

**PARTNERS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

by

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Dedication

To my sister for her strength and to my partner for his endless support.

Abstract

This study investigates the lived experiences of the partners of international students of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) in relation to gender and race to address three research goals: (1) to explore partners' lived experiences in St. John's; (2) to examine the structural constraints that hinder partners' full participation within the community where they live; and (3) to offer recommendations to the International Student Advising Office (ISA) of MUN for service implementations. The findings of this study suggests that the experiences of the international students' partners are gendered and racialized with respect to childrearing, parenting responsibilities and access to local services, such as English as a Second Language classes and public transportation. Furthermore, the findings support the literature that notes structural barriers influence partners' ability to locate and access paid employment in their area of expertise and engage with the community in general.

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Introduction

This study investigates the lived experiences of the partners of international students (hereafter referred to as “international student partners” or simply “partners”) in relation to gender and race with the objective of providing suggestions for service improvement to the International Student Advising Office (ISA) of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). The importance of this work as a whole consists in acknowledging partners’ issues and needs as equally important to those of the international students they accompany, as well as implementing feminist research that specifically investigates partners’ lived experiences. The importance of international student partners’ well-being is also acknowledged by the ISA, which hopes that the support provided to international students is extended to their family members (Knutson, 2011). In this introduction, in addition to locating the population of partners within the internationalization of MUN and the immigration dynamics of the province, I situate myself as a researcher, outline the services provided at the ISA and present an overview of the structure of this thesis.

International student partners occupy a peripheral position within the current immigration scenario of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, their presence in St. John’s being related to processes of internationalization of MUN and immigration retention strategies in the province. Their liminal position is derived from the fact that the partners’ physical presence in St. John’s depends upon the presence of international students, who are attracted in growing numbers by dynamics of internationalization ongoing at MUN. In turn, the process of internationalization that MUN is undergoing should be understood in conjunction with the strategy launched in 2005 by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The goal of the strategy is

to both attract as well as retain im/migrants¹ in the province and a key factor of this strategy is to attract international students, as they constitute a pool of potential future im/migrants (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). As the strategy outlines, it is the intention of the Newfoundland and Labrador government to work in partnership with MUN to find solutions to encourage graduate students to remain in the province after they have completed their studies (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005).

Furthermore, the strategies of MUN along with those of the Newfoundland and Labrador government should be understood within the broad context of recent immigration policies in Canada that target international students. In fact, between 1989 and 2009 the number of international students in Canada has more than doubled (Fama, 2011) and, between 2006 and 2008, the Canadian government has created various incentives to allow international students to find employment off-campus while they are still studying as well as after their graduation (Fama, 2011). The international student population is growing and this may be related to the Canadian government's recent introduction of various incentives that allow their partners to be entitled to full-time work permits (Fama, 2011). This type of work permit is often referred to as a temporary open work permit; in other words, individuals who receive this work permit are usually entitled to work full-time in almost every profession. Furthermore, research conducted in Atlantic Canada shows that the possibility for international students to come to Canada together with their partners and children plays an important role in their choosing Canada as a study destination (Chira, 2013). Partners, therefore, occupy an important (although peripheral) position within the

¹ I use the term im/migrant(s) to express the precariousness of their status in a country.

current immigration scenario of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. On the one hand, the presence of partners is contingent upon the presence of students, yet on the other, partners are instrumental to the recruitment of international students. Their successful integration may be a contributing factor to the settlement of international students in the province after their graduation (Chira, 2013). For instance, as Chira (2013) affirms “family members [of international students] who are not adjusted or are not expected to adjust [...] are a big settlement deterrent” (p. 32).

Although partners occupy an important role within the dynamics of internationalization, international students, and not their partners, are the major recipients of several services available to meet their needs. For instance, as the number of international students grows at MUN—11% of the student population in 2013—the process of internationalization of the university has translated into various services that both facilitate student exchanges abroad as well as ease the transition of those who arrive in St. John’s (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014a). Such services are, for example, the MUN Mentor Program that matches new international students with existing students at MUN during their first semester (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014b). Additionally, specific career-related services, such as the Professional Skills Development Program for International Students (PSDP) facilitate international students’ successful preparation for and integration in the local labour market (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014c). The Family Program is an important component of the services supplied to international students by the ISA and scholars such as Chira (2013) argue it is the only service in the provinces of Atlantic Canada to offer family support to international student partners. However, even within the Family Program, the services offered to partners are limited. Once again, this is

why this research has been welcomed by the ISA, as it provides suggestions to service implementation that specifically address partners' needs.

During the Atlantic Regional Meeting of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), which I attended, Howard Ramos (2014) critically questioned whether university administrators—in their race towards the internationalization of universities—are solely focusing on the economic contribution that international students bring to the Atlantic provinces. If so, this discourse would be relevant for an assessment of partners' needs, for partners' contributions to society might not be immediately seen in the same economic terms. The fact that partners are overlooked as protagonists of internationalization and immigration dynamics is also reflected by the scarce amount of literature that specifically analyzes their lived experiences. US-based studies analyze female partners' cross-cultural adjustment process (De Verthely, 1995), investigate the role of social support in international relocation (Copeland & Norell, 2002) and highlight international student partners' lived experiences as legal dependants (Teshome, 2010; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). The body of literature shows that partners frequently experience social isolation, financial hardship and emotional challenges (Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012) and that their emotional hardships are greater during the first weeks and months of their sojourn (De Verthelyi, 1995). Additionally, researchers such as Copeland and Norell (2002) highlight that partners' needs are better met when partners receive emotional support through socialization and networking. Although this body of literature is important and contributes to filling the gaps in literature about partners' lived experiences, it is largely US-based and does not address the specificities of the Canadian context. In fact, in the United States international student partners are usually subject to visa

constraints that often prevent them from joining the local workforce and, as researchers mention, such restrictions have important consequences for partners' well-being (De Verthelyi, 1995; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). On the contrary, in Canada, as I mentioned earlier, partners are usually allowed to apply for work visas that enable them to join the local workforce.

Yet, even in Canada, feminist research that investigates partners' needs is scarce. An interesting example of such research is provided by Plett Martens and Grant (2008), who conduct a needs assessment at the University of Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on female partners. Their research highlights that the majority of partners are young—between 26 and 35-years-old, educated and with at least one child. The same research also highlights that only one third of partners are employed and few are taking classes. This is due to the fact that, once in Canada, female partners become the main caregivers to their children; having adequate childcare support is therefore necessary for partners in order to attend classes (Plett Martens & Grant, 2008). Additionally, Plett Martens and Grant (2008) relate that the high cost of language courses prevents partners from attending classes. In terms of services that partners wish to see implemented, this research indicates that partners' preference is for programs that facilitate their professional development, provide support with childcare and inform them about services available within the community. Another example of research investigating partners' needs is Kong's work (2003) conducted at MUN, which focuses on female partners and investigates their language needs. Specifically, Kong (2003) investigates if partners are adequately supported with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at MUN. Kong (2003) argues for ESL service implementation through the development of a "language

learning community” (p. 3) and proposes a model of such communities, where ESL support is offered through classes as well as in informal settings—city tours and workshops. Although this research differs from Plett Martens and Grant’s (2008) with its focus on partners’ language needs, it too acknowledges the importance of providing partners with childcare services in order to enable partners to attend classes (Kong, 2003).

Although these studies are relevant to this research, this body of scholarship does not contextualize partners’ lived experiences in relation to gender and race. Because of partners’ peripheral position within the current immigration scenario, I draw from feminist literature on im/migrants and immigration to support this research. Indeed, partners who arrive in St. John’s as the dependants of students can apply for temporary work permits, which might further change their immigration status. Therefore, feminist literature concerned with immigration issues is particularly useful to this research as it highlights the gendered and racialized nature of immigration dynamics as well as the structural constraints that particularly hinder gendered and racialized individuals.

Me, the Researcher: Approaching this Study

My life experiences as both student and worker have deeply influenced my research interests. Born and raised in Italy, I started my Bachelor Degree of Cross Cultural Communication at a time when my hometown, Turin, had long become a multicultural melting pot and I was fascinated by its transformations. As I was eager to improve my German and I wanted to experience life abroad, I moved to Berlin, Germany, where I conducted part of my undergraduate studies. While this experience presented some challenges, such as being away from family and friends, these challenges were easy to overcome. For instance, I was able to travel back and forth to

Italy and, thanks to my courses and classes, I quickly learned the language and made long-lasting friendships with students from all over Europe. This experience left me with the belief that, through willpower and determination, people could adapt to new environments and quickly overcome difficulties. I soon realized, however, that a positive attitude and determination are sometimes not enough to overcome challenges, especially when individuals face structural impediments hindering their successful integration. This became clear during my last year at university when I worked in a cross-cultural centre for women in Turin. At the centre, I realized how women, especially racialized individuals, were more likely to face discrimination on the basis of race, to be employed in gendered positions, to have limited economic resources and poor access to services and often to be exposed to violence. The situation of most of the clients who visited the centre was aggravated by the disastrous global financial crisis that was enveloping Italy and that had been particularly severe for them due to their disadvantaged position in the labour market, their often racialized status as im/migrants and their gendered status as women. The global financial crisis also affected my employment prospects and soon after my graduation I decided to travel abroad to look for professional opportunities; I first moved to England, then to Australia. Once in Australia my professional opportunities were limited by several factors: the constraint imposed on my temporary work visa, my lack of Australian work experience and the fact that my education obtained in Europe was not fully recognized. Unable to secure a work visa that would allow me to extend my stay in Australia, I left the country.

These personal and professional experiences left me with the desire to deepen my knowledge of immigration dynamics to specifically investigate how these dynamics

are gendered. Feminist scholar Tastsoglou (2011) describes immigration as a “gendered process par excellence” (p. 21); in other words, Tastsoglou (2011) argues that since there are differences between men and women in terms of socio-cultural and economic relations, men and women experience the process of immigration in different ways. Yet, just as individuals become “gendered” through the socially-ascribed attributes and roles assigned to them (Spitzer, 2011, p. 5), they also become “racialized” through a social process that involves assigning social worth and social meaning to racial categories (Spitzer, 2011, p. 7). It is for this reason that, similarly to feminist scholars such as Spitzer (2011), I account for gender dynamics together with other social constructs such as race. By using the term “race” I refer to a social construct and I draw from Winant (2000) who argues that “there is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race” (p. 172); indeed “the sociohistorical categories employed to differentiate among these groups reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be imprecise if not completely arbitrary” (Winant, 2000, p. 172).

Once I started my Master of Gender Studies at MUN, I focused my academic interests on a category of im/migrants, that is, international student partners. I was most interested in understanding their lived experiences and needs given their particular immigration status as dependants of students. In addition, I approached this study with the idea that partners have needs that are not entirely fulfilled by the services available to them. In thinking this, I was initially influenced by the fact that I arrived in St. John’s with my partner and observed how his adjustments and needs varied considerably to mine, as did the services made available to him. The research participants in this study and I all share some common ground. For instance, we have

all moved to St. John's and share—in very different ways—needs that are connected to adjustments and rebuilding our lives here. In these sense, we are all newcomers to this land. Yet, I also believe that the participants and I are all subject to different types of adjustments, partially due to our different social locations (a concept that I explain further throughout this thesis).

The International Student Advising Office of Memorial University of Newfoundland

Memorial University's International Student Advising Office offers a variety of services directed to international students, which guide them from the application process when they are still in their home country, to the first steps after their arrival in St. John's. The ISA offers support in matters of housing, health insurance, immigration information and employment; it organizes workshops on income tax and provides information and resources regarding the city of St. John's as well as events and volunteer opportunities; it offers outreach services to students who need emotional support related to academic, financial and personal matters (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014d). Furthermore, two recreational services, the Coffee Club and Discussion Group, are open to students. During these weekly events, students have the opportunity to meet new people and share points of view and different experiences with other adults. Importantly, in relation to this research, the Family Program offers support to students with family members by providing good factual information regarding family health care, schools and daycare facilities for children, family tax benefits, local community supports and services and parenting resources (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2013a). Although the Family Program is established to support students, the Family Program Coordinator often

interacts with partners. For instance, the Family Program has a section entitled “Support for Spouses” where partners can access factual information regarding employment and ESL opportunities in St. John’s (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2013b). In the past, the Family Program also organized family-oriented events, which included transportation options and offered spaces where families and their children gathered together. Furthermore, the Family Program provides classes for female partners at the ISA that are usually offered throughout the year.²

Rationale for the Study

This thesis offers feminist insights into the lived experiences of international students’ partners in St. John’s in relation to gender and race and locates partners and their needs in the broader context of the immigration scenario. In my work I draw from feminist scholars who have explored the interactions of gender and race in relation to investigating immigration issues in Canada as well as specifically in the Atlantic Canadian context. In fact, the existing literature regarding partners in Atlantic Canada analyzes their presence in relation to other immigration issues. For instance, Chira (2013) quotes international student partners when she investigates emerging policy avenues to permanent settlement in Canada and international students’ willingness to pursue settlement in Atlantic Canada. In addition, Knutson (2011) notes that the involvement of MUN and the provincial government appears to help with improving international students’ retention rate post-graduation. Lastly, this work is intended for the use of the ISA at MUN to provide more comprehensive programs to

² During the Winter Semester 2014, the ISA offered a class for both female and male partners; however, during my fieldwork classes were offered only to female partners.

international students' partners.

