At Home in Canada: Iranian Immigrants' Sense of Belonging, Homemaking Practices, and Racialized Experiences in the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario

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Abstract

This study focuses on Iranian immigrants' experiences in four midsized Atlantic Canadian cities, including Halifax, St. John's, Charlottetown, and Moncton, as well as Fredericton, and asks how do the communities of belonging emerge and function through the Iranian immigrants' transnational practices. In this, I focus on how the participants' everyday practices contribute to creating, developing, or resisting a sense of belonging within their home, neighbourhood, and beyond. I also include Iranians who left these Atlantic cities for five cities in Ontario with different Iranian community sizes: Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Lancaster, and London. In this exploration, I focus on everyday life to understand the dynamics of a sense of belonging in two different regions with different characteristics and considerable inner diversity regarding access, population, remoteness, urbanness, being an island or not, Iranian community size, etc. The central contribution of the comparison is to highlight how communities of belonging function within the Iranians' diaspora in each region and how these communities function differently depending on the participants' social location and where they reside. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured, in-depth interviews with sixty-seven first-generation Iranian immigrants residing in the five Atlantic Canadian cities and five cities in Ontario, I explore the meaning of home for immigrants who left Iran during the 1979 revolution and examine how it is in conversation with a sense of belonging.

Through a symbolic interactionist and social constructionist lens and using the sociology of home and belonging theories, transnationalism, group culture, and critical race theories, this study demonstrates that Iranian immigrants have shaped various

communities of belonging within the Iranian diaspora with different characteristics in the Atlantic cities and Ontario. These communities of belonging are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups of Iranians rather than through negotiation with the Canadian communities. In other words, the formation of the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their immigration status, language, and cultural differences with the centrality of *race*. The findings in chapters three and four show that home is a fluid concept for Iranian immigrant participants, depending on gender, religion, immigration status, where they live, and how and when they left Iran. Similar to their sense of belonging, home for the Iranian immigrants in this study does not have a homogenized specific definition. Rather, it is an impossible and ongoing project, a paradoxical notion that they constantly work toward to make sense of with their agentic strategies of action.

Moving from more individual to community and group level processes, chapter five suggests that meta-stories and narratives shape the common imaginations of Iranian immigrants about remote and central locations and have an impact on their decisions to leave or stay in the Atlantic region. Moreover, it demonstrates that friendship groups significantly contribute to creating a space for interaction, mutual understanding, and performing an "authentic" or an Iranian-style version of self with the central role of the mother tongue language. These close and tied friendship groups play the most prominent role in enacting belonging and are pivotal in operationalizing *temporary belonging* in the Iranian diaspora in Canada.

In chapter six, I engage with the participants' racialized experiences as another influential driving force in navigating their sense of home and belonging in Canada.

Despite the calls and claims at different local and national levels to celebrate diversity, I show that covert and tacit racism (Duck & Rawls, 2020) are omnipresent and subtle forms of racism in the participants' lives that influence their understanding of selves, their thoughts, and their relationship with society. I argue that tacit and covert racism coupled with the Iranian immigrants' initial identification of themselves as "White" pushes them to enter a *racialized spiral of silence*, resulting in taking racialized experiences for granted. The reality of being racialized in the Canadian context changes the participants' identification over certain incidents. I borrow Kathy Charmaz's (1991) concept to mark this identification transformation as the "Identifying Moment" and explain how race suddenly becomes a master status for the participants. In the midst of racial disparities and discriminatory experiences, the physical home is a social field for self-expression and an extension of self among family and friends for the participants.

This study explores the lives of Iranian immigrants who land in Atlantic Canada: many of whom do not stay in the region and leave for Ontario. It contributes to the fields of sociology of race, home, and belonging in the Atlantic midsized cities and Ontario and to understanding the diverse experiences of immigrant groups — in this case, Iranian immigrants —within these contexts. It highlights the diversity of immigration across Canada and the importance of decentralizing immigration policies and plannings to create more welcoming contexts for diverse immigrant groups in different parts of Canada. Compared to the current diverse literature about the immigrant communities' function in traditional immigration gateways such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, focusing on the Atlantic cities' context allowed me to advance the scholarship in understanding the immigrants' experiences in non-traditional immigration gateways in the five Atlantic

cities. As a result, the present study reveals how Iranian immigrant communities function in these cities and how their transnational practices contribute to creating communities of belonging within each region with their own diversities. It also advances our knowledge of the racialization processes in the Atlantic Canadian cities and fills the gap in understanding the Iranian immigrants' racialized experiences and the transition of their master status after migration to a White-dominated society.

Keywords: Belonging, Home, Migration, Racialization, Symbolic Interaction.

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"I left Iran, but Iran did not leave me."

    Azar Nafisi.

Introduction

    Home and belonging are contested notions for people who have left their community, hometown, or country by choice or force. Moving around in a hyper-mobile era causes distress for people already residing in a particular place and for immigrants (Haas, Castles, & Miller, 1998). A sense of belonging captures a detailed condition of immigrants' relationship with the host society and portrays how they are doing there (May, 2013; Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017). This study explores the sense of belonging of Iranian immigrants in relation to a new "home" – in a material and social sense – in the context of Atlantic cities and Ontario. I address how Iranian immigrants create, develop, or resist a sense of belonging and investigate how this relates to a sense of home for them in the Atlantic cities: St. John's, Newfoundland; Fredericton, Moncton, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. I also included Iranian immigrants who left these Atlantic cities for three major cities in Ontario: Toronto, Ottawa, and London, for various reasons, including job opportunities. I chose to focus on the context of Atlantic cities because of the challenge of immigration retention (Statistics Canada, 2023i), the challenge of population growth (Reid, 2011; Government of Canada, 2023a), my observation of immigrants constantly choosing to leave the region, and the lack of research on racialized communities and their experiences of belonging in the region contrary to more traditional immigration gateways.

Canada strives increasingly to become a significant destination for transnational, skilled worker immigrants, especially in the post-pandemic era (Government of Canada, 2023f). The mission statement of Citizenship and Immigration Canada indicates the Canadian government's aspiration to provide an inclusive environment for immigrants and proclaims that it is vital to facilitate immigrants' successful integration into Canada to maximize their contribution to the country (IRCC, 2020). Such a declaration comes from a state-centric view that seeks to utilize immigrants' presence in a maximum capacity and highlights their beneficial presence for Canadian society. Such statements intensify the "othering" of immigrants (Brah, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2011a) and highlight the necessity of justifying their presence in a destination country. It exacerbates the boundaries between immigrants and White settlers and centres the justification of immigrants' presence around their usefulness in society. However, such statements also reveal the significance of such topics from the state's viewpoint and the Canadian governments' preoccupation with facilitating the immigrants' integration into society.

In the following, I present my research question, objectives, and contributions and highlight the necessity of focusing on the immigrants' experiences, especially the participants in this study in the Atlantic cities, both while residing in the region and after leaving it. I also provide an outline of each following chapter and portray the contributions of the dissertation in the field.

Research Questions, Objectives, and Contributions

The present research contributes to the major question of how communities of belonging might emerge, rather than communities around the division of race, nationality, or ethnicity through micro and meso-level processes by Iranian immigrants. I define communities of belonging as communities where the members are gathered around shared values and goals and benefit for all, regardless of their gender, race and ethnicity, religion, class, status, ability, age, sexual orientation, or any other identifying characteristics. The communities of belonging are fluid and constantly changing to adapt to the members' needs to equally provide a thriving context for everyone. Throughout the following chapters, I demonstrate and argue that the communities of belonging for Iranian immigrants evolve around two main goals: building and fortifying the networks of support for members and remembering and practicing Iranian identity to ensure its continuity after migration.

In this, I focus on the case of Iranian immigrants, who are a growing population in Canada and put their experiences at the centre of my analysis of a sense of home and belonging. In this study, home is a dynamic process consisting of imaginary, sensory, social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Cross, 2015; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019). Thus, it might take the dimensions of a physical home, neighbourhood, city, and even to the extent of a country or the whole world (as some participants described). It might be provoked by the presence of a person or remembering a memory from the past. I view home as an ongoing project (Hage, 1997)

that immigrants work toward making sense of, even if they deny it. Moreover, I regard a sense of home not only as a contributor to the sense of belonging, but as an integral part of it.

I ask how communities of belonging emerge and function through the Iranian immigrants' transnational practices. In addition to that, I ask how Iranians' interactions within and beyond their physical home shape their experiences of belonging. I also investigate how a sense of belonging within the home emerges due to meso and micro-level social processes for Iranian immigrants. Such processes might include, but are not limited to, participants' interactions with neighbours, friends, colleagues, and others, their contribution to building formal and informal Iranian communities, their homemaking practices, decision-making to leave Atlantic Canada for Ontario, and their racialized experiences within the context of social life. These processes are at the micro and meso-level, but they contribute to creating and shaping the participants' experiences at the macro level, because they are connected and influence one another. Therefore, though these processes are focused on micro and meso-level, they reveal the underlying layers of the immigrants' experiences in relation to larger social processes such as their contribution to the social and economic system and the challenges and exclusionary processes they face in this regard.

I categorize the objectives of this research in two different levels: micro and meso, and explore the following questions: In chapters three and four, I ask, what is home, how is it achievable, and how is it in conversation with a sense of belonging for immigrants in this study? In answering these questions, I engage with the literature on the sociology of

home and belonging and transnationalism. Swidler's (1986) cultural toolkit theory and her conceptualization of the agentic strategies of action in uncertain times provide the analytical tools to illustrate the Iranian immigrants' definition of home and their homemaking practices after migration. I discuss the socio-cultural barriers and boosters of a partial or temporary sense of belonging, focusing on language, material objects, immigration status, and friendship communities and illustrate how home and belonging are achievable through these relationships. I also use theories that view home as a relational process (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020) to analyze how it is achievable according to the three levels of home introduced by Duyvendak (2011).

In chapter five, I ask how these Atlantic cities shape the experiences of immigrants in relation to their community building, decision-making to leave the Atlantic region, and their sense of belonging? In this chapter, I engage with the theories of group culture creation and functioning (Fine, 2012; Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003) to describe how these communities emerge. I also conceptualize the participants' practices in connection to Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, Melucci's (1989) concept of collective identity, and the role of meta stories (Cope et al., 2019) and narratives in the shaping and functioning of these communities.

In chapter six, I ask how do Iranian immigrants experience racialization in their everyday lives, how do they refer to these experiences, and what do they imply about their sense of self and their connection to Canadian society? To address these questions, I first use the concept of "tacit racism" (Duck & Rawls, 2020) and extend its use in relation to the experiences of racialized groups other than Black people in the Canadian context to

explain how it has also permeated the interaction patterns and the fabrics of everyday life in the Canadian context. Then, using the concepts of "identifying moment" (Charmaz, 1991), double consciousness (Du Bois, 2005 (1903)), and building on my research data and extending the concept of a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), I introduce the concept of *a racialized spiral of silence* to explain the positionality of Iranian immigrants in relation to their race and in connection to Canadian society.

These questions reveal how a sense of belonging within one's physical home and in the diasporic community emerges and how social processes are involved in them. These explorations and the immigrants' connections to home and community also reflect the immigrants' sense of belonging to the host society. In other words, they reveal the positionality of a sense of belonging within the home and community, among the other forms of a sense of belonging, i.e., a sense of belonging to the host society. These questions help us understand the nuanced social and political layers of the fabric of Canadian society impacting immigrants in their everyday lives. Also, it is useful in understanding the immigrants' challenges and struggles in making a home in the Atlantic region. It informs future policies since the region tries to develop economic growth (Government of Canada, 2023d) and retain immigrants (Government of Canada, 2023f).

The available theoretical contributions in a broader sociological context frame belonging in relation to place belongingness (Antonsich, 2010; Bennett, 2012), the politics of place (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011b), and in relation to the connection of the individual to society (May, 2013). Moreover, the available empirical research examines a variety of topics, from the sense of belonging of immigrants to Canada and

their home country (Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2018), immigrants' racialized

experiences and the unequal relations in society (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007; Wu, Hou, &

Schimmele, 2011; Hogarth, 2011; Moghissi, Rahnema, & Goodman, 2009), or

community belonging within and beyond the immigrants' diaspora (Salami, et al., 2019).

Also, the research concerning race and belonging has been more widely done across

North America and beyond (Sadeghi, 2023; Deckman, 2022; Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018;

Miller, 2003). More recently, a novel study has been done in the United States that

explains the contradictory racialized experiences of Iranian immigrants and other Middle

Eastern Americans in the context of everyday life and their struggles to navigate their

identity in relation to their race (Maghbouleh, 2017).

Despite the rich body of literature on the topics of race, belonging, and the

connection of minority groups to the state, the current literature on immigration and

belonging has not addressed the experiences of Iranian communities as one of the largest

immigrant communities in Canada in relation to their transnational practices, community

building, and decision-making to make a secondary migration within the context of

Atlantic cities. Moreover, a sense of belonging starting from a physical home has rarely

been the subject of research in work on the sense of belonging for immigrants and the

nuances of that in Canada in the context of everyday life. In general, few studies have

addressed the Iranian community's transnational practices within home and diaspora in

Canada in search of belonging. Additionally, the proposed frameworks to study belonging

also lack the attention in considering belonging as an active process (doing belonging) in

opposition a passive process (having a sense of belonging). Therefore, I focus on "doing

belonging" (Bennett, 2012) and the participants' agentic action strategies in dealing with belonging. The novelty of my research in the field is that it presents a detailed description of how the friendship communities of belonging emerge from the everyday experiences and interactions of Iranian communities in the Atlantic cities that have a different dynamic compared to the Iranian diaspora in the more traditional immigration gateways such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. It shows that the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their immigration status, language and cultural differences with the centrality of their race. In other words, the communities of belonging are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups for Iranians rather than in negotiation with the Canadian communities.

I organized my dissertation around the proposed analytical dimensions of a sense of belonging by the proposed frameworks of May (2013) and her attention to the relationships in addressing a sense of belonging, and Antonsich's (2010) work for connecting his definition to the place. In that, rather than seeing belonging as a sense that exists (or nor) for immigrants, I study how they work toward it (or not) and how they are "doing belonging" (Bennett, 2012). This approach provides the research tools and conceptions to investigate the sense of belonging in everyday micro and meso-level practices in light of the macro-level societal forces. In doing so, I focus on 1) the immigrants' narratives, interpretations, and aspirations about home and belonging; 2) the interactions and communicative actions of immigrants at homes and within the contexts of the neighbourhood, workplace, and friendship, and Iranian communities; and 3) the

immigrants' everyday experiences of micro-aggressions and exclusions in the Atlantic cities vs. Ontario. These three main aspects of my research include but are not limited to the social processes at micro and meso-levels that seek how immigrants are doing belonging in their everyday life.

Why Belonging?

The International Organization for migration estimates that there are 281 million international migrants globally (or 3.6% of the world's population) **Invalid source specified.**. Immigration often disrupts the regular pace of life for immigrants and affects their sense of belonging and connectedness with others. The concept of belonging is useful in explaining how immigrants' agency stimulates actions when displacement causes ontological insecurity (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017). Since a sense of belonging is a multifaceted and interrelated notion, it reflects the individual's sense of connectedness to the surrounding world (May, 2013). Therefore, it is a useful concept for understanding how a given society may (or may not) be accommodating and welcoming to immigrants, and how immigrants are co-constructing and negotiating the boundaries of belonging. I explore how the participants cope with their challenges as immigrants and how they might become at ease with the interruptions that affect their feelings about who they are in connection to the world.

We make sense of ourselves by defining who we are and who we are not. We construct our individual and collective identities in relation to others through "a process of othering" (Cohen, 1982; May, 2013). Therefore, belonging is also hierarchical (Girard, 2016). Some groups might exclude others, and not everyone is allowed to belong.

