a need to open streams of communication between local level organizations and upper-level policy decision makers and political leaders. This study revealed how dominant discourses flow from the top down, constructing institutions and subjectivities that impact local actors. At the same time, systemic barriers limit the flow of communication back up to higher levels of government. Much of what occurs at the micro level is unknown to and unsupported by higher levels. Since higher levels are concerned primarily with attracting and retaining migrants and tracking their progress in towards economic outcomes, critical perspectives that better reflect social aspects of integration on the ground level need to make their way back up to government levels. Briefly, more authority needs to be given to leaders of local LINC offerings to have agency in supporting migrants how they see fit.

Recommendation 2: Appoint Immigrant Leaders to Guide Integration Programs

At the local level, both within and outside of the LINC program, many initiatives are created and led by immigrants who have lived experience with integration and migration. Not only should the perspectives and efforts led by immigrants be better recognized for their relevance and impact, but across levels, immigrant perspectives and leaders should be at the center. Immigrants themselves should be increasingly included in leadership roles in immigrant service providers. Additionally, further research studies that solicit and include immigrant perspectives like the current study should be prioritized and funded; until now migrants' voices (through interviews and focus groups) have been left out of research on social integration.

6.5. Summary

This chapter set out to address how immigrants' experiences and perceptions of social integration progress in alignment (or in tension) with the discourses they encounter and enact in the context of the LINC program. I outlined how discourses support or interfere with migrants' lived experiences of social integration. One discourse that appears to support migrants' integration is the linking between Canadian identity and immigration, which carves out physical and symbolic spaces for migrants to assert their belonging. Other discourses seem to significantly interfere with integration outcomes, as evidenced by tensions between macro and local discourses or lived experiences. Namely, (1) migrants' social bonds tend to be discursively advanced as problematic when in actuality, migrants receive indispensable support from those of a shared habitus; (2) a discursive obsession with assessment and evaluation leads newcomers to

internalize their own deficiency and disadvantage; and (3) Canadian multiculturalism enables excluding migrants who do not meet normative standards and expectations.

I also discussed certain discourses that align across levels that convalesce to impede integration outcomes. Namely, (1) a tendency to portray and position newcomers as learners, which leads to their inferiorization, discrimination, and exclusion; (2) viewing migrants as responsible for not making (enough) efforts to integrate by accessing existing services and supports rather than recognizing other more pressing needs; (3) prioritizing language programming at the expense of other cultural indicators of integration; and (4) the idea that migrants must begin life anew in Canada, discarding their past or viewing it as incompatible with their trajectory in Canada.

Based on this discussion, I outlined recommendations to improve social integration outcomes. Discursive recommendations involved dismantling concepts like diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism to make way for language that attends to the sociocultural identities and lived experiences and realities of migrants. Shifts in discourses should involve all Canadians in supporting newcomers in meaningful ways. LINC program recommendations included nurturing space for community building, life sharing, and identity negotiation in classrooms, reducing assessments, and adding objectives targeting steams of language use, clients' mental health issues, and discrimination. Finally, I made the case that government agencies must increasingly listen and respond to local level needs, and that immigrants should be hired into leadership roles and placed in positions of power.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Overview

Through analysis of discourses surrounding immigration and attention to the voices and experiences of immigrants, this thesis has shown a range of complex factors that shape processes of social integration in Canada. Within the LINC program, dominant discourses operate to construct and position immigrant subjects by carving out space for immigrants as learners, erasing or minimizing their existing experience and knowledge, and privileging normative Canadian ways of speaking, behaving, and thinking as a means for integration. Migrants adopt discourses they encounter in the program (and beyond it), which, for the most part, interfere with their social integration as they settle in Canada.

This thesis defined social integration as gaining cultural and social capital through developing a sense of belonging, forming relationships, and negotiating identity. These aspects of social integration are scarcely supported or addressed in the prevailing dominant immigration discourses in Canada, which are patterned to privilege economic migrants, maintain Canadian language standards through assessment and evaluation, uphold 'Canadian' norms and systems that marginalize and/or exclude those who are culturally further from standard, bolster multiculturalism while enabling discrimination, disparage apparent 'ghettoization' of migrant groups, and maintain a double standard where migrants are blamed for failing to integrate and Canadian systems are exalted when integration appears successful.