Assumptions of the Study and Usage of Terms

As a feminist researcher I am committed to producing research that fosters social justice; thus, the theoretical and methodological frameworks that guide the research reflect my feminist political stance. More specifically, I take an anti-colonialist feminist approach that contends that the colonial project is *ongoing*, that is, that legacies of colonial power are still pervasive on pre-and-post migration processes to various degrees. As Loomba (1998) argues, “inequities of colonial rule have not been erased” (p. 7). Additionally, because formal decolonization has spanned three centuries and has affected countries and individuals within them differently, countries and individuals find themselves differently positioned within the postcolonial³ context (Loomba, 1998). For instance, countries that may be formally independent may still be economically/culturally dependent on the former colonial power (Loomba, 1998). Similarly, Brydon (2003) argues that Canada can be considered postcolonial only if one critically looks at the definitions that are given to postcoloniality, who is asking the question and what is the spatial, local and social position of the person who addresses the question. Furthermore, Thobani (2007) argues that in Canada the very existence of Aboriginal rights implies the presence of a superior/sovereign power that regulates the rights of Aboriginal people in what is a “colonial relation” (p. 40).

I also approach this thesis by trying to challenge pervasive heteronormative constraints that regulate immigration dynamics. As Melissa Autumn White⁴ (2014) highlights, heteronormativity is reproduced within immigration processes and

³ By using the term “postcolonial” I draw from feminist scholarship that critically questions the end of colonialism implied in the use of the term “postcolonial.”

⁴ White, M. (2014, January 7). *Documenting the Undocumented: Queer Migrant Activism and the Politics of In/Visibility*. Speakers Series of the Department of Gender Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

dynamics for these processes are heavily regulated by legalized documentation. This is evident, with regards to this research, in the way partners become dependants of international students. For instance, when international students apply for their student visa and intend to include their partners in their application, they must submit either a statutory declaration of common-law union or a photocopy of their marriage certificate. The fact that relationships have to be proved—either through proof of marriage or statutory declarations—presents an obstacle to partners who are in relationships that cannot easily be proved through documentations; for example, relationships among partners who are not in “common-law” relationships, or partners who are queer-identified individuals. Because the term “spouse” is connected to a marital relationship that is limiting and heteronormative, I choose to resist its usage.

As such, the term “spouse” excludes all those unmarried individuals who live together under the same roof as partners. Although there is little that I can do to challenge these overarching structural constraints, in this thesis I do not refer to research participants as “spouses” but as “partners.” For the same reason I do not use the term “common-law partner” because of its focus on the legal aspect of the relationship between two individuals. To avoid confusion among the three words—spouse, partner and common-law partner—I decided to simplify the terminology and to use the term “partners” when referring to the participants of this study, a term that, among the three, I consider to be the most inclusive and least normative.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized into four chapters. In chapter 1, I provide the theoretical framework that allows me to situate partners within the historical context of nation-building in Canada. I review the current feminist scholarship that addresses issues of

immigration in relation to gender and race in Canada, and specifically in Atlantic Canada. In chapter 2, I focus on the epistemological and methodological approaches of this thesis and outline the research design; in chapter 3, I outline, analyze and discuss the research findings. Finally, in chapter 4, I draw conclusions and offer directions for future research.

Chapter 1. Situating Partners: Theoretical Framework and a Review of Literature

In this chapter, I draw from feminist scholars that highlight the gendered and racialized dynamics that have informed and regulated settlement and immigration in Canada. At the same time, I present a central part of my theoretical framework as I locate partners in a much broader discourse related to colonial dynamics of nation-formation by theorizing immigration to Canada in the context of colonialism. This allows me to link past racialized and gendered immigration dynamics with current immigration issues, including the persistence of racialized and gendered issues today. Furthermore, it allows me to look at how contemporary criteria regulating immigration and settlement to Canada—based on education and skills—affect gendered and racialized im/migrants.

Gendered and Racialized Nation-building Dynamics: A Historical Overview

In what follows, I situate the study of partners' needs in a broader context, namely Canada's colonial history and the immigration policies that emerge out of that history. Therefore, in order to investigate partners' lived experiences, I theorize Canadian immigration policies as colonial, gendered and racialized processes. As Essed (1996) argues, racial white superiority "justified colonialism, the slavery of Africans, and the appropriation of African, Asian and American land and human resources" (p. 7). Colonialism generated specific social constructs of race, gender and class that deeply affected Aboriginal, African, Asian women and women of other backgrounds—and still do (Brand, 1999; Carty, 1999). For instance, race, class and gender categories were constructed in ways to ensure that individuals were assigned inferior or superior status and worth according to their placement into these fictitious categories. Importantly, Euro-Western "scientific" paradigms sustained these

categorizations and instilled “scientific” value to social concepts of inferiority and superiority among individuals (Brand, 1999, p. 86). Racial categorization and the idea of white superiority have ultimately contributed to the creation of the “Other” (Essed, 1996, p .7). This is particularly true for Canada, where sexist and racist discourses of nation-building, settlement and immigration policies were—and still are—informed by the logics of colonial power.

In the pre-Confederation era, immigration was not systematically regulated, yet between 1896 and 1905, white settlers from specific countries—the United States, Great Britain and Eastern Europe—were encouraged to establish and populate parts of Western Canada (Tastsoglou, 2011). In contrast, various immigration acts—such as the Chinese Immigration Act, the Exclusion Act, and others enacted between 1885 and 1910—were introduced on the basis of racial discrimination (Tastsoglou, 2011). Specifically, Black Americans and citizens from the Global South, especially women from China, Japan, South Asia and the Caribbean, were prevented from migrating to Canada (Agnew, 1996). The goal of these racist and sexist policies was to prevent the formation of families among these communities (Agnew, 1996). This was due to the fact that women have been historically perceived as biological and cultural reproducers and therefore conceptualized either as desirable im/migrants or as threats to the nation (Arat-Koç, 1999).

Immigration, therefore, was conceptualized as a potential danger “if it threatened the development and maintenance of a [predominately white] national population and national identity” (Mackey, 2002, p. 32). McClintock (1995) argues that white women’s reproductive capacities were seen as indispensable to the colonization and nation-building projects as theirs was the task of producing a “virile race of empire-

builders” (p. 47). This can be seen, for instance, in the way immigration encouraged single white women coming from Great Britain to come to Canada as domestic workers with the ultimate goal being to have them marry European men (Arat-Koç, 1999). Historically, in Great Britain, class dynamics had ensured that domestic work was performed by working-class women (McClintock, 1995); yet, white British domestic workers’ overall low social positioning in Canada could be elevated by their whiteness, although relegated to a second level relative to white men. The fact that these domestic workers could elevate their social position through their whiteness was possible through a process that Thobani (2007) defines as the “exaltation” (p. 5) of the “national subject” (p. 3) where individuals come to be seen as embodying those qualities “said to characterize nationality” (p. 5). In other words, it is the individuals’ desire to belong to that part of humanity, which is seen to embody positively valued qualities, that enables national subjects to forget internal differences and unite themselves in opposition to, what is conceptualized as, the outsider (Thobani, 2007). For example, Canadian white women themselves viewed im/migrant women’s reproductive potential as threatening and often did not support Black and Asian claims for family reunification (Thobani, 2007). In sum, racist colonial processes have gendered women’s bodies differently, as desirable or not-desirable biological and cultural reproducers. Therefore, it is important to account for dynamics of class and race together.

Historically, during the colonial Victorian era in Europe, domestic work was conceptualized as appropriate for working-class white women, who belonged to the “degenerated classes” (McClintock, 1995, p. 46). Domestic work performed within the household was considered shameful and “women who wanted membership in the

‘respectable’ class” were expected to hide this kind of work (McClintock, 1995, p. 161). Additionally, especially during Victorian England, “idleness” (McClintock, 1995, p. 161) was understood as a virtue to be embodied by the “useless woman” whose aim was to occupy “an ornamental place in society” (McClintock, 1995, p. 160). Yet, as Brand (1999) points out, this ideal of womanhood applied only to white women and *not* to Black or racialized women, who were thought of as lacking “natural refinement” (p. 86) and whose “sex brought them no consideration; they were not seen to have physical limitations nor were they looked upon as the ‘weaker sex’” (p. 87). That is, women’s bodies have been deemed able to perform certain types of work according to how their bodies were conceptualized in terms of race.

This conceptualization of racialized bodies who are “apt” to be employed in physically demanding positions of servitude is intrinsically linked to the “worth” assigned to them. These colonial conceptualizations of Black women’s bodies as apt to perform strenuous, demanding and servitudinal jobs are still prevalent. A case in point is domestic work institutionalized through the various immigration schemes. In 1955, Canada began the “formal import of domestic workers [...] under agreement between the Government of Canada, Jamaica and Barbados” (Oxman-Martinez, Hanley & Cheung, 2004, p. 4). Although over the years the program has changed names, feminist scholars highlight that the nature of the program is still sexist, racist and exploitative. Daenzer (1993) describes the program as “the institutional setting for current-day colonization of immigrant female labour” (p. 2). To start with, the program is sexist and racist. Silvera’s (1989) work denounces the long hours, low wages and almost slavery-like work conditions that Black Caribbean domestic women workers endure. Historically, slavery has ensured that Black women’s work is considered

beastly labour (Brand, 1999; Carty 1999); yet, today domestic workers are more and more often recruited from countries such as the Philippines. This is because the racist nature of the program has changed over time, further categorizing workers on the basis of racial stereotypes; as Stasiulis and Bakan's (2005) highlight, Filipino applicants "are currently considered in a racist stereotype to be good servants" (p. 90). Additionally, the nature of the program is highly exploitative. Scholars have denounced the institutionalized violence that domestic workers face because of their status as temporary workers. Due to their precarious status as im/migrants, when workers are exposed to violence within their workplace they are likely not to report it for fear of losing their employment—and therefore status (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Additionally, the fact that their status exists through temporary work contracts systematically hinders domestic workers in obtaining permanent residency status (Daenzer, 1993; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). This often ensures that the process of domestic workers bringing their family members to Canada is extensive (Daenzer, 1993; Silvera, 1989). Finally, scholars have also highlighted that the exploitative nature of the program is instrumental to the Canadian state. Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) argue that by institutionalizing the program, Canadian families can count on cheap domestic, racist, sexist work for low wages, whereas the Canadian state is exonerated from financing childcare and other facilities. Castagna and Sefa Dei (2000) sustain the same argument. By pointing out that, in the nineteenth-century, gynecologists recommended that white, middle-class women rested but that Black women were destined for domestic work, they argue that similarly, today:

Many white, middle-class women have been able to work outside the home only because Black, Filipino (and some southern European) women work raising their

children and cleaning their homes, under social conditions whereby adequate affordable childcare is not available for their own children. (Castagna & Sefa Dei, 2000, p. 32)

This, for instance, creates further social divisions along lines of class, gender and race, having on the one side wealthy, white employers and on the other, poor im/migrant women (Daenzer, 1993). In short, feminist scholarship highlights how this program is “consistent with Canada’s history of using immigrants and temporary workers to address labour-market shortages and of using women of colour in particular to perform domestic work” (Singh, 2012, p. 19). As such, this conceptualization of domestic work betrays a racist logic that assigns social worth to individuals according not only to their gender, but to their class and race. While international students’ partners do not need to apply through a point system to obtain a temporary open work permit, this history is relevant to understanding their experiences; as likely gendered and racialized individuals, partners would be affected by the ramifications of these gendered and racialized dynamics of nation-building.

Conceptualizing Women as Dependants

In this section, I further situate partners in the broader context of Canada’s colonial history. More specifically, I argue that the nation-formation dynamics introduced during colonization have contextualized im/migrant women as dependants. This is relevant to a study of partners’ needs due to their status as students’ dependants. Up until the Second World War, selective immigration to Canada ensured racialized cheap labour, for example, from Asian im/migrant workers; in addition, it separated the immigrant population into categories of citizens with different privileges, where white Anglo and French speaking im/migrants were favoured

(Tastsoglou, 2011). On the contrary, immigration procedures disadvantaged non-French and non-British working-class im/migrants, particularly women, whose linguistic proficiency was instituted as a criterion to issue citizenship and who were less likely to be fluent in either language (Thobani, 2007). With specific reference to im/migrant women, Mackey (2002) argues that “immigration policy is more than simply a process of importing the labour needed for nation-building. It is also an ‘expression of a political idea of who is, or could be, eligible to receive the entitlements of residence and citizenship’” (p. 32).