Citizenship status, for instance, is a ubiquitous example of exclusive membership. It divides people who can claim to be members of a group — here a nation — from those who are not allowed to do that through some technologies like passports or birth certificates. Then, some people seek, get qualified, and become citizens of a particular country, while others get excluded (May, 2013).

Important questions arise in this discussion. How do dominant groups in societies define their boundaries? How do they determine the inclusion and exclusion of "others?" What happens when immigrants from a different cultural, racial, ethnic, and social background resettles in a new context? How can they become insiders if ever allowed to cross those boundaries? How do immigrants create, develop, or resist a sense of belonging in relation to different groups in society? Do these relationships tend to get created around groups of immigrants from the same background, or do they cross those boundaries? What are the limits and challenges of being considered an insider in Canadian society? How can one be considered Canadian (i.e., being White, being an English or French speaker, being Christian, a combination of these, etc.)? This study's scope is limited and does not address all these questions, but it allows us to think about how a group's boundaries affect and control the boundaries of belonging in a broader context in Canadian society. Also, we can think about the possibilities and the ways people overcome the dominant boundaries, cross them, and become insiders, fully or partially, despite the structural pressures.

While studies such as May's (2013) and Miller's (2003) about belonging are valuable in providing a sociological framework to study belonging, the current literature

lacks studies that examine the everyday connections of people in their social lives in relationship with and in the context of places. We need more studies that consider diverse social groups' experiences and explore their everyday experiences of belonging in connection to people, places, and the social world. The current study is a step toward this goal and intends to understand how Iranian immigrants are doing belonging (Bennett, 2012, p. 31) or situating themselves in the everyday in relationship to the Atlantic Canadian cities and how the dynamics of constructing and negotiating a sense of belonging might change after their secondary migration — which is the immigrants' subsequent relocation after reaching their initial destination (Haan & Prokopenko, 2016) — to Ontario.

The symbolic interactionist lens is a suitable perspective in this study because it focuses on social processes, social action, and the social construction of meaning to study group life and human behaviour (van den Scott, 2019). Thus, it facilitates our understanding of how the immigrants' relationships with Canadian society are deeply influenced by the social processes and the micro-level mundane everyday life interactions and practices they experience. It also demonstrates how these relationships are all impacted by and contribute to the inclusion or exclusion of immigrants in the Atlantic Canadian context.

Belonging has been a subject of study across various disciplines from psychology (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), health studies (Stead, 2011), economics (Bhalla, 1997), education (Morieson, 2013), political science (Yuval-Davis, 2011b), and sociology (May, 2013; Sadeghi, 2023). Studies of belonging are impregnated into different domains and

therefore, they are fractured and inconsistent in addressing this concept across different disciplines (Allen et al., 2021). In other words, there is no unified framework that captures the nuances of belonging in every discipline. However, there are some characteristics described in various disciplines that show there are some consensuses here and there in defining belonging. For instance, various definitions emphasize belonging as a multidimensional concept that captures the individual's relationship to the world outside (May, 2013; Antonsich, 2010; Girard, 2016).

In this dissertation, I focus on belonging from a sociological perspective. Therefore, I consider belonging as a feeling that tells us about an individual's connection to themselves and the surrounding people, cultures, and places (May, 2013). In this sense, belonging has a collective nature and interconnects with other people. It is "a sense of ease or accord with who we are in ourselves" and "a sense of accord with the various physical and social contexts in which our lives are lived out" (Miller, 2003, p. 220). It implies that a self is not a singular separate identity, but a self is connected with the world outside (Game, 2001). Belonging, thus, includes ontological dimensions and contributes to making us who we are (Miller, 2003). We may live somewhere we feel we do not belong, but we probably know somewhere, or some groups that we belong to or at least have a utopia in our minds that we wish we lived within. Living somewhere without a sense of belonging is possible, but would it be satisfying? Would it be a suitable state in which to thrive?

A sociological understanding of belonging suggests that our connections to the world outside of us make us who we are (May, 2013). In this between, using the

theoretical works of Marx, Goffman, and Giddens, May (2013) defines belonging by

highlighting its multidimensional character and describes it in relation to identity, self,

and social change. According to her, belonging "is an inherent capacity in people who

have developed a sense of self, because this sense of self is partly based on who we feel

similar to, that is who we belong with" (May, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, belonging is

intertwined with reciprocity. While we identify ourselves as members of different groups,

the groups also accept us as an integral part of them (May, 2013).

Another approach beyond theorizing belonging directs the sociological

understanding of belonging toward "doing belonging" (Bennett, 2012, p. 31). Rather than

focusing on a sense of belonging that is passive and unseen, doing belonging addresses

the many ways in which individuals actively take action toward belonging (or not

belonging) (Bennett, 2012). Considering the relational aspects of belonging, I study the

Iranian immigrants' relationships with people and places in the Atlantic Canadian cities

and Ontario context and the cultural intersections they experience in their everyday lives

to understand how they negotiate and navigate their sense of belonging.

Depending on the context, belonging can provoke different meanings that may not

necessarily be positive. It is even possible that in the midst of belonging and yearning to

belong, ambivalent feelings appear, and individuals resist belonging. In such a situation,

conformity and nonconformity may happen simultaneously (May, 2013). The

combination of conformity and nonconformity or resistance occurs in people's everyday

lives. While belonging may seem like a positive feeling and an ideal state, our sense of

belonging constantly changes and evolves, and sometimes we resist or refuse to belong.

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We conform to enter some groups and belong with them, while we push and break the boundaries of other groups to define another way of membership. These pushes and a sense of not belonging may open new paths that drive political action and social change. Belonging, thus, is an important aspect of our relational self, and not belonging is not necessarily negative. It can actually offer new directions. Even the people who resist some forms of belonging seek other forms of alternative belonging (May, 2013).

Moreover, Calhoun (1999) explores cultures, people, and material surroundings as three key sources of belonging. He emphasizes that cultural belonging is only one aspect of the constituents of belonging and calls for studying other aspects of belonging. While culture is a key component in my focus on studying Iranian immigrants' belonging, I pay particular attention to my participants' relationships with people and places. This is why I look at their racialized experiences and decision-making around choosing a secondary migration and leaving the Atlantic region, in addition to their definition of home and its connection to a sense of belonging.

Context

I explored the everyday experiences of belonging of Iranian immigrants who have left Irani since the 1979 revolution and landed in the four midsized Atlantic Canadian cities defined here as "metropolitan areas with a population of 50,000–500,000" (Kaida, 2020, p. 192) including Halifax, Nova Scotia; St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador; Moncton, New Brunswick; and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (Kaida, 2020) as well as Fredericton (since it has the highest Iranian population in New Brunswick but

does not fall category of midsized cities (Statistics Canada, 2023f). Also, I include Iranians in Toronto or — as they put it — "Tehranto," (Tehran is the capital of Iran), Ottawa, London, Mississauga, and Lancaster in Ontario, who have resided in at least one of the Atlantic provinces and left there to resettle in Ontario as a touchstone in my analysis. There are diverse Iranian communities in the Atlantic provinces, as well as each city in Ontario, that have different characteristics such as population, immigration status and occupation, and community dynamics.

The Toronto metro area has the most concentrated Iranian population, with several neighbourhoods such as Richmond Hill that are the primary neighbourhoods for Iranian immigrants with Iranian languages to settle (11.3% compared to 33.8% English speakers and 11.6% native speakers of Mandarin) (Statistics Canada, 2023g). The Iranian immigrant population is the highest number compared to the rest of Canada, and many immigrants choose there as the first or a secondary destination to resettle. On the other hand, the Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic provinces, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, are scattered populations who tend to leave the province after graduating or finding a job in Canadian metropolitan areas or peripheral regions (Statistics Canada, 2023b). While remoteness and centrality are constructed and depend on where we define the centre, I ask the participants to explain their conception of the rural/urban and remote/central in relation to their imagination of living in those places. These questions reveal how the participants think of these places, how they conceptualize them, and how the conceptions of rural/urban affect their sense of home. Moreover, they demonstrate

how the immigrants' conception of their relationship with the centre impacts their sense of belonging within their home.

The comparison between the current Iranian immigrant Atlantic cities residents and Ontario also allows me to investigate and understand the dynamics of belonging in Iranian immigrants' everyday life in a primarily rural and sometimes isolated context as a result of being an island or far from the most populous Canadian provinces and its probable impacts on participants' sense of belonging. On the other hand, we can think of the different forms of belonging in these two regions. For instance, whereas a remote community may seem isolated with less access to larger Iranian communities, amenities, and resources, I found stronger Iranian community ties in a more limited scope.

Iranian Immigration Around the World: Remarkable Events

My study focuses on the lives of Iranian immigrants who permanently left Iran since the 1979 revolution. Studying the lives of this immigrant group in Canada is not only important as they are among the top ten largest immigrant populations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2023c), but it is vital to address the larger issues of belonging, integration, racialization, and creating welcoming transnational contexts where every minority groups is seen, acknowledged, and included at various levels in a multicultural Canada.

Immigration is not a new phenomenon for Iranians. Over the last century, Iranians have emigrated for employment or intellectual and educational purposes (Naghdi, 2010). However, they are increasingly immigrating to foreign countries for educational and other purposes in recent years. According to internal Iranian reports, Iran ranked 17th for

student migration in 2020 among 241 countries (Iran Migration Observatory, 2023).

Naghdi (Naghdi, 2010) identifies three phases of the emigration of Iranians to foreign countries in the contemporary period: 1) Sending students to France in the Qajar monarchical era (1796-1925), which was the start of foreign immigration with the intention of returning to Iran. Then, workers started to immigrate to Tiblisi (the capital of Georgia) and Baku (the capital of Azerbaijan) and intellectuals to Delhi (the capital of India), Istanbul (the capital of Turkey), and Cairo (the capital of Egypt). 2) Immigration before the 1979 Islamic revolution, and 3) immigration after the 1979 revolution (which is divisible into smaller periods) (Naghdi, 2010). Naghdi's categories, however, do not include the emigration phases after the 1979 revolution. Therefore, I break down the post-1979 revolution emigration phases below.

Before the 1979 revolution in Iran, the emigration rate remained very low, and France, the United States, and the Caucasus were significant immigration destinations for the elite and noblemen (Naghdi, 2010). Japan was also a notable destination for those seeking employment (Naghdi, 2010). The 1979 revolution with the following Iran-Iraq war was a milestone in the Iranian exodus to foreign countries. Migration comprised exilic characteristics during the 1979 revolution. Many Iranians fled from the country for fear of social, political, and religious persecution (Atashi, 2018). To make a concrete argument based on the emigration flows in Iran, I present my own out-migration categories after the 1979 Revolution and break it down as follows: immigration 1) during and after the 1979 revolution; 2) during the Iran-Iraq war, and the internal extreme political oppression (1984-1988); and 3) after the 2009 Green movement.

Following the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, Iranians immigrated to Western Europe and Scandinavian countries, in addition to the previously mentioned countries (Naghdi, 2010). For instance, Sweden became a popular destination for Iranian immigrants and refugees (Kelly & Hedman, 2016). In the subsequent years of emigration, a more diverse population of Iranian immigrants rather than exclusively elites settled worldwide, particularly in North America, Europe, Australia, and the Far East, for various reasons, including non-political ones (Darznik, 2008; Atashi, 2018; Naghdi, 2010). Skilled professionals, the working-class population, and economic immigrants comprised the majority of immigrants in this period (Darznik, 2008).

After the 1979 revolution, and in addition to the Iran-Iraq war, the Green movement, also known as Persian Spring, along with the massive non-violent protests against the rigged election (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010), created another milestone in the out-migration of Iranians. Protesters demanded the removal of President Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad from office because they claimed his re-election was a fraud. Mir-Hosseing Mousavi, Ahmaninezhad's competitor, did not accept the announced election result and continues to be under house arrest today. The United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom are currently the top destination countries for Iranian immigrants(Azadi, Mirramezani, & Mesgaran, 2020). No precise statistics are available to report the emigration waves in Iran (Tabarraee, 2022). However, a recent study done outside of Iran shows the number of Iranian asylum-seekers after the 1979 revolution reached three peaks: 1) between 1984 and 1991, as an impact of the Iran-Iraq war and the power stabilization in the Islamic Republic with harsh crackdowns; 2) about a decade

later, from 1999 to 2001, ignited by the student protests of 1999 (Kouye-e-Daneshgah protests) and the widespread uprising, followed by the state violent crackdowns; and 3) in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential election and the state violence in suppressing the protesters. Following these protests in 2010, the continued stagnation started, which has lasted to date (Azadi, Mirramezani, & Mesgaran, 2020). This categorization is in harmony with the earlier out-migration tendency among Iranian presented.

Iranian Immigrants in Canada

Iran is among the top ten countries of birth of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2023c) (see Table 1). According to Tölölyan (2007), diasporas are the social formations of minority groups of immigrants in a host nation. Immigrants hold the minority group status while employing strategies to preserve and reproduce their cultural identity and visibility within the new setting. Scholars estimated the Iranian population to be between 4-6 million in the global diaspora (Vahabi, 2012) about a decade ago. In recent years, Canada has become a more popular destination for trade, investment, scientific, and educational purposes (Naghdi, 2010; Azadi, Mirramezani, & Mesgaran, 2020).

Top 10 places of birth reported by recent immigrants, Canada, 2016 and 2021

			2021	2016	Rank in 2016				2021	2016	Rank in 2016
1	India		18.6%	12.1%	2	6	United States		3.0%	2.7%	6
2	Philippines		11.4%	15.6%	1	7	Pakistan		2.7%	3.4%	5
3	China		8.9%	10.6%	3	8	France		2.0%	2.0%	9
4	Syria		4.8%	2.5%	7	9	Iran		1.9%	3.5%	4
5	Nigéria		3.0%	1.4%	13	10	United Kingdom		1.7%	2.0%	8

Note(s): "Recent immigrant" refers to a person who obtained landed immigrant or permanent resident status in the five years preceding a given

Source(s): Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

Statistics Canada / Statistique Canada

Canada

Table 1: Iran is among the top ten countries of birth of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c)

In 2001, the Iranian immigrants' population, including permanent residents and Iranian-Canadian citizens in Canada was 89,000; 44% resided in Toronto, 22% in Vancouver, and 10% in Montreal (Jafari, Baharlou, & Mathias, 2010). The 2016 census estimated 210,405 immigrants in Canada with "Iranian Origins" (Malek, 2019). This number includes the first generation of Iranian immigrants and the generations before them.

The most recent census in 2021 demonstrates how Iranian immigrants (excluding non-permanent residents compared to the previous statistics) are scattered in each Canadian province:

Iranian Immigrants' Population Across Canada (Excluding Non-Permanent Residents)										
Province	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NS	ON	PE	QC	SK	YT, NT, NU
Population	8,865	45,970	1,105	520	140	1,040	103,795	185	20,235	1,040	40

Table 2: Iranian Immigrants Population Across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c)

Data shows that the three Canadian largest cities (Toronto (87,105), Vancouver (43,245), Montreal (18,915) are still the major destination for Iranian immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2023b). There are no statistics showing the population of Iranian non-permanent residents such as students in each province. However, current statistics show that Iranians are choosing Atlantic Canadian cities as an initial landing point (Statistics Canada, 2023b). This data is in line with the general immigration trend in Canada that "the share of recent immigrants settling in Atlantic Canada almost tripled in 15 years, rising from 1.2% in 2006 to 3.5% in 2021" (Statistics Canada, 2023c) (See Map 1). However, the immigration rate to these provinces is still the lowest in Canada (Statistics

Canada, 2023h). Also, the question of whether the immigrants remain in the Atlantic

region is another point of attention.

The geographic distribution of recent immigrants across Canada

Note: "Recent immigrant" refers to a person who obtained landed immigrant or permanent resident status in the five years preceding a given census. For the 2021 Census of Population, this refers to the period from January 1, 2016, to May 11, 2021.
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 2006, 2016 and 2021 (3901), and National Household Survey, 2011 (5178).