To contrast, the immigrant perspectives highlighted in this study reflect a more nuanced view of social integration. Migrants gained cultural capital through a spade of efforts ranging from community involvement to activities and undertakings that "feel Canadian." These personal and continual efforts involved interactions with a range of social actors, which provided instances for migrants to understand how their existing experience and knowledge contributes to their present life. Therefore, these efforts enabled negotiating their identities (specifically, wrestling with an immigrant identity) and adjusting their approaches, personalities, behaviours, and understandings accordingly. Additionally, migrants' social integration appeared most supported through relationships with others who shared a similar habitus; these relationships led to a sense of solidarity, confidence, and belonging in Canada and increased familiarity with and knowledge about Canada.

The intersectional experiences and backgrounds of migrants in Canada result in varying degrees in how much they can benefit from available services like the LINC program. Cultural barriers, mental health issues, parenthood, immigration status, and desire (or need) to stay in Canada, among other factors, impact the extent that migrants may invest in the process of negotiating their identities and forming relationships. As a result, Canadian systems and services in place to support immigration are limited in their effectiveness; they are not likely to cater to all immigrants as individuals.

Taken together, this thesis has demonstrated a need for a widespread shift in discourses (as outlined in Chapter 6) so that migrants are better supported across levels as they enter a system that could be much more welcoming and supportive. Additionally, this thesis marked a need for increased attention to the individuality of newcomer needs, which require unique approaches to support integration.

7.2. Reflections on the Research Process

The theoretical and methodological approach used in this study proved an effective way to gain insight into improving Canadian immigrants' social integration. By combining critical discourse analysis and intersectionality, I hoped to explore migrant perspectives on social integration, understand how discourses impacted migrants, and generate ideas that could transform migrant's experiences of social integration. In addressing these objectives, the framework was instrumental. Not only did the critical discourse analysis help to triangulate, validate, and explain newcomers' perspectives and experiences, but it also provided significant evidence that Canadian systems could be doing much more to support immigrants by adjusting policies and practices that reframe discourses to better reflect migrants' realities. This methodological approach brought to light taken-for-granted realities in Canadian discourses and allowed them to be examined and problematized while considering immigrant perspectives.

As expected, the combined use of CDA and intersectionality reduced weaknesses associated with using either methodology alone. That is, where CDA lacks subject voices, intersectionality delivers; and where intersectionality has been thought to enable researcher bias and power dynamics to influence analysis and findings, CDA data sources provided a degree of distance and external objectivity (i.e., patterns that existed across levels and in multiple data sources). This balance was critical considering my positionality as a white Canadian-born

researcher, both an outsider to immigrants' experiences and in a position of relative privilege. The combined approach allowed me to explore factors impacting Canadian immigrants' social integration while incorporating approaches to increase the validity and reliability of findings (i.e., comparing data across sources, carefully documenting the research process, reflexivity, detailed descriptions of data and participants). Overall, this combined approach enabled a sound, interdisciplinary, and multi-level exploration into matters of identity, power, and social change in LINC program offerings.

7.3. Contribution

This research has contributed to the field of migration studies through a critical framework that enabled exploration of the relationship between discourses and social practices among Canadian immigrants as they integrate socially in their new context. Implications and recommendations were outlined for discursive change in the Canadian context, for policy and practice within LINC programming, for conceptual theorization within the field of migration studies, and for research methodology. This study's contribution to knowledge, namely, how awareness of discourses in immigration can allow reframing ideas and mobilizing new approaches in language training and other settlement services, can extend beyond the local context to the global community. The ideas and perspectives of this project could benefit similar programs in Australia or European countries looking to improve their immigration settlement services. Importantly, this study highlights how attention to discourses and immigrant voices can contribute to understanding the social realities of immigrants and improving their integration experiences.