After the Second World War, policies regulating immigration started to incorporate im/migrants from southern and central Europe, provided that they were in good health and character and that their skills were needed by the Canadian economy (Tastsoglou, 2011). Nevertheless, immigration from citizens from the Global South remained strongly limited with the exception of Black im/migrant women from the Caribbean, who were sought after as domestic workers (Tastsoglou, 2011). After the 1960s and 1970s, the door opened to non-European im/migrants, a change stimulated by the “capitalist industrial growth in Canada” and the intention to create a liberal democratic nation (Bannerji, 2000, p. 30). Importantly, according to Thobani (2007), the emergence of the welfare state during the Canadian postwar period has had an influential role in the formation of more liberal immigration policies that evaluate education and skills. This discourse is important to understand the interdependence of race and gender in nation-building dynamics, and to grasp the pervasiveness of the legacies of colonial power in immigration dynamics. Canadian welfare state’s contributory social insurance programs—associated with fulltime employment—tend to be accessed by men, while public assistance programs, which do not require

contributions, are more likely to be accessed by women (Thobani, 2007; Man 2004). This specification of programs supports “the maintenance of [a] wage system with the adult male worker at the centre” while defining women primarily as mothers and wives with lesser attachment to paid labour (Thobani, 2007, p. 106). Importantly, the fact that the adult male worker is put at the centre also means that he is more likely to receive formal education, which is particularly true in capitalistic societies. In fact, Brand (1999) argues that capitalistic production and the social construction of gender are correlated in such a way that white masculinity “reinforces the categories of manager and experts in the social relations of capitalist production” (p. 85). Similarly, McClintock (1995) argues that gendered managerial skills and expertise have historically been embodied by “English middle-class males [who were] placed at the pinnacle of evolutionary hierarchy” (p. 55).

In short, this digression on the welfare state is useful to better situate partners’ social position as students’ dependants. The welfare state has indeed contributed to the cementation of the family ideal and has conceptualized, historically, the European im/migrant family—white, patriarchal, nuclear, middle-class—as the norm (Thobani, 2007). This family model privileges certain racial, gendered, heterosexual and class relations and, importantly, this idealized family also has been translated into immigration policies. Arat-Koç (1999) argues that “the definition of family used for immigration purposes is an ethnocentric and heterosexist one, focusing on members of the nuclear family and not considering how family and significant others may be defined in other cultures, sub-cultures, or by individuals themselves” (p. 210). Additionally, Arat-Koç (1999) affirms that immigration policies have created the category of “family class immigrant” (p. 210) and operated a distinction between

“deserving” and “non-deserving” immigrants (p. 212). This distinction is made based on the idea that “one group of immigrants, namely independent class, is expected to make a contribution to Canadian society and the economy, whereas family class immigrants² would not, and therefore would not deserve a status and rights” (Arat-Koç, 1999, p. 212). Yet, not only does the concept of “contribution” intrinsically relate to economic value, it also “removes from view the level of skills that many women entering as family migrants brings with them” (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006, p. 293)—once again, it perpetuates the devaluation of domestic work, which is intrinsic to colonial discourse. This concept of economic contribution is also not quite accurate: it is not true that dependants do not participate in the paid workforce; rather, dependants’ presence in the workforce (especially for women) cannot be anticipated and is subject to changes (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006). Because dependants are deemed economically unworthy, it might come as no surprise that there are few resources dedicated to the needs of partners similarly conceptualized as dependants located in places like universities.

Structural Challenges to Im/migrants’ Integration

In 1967, explicitly racist Canadian immigration policies were modified in favour of a point-based system through which im/migrant workers are allowed to enter the country on the basis of their education and skills (Tastsoglou, 2011). Yet, feminist scholarship argues that skills and education still bear the legacy of colonial sexist and racist dynamics of nation-building and still discriminate against gendered and racialized individuals³ (Man, 2004; Mojab, 1999). For instance, feminist scholars

² The family class is composed of family members who are *not* able to immigrate with the principal economic class applicant.

³ Additionally, El-Lahib and Wehbi (2011) argue that ableism is also imbedded in the point

argue that structural constraints contribute to the undermining and challenging of im/migrant workers' integration into society and ultimately compromise their well-being. Chief among these structural constraints is institutionalized racism that ensures that im/migrants workers' knowledge acquired abroad is deemed inferior and not fully recognized (Houle, 2012). To specify, Bauder (2003) argues that knowledge obtained through work and education becomes acceptable or not according to the place where such knowledge is acquired. This highlights that dynamics of colonial power are institutionalized through certification processes that deem knowledge—and knowers—as worthy or not according to the countries where knowledge has been acquired. For instance, degrees obtained in countries such as South and Central Asia, the Middle East, South and East Europe are often not fully recognized (Bauder, 2003). As a result, non-recognition of foreign credentials often prevents im/migrant workers from occupying the upper segments of the labour market (Bauder, 2003). Similarly, Salaff, Greve, and Ping (2002) highlight that the process of evaluation of professional and educational foreign credentials is only presumably objective. This is due to the fact that evaluating human capital is itself a socially-constructed process; as such, it is defined both by certification procedures and by how Canadian employers *perceive* appropriate matches between jobs and job seekers (Salaff et al., 2002). In their case study of Chinese im/migrants in Toronto, Salaff et al. (2002) find that employers less favourably assess credentials achieved in schools unfamiliar to them and prefer to employ labourers who have a Canadian education. Furthermore, Zaman (2010) argues that employers and employment agencies have institutionalized power to discriminate against im/migrants also based on what they deem to be culturally appropriate

system, for the emphasis given to education and employment discriminates against dis/abled im/migrants—as these areas already marginalize individuals with dis/abilities.

according to normative Canadian standards. Specifically, Zaman (2010) provides an example of an employment agent who suggested a Pakistani im/migrant woman change her clothing, jewellery and haircut in order to become the ideal candidate to obtain a job. These are further examples of the ways im/migrants' knowledge, work experience and culture are discriminated against and how unemployment is often the result of constraints imposed from society at large—rather than from personal failure.

Importantly, as VanderPlaat (2007) argues, im/migrant women's needs and the constraints they experience to their integration are “uniquely gendered” (p. 18). In other words, because of the gendered roles that often conceptualize women as caregivers, immigrant women's integration outcomes are related to their roles within the family (VanderPlaat, 2007). This is clearly illustrated in the way Mojab (1999) refers to the “education-job gap” (p. 127) that im/migrant women experience when their credentials are not recognized and require upgrading in terms of skills and professional experience. Often, for im/migrant women—more than for men—upgrading their credentials is contingent upon finding affordable daycare services for their children or having access to transportation, factors that contribute to discouraging the acquisition of further skills (Mojab, 1999). Once again, the fact that im/migrants often have to update their skills is symptomatic of the fact that their knowledge and work experience is considered inadequate. Similarly, Yax-Fraser (2011) argues that for these combined reasons, im/migrant women often cannot access the labour market and instead became full-time mothers. Or, because upgrading one's credentials is such a difficult process, some im/migrant women are forced to take jobs immediately available in order to financially sustain their family members (Man, 2004, Houle, 2012)—even if these jobs are low-paying, have little to do with their work experience

or deskill their knowledge.

Im/migrants can also face discrimination because of their accents (VanderPlaat, 2007), as certain accents are perceived to indicate inferiority based on the legacy of colonialism (Topen, 2011). Furthermore, as Persad and Lukas's (2002) research demonstrates, there is also religious discrimination against im/migrant workers. Conducted in the greater Toronto area on women working in the manufacturing, sales and services sectors, Persad and Lukas's (2002) study reveals that women are denied employment based on the fact that they wear hijabs. The study highlights that it is because of similar discriminations, which act as gatekeeping mechanisms, that im/migrants often experience unemployment and downward mobility.

Feminist scholars focus on similar issues in the specific context of Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Canada has been historically characterized by a low intake of im/migrants and low concentrations of racialized communities (Tastsoglou, 2011). For these reasons, Tastsoglou (2011) suggests that we can expect higher barriers and challenges to newcomers' integration. Conducted in Nova Scotia, Topen's (2011) study considers the interplay of gender, class, and race in the labour market integration experiences of Black im/migrant women from sub-Saharan Africa. Topen (2011) affirms that the majority of the women encounter racial, sexual discrimination; they are also discriminated against because of their non-Canadian sounding "accents." The study highlights that these discriminations are systemic; employers often act as gatekeepers, leading im/migrant workers to experience occupational segregation, underpayment and underemployment. The study also considers how the inequalities experienced by these women originate from historical and structural gender and racial discrimination in Nova Scotia. In fact, while there are several Black communities in

Nova Scotia, historically, Black settlers arrived in the province after the American Revolution and were conceptualized as inferior citizens because they were Black and due to their status as “freed slaves” (Topen, 2011, p. 144). Institutional racism has ensured that Black Nova Scotians have been segregated into the lowest social and economic labour market positions, while Black women in particular have found employment primarily as domestic workers (Topen, 2011). Similarly, in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Jaya and Porters’ (2011) case study explores the interplay of gender and race in the embodied experiences of racialized im/migrant women. Research participants relate difficult labour market conditions together with “the impossibility to ever become a Newfie” (Jaya & Porter, 2011, p. 121) as key barriers to their successful integration. In other words, research participants relate being labelled as outsiders because they are not from Newfoundland; yet, they also highlight the difficulty of being fully accepted as part of the population. As a research participant argues “the only way you become a Newfoundlander is because you are born here. The rest are newcomers” (Jaya & Porter, 2011, p. 121). This is important, because the women in Jaya and Porter’s (2011) research affirm that despite being qualified, employers prefer native-born workers instead of im/migrants, a discrimination that often ensures that participants undertake great efforts to find employment.

Feminist scholarship also emphasizes the link between gender, race and health when exploring immigration issues. Im/migrants to Canada are selected based on their language ability, education and job skills—and such characteristics are usually associated with healthy lifestyles (Hyman, 2010). As a consequence, when immigrants arrive to Canada their health is usually superior to that of the Canadian-born

population (Hyman, 2011). Yet, resettlement in a new country exposes im/migrants to many adjustments that can be stressful and can undermine their well-being (VanderPlaat, 2007). Additionally, access to healthcare will be impacted by class, race and gender dynamics. Feminist scholars have conducted gender-based research that accounts for variables such as social support, discrimination and lack of access to economic resources in order to analyze how im/migrants' well-being is affected and shaped by the im/migration process. Spitzer (2011) for instance, employs the expression "engendering" (p. 13) to define the "efforts [of feminist scholars] to make visible the implications of intersectionality (not just gender) and social location on health and well-being" (p. 13).

Scholars have drawn attention to language barriers experienced by im/migrant women (Dossa, 2011), access to services (Egan & Gardner, 1999; Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009; Weerasinghe, 2011) and cultural sensitivity to im/migrant needs (George, 2000; Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2008; 2009). Dossa's (2011) study is about im/migrant women coming from Afghanistan. Using collective storytelling techniques, the women use "the language of their bodies" (Dossa 2011, p. 147) to share testimonies of suffering about their everyday life and their encounters with social and health providers. This research highlights the relationship between embodied suffering and the structural violence that women encounter in their country of settlement. Egan and Gardner (1999) explore how institutionalized racism embedded in the health care system prevents im/migrant women's access to healthcare. For instance, the scholars point out that im/migrant women are often treated disrespectfully. Additionally, the oppressive work conditions of low-paid jobs in which im/migrant women are often employed, prevent them from taking time off

from work to be examined, and this has consequences for their health (Egan & Gardner, 1999). Weerasinghe's (2011) research highlights im/migrant women's health issues from a socio-environmental perspective. In other words, this research shows that im/migrant women's health is strongly influenced by the social environment where they live. Importantly, Weerasinghe (2001) recommends that public health policies and service providers eradicate "the social, cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers that marginalize ethno-cultural groups" (p. 254). For example, im/migrant women name the lack of interpretation services in primary healthcare as one of the major barriers that they encounter. Furthermore, the women in this study also experience violence, as they identify practices commonly used in Canadian hospitals as discriminatory and culturally inappropriate (Weerasinghe, 2011). Similarly, in St. John's, Newfoundland, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2009) address both the gaps in and opportunities for providing better access to information about primary mental health care services among racialized im/migrants. Specifically, the authors insist on the need to develop and consolidate awareness and cultural sensitivity and gender-based approaches within primary mental health care environments, for the lack of such approaches may act as a powerful barrier to both the access and utilization of services. In another case study conducted in St. John's, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2008) focus on im/migrant Muslim women and their maternity health care needs and barriers to accessing maternity health services. This research reveals that women's needs during pregnancy, labour and postpartum phases are not met due to poor healthcare information, racial discrimination and a deficiency of sensitive approaches towards their religious and cultural practices. Similarly, George (2000) points out that specific barriers such as cultural insensitivity from service providers or language

barriers prevent im/migrants access to the healthcare system.

From this review of current feminist literature, it appears clear that impediments are often structural, that is, embedded in the social tissue of the society where im/migrants live and work. Overt racism, racist attitudes and standardized processes (i.e., the way foreign credentials are recognized, or health care procedures) discriminate against im/migrants and for this reason their successful integration is often challenged.