Map 1: The Rise of Immigrants Settling in Atlantic Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c)

Why Atlantic Cities?: Atlantic Canadian Cities at a Glance

The Atlantic region is a very recent created term describing Newfoundland and

Labrador and the three Maritime provinces of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and

Nova Scotia. It has only existed for less than 75 years, since Newfoundland joined the

Confederation and became a part of Canada in 1949 (Reid, 2016).

The regional disempowerment reflects the recent collapses of natural resources

such as the cod fishery and offshore oil, and the underlying reasons for shaping the core-

periphery relationships between the former colonies and their imperial centres as well as

between central Canada and the eastern provinces (Innis, 1956; Kaida, 2020). The three

Maritime provinces, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island,

were preoccupied with institutional consolidation and political integration the first three

decades after Confederation (Forbes & Muise, 1993). From a political economic

perspective, the Maritimes experienced deindustrialization at this time because of

prioritizing national economic policy manufacturing in central Canada (Brodie, 1997).

From the 1890s to the end of World War I, the region responded to the

opportunities to develop a new industrial capacity. Then, from 1920 to 1950, the region

experienced the breakdown of the new economy as well as marginalization. At the final

stage (1950-1980), the three Maritime provinces with Newfoundland made efforts to

overcome the regional disparities and underdevelopment (Forbes & Muise, 1993).

Despite the general use of the Atlantic region and putting all these provinces in

one category, I would like to emphasize the social construction of the term Atlantic

Canada and prevent a reductive angle in my analysis toward the diversity in these four

provinces, even though they might face some similar challenges at present, such as

population growth or immigration retention (Statistics Canada, 2023i; Government of

Canada, 2023d). I also acknowledge the distinctness among these provinces and their

different trajectory in history, especially in relation to the population movements, including the Indigenous, settler colonials, and immigrant groups (Reid, 2016).

In the face of the increase in immigration rate in the Atlantic region, the four provinces still possess the lowest immigration rate in Canada. In addition, immigrant retention remains a challenge. To alleviate the issue of low retention and labour force shrinking, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program (AIPP) was launched in 2017. It became a permanent program as the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023e). While the program was successful in retaining immigrants one year after admission compared to other programs, the long-term retention of immigrants is still a challenge in the region (Statistics Canada, 2023h).

Having the lowest immigration levels in the Atlantic region compared to the rest of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c) shows multiple economic and sociocultural dimensions impacting the region in attracting immigrants, despite their efforts to do so. Pottie-Sherman and Graham (2020) introduced the concept of "aspiring gateways" in relation to Atlantic Canada "to describe locations that attract few immigrants but proactively aspire to become welcoming communities" (p. 1). These places are relatively isolated from international migration flows but aim to accommodate more immigrants through incentives to attract their participation in the economy and beyond (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2020). This is a reason why I focus my research on Iranian immigrants' stories in these midsized Canadian cities as well as Fredericton, along with five cities in Ontario: Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Lancaster, and London, with different Iranian populations. Canadian Atlantic provinces with more rural characteristics

compared to the rest of Canada deal with considerable challenges, such as population growth while the region's population is aging (Reid, 2011; Government of Canada, 2023a).

The concepts of remoteness and centrality reflect the social construction of the Atlantic Canadian cities and Ontario from immigrants' points of view and examine their probable impacts on a sense of belonging for immigrants.

Remoteness is a relational and socially constructed concept that depends on subjectivity for definition. However, a remote location is defined as "being secluded or placed apart, distant, existing far away in space… a remote place implies a distant site with reference to where the one person positing such a qualification is located" (Bocco, 2016, p. 178). Bocco (2016) offers two dimensions of remoteness: the absolute, geometric dimension, which depends on the distance. The other one is a relative geographic dimension that is subject to connectivity. Atlantic provinces are remote when we measure their distance from Ontario or consider their connection to a province like Ontario. But why is Ontario being regarded as a centre? Where do these concepts come from?

Centrality is also a socially constructed and relational concept. Throughout the history of Canada and its development, Ontario and Quebec have traditionally been related as the centre of economic and political power because of the concentration of population, wealth, and industrial resources. These reasons have led Ontario and Quebec to be considered "central Canada" (Flaherty, 1988, p. 101) while the rest of Canada takes a critical perspective toward such distinctions (Flaherty, 1988).   Moreover, there are diverse areas in each province of the Atlantic or Ontario that might contrast with the

general definitions of remote and centrality of their provinces. Some critical questions arise here. For instance, to label a place as remote, how far should it be from other places? Where are the boundaries of remote places? How do we regard the contrasting diversity within each of these areas?

Having these differences in mind, I emphasize again that all of the notions that describe the characteristics of regions, such as central, periphery, remote, rural, urban, etc., are socially constructed as they depend on the perspective of the person or group who accepts and defines them. Therefore, centrality and remoteness are relational concepts and the products of the social construction of meaning in a given society. In the same manner, the claims that consider Atlantic provinces as remote because they are geographically located in the far east, apart from the rest of Canada, are social constructs. These definitions and conceptualizations have roots in a specific time and place that certain groups of people have adopted to describe their relationship with other parts of the social world. Therefore, it is vital to reconsider these concepts, think of the underlying reasons for the emergence of these meanings, and question their origins and the involved power relationships.

Chapter Outlines

This study explores the lives of Iranian immigrants who land in Atlantic Canadian cities: many of whom do not stay in the region and leave for Ontario. Chapter One reviews the literature on the sociology of belonging, race, racialization and transnationalism, and the sociology of home with particular attention to the Canadian

context. I present the framework of my study and indicate my stance in the literature on home and belonging for exploring the lives of Iranian immigrants. Chapter two elaborates on the research methodology, research design, and my reflections on data collection and fieldwork. I also address the limitations of the study before, during, and after the fieldwork.

In the following empirical chapters, I start by studying a sense of belonging from a more individual level concerning a sense of home to a relational and interactional level and then at a group level. Chapter three explores the meaning of home and how it is in conversation with a sense of belonging for Iranian immigrants. It provides a portrayal of how Iranian immigrants define home in a fluid way depending on their experiences from the past, their social location, their agentic strategies (Swidler, 1986) to deal with the uncertainties after immigration, etc., and what implications it has for a sense of belonging. In this chapter, I introduce the concept of a *temporary belonging* that explains the participants' agentic action in operating a context and time-dependent form of belonging.

In chapter four, I discuss the socio-cultural barriers and boosters of a partial or temporary sense of belonging, focusing on language, material objects, immigration status, and friendship communities and illustrate how home and belonging are achievable through these relationships. In the end, I describe how it is achievable according to the three levels of home introduced by Duyvendak (2011) and Cross's (2015) place attachment processes.

Chapter five focuses on how Iranian immigrants conceptualize Atlantic Canadian cities and how this shapes their experiences of friendship communities of belonging. In this, I pay particular attention to the unique characteristics of Atlantic Canadian cities and the imaginations the participants have toward living in bigger cities. Chapter six demonstrates how the participants use storytelling to share their racialized experiences in everyday life interactions. I introduce the concept of a racialized spiral of silence which follows an "identifying moment" (Charmaz, 1991) in relation to the participants' racialized experiences.

These chapters are all investigating and questioning how Iranian immigrants are doing belonging in two different regions of Canada — a traditional (Ontario) and a non-traditional (the four Atlantic provinces) immigration gateway — and demonstrate how communities of belonging emerge out of their transnational practices. I consider the participants as the agents of action and focus on how they are proactively doing (or not doing) belonging in the Iranian diaspora through their transnational practices and creating distinct communities. In this, I highlight the participants' experiences in non-traditional immigrant destinations and pay attention to their imaginations about leaving the Atlantic region and living in more traditional immigration destinations, such as Toronto, Ontario.

I also touch on the nuances of immigrants' life after leaving the Atlantic region for Ontario, such as their friendship communities and their experiences of the Iranian diaspora and show how they function. These chapters reflect the participants' point of view about the most significant aspects of a sense of belonging in a specific period of time and specific places, depending on the social location of each participant. Therefore,

they are not generalizable, but they have significant implications in terms of creating communities of belonging in the Atlantic cities and Ontario, the process of racialization in Canada, and the immigrants' retention.

All these chapters are evolving around the overarching argument that the first generation of Iranian immigrants are contributing to shaping the communities of belonging within the Iranian diaspora, which are different from each other depending on the place, religion, gender, and immigration status while they mostly keep their relationship with non-Iranians limited and as needed. It reveals how Iranian immigrant communities function in the Atlantic cities and how their transnational practices contribute to creating communities of belonging within each region with their own diversity. It advances our knowledge of the racialization processes in the Atlantic Canadian cities and fills the gap in understanding the Iranian immigrants' racialized experiences and the transition of their master status after migration to a White-dominated society. In the next section, I expand on the concepts of belonging, transnationalism, and home to indicate my stance in the current literature in addressing the main research questions. I also present a symbolic interactionist perspective toward the present research and elaborate on how it is a suitable theoretical and methodological approach for addressing this study.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

In this chapter, I engage the literature review on the sociology of belonging, transnationalism, the sociology of home, and race and racialization. I consider home as a socio-archi-cultural space and demonstrate how the concepts of home and belonging are in conversation with each other. In this, I pay particular attention to the relational aspects of home and belonging. Moreover, I brought various insights into how race and racialization are a present reality in Canada and explained the mechanisms through which it operates in society.

Sociology of Belonging

Belonging is a multidimensional concept involving a wide range of the connections of self to society. Like any other concept, it is a social construct that takes various meanings and usages in different social contexts and areas of study. This section, first, presents diverse insights into the notion of belonging and its relevance to identity. Then, I continue to discuss the more comprehensive concept of belonging and its relation to citizenship. I discuss how they interact and point to the macro-level aspects of belonging.

I take a sociological lens, and I gradually move my discussions of identity and belonging from micro to macro. Subsequently, this section offers my stance on the definition of belonging that builds on the previous conceptualizations and captures the relational aspect of belonging. Such a definition involves various perspectives from an

individual to a structural level. My focus is on the participants' everyday experiences in relation to their surrounding world. Finally, I highlight the literature gap on studying immigrants' belonging, explain my perspective on belonging in this research, and clarify how it works with the other segments of my study.

Identity and Belonging

Identity refers to how individuals and groups consider, construct, and position themselves in relation to others (La Barbera, 2015). Kathy Charmaz (1991) introduces the concept of "Identifying Moment" to explain how self-images suddenly change through interactions. Van den Hoonaard (2009) also uses this concept and illustrated how widows acutely became aware of their new identity as widows. This is a useful concept in explaining how self-images suddenly shift and change throughout our interactions. In the case of the participants in this study whose sense of belonging has undergone the deepest changes, the Identifying Moment directs our attention to any identity shift the immigrants may experience due to their interactions and being situated in a White-dominated society.

I continue the discussion here by differentiating the notions of belonging from identity, discussing collective identity, community as story, and group culture formation. The common point in studies exploring identity in relation to belonging is that belonging is an outcome of sharing the same history, culture, or memories. In this manner, belonging is connected to the ideas of rootedness and national or ethnic identity (Antonsich, 2010; Fortier, 1997; Bond, 2006). Identity, however, also results from a combination of assigned roles and an individual's series of choices (Guibernau, 2013) and

self-image changes (Charmaz, 1991), as identities require reciprocal recognition and produce individual's actions (Melucci, 1989).

Melucci (1989) introduces a model of collective identity in relation to social movements, but I found it useful in delineating the distinct characteristics of Iranian communities in the Atlantic cities. He defines collective identity as an interactive and shared definition that several individuals produce in the forms of groups or other conditions to act together. Collective identity, in this sense, works as an intermediate process that explains how collective actions take shape and how individuals are motivated to act. Individuals learn that they share specific common orientations and decide to act together on that basis. I use Melucci's ideas to investigate the role of stories and narratives in developing the collective identities of the Iranian diaspora in the Atlantic cities and how they shape the decision-making of the Iranian immigrants in leaving the region.

Stories and narratives are important elements of community building. Cope et al. (2019) introduce community as story to refer to the narratives and meta-narratives that members create about their community and their changes. Building on Phillips (2002) and Calhoun's (1991) work on imagined communities, Cope et al. (2019) argue that "community as story, then, is portrayed through the observed or imagined relations between specific actors who occupy a particular place in time and the inherited stories of that place" (p. 2). Therefore, stories constitute the members' collective identity that takes part in creating an imagined community. I use this concept to explain the relationship

between the Iranian immigrants' collective identity in the Atlantic cities and the community's stories and meta-narratives in forming their actions.

The stories contribute to creating a collective identity for the group or what Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) regard as "group style". This concept demonstrates how people use collective representation to make meaning collectively in everyday life. Individuals make meaning through collective representation, and it provides a meaningful, shared ground for interaction. This shared ground is called *group style*. Group style filters the collective representations, and the result is the culture in interaction. The concept of group style here intersects with the notion of "idioculture" (Fine, 1987), which is the unique culture of each group or the system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviour, and customs that define a group together. Idioculture illustrates that action, meaning, institution, and eventually culture roots in small groups (Fine, 1987). The small groups hence have a pivotal role in organizing social life. Thus, the notions of group style and idioculture are useful to explain how group cultures emerge from the everyday interactions of the Iranian community. They are helpful in analyzing these relationships and the creation of communities with distinct goals, sizes, and functions across the Atlantic cities.

Ethnic minorities, as groups of immigrants, and their stories and experiences in new places, have been the subject of various studies (Huot, Dodson, & Laliberte Rudman, 2014; Fortier, 1997). Fortier (1997), for instance, discuss the relationship between the identity of places and "terrains of belonging" and the "physical places that constitute Italian terrains of belonging(s)" (p. 42) in her study of the formation of an Italian 'émigré'

culture in Britain. The discussions of a group's sense of belonging and the location of culture are critical in her work. She explores "how efforts of settlement and rooting manifest themselves in locally specific ways, and how they are physically articulated with "multi-local terrains of belonging" (Fortier, 1997, p. 41). The concept of belonging, in this sense, is not only connected to cultural, ethnic, and group identity but also to imaginary possessions and physical places, like a church, a mosque, a bazaar, etc. In addition to the role of stories and places in ethnic identity formation, studies such as Shin's (2016) find language proficiency to be a significant factor in negotiation marginalization and the integration and formation of inter-ethnic friendships for immigrant students. Also, language is found as an important aspect of identity construction for ethnic group immigrants (Han, 2012; Shin H. , 2012). Thus, I pay attention to the role of places (in this case, the Atlantic cities), immigrant group stories, and language in the formation of communities of belonging for Iranian immigrants in this study.

A common way from a sociological perspective in approaching identity is considering it as a process that individuals do rather than something they have (Jenkins, 2008). Belonging and exclusion co-construct identity either as a choice or by another's imposition (Guibernau, 2013). Belonging as identity refers to micro-level conceptions and social practices at an individual or a group level (i.e., gender identity, national identity). Focusing on identity categories may confine individuals to certain social categories and restrict their multiple feelings of connectedness (May, 2013). For instance, people from Kurdistan in Iran may feel they belong to both Iranian and Kurdish people

simultaneously. If they have Iranian and Canadian citizenship at the same time,

categorizing them would be even more complicated. They might feel more Kurdish in

some contexts, more Iranian in others, and more Canadian in different situations. In such

cases, while identity categories seem deficient, belonging explains the complexity and the

interconnectedness of the individual's identities. Belonging, however, offers a space for

holding multiple and even contradictory identities and a feeling of belonging to different

groups, cultures, and places (May, 2013). In the following sections, I discuss the notion of

belonging at the societal and political discourse level.