Regarding discursive change: I suggested rethinking many terms used in relation to immigration. These include ghettoization, multiculturalism, and diversity and tolerance. I also problematized a discursive pattern of blaming migrants for failure to integrate (yet celebrating Canada when migrants appear to integrate well) and viewing immigrants as 'starting from nothing.' These terms are used in common sense ways, but they advance ideologies that harm immigrants and that are contrary to their life experiences.

Regarding conceptual theorization: This study has created new understandings of social integration (of belonging, identity, and relationships) based on the perspectives of immigrant participants. Belonging has been theorized in novel ways throughout this dissertation,

as an emotionally intuited, experience-based, socially contingent process of gaining knowledge, familiarity, confidence, and independence. Identity was seen as a process of developing and negotiating forms of capital through meaningfully reconciling the past and present versions/lives of oneself and making coherent the ways one's past fits into their current life. In forming relationships, habitus emerged as a key determiner of relationships that were most critical for newcomers' integration, as most participants were best supported by other members of their family/cultural group.

Regarding policy and practice within LINC programming: The above reconceptualization of social integration provides a much more robust image of social integration than it would appear is officially understood by policy developers and creators of the LINC program. It seems that the supports provided by the LINC program feed into discourses that construct ideal migrants as those closest to normative Canadian standards. As such, the system and processes of the LINC program constrain migrants to predetermined positions. For migrants who do not 'fit' within the space they are allocated in the program (and in society), they are left frustrated and immobilized in their efforts. It is as though Canada (and the LINC program) is tolerant of immigrant others as long as they fit within expected and pre-determined spaces. Beyond these spaces, immigrants may face discrimination and feel they have unequal access to opportunities. Briefly, as it is, Canadian supports for migrants appear to constrain possibilities for integration such that immigrants stay in learner positions, where they are continually assessed and evaluated after they arrive in Canada, especially on their language ability.

Regarding research methodology: As outlined above, this study has contributed to understanding an emerging methodological approach combining CDA and Intersectionality for research with immigrants. The approach to enables a sound, multi-level, and rigorous analysis that may be particularly well suited for researchers like myself who embody differing cultural and social profiles compared to research participants.

7.4. Closing

In this study, the supports that were officially extended to newcomer participants included language training (that advanced a deficit model of learning), a Permanent Resident card (that gives them access to basic needs), and some organizational support from service provider organizations. Beyond that, participants were tasked with leveraging their cultural

capital in relation to Canadian ways of speaking, behaving, and thinking in order to access opportunities. A very positive aspect of this study were the unofficial initiatives and roles taken on by teachers and administrators to use equity-enhancing, immigrant-centered, and empathetic approaches and discourses that validated the realities of newcomers. These sorts of supports should be extended to other sectors of society so that immigrants can be meaningfully included in all areas of society.

This study illustrates the diverse trajectories and goals of Canadian newcomers, and therefore, this study reiterates the need to rethink our systems and approaches to social integration. Currently, immigrants are limited by a system that devalues their past experiences, positions them as deficient, critiques the suitability of their social bond relationships, and fails to recognize the difficulty of everyday interactions that cushion discrimination within the guise of multiculturalism. They are labeled and positioned as cultural outsiders, and then blamed for not being insiders. Despite this, the immigrant participants in this study demonstrated resilience and flexibility in adapting to establish themselves in Canada. Canada must do better; a clear starting point would be rethinking how the discourses institutionally advanced in policy and practice, even in the LINC program, align or not with immigrants' experiences, needs, and identities.

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Appendix A: Questions for Interviews with Administrator / Teacher

1. Tell me about your experience in the LINC program.
    a) How long have you been working in the program?
    b) What made you pursue a job in this program / field?
    c) What is your official role in the program?
    d) Do you have any unofficial role(s) that you have adapted while working here?
2. What would you identify as the main overarching mission of the program?
3. In your opinion, what does the program value? Or, what are its core values?
4. What are the goals and expected outcomes of the program, if everything went exactly according to plan?
5. Tell me about how you came to understand the mission, values and goals of the program? Are there specific documents or training procedures that led to this understanding? What was your training and induction like for this position?
6. From your perspective, to what extent are the vision/goals and expected outcomes achieved?
7. What do you think the impact of this program is on immigrant participants?
    a) What, if any, are the programs main positive impacts?
    b) What, if any, are the programs main negative impacts?
8. Is there anything more that you think the program could be doing to support immigrants?
9. What is your relationship like with the immigrants in the program?