Conclusion

To conclude, feminist scholarship critiques dynamics of Canadian nation-building, recognizing that these are based on gendered and racist processes that are far from concluded. Drawing from this body of scholarship helps contextualize how im/migrants—and therefore international student partners—are located within immigration dynamics. Feminist scholarship also critically looks at the way today's primary criteria regulating im/migration to Canada—skills and education—still bear gendered and racialized legacies of colonial power, which has informed Canadian settlement and nation-building dynamics. These dynamics concern international student partners given that partners are also located within the Canadian immigration scenario. By highlighting the overarching structures that regulate immigration dynamics, it is possible to contextualize partners—females being the majority—as dependants of international students—in the majority, males. It is also possible to contextualize the structural impediments—racism, undervaluation of foreign credentials, among others—that prevent im/migrants, and therefore partners, from fully integrating themselves into the society where they live.

Chapter 2. Epistemological and Methodological Approaches

In this chapter I enhance an understanding of my theoretical framework as discussed in chapter 1 with a focus on my epistemological and methodological approaches to the thesis. I draw in large part from anti-colonial feminist scholarship, which also takes an anti-racist stance, and to a lesser extent from (critical) postcolonial feminist scholarship. Together with the ideas presented in chapter 1, which theorize Canadian immigration policy as arising out of broader colonial processes, the ideas in this chapter allow me to understand not only how legacies of colonial power are still present in Canada, but also how they have historically produced hegemonic discourses around race and gender in mainstream feminist knowledge production. As a feminist researcher, I acknowledge my social location (a concept I develop further below) and how it influences the production of knowledge that constitutes this thesis.

Decentring Euro-Western (Feminist) Knowledge Production

Feminist research can be defined as the product of the interconnection of epistemologies, methodology and methods, where methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed (Harding, 1987). As such, feminist methodology raises epistemological issues that interrogate theories of knowledge; and methods, then, are techniques for gathering evidence (Harding, 1987). Similarly, Jaggar (2008) refers to feminist methodology as a “methodology [that] seeks to access knowledge-generating strategies in terms of their suitability for feminist research” (p. vii), where such strategies should be infused by values of gender equity and empowerment (p. x). Historically, Euro-Western feminist researchers have argued that traditional epistemologies reflect androcentric dominant paradigms and, in reply, have proposed alternative theories of knowledge that legitimize *women* as knowers

(Harding, 1987). However, as epistemologies raise questions about “ways of knowing” (Jaggar, 2008, p. 20), they also raise questions about knowers. For instance, feminist scholar Agnew (1996) argues that the perspectives of white, middle-class, university-educated women have dominated—and still dominate—feminist theories and practices in Canada. Western feminist debates and activist practices that are assumed to speak for all women have been of course criticized for creating the “‘Third World Woman’ as a singular monolithic subject” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 49).

Representations of Third World Women as “sexually constrained [...] ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family oriented, victimized” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 53) not only have contributed to negating differences among subjects; these representations have also had the effect of glorifying Western women as “educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 53). Ang (2003) provides an example within feminist movements; the scholar illustrates how the maxim “When a woman says no, she means no!” hides a feminist standpoint that is more a Western ideal than a universal ideal (p. 194). As such, it speaks to “the ideal feminist woman as assertive, determined, plain-speaking and confrontational” and conceptualized within a society that “prizes individualism, conversational explicitness, directness and efficiency” (Ang, 2003, p. 194-195). Yet, Asian women may use other ways to confront male dominance, ways that are more culturally appropriate and more “circuitous” for them (Ang, 2003, p. 195). Recognizing the dominance of Eurocentric approaches to knowledge production is important as I strive to account for the racially and culturally diverse sociocultural locations and knowledge of the participants in this study. In fact, as a woman born and educated in the Euro-

Western tradition, when I apply a feminist lens to investigate participants' beliefs, ideas and needs, it is vital that I recognize and respect these beliefs, ideas and needs although I may not share or fully understand them.

Throughout this thesis I often refer to legacies of colonial power. Colonialism not only restructured the economies of the colonized (Loomba, 1998), it also deeply shaped the historical construction of gender (Carty, 1999; Stevenson, 1999) as well as its racialization (Bannerji, 1999; Dua, 1999). As Sefa Dei (2006) affirms, “contemporary anti-colonial thought argues that colonial constructions affect knowledge production with profound material consequences” (p. 13). For instance, this body of thought highlights the pervasiveness of racism that derives from colonial power and insists on the need to recognize and value the knowledge of gendered and racialized individuals. As discussed in chapter 1, feminist theorists such as Brand (1999) highlight how legacies of colonial power are responsible for current economic dynamics that rely on the existence of a gendered and racialized labour market. This feminist scholarship has therefore been engaged in highlighting the discriminations derived from colonialism and how it has produced differences among women (Dua, 1999). Historically, racialized women have been systematically excluded from the academy and from other places of formal knowledge production (Agnew, 1996). Because “determining what is to count as knowledge belongs to those who have power,” “other” knowledge produced by those who have less institutional power is deemed as inferior (Agnew, 1996, p. 4). This superior/inferior dualism mirrors a racist and gendered logic that served to maintain colonial apparatuses (Carty, 1999) and still perpetuates logics of power that are present in today's society through racist and gendered institutionalization (Dua, 1999; Razack, 1999).

Today, Canadian universities are sites of knowledge production not immune to these dynamics. During a conference¹ that I attended, scholars Afua Cooper, Annette Henry, Handel Kashope Wright and Tamari Kitossa (2014) exposed the everyday violence they experience as Black academics, which derives from institutionalized racist and gendered power dynamics consolidated within the academy. Importantly, Tamari Kitossa (2014) also pointed at how his own body as a Black male professor was perceived with fear. This discourse can be better understood by drawing from Sefa Dei (2006) who argues that “dominant systems of racialized power construct ideas of criminality through particular bodies [...] black and brown bodies and communities” (p. 10). This discourse of “fear” and “criminality” is relevant to the sphere of knowledge production; knowledge produced by racialized bodies is knowledge that often aims at dismantling the social structures in power and, as such, it is perceived as dangerous—and it is often purposely disempowered.

At this stage it is important to discuss the ideology of whiteness. Fully contextualizing this ideology is beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the ideology of whiteness is pervasive in Canada and it operates in a way that privileges whites over all other groups of people. Whiteness, as Owen (2007) argues, is a “structuring property of the social system” (p. 205) that “shapes actions, social practices and dispositions, and thus constitutes a part of the ‘know how’ or practical knowledge that competent social actors possess” (p. 206). Importantly, whiteness maintains and perpetuates a system of white supremacy that is inherently violent and oppressive, having originated from the horrors of colonialism of which it

¹ (2014, May 26). *The Nuances of Blackness and/in the Canadian Academy*. Congress 2014 of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Brock University, St. Catherine, Ontario.

represents the most pervasive legacy (Owen, 2007; Sefa Dei, 2006). For instance, Aboriginal women's knowledge was violently and purposely undermined by colonial agents in Canada so as to justify their subjugation to Victorian patriarchy (Stevenson, 1999). As Owen (2007) argues, that which is associated with whiteness "becomes defined as natural, normal or mainstream" (p. 206). Similarly, during the conference I mentioned previously, Annette Henry (2014) considered the implications of referring to individuals as "visible minorities"; that is, if a visible minority exists, then also an invisible, normalized majority of individuals exists. This is reflected in the way that in Canada some "groups are widely considered more 'ethnic' than others" (Mackey, 2002, p. 20). In other words, pervasive racist structural mechanisms have enabled the descendants of racialized white people to be perceived as "Canadian-Canadians" or "Ordinary Canadians" (Mackey, 2002, p. 20). Importantly, as highlighted above, whiteness—as a structural property that includes individuals on the basis of racial privilege, whose cultural practices become normalized—has had, and still has, important consequences in the sphere of feminist activism and knowledge production in Western countries.

It is no wonder, then, that anti-racist feminist scholars have criticized the assumption of common experiences among women, due to the fact that not all women experience gender, class and racial discrimination similarly or simultaneously (Dua, 1999). Acknowledging that women are differently located within social relations is important, but we must also remain vigilant when using the term "diversity." Today's Canada represents itself as a place that celebrates difference and that is founded on official policies of multiculturalism and bilingualism (Mackey, 2002). Yet, Bannerji (2000) argues that a "purely descriptive use of the term" diversity simply signals

heterogeneity, and does not allow us to understand the underlying power relations attached to its use (p. 35). In other words, this superficial and descriptive way of using diversity allows social relations of power to vanish, so as to lose the notion of difference as “a construction of power” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 36). By analyzing the concept of diversity within the European context—therefore from a different perspective—Essed (1996) is particularly concerned about the changing nature of racism implied in the use of diversity. The Other, Essed (1996) argues, is produced when differences are emphasized more than similarities and when the power used to produce difference goes away unquestioned. By using the term “paternalistic racism,” Essed (1996) defines it as “a remnant of colonialism, wrapped in ‘good intentions’ to ‘help’ ethnic minorities” (p. 1). Then, following Essed (1996), openly racist insults or remarks are no longer needed when “less-valued cultural characteristics are inextricably linked to color (gender) and ethnic background and are used to explain the unequal position of ethnic groups” (p. 34). Similarly, Thobani (2007) argues that daily rituals and rites of citizenship, such as asking where a person is “really” from, can reinforce the dichotomy between belonging and not belonging to a nation. Not only do these rituals produce difference—and otherness—but they leave the reasons behind this production of difference unquestioned. In relation to partners, partners bring their cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds to the community of St. John’s; it is therefore important to be vigilant about if and how they are being produced as Others in the Canadian context in racialized and gendered ways.

To conclude, I draw from Dua (1999) who defines anti-racist feminist thought as “a body of writing that attempts to integrate the way race and gender function together in structuring social inequality” (p. 9). As mentioned, I also draw from

scholars who adopt an anti-colonial and critical postcolonial stance; their scholarship calls for valuing the knowledge produced by individuals who are marginalized because they recognize the racist and gendered structural impediments that have brought them to marginalization. By giving value to their knowledge, I believe that this body of scholarship contrast and contests the paternalistic logic that disguises racism; these epistemological approaches are powerful instruments for me as I explore partners' experiences. Indeed, portraying racialized individuals as needing something—be it services, support—risks engaging in paternalistic racism. An anti-racist, anti-colonial epistemological perspective is reflected in my methodological approach and guides me in interpreting what participants tell me about their experiences in St. John's and in Newfoundland, as they are a gendered and racialized population in these settings. Furthermore, these epistemological approaches signal to me that I need to be mindful in the analysis of how participants' needs will reflect the structural and institutionalized barriers that they face by virtue of their gendered and racialized status.

Methodological Approach: Culturally Grounded Methodology

Applying a culturally grounded methodology allows me to better understand partners' multiple locations with respect to gender and race both within their own culture as well as in their new geographical and social locations. Specifically, this methodological approach allows me to understand how being racialized and gendered affects partners' needs and if/how processes of gendering and racialization constitute some of the structural impediments they might encounter.

I found Chilisa's (2012) text *Indigenous Research Methodologies* inspiring as it challenges Euro-Western approaches to conducting research. According to Chilisa

(2012), Euro-Western research approaches are an extension of colonial power and therefore it is important in research to “center the concerns and worldviews of the colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives” (p. 13). Chilisa (2012) further explains that “current academic research traditions are founded on the culture, history, and philosophies of Euro-Western thought and are therefore indigenous to the Western academy and its institutions” (p. xvi). Therefore, the main goal of Chilisa’s (2012) work is to decolonize Western-based research and to offer various research methodologies that resist Euro-Western thought and the further appropriation of “other” knowledges.

Following Chilisa (2012), I define my methodology as indigenous in the sense that it foregrounds “a cultural group’s way of perceiving reality, ways of knowing, and the value systems that inform [the] research process” (p. 13). In fact, as I interviewed individuals belonging to various cultural groups, I paid particular attention to participants’ ways of perceiving their reality. In addition, as Chilisa (2012) suggests, I am aware of my responsibility “to critically assess the research process and procedures to see if they allow the researched to communicate their experiences from their frames of reference” (p. 139). I adopted interviews as one of my main research methods. I therefore found particularly useful Chilisa’s (2012) practical suggestions about how to conduct an interview (p. 222). In short, Chilisa’s (2012) suggestions can be summarized as follows: reduce power relations between the interviewee and the interviewer; encourage dialogue; be an active listener; allow the participant to take their time to reply to the questions; reassure participants about the importance of their replies; be sensitive to signs of distress or embarrassment and, if needed, change the line of interviewing; and, confirm with the participants if the

researcher has correctly understood what they wanted to express.

Additionally, I referred to Marsiglia and Kulis's (2009) "notes from the field" section in which they examine real case scenarios where they show the power of using culturally grounded approaches in research to bring about social change. Although Marsiglia and Kulis's (2009) text is not a research text, I appreciate how the authors emphasize the complexity of culture and offer practical suggestions on how to interact with individuals from various sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds in anti-racist and anti-oppressive ways. Importantly, Marsiglia and Kulis's (2009) social work methods are aligned with feminist theories as the latter also aim to empower and bring about social change (pp. 93-94). For example, it was Crenshaw (as cited in Spade, 2013) who first used the term "intersectionality" to indicate a method of analysis that unearths dynamics of oppression (Spade, 2013, p. 1031). Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) define intersectionality as:

A heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics. It exposed how single-axis thinking undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice. (p. 787)

Intersectionality has pushed its way through various disciplines (Lewis, 2013); so too has it been criticized for its limitations. For instance, as Carbado (2013) points out, intersectionality has been criticized for favouring specific social categories, for being "identitarian" and static (p. 814) and for having "traveled as far it can go" (p. 815).