Citizenship and Belonging

Critiques in the area of belonging question the characteristics of citizenship in

relation to identity and the right to membership. Patten (2001), for instance, asks critical

questions about citizenship status and the boundaries of membership, and the affiliated

entitlements for the community's expectations of full members. These elements control

the legal and social ways of constructing who belongs and who does not. The discussion

of belonging here — particularly for immigrants — ties with their social inclusion and

status. In other words, the consequences and impacts of a lack or inconsistency of

belonging go beyond the individual's scope. Therefore, we must seek the formal and

informal situations that have an impact on immigrants' connections and relationships to

understand their contested sense of belonging in a given society.

Yuval-Davis (1991) defines citizenship and conceptualizes it in relation to the

notion of a sense of belonging. After determining belonging as a deep emotional need of

humans, she refers to a communitarian understanding of citizenship. She argues that

citizenship cannot "be reduced to identities and identifications, which are about individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and destiny" (Yuval-Davis, 2004, p. 215). Instead, citizenship is a multilayered construct that enables citizens to participate in society through their rights and responsibilities. Further, it encompasses experiences of belonging and recognition. Belonging, in this sense, encompasses different forms of belonging, including sexual, cultural, and diasporic citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2004; Nodberg, 2006; Delanty, 2000).

Citizenship sums up the relationship between the individuals and the state. It is an invisible and naturalized hegemonic construction that becomes visible when it is threatened (Yuval-Davis, 1991). Refugees are a significant group of people who experience the threat more than any other group on the move. For instance, climate change refugees whose islands are sinking may be displaced or lose any sign of their physical homeland (Haas, Castles, & Miller, 1998).

The emphasis on citizenship as a transformative and contested concept contributes to creating a sense of participation and belonging for the members of a society; one that can be promoted through time (Nodberg, 2006). "Social identity theory" explains the in-group relationship as a source of identification for its members and discrimination against out-group people. As the members of groups identify themselves vs. others, the boundaries take shape, and the discrimination and in-group biases become reinforced (van den Scott, 2017). Citizens in a country share a mutual sense of identity and an imagined community, and immigrants are the out-groups who try to push the boundaries of being an immigrant while they may try to enter the spaces of being recognized as genuine

citizens simultaneously. Therefore, immigrants are constantly negotiating the in-group and out-group boundaries in order to find their suitable position between being recognized as immigrants and citizens in society. In this, the state-level immigration policies impact who belongs (Jimenez et al., 2021). Interestingly, welcoming states' measures for immigrants not only result in the greatest sense of belonging for immigrants but may also fortify the other non-targeted social groups' sense of belonging (Jimenez et al., 2021).

While identity focuses on the self and how one defines themselves based on certain group memberships, citizenship focuses on one's membership and relationships to society at the formal and informal discourses. Therefore, it makes sense to assert that "neither citizenship nor identity can encapsulate the notion of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2004). As Yuval Davis puts it, "belonging is where the sociology of emotion interfaces with the sociology of power, where identification and participation collide, or at least aspire to or yearn for" (2004, p. 190). The existence, faulty existence, or non-existence of a sense of belonging is connected to the individuals' lives, experiences, emotions, circumstances, and political and power dynamics surrounding them. In other words, a sense of belonging tells us about not only the individual's life but also the relationship between the individual and society (May, 2013). Hence, I use the concept of belonging to conceptualize the Iranian immigrants' experiences of inclusion or exclusion in their new homes in Canada.

Belonging

In this section, I explain where I land in defining belonging, what it consists of, and why I address it rather than the concept of identity or citizenship. Moreover, I determine its bounds and importance in the migration literature. I also indicate my stance in addressing the immigrants' sense of belonging concerning its relational nature.

Belonging might be a matter of choice or imposed by groups. Belonging provides a relational view of the self and fosters emotional attachment. It positions the individuals and defines them in connection with other people and groups. The group, in return, offers a home and a familiar space for sharing and reciprocity (Guibernau, 2013). Relationality is one of the important differences between the notion of identity and belonging. Whereas identity begins from the separate, autonomous individual, belonging emerges from connectedness. Belonging focuses on our sense of ease with our social and cultural surroundings and our sense of similarity with other people (May, 2013).

Belonging with its relationality also focuses on social interaction and intersubjectivity. It is an individual and collective achievement that is an outcome of intersubjective negotiation. It is a process through which individuals create a sense of identification with or connection to cultures, people, places, and material objects. Belonging is one of the ways in which our connections with ourselves and the world outside manifest themselves (Guibernau, 2013; May, 2013).

Anthias (2016) explores the interconnection between the practices of identity-making and belongingness and the construction of inequalities. Belonging has a dualistic

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character of inclusion and exclusion at the same time. It goes beyond a personal feeling and may become a contested social and political issue when it connects to the debates around who has the right to belong in a particular society. It is a taken-for-granted notion rather than a conscious goal to achieve for people that reveal the individuals' connection to society (May, 2013). The concept of belonging captures immigrants' experiences in relation to society. They may not be fully conscious of belonging, but it affects their emotions, connections, and practices.

People become sensitive about belonging when they feel it has been threatened. Transnational mobility causes stress for identity and belonging, not only for the immigrants but also for the people who are established in a particular place (May, 2013). It is a multilayered concept and a dynamic process with various dimensions (Yuval-Davis, 2011a). Outlining three significant analytical aspects, Yuval-Davis (2011b) also defines the different co-constructed interrelated dimensions of belonging. Her definition of belonging concerns (1) "social locations," (2) "people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings," and (3) "ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own or others' belonging/s" (Yuval-Davis, 2011b, p. 5). Therefore, belonging is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends the individual level and reflects the people's relationship with society.

Social locations are the particular gender, race, class, age group, kinship group, nation, etc., that people belong to. On the one hand, each category has a specific positionality among others that reflects power hierarchies (Anthias, 2013). On the other hand, identities are relevant to the conceptions and stories people narrate about

themselves that define who they are. Yuval-Davis's (2011b) argument illuminates

immigrants' struggles in defining themselves and their yearning to belong to a place,

space, group, etc. The way immigrants feel in a new environment tells us a lot about their

context and the positionality of their race, ethnicity, or nationality in the new context.

How hierarchical is the society they live in, and what would the host society's conception

about them be? For instance, how would the immigrants' experiences be different if a

White person immigrates to another White-dominated population country versus a black

person immigrating to the same location? Thus, a sense of belonging is a highly

relational concept relevant to human emotions that reflects the positionality of a certain

race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, or nationality in a particular context.

Belonging is a more comprehensive concept than identity, the former of which

focuses on our relational self, and how we connect to one another (May, 2013). In other

words, identity aspects are embodied in our sense of belonging and are integral parts of it.

Thus, belonging is also about constructing individual and collective identities and how we

judge and value social locations. The politics of belonging concerns where and how to

draw categorical boundaries around identities. It demonstrates how we utilize social

locations and narratives of identities ideologically and ethically to draw the boundaries

between "us" and "them" within the realm of political communities (Yuval-Davis,

2011b).

Boundaries are social artifacts that differ in various social contexts or across

historical periods (Zerubavel, 1991). Bourdieu conceptualizes the relationship between

individuals and society in his field theory. Individuals are located in the field with their

habitus and capitals (social, economic, and cultural) and as a result of the interactions between different rules of the field (Bourdieu, 1984, Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Boundary work is a way for a group of people, or as Bourdieu (1984) discusses it, for a "class" to dominate the field. For Bourdieu, people practice boundary work to ascribe themselves to the upper class. They also do that to show their distinction for dominating the field, monopolizing resources, and strengthening their authority. From a Bourdieusian perspective, boundaries are the results of the disposition of the individuals with their symbolic capitals in the field that enable them to acquire status, make their tastes dominant, and monopolize resources (Bourdieu, 1984, Lamont & Molnar, 2002).

Apart from how we mobilize identities to draw the boundaries, belonging posits people with multiple solidarities and hybrid identities simultaneously. In fact, where identity emphasizes singular, internal subjects, belonging encompasses the plurality and the relational connectedness of identities (Calhoun, 1999; May, 2013). This is where I highlight the boundaries of belonging. Belonging is in relation to our social selves and where we connect to the world outside. Once we define ourselves in connection with other people, places, and cultures, we emphasize our sense of belonging and connectedness with others. Thus, belonging consists of all the places, cultures, and groups we relate to. It makes us who we are, and it acts like a bridge that connects us as an individual to the world and creates our social selves. I study the immigrant's relationship to society through their sense of belonging within their home, considering their social locations and their relationship to the particular places, cultures, and groups, even though

they may feel uprooted from their primary community and marginalized among people of different nationalities.

Building on previous contributions to the concept of belonging, Antonsich (2010) proposes an analytical framework concerning the notion of home. This framework evolves around the politics of home and place compared to Yuval-Davis's analysis, which investigates belonging concerning socio-political structures. Antonsich (2010) conceptualizes belonging in two dimensions; "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645). Antonsich (2010) focuses on the territorial form of the notion of belonging and presents a suitable context to study belonging in the context of physical places and mundane everyday life. The geographical scale of belonging varies among individuals and in different situations. It can be a home, neighbourhood, island community, or national homeland. His definition highlights the importance of places such as a home in relation to belonging. It includes the individual's emotions of being at home and contextualizing them in a greater context of the inclusionary/exclusionary relations in Canadian society.

While Antonsich's definition specifically includes two constituting realms of manifesting a sense of belonging with a focus on the importance of home, it lacks particular attention to the impact of relationships. Therefore, I add May's (2013) three aspects of an individual's belonging in connection with society and focus on relational (between people); cultural (the institutional order); and material (space and objects)

aspects of belonging. These two definitions provide the research conceptions in my study to investigate the sense of belonging in everyday micro-level practices in light of the macro-level influences of societal forces and relationships.

My study focuses on the micro-level practices of immigrants in the context of mundane everyday life to explore their sense of belonging. The above definitions of belonging reveal the interconnectedness and interdependence of social processes at the macro and micro levels and how they constitute the components of belonging. In completion of Collins' (1981) claim of how microsociology provides the foundation for macrosociology, Gary Alan Fine asserts that the "microsociological research incorporates macrosociological claims into its analysis" (Fine, 1991, p. 172). Considering the inseparability of various social processes in constituting a sense of belonging. May's (2013) relational, cultural, and material aspects of belonging are compatible with my study design. It allows me to focus on particular elements constituting a sense of belonging, while I being open to other aspects that matter to my participants.

Also, I pay attention to Antonsich's (2010) work for connecting his definition to the place and the probable impacts of living and interacting with places in immigrants' everyday life. In that, rather than seeing belonging as a sense that exists (or nor) for immigrants, I study belonging as an agentic process, or what Bennett (2012) regarded as "doing belonging" . Her approach to conceptualizing belonging provides the research tools and conceptions to investigate the sense of belonging in everyday micro and meso-level practices in light of the macro-level societal forces. Rather than focusing on a sense of belonging that is passive and unseen, doing belonging addresses the many ways in

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which individuals actively take action toward belonging (or not belonging) (Bennett, 2012).

In addition to doing and having a sense of belonging, I also study the reasons for the possible non-presence of a sense of belonging or not doing belonging. Scott (2018) explains how "disengaging from a group or finding nothing to relate to in a dominant cultural script, can all be considered demonstrations of individual agency, suggesting a critically distant interpretation of one's situation" (2018, p. 4). Her work contributes to our understanding of how nothing is always productive of something. Therefore, I consider not doing belonging or not having belonging as an indicator of the relationship between the individual and society, and I analyze what this non-existence produces and suggests in the experiences of the participants.

Considering the relational aspects of belonging, I study the Iranian immigrants' relationships with people and places in the context of the Atlantic Canadian cities and Ontario as well as the cultural intersections they enact in their everyday lives to understand how they are negotiating and navigating their sense of belonging. In the method section, I present a more detailed explanation of how I approach the participants considering their everyday life relational aspects of belonging.

Race, Racialization, and Transnationalism in a Multicultural Canada

Human mobility comprises all forms of human movement outside their living place and social environment. Migration is a form of migratory mobility that involves the change of an individual's residency across administrative. When individuals cross the borders between states, they become international migrants (Haas, Castles, & Miller, 1998). The United Nations Population Division identifies two types of international migration based on the duration of stay: short-term or temporary and long-term or permanent. My dissertation focuses on the long-term or permanent Iranian international migrants whose duration of stay is more than one year, and their movement accompanies a change of country of residency. The reason for that is I want to focus on people who decided to live permanently in Canada rather than Iran. Therefore, they have the intention to stay and think of the possibility of re-rooting in a place other than their homeland, Iran. These participants have landed in one of the Atlantic provinces. Also, it includes immigrants who have experienced a secondary migration. "Secondary migration is defined as immigrants' subsequent relocation after reaching their initial destination. It can be defined at the local (census subdivision), municipal, provincial, or even national level" (Haan & Prokopenko, 2016, p. 2). In this case, I focus on the Iranian immigrants who have lived in Atlantic cities and relocated to Ontario. The participants have emigrated from Iran either voluntarily or by force. Categorizing people who leave their home country as refugees, migrants, etc., however, is problematic since the use of these types of labels potentially dictate the ways in which displaced people are received and perceived.

Using such labels shapes the range of possibilities for understanding what their story is, might undermine public support and frames how the world reacts to their crisis (Lee & Nerghes, 2018).

I will also touch on the challenges of student life as a result of education and student migration in the Atlantic cities and analyze their experiences of home, race, and belonging and their decision-making to leave the region in the following chapters. In this section, I investigate the current literature on transnationalism, multiculturalism, diasporic communities, and the experiences of Iranian immigrants in linking their past to their recent experiences at home.

Race and Racialization in a Multicultural Canada

Multiculturalism as a Public Policy

The multicultural public policies and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) emphasis on multiculturalism invite immigrants to engage in transnational social practices and develop transnational social identities (Wong, 2008; Kymlicka, 1998). With the British as the dominant group, multiculturalism has existed in Canada demographically since the time of Confederation when Canada became a country and where the Indigenous, British, and French were the three founding ethnic groups. However, it only exists as public and state policy from the 1970s. In response to the historical tensions between the French and British, the Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Canada (B and B Commission) recommended that English and French be declared as official languages to address the assimilationist policies of Anglo-conformity. However, with the increasingly growing population of Canadians with non-European ethnic origins

(over 200 different ethnic origins listed in the 2001 census), the non-English and non-French have refuted that Canada is bicultural and bilingual. The commission acknowledged the diversity, and Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy within a bilingual (English and French) framework (Guo & Wong, 2015).

Critics have questioned the ideal conditions that multiculturalism portrays. Dhamoon (2009) has elaborated on how multicultural citizenship has been analyzed as a system of accommodation and ranking of citizens through categories of racialization in relation to the white settler superiority. It attributes culture as an unchanging essence and considers it a determinant of human behaviour, while it does not recognize the systemic roots of inequalities for different social groups in Canada (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018; Christensen, 2012; Dhamoon, 2009).

Despite its deficits and the critiques of its reproducing racialized systems of inequality, multiculturalism has become a defining ideology of the nation since Pierre Trudeau's administration. Thereafter, the Canadian government promoted diversity and claimed to embrace people from different nations in the political discourse (Creese, 2016). Porter (2000) has also critiqued multiculturalism for masking the relations of class and power in relation to ethnic groups in the formation of Canada. His central argument is that immigration and ethnic affiliation were significant contributors to the social class formation process hierarchically in Canada, and multiculturalism covers these relationships. Porter's work is important for setting the stage for the development of social inequality in Canada (Li, 1988). His Vertical Mosaic concept explains the ethnic

component of the class hierarchy in Canada and the way it has been structured (Satzewich & Liodakis, 2021).

Race and Racialization in Canada

Canada has adopted a multiculturalism policy and emphasizes the value of racial, ethnic, language, and religious diversity (Matheson, et al., 2021). However, this policy fails to take into account the reality of the lived experiences of 11.5 million people of colour and indigenous people, who constitute approximately 30% of the population (Williams, Khanna, MacIntyre, & Faber, 2022). Racism is an embedded part of Canada's history as demonstrated by "legal slavery, the Chinese Head tax, colonialism, Residential Schools, the Komagata Maru, WWII Japanese internment camps, and the destruction of Africville" (Williams, Khanna, MacIntyre, & Faber, 2022, p. 18). Covert democratic racism (Henry & Tator, 2006) prevails over the claims around diversity and colour blindness on individual and systemic levels and racist discourses, including blaming the target of racism or denying that racism exists, are manifested very subtly in the fabric of the everyday life in society (Malhi & Boon, 2007).