Appendix B: Questions for Focus Groups with Newcomers

1. What was it like to move to Canada?

   Follow-up prompts: What were the greatest challenges? Did anything surprise you, or was there anything that you didn't expect?

2. How would you describe Canada (or Canadians) to your friends and family in your home country?

   Follow-up prompts: How is life different in Canada compared to life at home? Is there anything you really like (or don't like) about living in Canada?

3. What does it mean for you to integrate in Canada, or to become a part of Canadian society?

   Follow-up prompts: What makes (/Do) you feel like you belong or 'fit' in Canada? What is involved in successfully becoming part of Canada?

4. Has there been a time when you felt particularly welcomed or unwelcomed in Canada?

   Follow-up prompts: In your neighborhood? In your workplace? By non-immigrants? By other immigrants?

5. How has your experience been in the LINC program?

   Follow-up prompts: In what ways does the program help you? In what ways could the program help you more?

Appendix C: Questions for Interviews with Newcomers

Part One: Life Story Narratives (45 minutes)
Questions were selected and adapted from Atkinson (1998). This part of the interview is loosely structured, and questions will be asked flexibly as the conversation is guided mainly by the participant.

Questions about background:

1. Can you tell me about what it was like was growing up in your house and neighborhood?
2. Can you tell me what was your family like?
3. What kind of celebrations, traditions or rituals were important?
4. Was religion important for your family?
5. Can you tell me about your educational and career background?
6. When you were young, what were your dreams and goals?

Questions about experiences:

1. What have been the most important learning experiences in your life, or since coming to Canada?
2. What have been the greatest challenges of your life so far, or of immigrating to Canada?
3. How have you learned from or overcome your difficulties?
4. What relationships in your life are the most significant?
5. What is your biggest worry now?
6. What matters the most to you now?

Questions about looking forward:

1. When you think about the future, what makes you feel the most uneasy / what gives you the most hope?
2. What do you see for yourself in the future? 5, 15, 25 years?
3. Do you have any wisdom for the younger generation? For new immigrants?

Part Two: Questions about Social Integration (45 minutes)
Questions reflect social integration themes from literature. This part of the interview is semi-structured. Each question will be asked.

1. What does social integration mean to you?
2. So far, how (well) do you feel you have integrated into Canada?

3. What are some of the day-to-day challenges you face? (Bowleg, 2008)
4. Have you had any experiences dealing with discrimination? (Hillsburg, 2013)
5. Do you feel that you belong in Canada?
   What could increase your feeling of belonging here?
6. Do you feel it is important to develop a sense of belonging in Canada?
   Is it important to you to 'be Canadian'?
   (Do you feel you are seen as Canadian by others?)
7. Does Canada feel like 'home'?
   What could make Canada feel more like home?
8. Which social connections or relationships are important to you while in Canada?
   (*Interviewer will prompt to elicit 'layers' of social connections – bonds, bridges, links*)
9. How has your identity changed (or not) since coming to Canada?
10. How (well) do you feel Canada (and Canadians) understands you and your experience?

Appendix D: Online News Articles Included in Analysis

The title of each article is hyperlinked to the online source (first column). This table is organized alphabetically by author last name (middle column).