However, here, I do not intend to go into details about the limitations and critiques of intersectionality; rather, I look at how intersectionality is related to the culturally grounded approach that I have followed in this thesis. As Carbado (2013)

argues,

Scholars have mobilized intersectionality to engage multiple axis of difference—class, sexual orientation, nation, citizenship, immigration status, disability, and religion (not just race and gender). And they have employed the theory to analyze a range of complex social processes—classism, homophobia, xenophobia, nativism, ageism, ableism, and Islamophobia (not just anti-Black racism and sexism). (pp. 814-815)

In other words, intersectionality and culturally grounded approaches address gender, sexual orientation, religion, class and economic status and how these overlapping elements constitute individuals' identities and social locations in society. For partners, integrating into a new culture and environment requires many adjustments that encompass their working aspirations, parental strategies, religious needs, time management skills, language, financial situations, and others. However, although it is important to acknowledge cultural differences and individual social locations, it is also vital not to “strip [a person] down to a few characteristics” (Essed, 1996, p. 44). In other words, it is important not to trace every belief, behaviour or situation as stemming from them individuals' social location, for to do so would be to perpetuate an essentialist idea of the self solely defined by gender, ethnic background, class, immigration status, dis/ability.

Research Design

For this research, I considered seven to be the maximum number of participants that I would be able to adequately analyze (although in the end I was able to recruit six). In this section I discuss all the stages of the research design.

Participant Selection and Recruitment. I selected participants who were 19

years old or older and who were able to communicate in English at a conversational level. Originally, I had also anticipated selecting partners who had arrived in St. John's during the winter semester 2013 or earlier, reasoning that the longer partners had been in St. John's, the more they would be able to tell me about their experiences. However, because two partners who had arrived more recently in St. John's (during summer 2013) contacted me, I decided to include them in the study. Additionally, I interviewed a participant who had originally arrived as a partner of an international student, but who had later become a student.

Although I guaranteed confidentiality to participants, I did not guarantee their anonymity as in the small population of partners of international students in St. John's it would not have been possible to ensure participants' complete and unconditional anonymity. However, I did ensure that participants' data would remain confidential and I decided not to use pseudonyms of any type and to use instead alphabetic letters from A to E for each participant. On the informed consent form, I clearly stated that I would make exceptions to participants' confidentiality if they disclosed information that suggested that they or someone else was at risk. Additionally, although potential harms were minimal in comparison to the potential benefits derived from taking part in this research project, I provided partners with a list of services that they could access in case they needed support.

To recruit participants, I posted information about the research on the ISA e-mail listserv sent out twice a week to service users and, in addition, printed and distributed recruitment letters in places frequented by users such as the ISA building and social room, the dining hall, MUN daycare centre, hospital and some residences on campus. I decided to alter the strategies that I was using to recruit participants

because I soon realized that few participants were responding to the call for participants. I attributed the low responses to several factors. First, the main means for recruiting—the twice weekly listserv e-mails—are aimed at students, not at their partners. This meant that either the students would have had to read about the study and let their partners know about it, or that the partners would have had to open and read the students' e-mails. To compensate for this issue, I printed an additional 65 recruitment letters and placed them around the campus in locations where I thought partners of international students might frequent. However, I soon realized that by posting the research information around the campus, I was again targeting the student population and depending on them to relay the information to their partners. I decided to contact several religious and cultural associations on campus and in St. John's and ask them to post my recruitment letter on their websites; I also posted it on the ISA Facebook page. However, by privileging the written word, I was excluding the population of partners who could not read English. I therefore decided to ask one of the participants to talk about the research among their friends. I also approached ESL classes aimed at female international students' partners organized at the ISA. I volunteered during the classes for almost a month and a half, where I introduced myself to the partners and explained the goals of the research as well as how participants could contact me (I also left copies of my recruitment letters). More specifically, I used class breaks to answer any questions that the ESL students had about the research, and I clearly stated that those who were interested in taking part in the research would have to contact me outside of the classroom to ensure their privacy. Revising the research design allowed me to recruit participants who had read and heard about the research project, even though they had spent a shorter amount of

time in St. John's.

Research Questions. A central aspect of my study was to understand participant experiences since their arrival in St. John's in relation to their gendered and racialized status. Therefore, I divided my interview script into two parts, one composed of eight demographic questions and the other composed of five open-ended questions. The demographic questions were designed to give me a precise picture of the demographics of each participant related to the following: age; ethnic background; fluency in languages written and spoken; country of birth; time spent in St. John's; family composition (e.g., whether they had children); educational background; and services accessed since their arrival in Newfoundland. The open-ended questions were intended to assess partners' experiences with accessing services in St. John's; their aspirations, goals and profession and whether these had changed since their arrival; how they had adjusted to the English language; and recommendations for how the ISA could better support new partners' integration into the community of St. John's. Although it is not paid work, I included parenthood/motherhood as a profession, for otherwise, as Yax-Fraser (2011) highlights, "the costs and work women face in raising children and managing a household [is made] invisible" (p. 300-301).

I used in-depth interviews because I thought that they would better accommodate participants' needs to express themselves in their second or additional language. In designing and implementing my interview protocol, I drew on Chilisa's (2012) interview strategies as described previously. Although Montell (1999) argues that focus groups facilitate consciousness-raising and empowerment while mitigating the possibility of an exploitative relationship between researcher and researched (p. 44), focus groups would not have provided the degree of confidentiality that I was

interested in guaranteeing participants.

I personally transcribed all the interviews within one week from the interview day, to make sure that I could still remember participants' hesitations, facial expressions, emotionality and silences. I designed and used a special code that would signal to me when a pause² occurred and how long it was, whether there were pauses between words, and/or if there were words that were not clear or words that were stressed. I did not use any standard coding procedure to do this, but I ensured that every interview transcription would follow the same coding system. I proceeded to read all the interviews, make notes and underline parts that I thought were important, all the while referring back to the research goals and to the methodologies supporting them. I read the scripts a second time two months after my last interview transcription and I grouped my interviews into the following themes: a) participants' needs; b) structural barriers (such as discriminations and lack of affordable child care) identified by participants as having hindered their full participation in the St. John's community and c) participants' suggestions for ISA services.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter outlines my epistemological and methodological approaches as well as the methods that I have used to create the research design. It also outlines how, when faced with some unexpected issues during my fieldwork, I modified some aspects of the research design. Furthermore, this chapter highlights how I blend some aspects of Indigenous methodologies into my methodological

² I use a parenthetical ellipsis [...] to signal that a passage is omitted; I use the number of periods to signal the length of a pause (for example, "..." signals a short pause whereas "....." signals a longer pause); I use italics to highlight words said with emotional voice, anger, puzzlement, or other emphasis.

approach to analyze my data. This combined methodology enabled me to connect this work with my epistemological approaches, which focus on anti-colonial, anti-racist and critical postcolonial and feminist theories.

Chapter 3: Findings, Analysis and Discussion of Partners' Lived Experiences in St. John's

In this chapter, I outline, analyze and discuss partners' lived experiences in relation to gender and race and I focus on the structural constraints that hinder the full participation of partners in society. I present the research findings in six main sections as follows: 1) demographics of the research participants; 2) partners' access and utilization of ISA services; 3) partners' aspirations and needs; 4) partners' emotional and social needs 5) employment experiences; and 6) partners' language needs. I conclude by summarizing partners' suggestions to ISA service implementation, who asked to receive support prior and after their arrival in St. John's especially in three main areas: transportation; employment, and childcare services.

Demographics of Partners

The partners who took part in this study were young (between 24 and 34 years old) and, to various degrees, were all conversant in English as a second or additional language.¹ The group was composed of one self-identified male and five self-identified females. All but one of the participants were highly educated and had a Bachelor's Degree; two had also completed a Master's Degree and one had just started a PhD. There was one participant from each of the following regions: Central-South America, Eastern Asia, Central Asia and Europe; and two participants from North Africa. The time partners had spent in St. John's varied from a period of 40 days to four and a half years. Two participants were without children, while the others had from one to three children, and one was pregnant. During their stay in St. John's,

¹ Almost all participants required further explanations of my questions, either because they did not know some words or because they were unsure whether they were expressing themselves correctly. Occasionally, I had to reformulate their answers and ask them to confirm if I had understood them correctly. Generally, participants were willing to provide me with further explanations and were eager to make sure that I had understood exactly what they had meant to communicate.

partners accessed several community-based services: employment and career-oriented services; childcare facilities (such as daycare and libraries); public transportation; ESL classes; medical; and immigration services.

Partners' Service Access to ISA

In this section, I outline, analyze and discuss the research findings in relation to partners' access to ISA services. The interviews I conducted highlight the overall positive experience of accessing ISA services and the support that partners derive from the ISA. In general, partners mentioned that the ISA provided them with a safe and welcoming environment where they could obtain factual information, talk about personal issues, attend ESL classes, receive career-related advice and socialize with other adults through the ISA weekly meetings and other organized events. Participants with children were particularly grateful to the Family Program Coordinator, who informed them about community-based services for children. A participant positively described her meeting with the Family Program Coordinator as the latter encouraged her to join the services provided by the ISA together with her young child:

Ah, that was really nice that I had to meet [the Family Program Coordinator] [...] so she actually contacted me, and came to my place and you know, introduced me to the services they had and kind of make it, made it a bit easy, here, because when you are a, the first, like the newcomer probably you would feel a little bit shy to just come and introduce yourself and start using this or that, especial that you are not a student, like I was not a student, right? But she said it would be fine, just come and do it, like, so I just came with my [baby] boy and you know, it was you know, really welcome, right?

Similarly, another participant noted that, thanks to the information her husband

received via e-mail from the ISA, she had been informed about workshops and events that she could attend with her children.

As this participant experience highlights, partners' access to ISA services is often subordinated to students' access to these services. This is the result of the student-centred approach of the ISA, which risks reinforcing partners' dependence on students and may hinder partners' access to services. For instance, this student-centred approach does not allow the ISA to obtain reliable demographic data specifically on partners. This issue emerged during the early stages of my fieldwork, when I reviewed pre-collected demographic data pertaining to partners: because this information was solicited from the students, it did not necessarily provide accurate details about the gender of the partners, their country of origin or whether or not they were physically present in St. John's. A similar issue also emerged around the yearly surveys sent from the Family Program Coordinator. Surveys are useful instruments to gauge partners' needs or to verify that existing services effectively meet their needs (Personal communication, May 16, 2014). During my fieldwork I reviewed the final results of surveys sent in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The surveys are sent directly to student e-mails although the ISA encourages both students and their partners to provide feedback (Personal communication, May 16, 2014). While taking the surveys, recipients have the option to indicate their gender, if they are students or partners or whether they prefer not to answer. Looking at the percentages,² results show that during years 2011 and 2013 the majority of respondents who took the survey were female and for all years, including 2012, the majority of respondents were students. Yet, female students are not the majority of international students with partners in St. John's. It is possible

² Of the individuals taking the survey in 2011, 54.84% identified their gender as female, 45.16% male; in 2012: 46.67% female, 53.33% male; in 2013: 66.67% female, 33.33% male.

that in 2011 and 2013 some male students took the survey on behalf of their partners—identifying themselves as students, but then indicating their partners’ gender. It could also mean that female students are more interested than male students in taking the survey; it is hard to tell. In short, there is a shortage of reliable demographic data on partners and the survey’ results can be considered skewed and therefore inconclusive, because of the impossibility of discerning with clarity whether students or partners are filling them out.

Research participants relayed that the Family Program Coordinator initially contacted them through their husbands’ e-mails. On the contrary, another participant noted that having accompanied her husband to check in at the ISA, she was able to give her own e-mail address to the Family Program Coordinator and receive updates and news about the program from the twice weekly listserv. It is important to highlight that the twice weekly e-mails contain information about services, activities and happenings both in St. John’s as well as on campus. Similarly to what I highlighted before, because the listserv e-mail is sent to students’ e-mails and not to partners’ e-mails—unless specifically requested—partners are not the direct recipients of the ISA listserv e-mails, rather, they depend on the students to access these e-mails and the information they contain. Students may be busy with their own studies and forget to inform partners about opportunities, activities or courses happening in St. John’s, with partners at risk of not being informed—as happened to some partners. Additionally, this partner experience highlights that the student-centred approach of the ISA is also visible in the check-in procedure that all international students must undergo at the ISA upon arrival. During this check-in process, students with partners may declare the latter’s presence in St. John’s on the check-in forms that are given to the Family

Program Coordinator; subsequently, the Family Program Coordinator files the forms and registers the students' e-mail addresses, follows up with the students, sends information about the Family Program and invites them to come together with their partners to the ISA. As interviews highlight, this partner accessed the ISA upon following check-in instruction for international students, as she accompanied her husband to the ISA and met the Family Program Coordinator. Yet, if partners do not accompany the students when they check in—because, for example, they arrive at a later date—they might not immediately get in contact with ISA staff members, as was the case for one participant.