As a result of the false discourse of multiculturalism, Canadian politicians have tended to accredit their lack of concern toward Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour's (BIPOC) reports of racism (Satzewich & Liodakis, 2021). However, numerous studies report the experiences of racism as a potent reality of the BIPOC groups in Canada. A study of First Nations adults across Canada in 2010, for instance, demonstrates that 99% of participants reported experiencing at least one instance of discrimination in the last year (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Studies also demonstrate the impact

of racism on socioeconomic status and minority groups (Veenstra, 2012; Abdillahi &

Shaw, 2020). Another recent study demonstrates that Black Canadians deal with

significant socioeconomic disadvantages in the hiring process and workplace, or housing

market even compared to all other ethno-racial groups. Similar narratives and themes

exist among the Muslim and Asian immigrants' experiences. A focus group study in 2017

demonstrates that immigrant youth experience marginalization and feel like second-class

citizens as a result of Islamophobia and anti-Asian racism (Hilario, Oliffe, Wong,

Browne, & Johnson, 2017).

Various studies have shown the continuum of marginalization of racialized groups

in Canada at different societal levels. A set of research demonstrates the lack of

meaningful policies in the curriculum, the absence of cultures, religions, and historical

contributions of minorities or the underrepresentation of minorities in school staff

(MacDougall, 2010). For instance, George, Maier, & Robson (2020) compared the

equity-related education policies in Ontario and British Columbia to ascertain how

official documents understand race and racialized students. They found a lack of

commitment to enact substantive programming to identify and prevent structural racism,

which they called "symbolic anti-racism" (George, Maier, & Robson, 2020).

The available literature on racism in North America meticulously addresses

racism and its structural, institutional, and sociocultural roots, influences, and challenges

in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2001; Feagin, 2001;

Omi & Winant, 2008; Vera, Feagni, & Gordon, 1995). The challenges related to racism in

Canada differ from the United States and involve various marginalized groups in each

country. However, both produce unequal systematic symptoms because

> Both nation-states are products of settler colonialism and the genocide — and
>
> continuing colonial oppression — of Indigenous peoples. Both participated in
>
> Black-Atlantic chattel slavery, and both continue to bear witness to its living
>
> legacies. And, as sovereign states, both have historically deployed a eugenic
>
> approach to settler-immigration policy, preferring Western Europeans as citizens
>
> while excluding and/or exceptionalizing those deemed non-White as "non-
>
> preferred races" until the 1960s. Even after both countries liberalized their
>
> immigration policies, non-White immigrants have faced roadblocks to accessing
>
> resources and rights, continually reminded of their outsider status. (Daniher &
>
> Zien, 2020)

Numerous studies show how immigrants coming to Canada since the 1980s

experience major labour market disruptions, including underemployment and precarious

work (Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Galabuzi, 2006; Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010; Gogia &

Slade, 2011). According to Statistics Canada, the labour market obstacles experienced by

the immigrants went along with a demographic shift in immigrants' countries of origin

arriving in Canada. The demographic shift shows evidence that since the 1980s, most

immigrants have come from non-White majority countries, while European immigrants

were previously in the majority (Statistics Canada, 2014). The changes in the labour

market show how non-White immigrants were the target of systemic racism. Reitz

(2011), for instance, introduces the taxi-driver syndrome in Canada, describing how

highly educated immigrants work in precarious, low-paid jobs because of not finding employment relevant to their areas of expertise.

My study also has implications for education and student migration. Student migration takes place when students study outside their home country (Gribble, 2008). These highly educated international students are increasingly becoming the key drivers of innovation and economic prosperity (Alberts & Hazen, 2013; Bilecen & Faist, 2015; Wu & Wilkes, 2017). Therefore, countries such as Canada, UK, and Australia particularly increasingly benefit from international student migration, as they can address the skilled-worker shortages through locally trained international students (Gribble, 2008). In addition to considering how and why students make the decision to leave for education or return (Wu & Wilkes, 2017), there is also a need to understand how the students are navigating their everyday life and how what challenges they face in transitioning from being a student to becoming a worker or a permanent resident.

While Black and Latinx groups are at the centre of race discussions in the United States, more recent studies address the Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African communities' struggles with systemic racism (Garner & Selod, 2015; Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019; Jamal & Naber, 2008; Maghbouleh, 2017). The discussions of colonialism, indigeneity, and black communities are at the heart of inclusion/exclusion debates in Canada (Benoit et al., 2019; Cannon, Sunseri, & Alfred, 2018; Denis, 2020; Hogarth, 2018; Howell & Ng-A-Fook, 2022). However, the multiculturalism policy in Canada has overshadowed the existing systemic racism influencing racialized groups in their everyday lives and beyond. In fact, studies show how such seemingly non-

discriminatory race-related concepts and policies suggest a colonial meaning and contribute to the racializing and marginalization of non-White individuals in education and employment (Krysa, Paludi, & Mills, 2019). For instance, James (2007) and Mujawamariya (2007) demonstrate how race and racism in the larger societal structure are reflected in and perpetuated by the school system in Canada, despite the claims around cultural diversity, inclusion, and equality. Finally, racism is embedded in the public policies and fabrics of social life in a way that makes the discrimination extremely subtle, often invisible, and, therefore, harder to combat.

Tacit and Covert Racism in Canada

The literature on race and colonialism indicates that race and its colonial roots still affect the non-White immigrants' experiences in Canada. Du Bois (2005, (1903)) explored the experiences of Black Americans in the United States and introduced the concept of double-consciousness in relation to the feelings of one's own inferiority and living beneath the white gaze. Double-consciousness is a condition that develops a form of mechanism to resist and survive in a White-dominant society. While it is introduced to explain the experiences of Black Americans, it is relevant to the experiences of other racialized groups who are impacted by the colonial power and living in a White-dominant society. Critical race theorists, namely Fanon (2021 (1994)) and Said (1987) explore these experiences in relation to the colonial power and imperialism. Their work is central in understanding the complex of dependency and inferiority in relation to White and western European values and in the process of racialization (Ahmed, 2002; Said, 1987).

"Racialization is a process that takes place in time and space: 'race' is an effect of this process, rather than its origin or cause" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 46). Using racialization and analyzing it as a process emphasizes the socially constructed nature of the race. As part of an overarching framework, "racialization plays a central role in the creation and reproduction of racial meanings" (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019, p. 506). Race, in this sense, is a powerful source of differentiation and discrimination, impacting organizational practices based on colonial assumptions (Krysa, Paludi, & Mills, 2019). While overt racism is blamed in the political discourse and often prohibited in Canada, covert racism is a subtle reality of racialized groups, targeting them nuancedly and consistently. In this part, I discuss how tacit racism and covert racism are the mechanisms through which White supremacy operates in the Canadian context.

In the context of the United States, Duck & Rawls (2020) illustrate the many ways in which racism is coded into the everyday social expectations of people and call it "tacit racism." They demonstrate how racist behaviours are embedded in the taken-for-granted interaction orders of race (Rawls, 2000) and create a hidden unconscious that is institutionalized in everyday interactional expectations of Americans. "Acting on this racism does not require conscious intent: actions are racist if race is coded into them" (Duck & Rawls, 2020, p. 1). They demonstrate how tacit racism has permeated the fabric of American social life and how it is an omnipresent phenomenon, like the air we breathe. They trace different forms of tacit racism in various settings, such as the workplace or a college. They show how such a nuanced aspect of life, like how people interact with each other, is intermingled with racism. The expectations and patterns of White people's

interaction in the United States are normalized and produce what they call the "tacit interaction orders of race." I argue that tacit racism is a concept that explains the very subtle and nuanced form of racism and captures the democratic and institutional forms of racism in the Canadian context, and I used it throughout chapter 6 to demonstrate how it is relevant to the experience of Iranian immigrants in the Canadian Atlantic cities. Black Americans developed a double consciousness (Du Bois, 2005 (1903)) throughout history as a strategy to cope with the challenges they faced in a racist society:

> The incorporation of double consciousness into Black interaction order expectations involves a form of self-organization by the Black community that allows Black Americans to experience themselves both through the eyes of White society, which sees them as inferior, and through the eyes of their own Black world behind the "veil" of Race, in which they view each other as equals. Instead of measuring themselves by a White yardstick, according to which they would fall short, Black Americans adopted their own standards. While they are still oppressed, Du Bois argued that racial exclusion had given Black Americans an "emblem" of their own creation on which to build a Black "nation." Ironically, he said, this nation built on Race was organized to transcend Race. As a consequence, Blackness in the United States is a uniquely democratic conception. (Duck & Rawls, 2020, pp. 21-22)

Poor White Americans, instead, were manipulated by racist discourses and contributed to the split labour market without knowing it. They attached their identity to Whiteness so potently that they would rather die and than betray their ideological view of

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Whiteness (Duck & Rawls, 2020). Du-Bois (2005(1903)) introduces and uses the concept

of double-consciousness in explaining the unique liberating strategy of Black Americans

in the United States. However, it is also useful in describing the racialized immigrants'

condition and strategic actions in a White-dominated society such as Canada. Therefore, I

use it in the later analysis in relation to the Iranian immigrant participants' experiences.

Transnationalism and Diasporic Communities

Transnationalism and transnational communities are broad concepts that include

diasporas and diasporic communities. Whereas a Weberian (1978) approach associates

inequalities or the distribution of opportunities to social class, multiculturalism promises

societies where one's origins are irrelevant to life opportunities or the term Weber (1978)

offers, "life chances" (Creese, 2016). Immigrants of colour are positioned between the

multiculturalism discourses of Canada and the realities of marginalization. Formal

citizenship is not equal to belonging to the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) of

Canadians, and immigrants of colour negotiate the boundaries of Canadianness

consistently (Gonick, 2000). Belonging is a contested notion, in their experiences, of

gendered, classed, racialized, and sexualized spaces, including neighbourhoods,

workplaces, schools, and urban spaces (Brah, 1996; Creese 2016). These spaces are

diasporic spaces in which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and

otherness or "us" and "them" are contested (Brah, 1996). Sadeghi (2023) demonstrates

how such contradictory experiences of Iranians in the United States between formal

citizenship and constant "othering" based on their race marginalizes them and leads to

something that she calls "conditional belonging." Her concept explains how racialized

others might partake in the host society's cultural practices, but not feel an unconditional social membership. Therefore, their sense of belonging is conditional and context-dependent.

More recent studies offer new directions to approach the issues around inclusion/exclusion and belonging after critiquing the notion of multiculturalism. Çalışkan (2023), for instance, uses the concept of diasporic citizenship rather than using multiculturalism in relation to German-born Turkish Ausländer (or outsiders) to highlight the issues of power and hybridity. She decouples the notion of citizenship from nation-states and explains how belonging might transcend the boundaries of the state. The concept of diasporic citizenship offers a new direction to think about the transnational forms of identity and belonging while it includes both national and transnational.

In addition to the diaspora, the transnational paradigm explains how immigrants bridge their home country's experiences and their new country of residency (Wong, 2008). The social process of transnationalism constitutes immigrants' experiences of creating "social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders, and [developing] multiple familial, economic, social, organization, religious, and political relations that span nations" (Wong, 2008)

Contrary to assimilation theories, transnationalism is constituted of social processes by which immigrants create social fields that link their countries of origin and of destination (Basch, Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994). A transnational framework allows me to explore the relevance of experiences of home in the process of immigrants' creation of a sense of belonging within their home in the country of destination. A

transnational perspective embraces the immigrants' past to create a new future. I shall take the transnational paradigm as key in my dissertation's discussion around migration because it brings new perspectives in characterizing the processes of immigrant settlement, adaptation, and integration that acknowledge and authenticate their past experiences (Wong, 2008).

Transnational and diasporic communities are the emergent consequences of economic and cultural globalization in the current era (Wong, 2008). The concept of "ethnoscapes," which Appadurai (1990) introduces along with four other terms (technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes), explains the flows in the current world and how people move around the globe. Ethnoscapes are "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 297) While these groups move toward different parts of the world based on their judgments and the imagined life they seek, the international capital system constantly shifts its own needs. Additionally, the nation-states shift their policies toward refugees and immigrants. These frequent shifts sometimes accommodate and often limit the people who are moving to turn their imaginations and aspirations into realities (Appadurai, 1990).

The available literature on transnationalism and the creation of diasporic communities in Canada often focuses on the immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada, in general, as a host country. Wong (2008), for instance, studies the relationship between

transnationalism with active citizenship and the immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada. Wong's (2008) research demonstrates that transnational identities and practices do not have a negative impact on immigrants' active citizenship or their sense of belonging to Canada. In other words, transnationalism does not harm the immigrants' active citizenship as it has been imagined before. Another set of studies, such as Liu's (2014), on the other hand, addressed the (Chinese) immigrant's negotiating of home, identity, and sense of belonging from a transnational perspective with a focus on the emotional spaces of home and identity and belonging. Liu (2014), however, does not address how a sense of belonging within the home might emerge, considering the immigrants' past and new home experiences.

Anderson (2006) describes the nations as "imagined communities" in that the members of a given nation will never know most of their fellow members, yet they share a common image of their community. Building on the concept of imagined communities, van den Scott and van den Scott (2019) suggested the concept of imagined engagements:

Imagined engagements are interactions constructed by the agent as two-sided (or multi-sided), between or among people and groups that have not met, that undercut or plainly omit the experience or contribution of the other side. This can include a blurring of temporal lines between the past, present, and future (van den Scott & van den Scott, 2019, p. 91)

Therefore, to fully belong somewhere means not only having a home in an imagining of a collectivity, but also seeing oneself included in the discourses of community and nationhood (Anthias, 2002). Consequently, the meanings of

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Canadianness constitute a diaspora space that immigrants of colour struggle to enter

(Creese, 2014). Immigrants negotiate a sense of belonging by recognizing and

transforming spaces that can become home (Sandercock, Dickout, & Winkler, 2004).

Immigrants thus create their homes in new places as they build forms of community, and

they negotiate public spaces through their practices to enact forms of belonging.

Immigrants' experiences in Canada involve exclusion and resistance simultaneously by

negotiating belonging and the diaspora spaces of Canadianness simultaneously (Creese,

2016). The meaning of home in this new context can be complex, consisting of past and

present experiences and future aspirations. Therefore, a sense of belonging within the

home might be influenced by all those experiences and aspirations.

Iranian Diasporic Studies

Iranian Diaspora research has evolved since the 1979 revolution as a milestone in

Iranian migration flow outside Iran. It encompasses limited scope (mostly the USA and

Europe), but consists of a variety of topics on transnationalism and internal diversity of

the Iranian diaspora (McAuliffe, 2008), their reinvention as a distinct national and ethnic

group outside of Iran (Elahi & Karim, 2011), their exile from the 1979 revolution onward

(Fathi, 1991), and the creation of liminal space and an ethnic minority or a diasporic

positionality that might move beyond the nostalgia of exile (Naficy, 1993; Mostofi,

2003). These studies focus on Iranians as diasporic communities scattered around the

world and how their ties with their homeland, Iran, affect their presence in the host

societies. These studies also highlight how the past socio-cultural experiences make

Iranian immigrants' life experiences unique compared to other diasporic communities and the native-born individuals of a country.

Van den Hoonaard and van den Hoonaard (2010), for instance, focus on the experiences of Iranian Bahá'í newcomers in New Brunswick who had arrived about twenty years previous and stayed there. They found the institutional and administrative assistance of the Bahá'í community, as well as the interpersonal and spiritual support, as significant sources of help in their integration in New Brunswick. This study shows how interpersonal ties and institutional supports help immigrants to overcome the hardship of making a new home in a new context. It also demonstrates how such ties may affect the immigrants' decision-making in the process of migration, and in this case, participants had decided to stay among the community of Bahá'ís in New Brunswick.