Title (Hyperlinked)	Author	Publication Date
Creating Calgarians: How refugees integrate	Aldous, Judy	Dec 15, 2015
A year in Calgary: 3 dramatically different refugee stories for 3 different families	Aldous, Judy	Nov 23, 2016
Syrian refugees: Ready or not, here they come	Aldous, Judy	Dec 4, 2015
UCP immigration plan would try to lure 10,000 newcomers a year to rural Alberta	Anderson, Drew	Feb 25, 2019
Alberta town of 3,800 joins pilot immigration program, gets 4,600 applicants	Bell, David	Feb 24, 2020
After 11 years, Calgary man reunited with wife, daughter from Afghanistan	Carpenter, Elissa	Nov 20, 2021
Provinces demand more control over immigration to combat labour shortage	Chin, Jess	Jul 27, 2022
More than 2.4M immigration applications in Canada's backlog, many here and overseas feel lost	Dayal, Pratyush	Jul 28, 2022
Sask. Seeks the same autonomy on immigration that Quebec already enjoys	Dayal, Pratyush	Jul 29, 2022
‘Come from away' problem makes integration difficult for newcomers	El-Darahali, Saeed	Mar 5, 2016
What you had to say about the 'dangers of self-ghettoization in Calgary'	Fletcher, Robson	Oct 18, 2018
As Canada ages, immigration expected to keep Alberta's workforce strong for decades	Fletcher, Robson	Mar 25, 2019
Canada shares expertise with Germany on successfully integrating immigrants	Harris, Kathleen	Mar 3, 2020
Immigration minister John McCallum to reveal 'substantially' higher newcomer targets	Harris, Kathleen	Oct 30, 2016
Newcomers illiterate in native tongue struggle to learn English	Hermann, Mackenzie & Bennett, Isabelle	Apr 15, 2018
Calgary chosen as port of entry for Afghan refugees arriving in Canada from U.S.	Kost, Hannah	Sep 13, 2021
Members of Calgary's Afghan community to rally for more aid as organizations mobilize to help refugees	Kost, Hannah	Aug 19, 2021

After outcry, company to remove pro-Bernier billboards that criticize 'mass immigration'	Levitz, Stephanie	Aug 25, 2019
New Calgary park and monument honouring Vietnamese community unveiled	Lirette, Dominika	Jul 1, 2022
Ukrainians in Calgary celebrate Orthodox Easter with newly arrived refugees	Lirette, Dominika	Apr 24, 2022
Calgary Ahmadiyya Muslim women gather items for Ukrainian refugees during Ramadan	Lirette, Dominika	Apr 3, 2022
Say what? Why some newcomers are paying to reduce their accents	Mahgoub, Salma	Dec 23, 2019
Emotional wellness overlooked when it comes to immigrants and refugees thriving in new lives	McGarvey, Dan	Jan 29, 2020
New park and monument will honour Calgary's Vietnamese 'boat people'	McGarvey, Dan	Jul 4, 2020
Statue of Filipino national hero planned for northeast Calgary park	McGarvey, Dan	Jun 1, 2021
Calgary's Ethiopian, Eritrean community training local leaders in mental health response	McGarvey, Dan	Mar 5, 2022
Calgary's Centre of Newcomers opens new facility in city's northeast	McGarvey, Dan	Jun 20, 2022
Multicultural counselling helps speed up immigrant integration in Calgary	McGarvey, Dan	Jun 26, 2019
More than 1.3 million immigration applications still in backlog	Osman, Laura	Aug 24, 2022
CBC-Angus Reid Institute Poll: Canadians want minorities to do more to 'fit in'	Proctor, Jason	Oct 3, 2016
Maxime Bernier photographed with members of alleged hate group in Calgary	Rieger, Sarah	July 9, 2019
Alberta yellow vest protests lack violence seen in Paris, but anti-immigration anger simmers	Rieger, Sarah	Dec 9, 2018
Advocates condemn xenophobic op-ed by Calgary instructor calling for end to diversity	Rieger, Sarah	Sept 7, 2019
Home for the holidays: Yazidi refugees reunite with families in Calgary	Rieger, Sarah	Dec 24, 2019
Here's how thousands of Calgarians celebrated the return of the in-person Pride parade	Sherif, Omar	Sept 4, 2022
It looks like a festival. But serious 'wellness' work is happening at this summer camp	Stolte, Elise	Aug 5, 2022