Interviews highlight that partners' access to services currently offered at the ISA, from which they would greatly benefit, is contingent upon students' access to these services. For instance, a research participant found out about the existence of the ISA through the ISA pick-up service, as he was picked up at the airport in St. John's with his wife (the international student). Although partners are welcome to use the pick-up service provided from the ISA together with the students, they are not able to access the service on their own without the student accompanying them (Personal communication, June 12, 2014). This research participant related that he was able to contact the ISA, upon consulting a handbook that the ISA provided to his wife containing the contact information of the Family Program Coordinator. This partner arranged an appointment with the International Student Career Advisor, which usually supports international students in their search for work, who helped him to shape his resume as well as prepared him with mock interviews.

The fact that these participants were able to navigate their way and access several services, for which they were not the initial recipients, highlights the fact that the ISA

provides a welcoming atmosphere for partners and is able to extend services to them even though these are usually reserved for students. Yet, it also highlights the position of subordination that partners occupy with regards to accessing ISA services.

Gendered Needs and Lack of Childcare Services

I now outline, analyze and discuss the research finding by focusing on partners' gendered subject positions within the family and the community. The majority of partners mentioned that they had come to St. John's to accompany their husbands while they studied at MUN and that partners' aspirations had often adjusted as a result of this relocation. Generally, partners relayed that while their husbands were pursuing their studies, they were the main providers of care for their children. For instance, Participant C mentioned that she came to St. John's with her husband to avoid the family becoming separated and, by relocating to Canada, she put aside her goal of starting a business in her home country. Once in St. John's, she noted that her wish to continue her career in the financial sector could not be pursued immediately as she could not find a childcare facility for her child. As a consequence, she spent the first months in St. John's as a stay at home mother. During this time, she noted that she felt very lonely:

Here it's just *us* and we are fighting everyday just to *survive* the three of us kind of thing [herself, her husband and her child] so some days some days it hurts [she becomes very emotional] *because life is all about living a day at the time now rather than thinking big.*

Similarly, another participant affirmed that she moved to St. John's with her husband for his education. He went to school and she took care of their children. On the one hand, she proudly described herself as playing a central role within the family, as she

was responsible for her children's religious education and the principal provider of emotional support to her husband. On the other hand, she explained that occupying this role often prevented her from fulfilling some of her personal aspirations. For instance, she noted that attending ESL classes and returning to school was contingent upon finding childcare services that could take care of her children when she was in class. For this reason, she mentioned that only once her husband had completed his degree would he be more able to share parental duties with her and, thus, would she be able to continue her education. The experiences of these two partners were similar to those of Participant F, who blamed the lack of affordable daycare facilities and long waitlist to access this service for her inability to pursue her education and career-related aspirations:

The day care is ah ... required one thousand per month, for our daughter, so, I'm willing to study, or willing to work [...] but I can't because my daughter, we can't, we don't have a money to ah, for her to get to the day care because it's one thousand per month, it's, it's too much yeah .. there is a [service] I told you that is *free* for children, but we registered her and they said, no, she is, she will stay at waiting list *till next September and then, we will see* if it's eligible or not, so, I don't know .. that's really a point.

Additionally, she mentioned that being able to find affordable daycare options would have allowed her to look for employment and financially sustain her family. Indeed, she lamented that the high housing costs were putting a strain on her family's meagre budget.

Interviews highlight that partners' aspirations and needs are often subordinate to those of their partners, the students. This is particularly true in the case of female

partners with children who occupy gendered social roles as mothers within their families and as women within the society where they live. For this reason, partners' experiences must be analyzed from a gender-based perspective that looks at the complexities of their subject positioning. Similarly, in their research in New Brunswick, Ku, Doyle and Mooney (2001) argue that "immigrant women's settlement process is further compounded by gender roles and patriarchal relations that predispose women to prioritize the well-being of their spouse and family over their own career goals" (p. 81). Similarly, Reitmanova and Gustafson's (2007) research on im/migrant women's access to healthcare conducted in St. John's highlights that im/migrant women's position is often "complicated by their multiple social roles and prioritizing the needs of other family members" (pp. 16-17). This clearly emerged from the interviews, as partners often prioritized the students' needs and aspirations above their own.

My research also shows that partners' aspirations in St. John's were challenged by a lack of adequate childcare facilities. Indeed, partners often became the main caregivers for their children and a lack of daycare options became a structural constraint that particularly disadvantages partners. This oppression is symptomatic of a patriarchal society that genders women as caregivers and, because "gendered" infrastructural services—such as daycare—are lacking, women are placed in a disadvantaged position within society. The St. John's Native Friendship Centre, a community-based, non-profit, registered charity, is soon opening a childcare service close to Memorial University of Newfoundland. Yet, there is already a waiting list to use the service (Personal communication, April 2, 2014). It is clear that affordable, and available, in terms of actual accessibility, daycare options are a community

need; the important difference, though, is that partners often cannot count on their families to look after their children, whereas some locals might. It is true that partners mentioned having free access to weekly play groups for children and libraries with storytelling sessions. Nevertheless, these weekly workshops did not substitute for full-time daycare services.

Women also relayed that they experienced challenges in being left alone after giving birth in formal institutions such as hospitals. For instance, a participant noted that she felt very lonely after giving birth to her children, as she missed her family members and the support that they would have given her in managing the household and she still felt overwhelmed with responsibilities:

I need, I still need lots of help, I'm looking for something, I still feel like sometimes is I *need* to run out out of the house, I still have that feeling, like I need to run *away* from *all those responsibility* I'm having and have the rest, sometimes I don't have it, sometimes I go into a *really* deeply in a depression and then I wake up and I say, OK I have to work.

This participant also mentioned other women from her own country who have similar experiences. This coincides with Reitmanova and Gustafson's (2008) research on the experiences of Muslim women giving birth in St. John's. According to their research, a key issue for these women is lack of arrangements for their other children when they are at the hospital. Specifically, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2008) affirm that:

Although child care can be a concern for Canadian-born women, the interviewed [im/migrant] women had a small network of friends and family. Their husbands had employment and education related duties that limited their ability to care for other children at home. (p. 105)

Importantly, similarly to the research findings, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2008) argue that women also need to be supported after they give birth because the responsibilities they have managing the household and their other children prevent them from resting and so fully recovering their energy. Interviews highlight that support with managing the household after giving birth is culturally gendered, due to the fact that in some cultures this type of support is almost exclusively provided from the women of the family. As Participant E shared, in her culture, men do not usually contribute to managing the household or parenting even after women give birth and they need additional support, rather, this is a gendered role performed by the women of the house. Caution is required when discussing this aspect as it risks portraying both gender roles and cultures in essentialist ways. Undoubtedly, gendered roles and expectations vary from culture to culture, yet these are not static and can be altered due to the changes that immigration processes imply (see for instance Este and Tachble's (2011) research on fatherhood roles among Sudanese and Russian im/migrants in Canada). Similarly, Spitzer (2011) notes that the immigration process affects gender roles and expectations, due to the fact that gendered status is a social construct that changes across multiple axes. A gendered approach to analyzing research findings is important to contextualize partners' needs, as partners' subject position places those with children as the principal caregivers within the family. As such, partners are disadvantaged within the patriarchal dynamics of Canadian society where, generally, adequate and affordable childcare facilities are lacking.

To conclude, an analysis of data highlights that immigration and its outcomes are gendered processes (Tastsoglou, 2011). In other words, as Tastsoglou (2011) affirms, immigration (and integration) experiences are gendered due to the "subordinate status

of women in society which acts as a ‘filter,’ gendering institutions and shaping men and women’s experiences differently” (p. 23). Recall, for instance, the overarching dynamics of nation-building that shaped Canadian immigration (chapter 1). The analysis of the interviews foregrounds that partners are involved in similar dynamics of gendered immigration. Additionally, from the analysis of the pre-collected data I reviewed during my fieldwork, it results that female partners account for 62% of the population of partners, while male partners are only 38%. Gendered education dynamics are in place, as the data shows that the majority of students are males and the majority of partners—who enter Canada as dependants—are female.

Partners’ Needs and Structural Challenges within the Community

In this section, I outline, analyze and discuss findings related to respectively socialization, employment and language experiences from a gender and race perspective.

Socialization and Isolation. As noted in a previous section, partners’ needs are gendered, and especially for partners with children, partners noted that peer socialization depended on the availability of financial resources, space and vehicle availability to go out with their children. In order to socialize and make new friends, several partners related that they had initially attended the family-oriented events organized by the ISA. During our interview, a participant noted that she had initially attended these events but once the events stopped³ she had used different channels to socialize, as she had met her neighbours and people at work. Additionally, she expressed that having a car was a great advantage for her, as she did not rely on public transportation to travel around the city with her children. Participant B also disclosed

³ Funding for the events stopped in 2012.

that she had initially socialized with peers through ISA-organized events. She noted that the events were important social opportunities to meet other partners because, although with time she had become more confident, she felt that her appearance as a Muslim woman wearing a hijab had often acted as a filter for the way people interacted with her:

It's just something normal that all international ... person or people feeling it at first when they first arrive .. you feel worried, you feel scared [she looks at me] [...] if people don't like you or something especially ... the appearance that I have .. right? [she almost smiles, she points at her hijab and circles her face when she says the word appearance] so .. [...] now I feel comfortable like I have I don't have that kind of worry ... about what people wanna think about me .. I'm OK right now, if was just for the first few like first couple of years or something .. yeah ...

As this participant noted, she did not initially feel welcomed within the community because she felt that their physical appearance was perceived with hostility. Whereas a research participant disclosed that she had access to many play groups and community-based workshops that supported her in taking care of her children, other partners experienced social isolation. For instance, a participant affirmed that she missed the support provided by her family, especially soon after her arrival in St. John's when she experienced some difficulties. She recalled that she arrived in the middle of the winter with clothing that was not adequately suited for the cold temperatures and, without a vehicle, she was unable to go out and easily buy appropriate clothing, as she feared that she would become sick waiting for the bus in the cold. For the first months, she barely left the house and she felt extremely lonely. This initial experience caused her

great emotional stress and she mentioned that she even contemplated returning to her home country while her husband completed his studies. Lack of emotional and social support also had important consequences on this partner well-being, as she felt isolated and sometimes even depressed. In a study about im/migrant's mental health conducted in St. John's, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2009) highlight that social support is among the components responsible for im/migrant mental wellness. In an early study, they argue that:

St. John's immigrants did not have sufficient support from their families and friends who were physically far away. They were separated from familiar neighbourhoods and social environments. Many had limited resources, family support, and information, and experienced loneliness and social isolation.

(Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2007, p. 15).

To conclude this section, a consistent number of partners experienced initial social isolation and lack of support provided by their family members at home, mostly due to structural impediments—such as lack of resources—that hindered their socialization. For this reason, partners often mentioned that they had successfully socialized as a result of the events organized by the ISA and that they provided the opportunity to go out with her family. Indeed, the events included transportation options and provided family oriented spaces. As such, these events were particularly useful to partners, who were supported in their parental needs and were provided with the material instruments to reach the events—often partners had no access to vehicles and were not always able to use public transportation.

Employment. This section highlights the experiences and structural constraints that partners encountered upon searching for employment. Two participants relayed

very positive experiences and felt that the employment that they found suited their needs and matched their qualifications. Other partners, however, relayed completely different stories. A participant affirmed that he had initially feared not finding employment in St. John's due to the limited opportunities in his field. However, just a few weeks after his arrival, he consulted the ISA career services and was hired by a company in St. John's. Although he was not working in a position that matched his skills and qualifications exactly, he affirmed that he was extremely pleased to be given the chance to work for a Canadian company where he could gain Canadian work experience. This positive employment experience was similar to that of another participant. Initially, she noted that she had not planned to look for paid employment, however, after she saw that an employer was hiring she submitted her resume, received an interview and obtained the position. Although in order to work for a Canadian employer she had to obtain a Canadian certification as a fitness trainer, she affirmed that this process was very quick and did not cause her any issues; instead it presented a good chance for her to refresh her knowledge. Unlike these partners, Participants B and C did not describe their employment-related experiences in a positive way, nor did they feel that they were given opportunities that would do justice to their previous work experience. Participant B was very concerned about not finding employment that matched her qualifications:

My hope [is] in terms of the employment .. [she clears her voice] because employment is my most concern and ... my hope is ... I hope that there will be more job opportunities I ... is hard to find a job here [she looks at me as if to say: do you agree?] .. and it's very difficult .. sometimes I feel like I'm gonna work in the super market [she smiles] [...] before I worked full time but now I'm part

time .. before I used to handle so many things [...] now I'm just handling one thing [she laughs] and ... well, that changed and .. for me is like, I don't know I feel like I'm not given enough opportunities while I tried to .. [...] like right now, is just the difference is just like money that I get with the currency and all so I feel like .. I am not really working I'm not using my credential fully, that's what I think.