Studies show Iranian diaspora is closely connected to a sense of nostalgia toward the home country, Iran, even for the second generation of Iranian immigrants (Elahi & Karim, 2011; Naficy, 1999; Malek, 2021; Maghbouleh, 2010). This approach is especially applicable and valuable in identifying with the Iranian immigrants who left Iran after the 1979 revolution. The newly informed concept of transnationalism, however, also captures the most recent emergent communities of Iranian immigrants around the world. Therefore, I use the concept of transnational communities instead of diasporic communities in this study to direct the attention toward Iranian immigrants from various backgrounds and emphasize their present experiences. A transnational approach allows me to involve different Iranian immigration characteristics rather than only focusing on their exile or fleeing after the 1979 revolution. In doing so, I will examine the agentic

attempts and strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) in light of structural influences in creating a sense of belonging, considering the past, present, and future.

Another point lacking in the literature is Iranians' sense of belonging within their present home after resettlement. The available literature mostly considers Iran as "home" for Iranian immigrants and emphasizes their sense of belonging and nostalgia toward their home country. Moreover, these studies are more USA-focused since many Iranian immigrants chose the USA as a destination country after the revolution (Mostofi, 2003; Sabagh & Bozorgmehr, 1986; Elahi & Karim, 2011). Numerous studies are also available on studying the Iranian diasporic communities in Europe (Naghdi, 2010; Sanadjian, 2015; Zarbakhch, 2015). However, the present research focuses on the Iranian experiences of a sense of belonging within their home and beyond in Canada — an increasingly popular destination for Iranian immigrants — to outline how they bridge their experiences to make sense of their belonging in the realm of home in the Canadian context.

Sociology of Home

In this section, I discuss the sociology of home, why it is important, and review the available scholarly research in this area. In this study, home is a relational concept and a dynamic process consisting of social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Therefore, it does not merely refer to a location, material artifact, or the past. It captures the complex relationship between individuals and the physical, social, and cultural world (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017). Therefore, it might take the dimensions of a physical home, neighbourhood, city, country, or the whole world

(as some participants described), as it might be dependent on the presence of a person or group or remembering a memory from the past. I view home as an ongoing project that immigrants work toward making sense of, even if they deny it in their lives. Moreover, I regard a sense of home as a contributor to the sense of belonging and as an integral part of it. Apart from these aspects, I seek how the participants describe and define home based on their specific social location, their past and present experiences and their future aspirations about home.

As mentioned above, the transnationalism framework privileges de-territorialized connections and allows scholars to shed light on the immigrants' experiences in creating social fields that span geographic, cultural, and political borders. Similar to assimilation theories, the transnational approach emphasizes how immigrants might integrate into the host society (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). However, immigrants' experiences are not only meaningful for their integration into the host societies. Their experiences are paramount to study because of their humanity, uniqueness, and the right to identify and express themselves in a safe, equal, and inclusive society. I take a multidimensional approach to comprehensively analyze how a sense of belonging might emerge through the immigrants' everyday life experiences and interactions within a home in both physical and sociopolitical aspects. To do so, I take Boccagni and Kusenbach's (2020) relational view of home in my sociological analysis of home.

Belonging concerns the emotional attachment and feeling at home. Home, in this view, is a safe space and "an ongoing project entailing a sense of hope for the future" (Hage, 1997, p. 103), while it is not a safe space for everyone. Home has often been

characterized by privacy; security, control, freedom; creativity and expression (Allan &

Crow, 1989). However, privacy might bring confinement, isolation, and domestic

violence. Therefore, a home might resemble more a cage than a castle (Goldsack, 1999;

Oakley, 1974; Darke, 1996). Home might also make someone feel trapped inside if the

outside feels hostile. Home is a contrastive concept that evokes what it means to be away

from home (Hannaerz, 2002). Such feelings might link with a sense of rootedness in a

socio-geographic site or result from an imagined affiliation to a distant local (Yuval-

Davis, 2011). I use the transnational approach to demonstrate how the immigrants' ties,

past and present experiences, and future imaginations of home impact their sense of home

and belonging in the new context.

As Boccagni and Kusenbach (2020) argue, the sociological understanding of

home does not merely refer to a location, a material artifact, or a background feature of

everyday life. Instead, a sociological understanding of home must be inherently relational.

The concept of the home captures the complex relationships between the "individuals or

groups and certain built environments, social settings and material cultures to which

people attach unique meanings and functions" (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020, p. 596).

Therefore, "home is a privileged site for studying processes of place-making, mobility,

identity, emotion, and belonging, as well as majority-minority relations, at both local and

global scales" (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020, p. 596). Accordingly, the sociology of

home pertains to the three analytical levels of relationships (micro), cultures (meso), and

structures (macro) that direct a comprehensive sociological definition of home (Boccagni

& Kusenbach, 2020). I take Boccagni and Kusenbach's approach toward studying the

sociology of home by emphasizing its relational characteristics and explaining why home is a suitable context for exploring the sense of belonging. Before expanding on this approach, I discuss what and where home is.

What is Home? Where is Home?

Home is a context that connects people's personal and emotional experiences. Like the sense of belonging, home is typically something already there and does not become an issue unless it becomes threatened, missing, or patently at odds (Duyvendak, 2011). When we are at our home, we feel we are in our place. The positive attributes we associate with home are also relational and involve our meaningful relationships with other people (Smart, 2007). Home, thus, is a process rather than a state of things; a process that involves lifelong efforts to reach "hom-ing" (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017, p. 597). A sense of home is a matter of degrees and thresholds rather than an unconditional achievement (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017; Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). If we consider home as a spectrum, one side would be the "ideal home," and the other would be the actual accomplishment of the home we occupy in real life. Home, thus, is a process informed by the ideal home. We experience it somewhere between the two ends of this spectrum, and we strive to achieve and accomplish our ideal home. Home, however, does not provoke a sense of safety and comfort for everyone. Home might be a place of hostility and trauma for some people, i.e., the women who live with domestic violence (Gurney, 1997; Rainwater, 1966; Somerville, 1997).

Home is also a physical space with three characteristic features: a geographic location, a material form, and an investment with meaning and value (Gieryn, 2000). It is

not merely equal to a house. Home has complex social and political dimensions that cannot be reduced to the features of a dwelling. Home can be more or less than a house in a material sense. A house or an apartment may not be owned in a legal sense but may still provoke a sense of home (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019).

In addition to Gieryn's definition of place (2000), there are three different aspects introduced by Duyvendak (2011) through which we can define the ideal nature of home: familiarity, haven, and heaven. These aspects of the home are tied to our complex sentiment toward home on social, personal, and physical levels (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019; Sixsmith, 1986). The individuals' in-depth knowledge of a home and their relationship with the home over time indicates familiarity. It resembles the "feeling at home," "belonging," "rootedness," "dwelling," or "habitus" for individuals and provides a context for self-expression and an extension of self. Haven is relevant to the home's physical space and architectural structures and refers to the basic necessities and feelings of safety, privacy, and comfort. Thus, home can also be a place for withdrawal from a busy social life (Sixsmith, 1986; Duyvendak, 2011).

The third aspect of home or "heaven" has rich meanings that indicate the sense of connectedness to relatives and friends through shared memories, history, or common cultural practices (Sixsmith, 1986; Duyvendak, 2011). Therefore, home is also a place for connection and interaction with people. Heaven signifies a broader concept of home beyond the private realm in relation to larger places, including negihbourhoods, cities, regions, or nation-states. Duyvendak (2011) argues that home as heaven implies membership in other social groups, specifically related to other fellow citizens, excluding newcomers and people from different backgrounds. Heaven, thus, promotes the concept

of home from physical materiality to a more symbolic, ideological realm and likens it to the notion of belonging (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019).

Cross (2015) offers a comprehensive framework for the relationship between people and places. Her study focuses on "processes" as the object of analysis rather than individual people, a novel approach in this research area. She demonstrates how place attachment is created through interactional processes. By proposing this framework, she presents seven distinct processes that interact at the individual, group, and cultural level to shape place attachment: Sensory, Narrative, Historical, Spiritual, Ideological, Commodifying, and Material Dependence. Each one of them is unique and develops differently over time and space. Cross's work contributes to a better understanding of immigrants' experiences and stories of their homes, their deep feelings toward them, or their non-existence of them. These proposed processes offer on-the-ground tools to explore immigrants' attachment to their homes. These interactional processes help understand how immigrants might create, develop, or resist a sense of belonging in relation to spaces and places.

Despite the current home definitions and descriptions of different home characteristics, sociologists Boccagni and Kusenbach (2020) acknowledge that sociology lacks a systematic analysis framework on the subject of home. They emphasize the inherently relational understanding of home and define it as "an emplaced relationship that prioritizes certain socio-material contexts over others, by the emotional, affective and practical values attached to them, in forms and degrees that change over space and time" (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020, p. 565). In other words, the home's cultural, structural, and relational aspects are interdependent as a social experience. Therefore, we must

investigate the home at the macro, meso, and micro levels and their mutual intersections (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). As I discussed earlier, home in practice is rarely ideal. Similar to a sense of belonging, I consider home as a result of intersecting social processes at an individual, societal, and cultural level rather than addressing it solely as a personal, intimate feeling at an individual level.

People's narratives, memories, aspirations, moralities, and values are the core subjects in studying home (Massey, 1992). However, to understand it in depth, we must investigate how the home is co-produced, negotiated, challenged, and mobilized in everyday life (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Previous studies have rarely applied transnational approaches in combination with discussing how immigrants create a sense of belonging inside the social and private realm of home through individual and collective everyday life practices in light of the inclusion/exclusion experiences beyond the home.

Home might also be a gendered space that is understood and formed by social constructions of identities and positionalities (Pease, 2009). The available literature on home and gender directs attention toward home as not necessarily a safe space but as a hostile gendered environment, especially for women with restricted options (Goldsack, 1999; Chapman & Hockey, 1999). Numerous studies show the relationship between space and gendered experiences (Duncan, 1996; McDowell, 1999; Massey D. , 1994). Migration also largely impacts the meaning and experiences of home experiences for the immigrants. Thus, not only does the meaning of home change for women after migration, but the meanings of masculine identity after migration also change (Hibbins, 2009; Pease,

2009). Throughout the following chapters, I also touch on the gendered transformation of roles by both men and women after migration.

I consider home a social and private realm because home is a private physical place. Also, home is a social realm when guests are there or when immigrants consider the broader meaning of home, which can be to the extent of a neighbourhood, a city, or a country. As the social groups that reside in marginal social spaces, immigrants have disparate unique experiences of being at home, different from the dominant groups in society. Therefore, I study how Iranian immigrants create the social and private realm of home that spans their past and present experiences and how a sense of belonging or resistance to it emerges from the intersection of the home's cultural, structural, and relational aspects. Thus, home in this study is a private and social realm that is the product of the interaction between internal processes and external forces. These processes and forces include, but are not limited to, an individual's ideals, interactions and collective negotiations, mundane practices, cultural influences and background, and the external structural forces of socio-political climate and discourses and their impact on the immigrants' lives.

Home and Belonging

Home and belonging are interrelated concepts and influence one another. Studies of home and belonging often direct our attention toward the relationship between people and places (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019). One of the differences between scholarly studies of home and belonging is the home's connection to a more individual and agentic emotional level. In contrast, belonging is often discussed in relation to socio-political

studies of inclusion and exclusion. Scholars primarily use belonging to discuss the

relationships between people and larger places than home, including neighbourhoods,

towns, regions, or nations (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019). The notion of belonging is often

discussed within the areas of (im)migration, (trans)nationalism, and citizenship at both

the national and global levels, and the relevant studies emphasizes the structural contexts

in which individual practices, identities, and experiences are embedded (Kusenbach &

Paulsen, 2019). Scholars thus often examine the concept of belonging as a matter of

power, politics, displacement, and exclusion and highlight the macro social dynamics and

constraints (Yuval-Davis, 2011a). However, the notion of home is also connected to

creativity and adaptation and is a context for expressing self and practicing one's agency.

When we describe a home as a social experience and practice rather than a place

of habitation, considerable similarities emerge between the two ideas of home and

belonging. However, only a limited number of studies have examined the people's

experience of home in relation to their belonging in neighbourhoods, cities, and nations

(Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019). Therefore, my study sheds light on how a sense of

belonging within the home might emerge due to the intersection of macro, meso, and

micro-level impacts in the realm of home. This research attempts to bridge the notions of

home and belonging by studying what constructs the meaning of home for Iranian

immigrants and how they create, develop, or resist a sense of belonging in their everyday

lives. It demonstrates how a sense of home is in conversation with a sense of belonging.

To study the agentic strategies of action among the participants in defining and

making home and in doing belonging, I use Swidler's (1986) cultural toolkit theory and

her conceptualization of the agentic strategies of action in uncertain times. It provides the

analytical tools to illustrate the Iranian immigrants' definition of home and their homemaking practices after migration. While she considers culture consisting of "symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies," she adds the "informal practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life" to her definition (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). In her arguments, the value, ideas, and interests influence individuals. However, the strategies of action that individuals choose based on the situation determine what action they will decide to take. These strategies are made based on a toolkit that consists of the habits, skills, and styles that people obtain in their life and choose to use them in different situations. These strategies are different in settled and unsettled times (Swidler, 1986). Thus, the context is important in deciding what action the individuals will take. I use Swidler's theory to elaborate on the strategic actions of the participants in the unsettled times of after immigration in making (or not making) a home and in doing (or not doing) belonging.

The cultural toolkit that Swidler (1986) proposes highlights the role of the individual in the process of taking action. Strategies of action are the cultural products that take place in the human mind based on the situation and their cultural knowledge. Therefore, the process through which the agency takes action happens in the mind based on the judgment of the situation. People act based on their perceptions, interpretations, and stimulations in the environment. Culture manifests in the schemata through cognition, and the individuals take action based on their cognition. Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between culture and individuals.

Home as a Socio-Archi-Cultural Space

I argue that home is a process consisting of social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects. There is a reciprocal relationship between space and place and the meaning they provoke. While we construct the places, they also influence our minds and lives (van den Scott, n.d). Lawrence and Low (1990) demonstrate an interactive relationship between people and the built environment from an anthropological perspective. They indicate that the built environment influences human behaviour during their interactions. The built environment also transmits meaning (Rapoport, 1982). Thus, the use of space demonstrates the social order in a given society and reflects the embedded social practices and their meanings in a particular place (van den Scott, n.d).

"The built environment also represents power dynamics in each society" (van den Scott, n.d, p. 5). Thus, architecture is not only political but can be a powerful tool for influencing social groups. A house might be a place that imposes a specific form of power and simultaneously a place of resistance to that power by the residents. The Canadian government, as a colonial power, for instance, imposes homes embodying colonial power relations for the Inuit in Arviat. Still, Inuit resist those power relations through their interactions, agentic actions, and usage of their houses. Thus, buildings and homes reveal the power dynamics and the socio-cultural settings of the society from which they emerged (van den Scott, n.d). In the case of the Inuit, "place-panic" or "place-alienation" is one consequence of failure to identify with a place. Settling in a physical home can also be a difficult experience that exacerbates their confusion about who they are (Casey, 1993).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the Northern-American home style has become a norm that exercises a form of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979 [1964]) upon the Inuit. Similar to Inuit experiences, the Northern American home style might impose a new form of living on the immigrants. With the home's physical and relational aspects in mind, I consider the dominance of the White Canadian culture in the sociocultural realm from physical home to society. I argue that the White Canadian dominant culture results in discrimination against immigrants from different backgrounds and operates as a symbolic form of violence in immigrants' lives, even inside their very homes. While immigrants contribute to Canadian society on many different levels, they are exposed to assimilation through soft and invisible forms of exclusion and racism. From living in a standard physical home — significantly segregated from their previous experiences of home — to being excluded from citizens' rights before or even after officially being a Canadian citizen, the immigrants experience symbolic violence. In the next empirical chapters, I demonstrate how the participants in my study experience exclusion and segregation at different levels and how these experiences push them to stick to their own community, where they find a haven and a sense of home in their relationships, their food, decorations, language, or even the sunshine's light.