Why CBC Calgary is publishing an Alberta utility bill explainer in six languages	Stolte, Elise	Aug 6, 2022
A hundred cards of kindness: How this project helps me connect with other new Canadians	Toory, Leisha	Jul 31, 2021
Free haircuts serve as a way to welcome Afghan refugees to their new life in Calgary	Underwood, Colleen	Oct 4, 2021
Canadians cannot be overly impatient with integration of immigrants, Justin Trudeau says	Valiante, Giuseppe	Sep 15, 2016
Afghan refugees in Calgary mark year since Kabul fell to Tehran	von Scheel, Elise	Aug 17, 2022
Canada not doing enough with its highly educated immigrants, StatsCan says	Wong, Jessica	Dec 1, 2022
Chinese Canadian seniors left behind as many Chinese-language newspapers stop printing	Zapata, Karina	Aug 27, 2022
Providing newcomers with culturally appropriate food not easy, says Calgary organization	Zapata, Karina	Dec 13, 2021
Alberta's labour market shifts as pandemic spurs workers to switch careers	Zapata, Karina	Aug 23, 2022
Think Canadians are tolerant of minorities? A look at the past shows otherwise	Zeidler, Maryse	Oct 9, 2016
Common Sikh names banned under Canada's immigration policy	--	July 23, 2007
Our new focus is on integration': Immigration minister	--	July 10, 2009
Growing number of newcomers settling in Calgary 'a blessing' and a challenge, immigration society head says	--	Mar 23, 2018
How Paolo Oliveros, a Filipino media personality, is highlighting the Asian LGBTQ community	--	May 18, 2022
Why Meenakshi Lamba finds fulfillment in helping newcomers	--	May 20, 2022
Hundreds of Ukrainian newcomers hand out resumes at Calgary job fair	--	Jun 11, 2022
Millions in multiculturalism funding going unspent	--	Jun 20, 2013
Zero-tolerance U.S. immigration policy could have asylum seekers looking at Canada	--	Jun 19, 2018
Alberta union questions 'shocking change' to Canada's temporary foreign worker program	--	May 2, 2022

Appendix E: Government and SPO Websites Included in Analysis

For federal, provincial and municipal web pages, the title of each article is hyperlinked (second column). For service provider organizations involved in the study, pseudonyms are used and the web pages have not been hyperlinked to protect the confidentiality of the participants involved.

Website Type	Numerated Web Page Titles (Hyperlinked)
Federal Government Web Pages	(1) Language classes funded by the government of Canada
	(2) Language training options for newcomers to Canada
	(3) LINC Home Study
	(04a) Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program
	(04b) Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program
	(5) Evaluation of Language Training Services`
	(6) What does "adequate knowledge" of English or French mean when applying for citizenship?
	(7) How do you measure how well I can speak English or French when applying for citizenship?
	(8) Understanding the Canadian Language Benchmarks
	(9) Issuing certificates for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) learners
	(10) Operational Bulletin 510 - March 15, 2013
	(11) Archived - Backgrounder - Language instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program
	(12) Mandate - Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
	(13) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2020-2023 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy
	(14) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Departmental Plan 2021-2022
Provincial Government Web Pages	(15) Alberta Immigrant Mentorship Innovation Grant
	(16) Alberta Settlement and Integration Program
	(17) Alberta Advantage Immigration Program
	(18) Resources for Immigrant Workers

	(19) Innovation Fund Project Grants
	(20) International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)
	(21) Opportunity Alberta
	(22) Opportunity Alberta Guide
	(23) Refugee Support
Municipal Government Web Pages	(24) Welcome to Calgary
	(25) Getting started in Calgary
	(26) Organizations to help you settle
	(27) CLIP (Calgary Local Immigrant Partnership)
	(28) Refugees Welcome Here
	(29) Welcoming Community Policy
Service Provider Organization Web pages	The Newcomer Support Centre - Our Culture
	The Newcomer Support Centre – Get Settled
	The Newcomer Support Centre – Learn English
	The Newcomer Support Centre – LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)
	The Newcomer Support Centre – NWC Guides
	The Newcomer Support Centre – 2020-2021 Annual Report: Resilience
	The Newcomer Support Centre – 2019-2020 Annual Report
	Welcome Institute – About Us
	Welcome Institute – Service and Programs for Immigrants
	Welcome Institute - Language
	Welcome Institute – LINC
	Welcome Institute – Annual Reports
	Immigrant Services Calgary – About Us