Although she had not been told the reasons why employers did not hire her, over the years she had applied for several positions—for which she believed she was qualified based on the job description and educational requirements—and had not gotten any of the jobs. She was left with doubt and the fear that employers were discriminating against her. Additionally, Participant B's frustration was connected to her experience with an employment agency that she had consulted. For instance, although she had a BA and an MA in the field of education, and had related work experience in her home country, the employment agency suggested she work as hotel receptionist, a position that matched few of her skills. Furthermore, Participant B had not been contacted to attend training sessions about which she specifically expressed interest and felt that she had missed out on important opportunities to meet employers and to network with them. Her experience was so negative, she declined to rely on the support provided by this employment agency and since then, she has looked for jobs on her own.

Similarly, Participant C, who had a successful career in finance in her home country, could not find any suitable employment that matched her skills and expertise in St. John's. She mentioned that she consulted the same local career service provider and felt particularly frustrated in seeing her many years of experience undervalued:

I did visit [the employment agency] and ... one thing I would suggest here is like

they treat everyone probably in the same ways like .. ah since I have almost [number of years] of experience and in .. [specific] sector I would love to start ... not *entirely as a newcomer* [voice is a bit tentative].

Additionally, it was suggested to her that she do volunteer work to acquire Canadian work experience, a suggestion she found frustrating as she noted that she was already qualified in her field and had years of work experience. She noted that, eventually having realized that her stay in Newfoundland would have deskilled her professionally, she decided to pursue a PhD in order to obtain qualifications that would help her once back in her home country.

As interviews highlight, often partners were prevented from finding suitable employment because of racial discrimination and devaluation of their foreign credentials. A similar research finding emerges in Nderitu's (2009) research on Black African im/migrant women in St. John's. As Nderitu (2009) notes "although the locals are friendly, the society is exclusionary" (p. 141) and although "people in Newfoundland are friendlier than in other parts of Canada [...] [racism] is there" (p. 115). Similarly, Jaya and Porter (2011) relate an "endemic discrimination against outsiders" (p. 119). Additionally, lack of Canadian work experience emerges as a reason for which im/migrants tend not to be hired by local companies (Clark, 2009). Furthermore, Clark's (2009) research on im/migrants in St. John's also points out that devaluation of foreign credentials is a major barriers to im/migrants' integration in the labour market. This systemic gatekeeping mechanism is the legacy of colonial power that is still embedded in contemporary Canadian society and conceptualizes knowledge and knowers as inferior or superior based on racial discrimination (recall the overarching discourse about worth assigned to knowledge and knowers as outlined in

chapter 2).

There are important outcomes that result from these discriminatory attitudes, as this research finding foregrounds that partners' health was also contingent upon the personal fulfilment of partners' expectations and dreams, such as finding suitable and meaningful employment. For instance, discriminations and undervaluation of foreign credentials ensure that jobseekers cannot easily enter the labour market, and therefore face downward mobility and impoverishment. Similarly, as Reitmanova and Gustafson (2007) highlight, im/migrants experience downward mobility as "some St. John's immigrant families had income lower than they had before moving to Canada and could barely cover their basic expenses" (p. 16). A further factor contributing to partners' downward mobility was the high cost of housing, which is also reported by the Off-Campus Housing Office of MUN affirming that "since 2009, there is an unprecedented shortage of affordable housing" (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014e). Securing housing on-campus is challenging too as, at the present moment, MUN has only 11 apartments in total available to international students and their families as well as to domestic students (Personal communication, April 28, 2014). In order to access this service, applicants are placed on a waiting list (Personal communication, April 28, 2014) and it often takes some months before a vacancy becomes available. Additionally, unemployment precludes access to channels that are important in order to socialize, such as interacting with co-workers. Unemployment may also diminish the sense of self-worth and lead to depression (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2007). Simply put, experiencing financial insecurity exposes partners to stress and has consequences on partners' wellbeing. This research finding is also noted in Weerasinghe's (2011) research, where women conceptualize

their mental well-being as a “stress and depression-free state” (p. 241), which can be threatened by lack of social inclusion or low income.

Language Needs. In the following, I highlight partners’ experiences regarding their language needs. In general, partners wished to improve their English knowledge beyond the functional level and wanted to be able to express themselves well; they wanted to better integrate themselves into the local population, to pursue their education or to improve their communication skills at work. Among the participants, two arrived in St. John’s with very little English and, for them, learning English was very important. Participant E told me that her greatest wish was to improve her English in order to fulfil her dream of pursuing further education:

So when I came here I was wishing really to learn English more than the, the way I am now I was wish, wish, wish, really and I still hope that I could, ah improve my English up to the top, I wanna speak fluent, I don’t wanna have any hard time expressing, express my emotion or saying anything I wanna say it, I wanna speak fluent the same as my language.. so this is first, actually this is coming in my mind first, whenever I could reach this point I [want] to go to college or university.

In order to realize her dream, she attended various ESL classes, first in another Canadian province where she lived before coming to Newfoundland, and then in St. John’s. She stopped attending classes, however, due to their high cost. She mentioned that not being able to attend regular classes had a negative impact on her English improvement and that she felt that her English knowledge was still poor, having forgotten a lot of material from her last course. Although this participant disclosed that there were several free ESL classes offered in St. John’s and at the ISA that she could

potentially attend, she noted that she was unable to do so because there were no childcare options available and her husband could not look after their children while she was at class. She also mentioned that other women she knew faced the same issue. Additionally, she mentioned that lack of transportation often prevented her from attending classes. Similarly, another participant explained that she attended some free ESL classes provided in the community, yet she was not sure if she would have been able to take ESL classes during the winter due to not being able to count on public transportation to easily reach the school.

Although fluent in English, Participant A needed to improve his communication skills for the workplace, because he was worried that his language skills were not good enough to guarantee him work in the company past his probation time. Yet, he mentioned that the courses provided at the ISA were intended for female partners:

I heard about a program which is intended to female spouses and that program was intended to help females to improve their English but there is not such thing to male [...] when I .. I was at the ESL [when I asked about other classes, a part those from the ISA] I asked about ... some kind of discount or I don't know short courses for foreigners and there is nothing related to it [...]

Additionally, he disclosed that he was not able to attend more advanced ESL courses because of their costliness. The only courses he was able to access were for beginners, while he was beyond beginner level English. Several barriers were identified as preventing partners from attending ESL classes. As highlighted in a previous section, class attendance was contingent upon availability of childcare facilities; it was also contingent upon financial availability to afford paying for courses and availability of means of transportation to reach classes. Importantly, interviews highlight that

partners depended on their partners (the students) in order to access ESL available within the community and at the ISA, for if the students are not able to look after the children, partners are not able to attend courses. Additionally, interviews foreground that lack of transportation options, especially in winter and during the weekend, discourages attendance to classes. Interviews have also highlighted that the ISA offers ESL classes based on gender-specific criteria. To be sure, it is important that gender-based classes are provided to ensure that specific cultural, religious and personal needs are met. For instance, in Reitmanova and Gustafson's research (2008), women found out about health/pregnancy information from the ESL classes that they attended, important information that in mixed gender classes they might have not shared. On the other side, this criteria discriminates against male partners. Using binary and heteronormative criteria to determine ESL class eligibility may also exclude partners whose gender identity and sexual orientation does not immediately fall into binary categories, such as transgender individuals.⁴

To conclude this section, I have outlined, analyzed and discussed findings by looking at the “the social and economic conditions that [im/migrants] encounter upon arrival” (Jaya & Porter, 2011, p. 113). In other words, as Jaya and Porter (2011) notice, integration is as a process where both im/migrants and receiving communities are involved (p. 113) and the successful integration of newcomers heavily depends on the conditions into which they settle.

⁴ As Luibhéid (2008) points out “most scholarship, policymaking, service provision, activism, and cultural work remain organized around the premise that migrants are heterosexuals” (p. 169). Similarly, O'Neill and Sproule (2011) highlight the importance of considering LGBTQ newcomers' well-being and invite service providers to be more inclusive of LGBTQ people.

Partners' Suggestions to ISA Services

I now outline and detail partners' suggestions on ISA service implementation as these emerged from the interviews, thus meeting the third research goal of this thesis. Although it is not a finding that was solicited by the research questions, it is important that I honour participants' wishes to thank the ISA for all the support that they have received. This gratitude was expressed constantly during interviews as partners wanted to be sure that their suggestions were not interpreted as complaints, but as contributions to the ISA programs.

Some participants suggested that support be provided to partners when they arrive, to help them settle in through a mentoring program of sorts where newly-arrived partners are paired up with partners already in St. John's. Partners conveyed that, this way, they would have the opportunity to ask questions prior to their arrival and would be better prepared to face the adjustment. A participant also suggested that the ISA provide partners with information sessions immediately after they arrive in St. John's; this way partners would be supported in matters of immigration, and ask questions about St. John's, public transportation, banking, schools and similar matters. As she further noted, these sessions would be particularly useful to partners who cannot read fluently in English and therefore may not be able to read the handbook distributed by the ISA to international students. In order to reach the ISA and better use its services, partners suggested that some transportation options be implemented. The majority of partners relayed that they are users of the public transport system and that the length of the routes, the low frequency between buses, and the lack of covered shelters made waiting for the bus difficult, especially in winter and/or with young children. A participant suggested that the ISA provide partners with a weekly or

monthly bus or shuttle service that could pick up partners and take them to the ISA. Additionally, this participant suggested the creation of a carpooling service to reach the ISA as well as other places. She affirmed that this service could be paid for by partners, and partners or even students who have a vehicle could set up places and times to pick up other people along their way. Similarly, other partners suggested the ISA provide partners with a voucher or a cab service in order to facilitate their attendance to ESL classes and activities in general. Another participant suggested that transportation options be provided to facilitate partners' visits to the local Mosque, located in just outside St. John's in neighbouring Torbay. Although she was aware that there is a chapel on campus where students and their families can pray, she mentioned that praying at the Mosque in Torbay would better address her religious needs.

Some partners offered suggestions in relation to employment. One participant suggested organizing specific cover letter writing activities and mock interviews to help partners improve their communication skills. This participant was aware that the ISA offers career consultation services to international students, and suggested that the service could be specifically advertised to partners too, as part of the Family Program. Additionally, this participant suggested that the ISA organize career-related events to expose employers to the multicultural knowledge and skills that partners possess. She noted that this would create the space for both potential employers and partners to meet each other and network. Another participant suggested allowing part-time employment on campus for partners while they are waiting for their work permit to be issued so that they can gain Canadian work experience. A relevant suggestion in relation to employment was that affordable English courses be provided to those partners who need to improve their communication skills for the purpose of

employment. Finally, several partners suggested that the ISA provide support to partners with children by providing affordable childcare facilities so that partners could more easily look for employment and attend ESL classes organized at the ISA. For instance, a participant suggested having childcare facilities that provide short-term care with hourly rates (that partners would pay) where children can be looked after while their parents have interviews or in cases of last minute emergencies. Another participant also asserted that partners who give birth to their children in St. John's may need more support. First, she asked for a volunteer to come home and look after the children when women are in labour, so that their partners can support them at hospital. Second, she suggested extending this support for a couple of days after women give birth; she specifically explained she would like more help in managing the household. In addition, some partners mentioned that their financial situation in St. John's had sometimes been precarious, and one suggested that an initial fund for emergency lending be established for partners in order to cope with urgent expenses. This fund would be paid back as soon as partners' financial situations improved. This participant also suggested that the ISA initiate a blog or networking service to allow partners to swap household objects and help partners to purchase affordable items. Another partner instead suggested that the ISA help partners coping with financial issues by implementing affordable housing services.

Conclusion

Interviews highlight partners' positive experiences with the ISA, as well as their needs and the structural impediments to their integration in St. John's. For instance, from the interviews it is clear that the ISA offers good factual information to partners and that some partners were able to socialize with peers through the events

that were organized there. However, partners are often hindered in fulfilling their aspirations because of their role as main childcare provider within their family and lack of affordable childcare options. This responsibility prevents them from attending ESL classes and pursuing their education, as well as precludes partners' access to employment and channels that enable partners to socialize. Partners are further limited by other restrictions, such as employment discrimination and the high cost of many ESL courses. Finally, partners' suggestions for service implementation reflect their needs as they generally suggested that the ISA develop childcare services, provide more transportation options and offer support upon looking for employment.

Chapter 4. Conclusion and Direction for Further Research

The research findings support much of the literature that suggests immigration is a gendered process. This is highlighted in the appearance and lack of visibility of the self-identified male participant. His needs were different from the women with respect to child birthing and post-birth support, childrearing, the need to connect with others socially and the need for support services to find specific to women's social and political functioning in society. Specifically, this research participant seemed marginalized in the findings; however, the findings also support the claim regarding the gendered nature of the subject and the focus of the research. That is, women are marginalized in their homes and communities and this is especially so in St John's, Newfoundland, where they are isolated from known support systems such as families and friends. Additionally, this research participant described his experiences in mainly positive terms: apart from not being able to find any affordable ESL course, as I discuss, his needs appear to have been met. And, as I focused on the structural impediments that partners encounter, his experience found little space in the findings. Partners' lived experiences highlight that partners are differently located within society by virtue of their gender and race, with important outcomes for their mental well-being. Importantly, solely using a gender-based approach is not enough to fully contextualize partners' needs as women are differently positioned within society because of their racialized status. Social constructs of gender and race ensure that partners are positioned unequally within the society, have different access to resources and socialize differently. Additionally, partners' successful integration depends on the availability of community services; access to childcare facilities, for instance, enables partners to pursue their education, attend ESL classes and enter the labour market. The ISA plays a key role in facilitating

partners' experiences within the community and based on research findings, a range of services could be implemented and created to further support partners.