Conclusion

Home as a private and social realm has rarely been a research subject of study for Iranian immigrants in Atlantic Canadian cities. Studies such as Liu's (2014) work focuses on how in an increased era of mobility and transnationalism, the concept of home and a

sense of identity and social spaces are formed for Chinese people in New Zealand. My primary research objective is to investigate how Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic region create a sense of belonging at home and beyond through everyday life micro-level social practices. I compare those processes with Iranian experiences from Ontario to capture the relevant influences of these two regions with different central and remote characteristics on immigrants' sense of belonging. It also helps us understand why immigrants tend to leave the Atlantic provinces for central regions.

As discussed above, a major part of the current literature focuses on the notion of belonging from either the political aspects or its relevance to individual's or groups' identity creation. Belonging has also framed studies that examine the immigrants' relationship with the host society in general. For instance, Hou, Schellenberg, and Berry (2018) study these patterns and determinants of immigrants' sense of belonging in Canada and their country of origin. However, the meaning of home for immigrants is not restricted to the homeland only. A home is equally a significant place in its physical and social sense because it is a locale for intersecting the past, present, and future. Thus, a sense of belonging in the home context is essential to explore because the home acts as a social field that spans past and future experiences and intermingles the various associated emotions and identities of immigrants. Therefore, a transnational perspective provides the tools to capture a bigger picture of what home means to Iranian immigrants and how it relates to a sense of belonging.

To recap, I study the notion of belonging as a personal feeling of being at home and a resource contributing to the emergence of inclusion or exclusion processes. I adopt

Antonsich and May's definition of belonging and consider it a highly relational concept reflecting immigrants' relationship with Canadian society. Therefore, the primary objectives to study are the cultural and interactional processes and their probable intermingling in the home context. On the other hand, I adopt Boccagni's definition of home as a social experience to include the interdependence between the home's cultural, structural, and relational aspects. I investigate how a sense of belonging within the home might emerge from meso and micro-level interactional processes for Iranian immigrants. To do so, I ask contextualities questions of my participants to understand how their sense of belonging or not belonging within the home might emerge as a result of everyday life practices, interactions, neighbourhood relationships, and the impact of the form of the houses on their lives.

In this, a transnational approach enables me to interpret how Iranian immigrants create new social fields within the home context, influenced by their past and present experiences in Iran and Canada, in light of future conditions and aspirations toward making the home and belonging to it. I study how a sense of belonging might emerge from the intersection of the immigrants' experiences and actions with their homes. Therefore, home, with its inherent cultural, structural, and relational aspects, is ideal for studying the highly relational concept of belonging. The immigrants' relationship and their feeling toward being at home reflect and are impacted by their greater relationships in Canadian society.

The various perspectives toward home are in dialogue with race, transnationalism and belonging discussions, which shape the framework of my study. I combine various discussions on belonging, transnationalism, and home to demonstrate the available gap in

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the literature. I aim to understand how immigrants create a sense of belonging within the realm of home in their new living context through their interactions and reciprocal relationships with their homes and neighbourhoods. I investigate the immigrants' definition of home, their experience, and their probable struggles and challenges in moving toward their ideal home in the context of Atlantic cities and Ontario.

A symbolic interactionist perspective is one of the most compatible approaches to conducting this study effectively. This approach allows a focus on social processes and actions while studying immigrants' lives and behaviour. Using the related concepts, methods, and procedures, I work to acquire knowledge of how Iranian immigrants define home and how they strive to make sense of the new world they encounter through their interactions at home. I elaborate on how they connect with their new home, neighbourhood, and community, how all these micro-level processes help them connect with their surroundings, and how a probable sense of belonging emerges and would be an outcome of their actions, interactions, and meaning-makings.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Introduction

Studying the nuances of Iranian immigrants in relation to a sense of belonging is not only important as they are among the top ten largest immigrant populations and a growing immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2023b) but also their experiences are prominent to understand as a racialized other group

from a Middle Eastern country in Canada. It is vital to address the larger issues of belonging, integration, racialization, and creating welcoming transnational contexts for these immigrants in a way that every minority group be seen, acknowledged, and included in various levels in Canada.

In this chapter, I start with elaborating on my positionality and insider/outsider perspectives and continue with delineating my research methodology and design while I offer my reflections on data collection in the field. There were certain limitations in the fieldwork, during the data collection, and during the transcription that limited the access to resources that I could use in my work. They included but not are limited to the COVID-19 outbreaks [More detailed list of COVID-19 closures and restrictions available at Research Support Services, 2022], access to the older generation of non-Baháʼí Iranians, conducting the interviews in the participants' houses, the unreliable weather forecast and the challenges it created for me in the field, self-managing my interactions (as a researcher) in sometimes hierarchical gendered relationships, balancing the level of hospitality with my compensations, and the transit between English and Persian language and the limitations of translating Persian concepts into the English language.

Positionality and Insider/Outsider Ethics

I come from a small city in the south-west of Iran, Boushehr, along the Persian Gulf's shoreline. The first time my sense of belonging was massively challenged was when I left my hometown for Tehran to continue my education at graduate school. Imagining that I was about to live far away from Boushehr and may never have the

opportunity to settle in my hometown as an adult made me think about my roots and ask where I belong. It was my first time leaving my hometown to live far away from my family. Something changed in me. My whole desire had been to leave Boushehr to explore the world. It was the plan, and I achieved my dream of entering the best university in the country, but some pieces of me were left in Boushehr. I loved the freedom I had to choose how to live, but I realized I would leave a part of me behind.

The question was: where do I belong now? In a larger context, where do the immigrants feel attached to? How do they work toward creating or resisting a sense belonging in their everyday lives? How do such experiences intersect with their experiences of belonging in the host context? These questions stuck in my mind, and while working on a project with my co-worker about home and the questions around a sense of place in an unsettling situation, I decided to explore a sense of belonging for immigrants in my Ph.D. After a second migration to Canada, I focused my research on the Atlantic regional context due to its unique characteristics compared to larger cities in Canada, my observations and my own experiences of friendship loss, and the limited research on Iranian immigrants in the region.

I ended up focusing on the Iranian group of immigrants in the Atlantic cities and Ontario for two reasons. The reason for choosing the Atlantic region was, first, the limited amount of research about Iranian immigrants in this region. Atlantic Canadian cities are non-traditional immigration gateways compared to Ontario, and more scholarly work is essential in exploring and understanding the lives of immigrants and highlighting their uniqueness in each part of Canada. The second is that we know little about the

dynamics of immigrants' lives in the region, and we need to grasp a better understanding in this regard to decentralize the immigration policies and work toward being more compatible and inclusive to accommodate immigrants in the Atlantic region. For instance, we have little understanding of the reason why Iranian immigrants and other immigrant communities tend to leave the Atlantic region after a while, how they come to that decision, and what other contributor reasons are involved other than job opportunities. The Atlantic provinces are not the only ones in Canada where immigrants tend to leave after a while and make a secondary migration (Statistics Canada, 2023i), but as discussed in the introduction, they have the lowest immigration rate (Statistics Canada, 2023i) and they need immigrants to contribute to their social (i.e., population growth) and economic systems.

Being born in the same country as my interviewees brought me challenges and opportunities. Being an Iranian, being an international student, and being an immigrant in Canada, all created a situation to connect to the participants in a way that the conversations quickly delved into the deeper layers of the participants' experiences. Coming from a country with an ideological and religious background at the formal level, conversation around religion was interestingly not prominent in the interviews. The only time that religious-related topics came up in the interviews were when the participants identified themselves as belonging to the Bahá'í faith communities. In this case, I was an immigrant who was not a Bahá'í. However, we still shared other similar identities such as being Iranian or being an immigrant in Canada that let the participants consider me to some extent as an insider. Also, verbal communication about other non-participant Bahá'í

friends who were known in the Bahá'í community helped to create a safe basis for trust for the participants. In other words, Bahá'í participants felt more comfortable talking to me when I elaborated my friendship connections to the Bahá'í communities, though I am not a Bahá'í. Also, they used some strategies like asking questions about where I come from, what is my plan for after graduation (whether I will go back to Iran or not), or what is my relationship with the regime (for instance, whether my education is funded by Iranian government or not) to assess if they are willing to participate in the interview or to adjust their level of expectation and trust with me as a researcher.

The issue of building trust also exists among non- Bahá'í Iranians because of Iran's political climate and the fear of talking negatively about the regime and putting families back in Iran in danger. Therefore, the participants were often hesitant to participate in the study unless they knew me from their networks or could trust me because I was a university student. Being a student helped me to gain their trust more easily because they could assume that I was unhappy with the political situation and preferred to leave Iran to further my education. It could also signal that I am not pro-regime person, nor a potential spy.

While being an insider has its benefits, including creating a dynamic for deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, it also brings challenges to the interviews. For instance, being an insider could potentially create a situation where I overlook the participants' experiences and consider them natural and the same as other immigrants or other non-immigrants. Therefore, I used different strategies to limit the possibility of taking their experiences for granted. While it was not guaranteed to not overlook the

unique life circumstances of the participants, I asked them to consider me as an outsider. Also, I was ready to ask follow-up questions where I felt they considered it "natural" for me to understand their perspective.

The younger generation of Iranian immigrant participants was either employed or graduate students. Access to this community was much easier because I had many connections there. I also shared a similar educational path with them in Canada, which allowed me to be considered an insider on another level besides being Iranian. Moreover, many people from the Iranian community in St. John's had moved to Ontario at the time of my interview. Therefore, I had access to many previous-Newfoundland residents in Ontario, and most of the potential participants I invited to interview agreed to participate in my study. This unique condition was an opportunity that made the recruiting process much easier for me in Ontario.

Moreover, I was an insider in the Newfoundland and some of other Atlantic region communities. Many participants were potential friends. There was a reciprocal relationship between me as the researcher and the participants, which went beyond being a researcher. Therefore, our relationship was different from an intense relationship as an outsider (Bikos, 2018). Once I passed the first stages of gaining trust, the participants welcomed me at their homes and greeted me warmly with Iranian hospitality, such as offering food, tea, and in some cases, a home-made dinner. Offering hospitality suggested a balancing dynamic in the relationship between myself as an insider researcher and the participant. On one hand, accepting hospitality put me in a position where I had to be cautious about not abusing the inevitable power dynamics around me as a researcher. On

the other hand, offering kindness and hospitality also worked as an empowering action by the participants who could lead and control some aspects of our relationship.

Research Methodology: A Symbolic Interactionist Lens

Symbolic interactionism addresses group life and human behaviour, emphasizing social action and social process. It reveals how people socially construct meaning and how structure intrudes on human lives (van den Scott, 2019). Blumer (1969) proposes three pillars of symbolic interaction: (1) people act based on the meaning they give to things; (2) this meaning derives from the humans' social interaction; (3) which are subject to change and evolve. Process and action are the subjects of research in this tradition. Symbolic interactionism is a powerful lens for analyzing and decrypting actions and the processes they incur (van den Scott, 2019). I focus on the "generic social processes" as Prus (1987) defined:

> [T]he phrase generic social processes refers to the trans-situational elements of interaction, to the abstracted formulations of social behavior. Denoting parallel sequences of activity across diverse contexts, generic social processes highlight the emergent, interpretive features of association; they focus on the activities involved in the "doing" or accomplishment of group life (p. 251)

As a qualitative researcher, I use this agenda to discover how and why things work in the same way in different social settings (Prus, 1987). For instance, I investigate how the meaning of home varies among the Iranian immigrant participants who left Iran since the 1979 revolution, while it is also a fluid concept connected to memories and

images from the past. Ethnography provides inductive and emergent findings based on lived experiences. Van den Scott explains how "symbolic interactionists often rely on grounded theory when they do ethnography" (2019, p. 6). To conduct an ethnographic study, I needed to spend a significant amount of time living in each field of my study. However, it was not feasible to do so due to the COVID-19 restrictions and other resource limitations. Therefore, I utilized ethnographic methods, although the methodology is not quite ethnography. Instead, I took a symbolic interactionist approach and used ethnographic methods such as interviews and photo-elicitation to gather data. In this, the participants often used story-telling as a method to share their experiences with me.

I study the everyday life experiences of immigrants in relation to belonging. Therefore, I needed to understand the meaningful experiences of immigrants of their life experiences, their relationships and interactions, their aspirations, and any other meaningful experiences. A symbolic interactionist lens combined with ethnographic methods helped extract the emerging themes from the immigrants' lived experiences and how they co-create a sense of belonging through their actions and interactions in their homes. These methods were compatible with my research questions and objectives because they allowed me to focus on what experiences were meaningful for immigrants, and they provided me with the opportunity to investigate and follow up with the hidden aspects that I did not have necessarily in mind before entering the field. Moreover, since I recorded the participants' voices and I transcribed them, I could return back to the data at any moment and revisit my analysis, if necessary, in the process of developing ideas.

I interpreted the processes that may shape a sense of belonging or not-belonging derived from immigrant experiences at "a second" home in Canada. I focused on the immigrants' agentic strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) in homemaking practices, navigating a sense of self and belonging. For instance, I examined how throwing Iranian-style dinner parties, making friends with Iranians or non-Iranians, or bringing Iranian handcrafts and food supplies for home decoration or cooking may help immigrants make a home in their new context. As van den Scott (n.d) theorizes about the walls of one's home, she brings our attention to the wall's powerful cultural and political characteristics, influencing our identities as well as our relationships with others. I consider home as a social space that "distributes power," "defines roles," and "reflects culture" (van den Scott, n.d). Consequently, I interpret the unique reciprocal relationship between Iranian immigrants and the Canadian context as a "second home" in the geographical and physical sense and with a broad socio-cultural meaning.

Research Design

This research explores the sense of belonging of Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic Canadian context. It explores the experiences of current residents of five Atlantic cities and previous residents who moved to Ontario to capture the dynamics of a sense of belonging in two different regions, Atlantic Canada and Ontario. It also allowed me to talk to people who had experienced living in both areas. I am focusing on the immigrants' social interactions in everyday life to study immigrants' sense of belonging and to demonstrate how it is in conversation with a sense of home. Therefore, I take a symbolic

interaction lens and explore how the participants talk about being away from their homeland, Iran. Moreover, I focus on the participants' home design, home décor, and the touchstones they brought as a reminder of the past. Additionally, I ask relevant questions about their everyday interactions and relationships, celebrations, rituals, ceremonies (Iranian/Canadian/International), personal emotions around being at home, being an immigrant at home (in a broader meaning), and the impacts of COVID-19 on their relationships and a sense of belonging.

Research Setting

The participants resided in the Atlantic provinces, including Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, as well as Ontario. I conducted twelve interviews in Newfoundland, thirteen in New Brunswick, twelve in Nova Scotia, six in Prince Edward Island, and twenty-five in Ontario (twenty in the Toronto Metro area, two in Mississauga, two in London, one in Lancaster) . The Ontario residents had all previously resided in at least one of the Atlantic provinces and were currently living in Toronto, Ottawa, London, Mississauga, and Lancaster.

I personally experienced frequent friendship loss in St. John's, Newfoundland. Since most of the students leave the province after their education, it is common practice for the community members to create friendship groups with the newcomers who arrive almost simultaneously. My husband and I were no exception, although our friendship groups included more diversity. However, many initial Iranian friends who came here for a master's degree or the ones who were seniors in the community left St. John's gradually and faster than we expected.