As outlined throughout this thesis, as im/migrants, partners are involved in the internationalization dynamics of MUN and the related immigration strategies of the province, indeed of Canada. While this research is by no means exhaustive, it nevertheless represents an attempt to fill the gap in feminist literature concerned about the needs of international student partners. This research is important, for instance, because as international students arrive in St. John's in growing numbers, so too will the number of partners increase,¹ and better understanding partners' needs is important to further support partners. This research highlights existing sexist and racist structural impediments such as underemployment and lack of adequate childcare options that particularly affect gendered and racialized partners. It foregrounds that partners' needs—and partners' ability to fulfil them—are often contingent upon the socio-economic dynamics that partners find once in St. John's. Accounting for the multiplicity of barriers that partners encounter is of vital importance for the ISA and for MUN when planning potential service implementation. It is important to state that the ISA encouraged me to do my fieldwork at their centre and asked me to conduct a needs assessment about partners of international students. This demonstrates Memorial University of Newfoundland's commitment to support partners of international students. Also, this research demonstrates that support to partners is already there. Interviews foreground that the ISA is a place where partners reach out, obtain factual information and are supported with specific programs such as ESL classes. The fact that partners are sometimes able to access services that were not

¹ Twenty three families in 2009/2010; 27 in 2010/2011; 44 in 2011/2012; 67 in 2012/2013; and 72 in 2013/2014 (Personal communication, September 9, 2014).

initially designed for them—career-oriented services or social events such as the Coffee Club—demonstrates that the ISA is able to offer services to partners that target their specific needs. However, more services could be implemented in order to more effectively sustain partners.

To conclude, this research is a pilot study and is intended to explore partners of international students' lived experiences from a feminist perspective in relation to gender, race and health. This is a starting point and future research need to be more inclusive and provide the space for the acceptance of differences in the partner population. For instance, further research could consider needs of partners who do not identify themselves in gender-binary terms. Although this research was open to partners of all genders and sexual orientation, the small sample size did not include queer-identified partners. As noted above, the research must be inclusive so that people with various backgrounds and lived realities will naturally be included as apposed of being singled out as being different (for e.g. for their sexual orientation).

Further research might more fully investigate the structural constraints that emerged within the community and provide specific suggestions in this regards; future research on partners of international students could also be conducted in languages other than English to include those partners that are not fluent enough to be interviewed in English. The limitations inherent in the research (e.g. no interpretation services) necessitated that some individuals were unable to participate. Finally, as partners are often in St. John's together with their children, future research may specifically investigate parenthood roles, parents' needs and how support can be organized.

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Appendix A. Recommendations to ISA Service Implementation

Here, I offer suggestions to the International Student Advising Office (ISA) services in the following areas: improved communication with partners; the advertising of services, which currently target students, could be expanded to include partners; better implementation of current services for partners; and the creation of new services for partners.

1. Adopt a more partner-centred communication approach. The ISA could create a check-in procedure for partners that is similar to what is already in use for international students. Currently, international students must check-in at the ISA upon arrival; there, they fill out registration forms, receive an informational handbook and attend a one-on-one orientation with ISA staff members. Based on the research findings, this procedure risks enforcing partners' dependence on students to access ISA services. If a check-in procedure for partners were to be put in place, there would be several benefits; partners would have the possibility to talk to an ISA staff member, explain their needs and immediately be informed about services available to them. Partners would also be able to leave their own contact information with the Family Program Coordinator and thereby be included in the twice weekly listserv e-mail. With regards to yearly surveys sent from the Family Program Coordinator, obtaining partners' e-mail addresses would also facilitate sending the surveys to partners and the overall results would likely be more accurate. Additionally, through the check-in forms that partners would fill out, the ISA would obtain accurate demographic information about them.

2. Expand advertising of services currently offered to international students to include partners. In order to ensure that services are accessible to

partners, the ISA needs to advertise its service offerings to partners and encourage partners to utilize services. For instance, partners might be encouraged to use outreach and career-oriented services that the ISA currently offers to international students. The ISA could explicitly advertise these services to partners on the ISA website, via e-mails sent directly to partners and with flyers distributed during ESL classes. Career services that might be extended to partners include the Professional Skills Development Program (PSDP, see introduction), the Entrepreneurship Training Program (ETP) and the Enhanced Development of the Graduate Experience (EDGE) that currently MUN offers to international students. The ETP specifically provides graduate students with the know-how required to start a business in Canada (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014f). EDGE offers several professional development programs during the academic year that assist graduate students in acquiring leadership, management, communication, interpersonal skills and several other skills (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014g). By having access to these career-oriented services, partners may acquire valuable employment seeking skills and enhance their possibilities of meeting potential employers. As discussed previously, some of the structural constraints that partners identified were racial discriminations and devaluation of work experience acquired abroad. If these barriers are not challenged, partners may have access to all the previously mentioned services and still have difficulties finding employment. The province is becoming more racially and culturally diverse; therefore, the university and the larger community are making efforts to become more aware of how racism, anti-immigrant sentiments and other forms of discrimination that affect newcomers to the province. The ISA could assume more of a leadership role in helping employers to understand partners of international

students by facilitating dialogue on these issues by creating awareness among career service providers in St. John's.

3. Implement existing services for partners. Interviews highlight that partners want to improve their language development skills and the ISA could implement open and inclusive ESL classes. For example, in addition to gender-specific classes, the ISA could offer classes open to all partners of international students and assist partners with transportation and childcare options.

4. Host information sessions at the ISA. The ISA could consider enhancing its informational services by hosting information sessions for partners with representatives from international students associations or community-based organizations, which support im/migrants. Information sessions could be centred on themes such as immigration; health and well-being; religious associations; childcare services and playgroups; information about banking services; public transportation and more. Examples of organizations to be contacted are the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council (RIAC) and the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador (MWONL). Additionally, experts working at the MUN Student Health Centre and in similar places within the university might be contacted to host a session on women's health and well-being—for example, in regards to the support available for women during pregnancy and postpartum. Sessions could be facilitated by representatives who speak languages other than English so as to facilitate the communication with partners who are not fluent in English and partners could be assisted with transportation and childcare options.

5. Create new services for partners. The ISA could create new services that assist partners with their childcare, socialization and transportation needs. First,

the ISA might consider providing partners with hourly rate childcare services that families pay—as the University of Toronto currently offers to students and their families (University of Toronto, 2014). Additionally, the ISA might facilitate the creation of playgroups where partners could meet weekly or monthly. Second, the ISA could create spaces for partners to meet socially. The ISA could facilitate further interactions among partners by providing bus tickets and organize events at central locations that can be easily accessed. These type of events could be facilitated monthly and be family-oriented so that partners can bring their children with them. Additionally, the ISA could support partners to be independent by helping them to organize small groups for outings that meet to visits associations, libraries and places of interest—facilitating transportation options as mentioned above. Finally, the ISA could act as a facilitator so that partners can create a carpooling system in order to enable partners to attend ESL classes or informational sessions.

Appendix B. Recruitment Letter

Re Research Project: *Improving Services for Partners of International Students at Memorial University*

Dear

My name is Ilaria Pivi and I am international student at Memorial University.

I am doing an internship at the International Student Advising office (ISA) as part of my Master Degree in Gender Studies and I am contacting you about the research project noted above. I am writing to request your assistance in recruiting your partner as a participant for this project.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a needs assessment by asking partners of international students which of ISA services could be improved to better their needs. Participants will also be asked to describe any possible gaps and barriers to their integration in the community of St. John's.

For this research project I am hoping to contact 7 participants. Participants are individuals who are married or live together in common-law relationships with international students and who have arrived in St. John's during the 2013 winter semester or earlier.

Participants will need to be able to speak English at a conversational level and will be interviewed one time for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interview will take place in the interviewee's home or in a location of their choice.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethic policy. If you or if your partner have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way they have been treated or their rights as a participant), they may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

If you or if your partner have any questions or if your partner would like to participate in this study please contact me, Ilaria Pivi, by phone or by e-mail. I can be reached at (709) 864-8895 or ip1253@mun.ca.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Ilaria Pivi

Appendix C. Information Letter

Re Research Project: *Improving Services for Partners of International Students at Memorial University*

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you because you are interested in my research project. I am a student at Memorial University and I would like to conduct a needs assessment about partners of international students.

I am interested in hearing about which services offered at the International Students Advising office (ISA) for partners of international students are useful and which could be improved. I am also interested in hearing about any possible gaps and barriers to your integration that you might have experienced in the community of St. John's. This is an opportunity for you to express your ideas and to help improve services offered at the ISA as well as in the community of St. John's.

If you agree to take part in this study I will meet you in your home or in another place of your choice for a 45 to 60 minutes interview. Interviews will take place between the 18th and the 23rd of September 2013. Your participation is completely voluntary and, with your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.

I understand that the experience of moving to St. John's together with your partner can be difficult and upsetting. I have attached to this e-mail an Interview Script, which outlines the questions I will be asking in the interview, so that you can decide if you would be comfortable answering to them. If you need any emotional support during and after your involvement in the project you can contact the Multicultural Women's Association on (709) 726-0321 and the Association for New Canadians on (709) 722-9680. Both associations are located in St. John's.

Together with this letter there is a consent form that describes your participation and explains any possible risks and benefits of your participation. At the time of the interview I will be happy to answer to any questions and concerns you have about the research or the research process. You will then be asked to fill out and sign this consent form.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, or would like more information, please call Ilaria Pivi at (709) 864-8895 or e-mail me at ip1253@mun.ca.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. Sincerely,

Ilaria Pivi

Appendix D. Informed Consent Form

Research Project:

Improving Services for Partners of International Students at Memorial

Researcher:

Ilaria Pivi

Academic Supervisor:

Delores Mullings

You will receive a copy of this before starting the interview. You may fill it on your own or with help at our meeting. Please check the boxes “YES” or “NO”.

I understand that the researcher, Ilaria Pivi, is doing this study at the ISA to develop a needs assessment about partners of international students.

YES NO

I agree to take part in a 45 to 60 minutes interview with the researcher, to discuss which services for partners of international students could be improved at the ISA and to describe any possible gaps and barriers to my integration in the community of St. John's.

YES NO

I understand that the interview is audiorecorded. YES NO

I understand that the researcher cannot ensure the anonymity of my participation to the study and that students and partners of international students who go to the ISA might know that I am taking part in this research.

YES NO

I understand that no information about my identity will be released or printed and that my answers will remain confidential.

YES NO

I understand that the researcher will make an exception to confidentiality if I disclose information that suggests that I or someone else is at risk.

YES NO

I understand that only the researcher and her Academic Supervisor will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts.

YES NO

I understand that after my participation in this study the Academic Supervisor will keep audio recorded material in a safe place for a minimum of five years as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research, after which time it will be destroyed.

YES NO

I understand that my participation in the study is completely voluntary.

YES NO

I understand that I can refuse to answer any question that I am asked and I can remove myself from the interview at any time without consequences.

YES NO

I understand that if I want to remove myself and/or my data from the study I need to contact the researcher within two months after my interview to make the request.

YES NO

I understand that if I decide to cancel my participation from the study myself and my partner can still access to or use the ISA services.

YES NO

I understand that if I need emotional support during or after my involvement in the project, support is available at the Association for New Canadians on (709) 722-9680 and at the Multicultural Women's Association on (709) 726-0321. Both associations are located in St. John's.

YES NO

Questions that I have about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. YES
NO

I understand that I may ask any question that I have now or in the future about the study.

YES NO

I understand that this study has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

YES NO

Your signature: Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to remove yourself and/or your data from the study without having to give me any explanation.
- You understand that to remove yourself and/or your data from the study you need to contact me, the researcher, within two months from the date of the interview and that doing so will not cause you any problems now or in the future.

If you sign this form, you maintain your legal rights, and the researcher is still bound to honour her ethical and professional duties. The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Signature of participant

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study and any potential risks of the study, I believe that they have freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Telephone Number of investigator:

(709) 864-8895

Email address of investigator:

ip1253@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861

Appendix E. Interview questions

First set of questions

1. Demographic questions:
2. May I ask your age?
3. How do you define your ethnic background?
4. What languages do you speak and write fluently?
5. Where were you born?
6. How long have you lived in St. John's?
7. Have you got any children? No/yes. If yes, how many?
8. What is your educational background?
9. Which services have you used since arriving in Newfoundland?

Second set of questions

- 1 . Tell me about your experience in St John's since your arrival.
- 2 . What hopes and aspirations do you have for yourself?
How have these changed since your arrival in St John's?
- 3 . How has your profession changed from what it was before you arrived in St. John's?
- 4 . How did you adjust to the English language once in St. John's?
- 5 . What recommendations would you make to the ISA to support new partners to integrate in the community of St. John's?