Many friends found a job and left St. John's. Many others left here seeking and hoping to get a job in bigger cities. I observed a constant worry among the community members and the pressure of instability to leave the province. Even friends with a job struggled to decide between staying or leaving the province. By the time I finished writing my dissertation, all my friends from five years ago when we had started our program had left the region for British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta, or Quebec. Moreover, many friends with a job here eventually left for bigger cities, seeking more success and urban experiences. I witnessed how this friendship loss also had an impact on other Iranian community members, even the ones who had been here for decades.

All of the participants in Newfoundland were living in St. John's. One reason for this is that Iranian immigrants here are working or studying, and there are more opportunities for them in St. John's than in any other place across Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants explained that the situation was the same for them in Charlottetown, on Prince Edward Island, when I was there to collect interviews. I also conducted interviews in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Fredericton and Moncton in New Brunswick. These are the four midsize Atlantic Canadian cities (Kaida, 2020) as well as Fredericton, which has the most populus Iranian community in New Brunswick. I travelled to these cities to conduct interviews. Moreover, I collected interviews in Toronto, Mississauga, London, and Ottawa in Ontario. The Iranian population in Ontario is grouped into scattered hubs in Ontario, and I travelled to these different areas to interview the participants.

I selected the participants' homes as the primary research setting for two main reasons. First, I was able to observe their interactions and their homemaking practices inside their physical homes. Second, because I did not spend enough amount of time with the participants to do ethnography, I used techniques that equipped me with rapid ethnographic methods in the participants' home settings. I conducted a multi-method ethnography involving "data collection from numerous sources over a relatively short period of time, including interviews… and participant observation" (Baines & Cunningham, 2013). However, I did accommodate the participants with the option of interviewing in a café or at their workplace if they felt more comfortable or if it was more feasible for them.

My alternative research method during the COVID-19 outbreak was online interviews. I managed to continue my fieldwork during non-outbreak times. Still, twenty participants had either medical conditions or preferred to participate online due to COVID-19 restrictions or personal preference. I conducted ten interviews at cafes and three interviews at the participants' workplaces. In those cases, I asked my participants to provide pictures and videos from their homes and send them to me if they were comfortable. I conducted one of the interviews at my home since the participant was leaving the province soon and she could not host me at her home. The rest of the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes. I also managed nine group interviews with couples to hear about their narratives and relationships about their sense of home and belonging.

I provided a thank-you card and a box of chocolate for my in-person interviews and paid for anything the interviewees ordered at a café. There was only one interview in Moncton during which the interviewee insisted on paying for himself and me because he said I was a guest in their town and should not pay for anything. This is how Iranians offer kindness and hospitality in Iran if you are a guest in their town. Still, I did not expect it to happen in Canada since keeping the hospitality level the same as in Iran is not feasible and can lead to misunderstanding if it occurs out of context. I remember the look on the waiter's face in the café when we had a discussion about who should pay. We were insisting on paying for the other person, and the waiter was completely confused, witnessing what was going on. I insisted and explained that it was the least I could do for the participant as they are my guest in the interview setting, but he started to get upset, and I eventually let him pay to prevent any potential offence.

Every participant kindly offered tea, coffee, sweets, and sometimes, meals when I was at their home to do the interview. It was the first time they had met me, and it was a very kind and friendly way to interact with me as a researcher and as a person who was taking up their time. It was also in keeping with Iranian hospitality rituals. I was therefore very thankful for their kind behaviour and felt grateful for being a member of their community.

Participants and Recruitment Process

The participants are Iranian immigrants residing in the Atlantic region and Ontario. I focus on their experiences in Atlantic provinces and primarily peripheral areas with a significant rural population and compare them with experiences in urban centers in

Ontario, the most important destination for international immigrants. I focused on the

immigrants who arrived in Canada from the 1979 revolution in Iran until 2021. I picked

the 1979 revolution because this was a turning point in Iranian immigration flow to

Canada. The participants who migrated to Canada during and after the 1979 revolution

are all Bahá'ís. It was a turning point in the history of Iranian migration to Canada, which

particularly included Bahá'ís and included a diverse range of immigration from Iran

afterwards.

A reason for that is the unsettling situation of Iran after the 1979 revolution for

non-Muslims and as a result of ruling an exclusive and oppressive ideological regime in

the country. In that situation, non-Iranian Bahá'ís in Canada started to advocate for the

Bahá'ís in Iran who were under the extreme pressure and fear of persecution to be

admitted as refugees in Canada. The Government of Canada was the first government to

welcome Bahá'í refugees in response to severe persecution following the Islamic

revolution in 1979 (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2010).

The conditions and incidents leading up to and following the 1979 Iranian

Revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war contributed to a rapid out migration of

Iranians worldwide (Malek, 2015). I take the 1979 revolution, Iran-Iraq war, and 1999 as

reference points that include the highlights of political and internal oppressions as well as

the public response and the subsequent movements in Iran and present in table 3 how the

participants fall within each period. This table also shows under what immigration

program the participants entered Canada (though many of them had changed to mostly

workers or PRs at the time of the interview). In the end, it shows how many participants were Bahá'í and how many were not Bahá'í.

Entering Category of Time to Canada	
	Number
1) During and after the 1979 revolution (all Bahá'í participants)	6
2) During the Iran-Iraq war, and the internal extreme political oppression (1984-1988)	1
3) From 1999 (Kouye-Daneshgah Disaster) to 2022 (including the Green Movement)	60
Immigration Status at the Time of Entry	
Student	39
Refugee	9
Spousal Sponsorship program	3
Permanent Resident	9
Work Permit	5
Tourist Visa	3

Religious Background	
Bahá'í	8
Not identified (Non-Bahá'í)	59

Table 3: Entering Category of Time to Canada

I consider three intervals: 1) during and after the 1979 revolution, 2) during the Iran-Iraq war, and the internal extreme political oppression (1984-1988), and 3) after 1999 Kouye Daneshgah Disaster, which includes 2009 Green movement (1999-present). The Green Movement in Iran in 2009 was accompanied by political pressure on those protesting the 2009 election announced results. There has been an increase in the tendency to emigrate outside of Iran among people who are not pro-regime.

The participants resided in the Atlantic provinces, including Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, as well as Ontario. I conducted twelve interviews in Newfoundland, thirteen in New Brunswick, twelve in Nova Scotia, twenty-five in Ontario, and six in Prince Edward Island. The Ontario residents had all previously resided in at least one of the Atlantic provinces and were currently living in Toronto, Ottawa, London, Mississauga, and Lancaster.

This categorization allows me to include Iranian immigrants from different generations, with different intentions for migration and probably various forms of relationships with Iran as a homeland and their new home in Canada. The participants mostly had middle-class backgrounds. They immigrated to Canada for education or

employment. The Baháʼí participants were also admitted as refugees and mostly became permanent residents immediately after arrival.

I used different methods and channels to recruit participants. First, I contacted the potential participants I knew directly. I created a bilingual poster that invited eligible people to contact me for an interview and sent it to them via email, Whatsapp, Telegram, and Facebook Messenger. Second, I shared the poster in the Iranian social media groups and provided more information about my research. Third, I used snowball sampling and asked the participants to share the information with anyone they thought might be interested in participating in the study. I followed up with the participants and got permission to contact anyone willing to be contacted by me to participate in the study. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I did not report back to the initial participants or mention who eventually participated or did not participate in the study.

Recruiting older participants was a challenge in my study. The older participants were often from three types of groups. The first group included Baháʼí participants who had immigrated to Canada around the 1979 revolution and established their lives here. The second group immigrated to Canada through investment programs. The third group depended on their children and lived here on a tourist or super visa (a visa issued for an immigrants' parents and grandparents upon specific criteria). The latter was less present on social media, and their family members often played a gatekeeping role in filtering who they could contact and who could contact them. In this, the immigrants' dependence on their family members to live in Canada made it almost impossible to reach out to

them. In a few cases, the participants were willing to put me in contact with their parents. However, they did not work to interview them afterwards.

I managed to contact the first group, Bahá'ís, with the help of my network of friends. I expected this first group from the older generation of Iranians to be the most difficult group to recruit into my study because of the suppressive situation they had experienced in Iran and because they had family members in Iran whom they thought might be affected. However, my friends vouched for me, and using their names let the Bahá'í participants trust me, and they often agreed to participate in my study.

Procedures, Methods, and Data Collection

I collected in-depth data through semi-structured interviews to analyze and examine the participants' relationships with their homes through their actions within and interactions with their homes. I took a symbolic interactionist approach combined with ethnographic methods because they allowed me to observe the emergent nature of social processes that contribute to creating a sense of belonging and the agentic nature of immigrants' actions (van den Scott, 2019). In addition, they equipped me with methods that provide profound knowledge about the participants' cultural settings and their interactions with their homes and others, including interviews and field notes (Kwame Harrison, 2018).

I applied an inductive research approach (Bryman & Burgess, 1994), using qualitative ethnographic methods, including in-depth semi-structured interviews with sixty-seven participants, photo-elicitation, and participant observation. "The primary purpose of an inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the

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frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in data" (Thomas, 2006, p. 2). Working with participants through the interviews, I explored whether a sense of belonging is important to the immigrants and whether they hold it as important for thriving. By accessing their lived experience, I put the participants at the foci of the research and acknowledged them as experts in their own lives. It allows unexpected data to emerge and enrich the study. Thus, my findings were emergent and inductive (van den Scott, 2019).

This inductive approach enabled me to use "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer H. , 1969), which emerge from the participants' language, such as recurring phrases, to reinforce the evidence and analysis. A sense of belonging reflects the connections people feel to society (May, 2013). Even the people who resist some forms of belonging might yearn to regain it in other forms or resist it because they may be afraid of losing it and getting hurt. However, I conducted this research to access immigrant experiences and to understand how the very taken-for-granted sense of belonging appeals to them. Also, I investigated how Iranian immigrants from various backgrounds and generations accomplish a sense of belonging through their mundane everyday life practices at the micro-level social processes. In doing so, I was open to any possibilities and data I was not looking for (van Den Hoonaard, 2018).

For instance, how the immigrants' past experiences and the new social relations and experiences in the Atlantic region and Ontario impact their sense of belonging. Therefore, I sought to understand how new forms of belonging may emerge due to new social relations and ways of life or through the encounter of past and present experiences.

Van den Hoonaard and van den Scott (2022) emphasize the interview *guide* rather than a script, questionnaire, protocol or schedule to highlight the flexibility of the interview questions based on the situation. I adopted this term because I was flexible in asking questions and tried to rearrange them or omit some depending on the situation. For instance, some questions are subject to change based on each province. I anticipated and included some probing questions to follow up in case I needed more information on a particular topic. I also created a list of topics that reminded me of the main topics to ensure the interview mainly evolved around those subjects.

I started interviews by asking a few open-ended questions while using a variety of probes during the interview that elicited further information (Ayres, 2008). I recorded my observations from their homes, their interaction with homes and neighbourhoods, and other people, including neighbours, friends, and other family members. In the end, I included a final question that left some space for the participants to discuss what they thought was important to add (van den Hoonaard & van den Scott, 2022) [See Appendix 1]. However, the outcome was different between the men and women participants. When I asked the ending question, "Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that I should have" (van den Hoonaard & van den Scott, 2022), the male participants reacted as if they were asked to talk about the shortcomings of my research design. Many middle-aged, educated male participants used this moment for "mansplaining" and making general tips about improving my interview guide. Subsequently, I kept the question the same for the women, but when interviewing men, I changed it in terms of language to focus the men's attention to add any missing point from their perspective.

Photo elicitation provided another data source in this study. Photo-elicitation is inserting a photograph into a research interview. I asked participants to take or bring meaningful photos of their homes and discuss and interpret them in the interview (Rose, 2016), though many did not provide them. Therefore, my analysis is more focused on the interviews than photo-elicitation.

The participants provided photos of what a home means to them. Some of them brought the pictures they took recently from their home or old pictures from the past in Iran to the interviews to show me their closest meaning to the idea of home. Some others brought a typical home from the north of Iran or a house in Canada full of woodwork. Also, the picture of family members and loved ones were what many participants brought to the interviews (Memo)

Photo elicitation is sometimes called photo voice. It was an effective method because the participants could express their thoughts (van den Hoonaard & van den Scott, 2022). This method added rich personal narratives to my research, as Clark-Ibáñez (2004) illustrates. During the interviews, I asked about their feelings about their homes, neighbourhoods, workplace, and interactions with others. I led them to discuss their relations with these places and their interpretation of being at these places. I recorded the interviewees' voices and wrote memos about my observations.

Data Analysis

Grounded Theory is a methodological-analytical approach that allows qualitative researchers to develop theories about human behaviour through direct and constant comparisons of the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory includes systemic

and flexible guidelines to collect and analyze qualitative data and construct theories from the data (Charmaz, 2014). It is a method that results in building theory from the "bottom up" rather than the "top down" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory involves "concurrent data collection, coding, conceptualizing, memo writing, theorizing, sampling, and writing" (Puddephatt & McLuhan, 2019, p. 141). The researcher revisits and reformulates many of these stages as emergent theoretical ideas develop. Writing a memo is a great tool for taking detailed notes during data collection that helps the researcher to conceptualize data and categorize them in the writing process. The researcher reaches data saturation when no new insights are being gained on a specific conceptual category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded Theory is a compatible qualitative data analysis with the inductive approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used a Grounded Theory approach during data collection and to analyze and encode the data. After reaching data saturation and leaving the field of research, I started transcribing the interviews in the original language in the interview which was either Persian or English. I transcribed the English interviews with Otter software and revised and corrected them by listening to them. I used professional help from an agency for transcribing the interviews in the Persian language, and I transcribed some of them manually, too. Since I recorded the interviews when the participants talked about the photos, I used the transcriptions to analyze photo data. Some interviewees were not comfortable sharing their photos with me because they included their family members. Therefore, I took notes of what I observed and combined the extracted data with the transcribed interviews to analyze photos.

I categorized the emergent themes. In this way, according to the steps outlined by Corbin and Strauss (1990), I categorized the data from interviews, observations, and photos. I proceeded with determining the categories of each interview individually and naming them, creating the broader categorizations of themes arising from all interviews, summing up the categories and combining them with other observations and documentation. Then, I presented them as emerging themes in my data analysis. Finally, at the last analysis stage, I integrated inscribed interviews with other data, including photos and observation notes. To protect the participants' anonymity, I changed all names to pseudonyms and changed the names of cities the participants talked about when they were in Iran. I selected Iranian names as monadonyms as a practice of cultural relativism in my study. Also, I used only one name for each participant as sometimes the content of a specific participant was important in relation to their other experiences included in data.

While writing the dissertation, I translated any quote from Persian/Farsi to English. Since I was an insider in the community, my experiences resonated with the participants. Therefore, I added a self-reflection approach related to my experiences from time to time throughout this dissertation to help take a more profound perspective toward the participants' experiences.

Challenges and Limitations

The representation of self for another Iranian person was important for the interviewees at the beginning of the interviews. It often took a while for the participants to

see me as a researcher who would not judge them based on their achievements and life

circumstances as an Iranian immigrant fellow in Canada.

I also faced another challenge, specifically with the male participants. Seeing me

as a female researcher whose work is substantial for Iranian immigrants was challenging.

My work was qualitative, focusing on the participants' everyday lives. On the other hand,

the participants were mostly highly educated at a graduate level. Therefore, the

participants were often familiar with research methods. However, most of the

interviewees came from a field other than humanities and social sciences, often more

familiar with the positivist and quantitative approaches. It was not easy for most of the

male participants and some of the female participants with an engineering or a hard

science background to grasp the importance of my qualitative research. Therefore, I

decided to spend some time at the beginning of the interviews to contextualize my

research in a broader context and elaborate on the significance of the participants'

experiences and perspectives in the qualitative research. In other words, I assured them

that they are the experts in their lives.

I experienced "mansplaining" in many interviews, and I was cautious to inform

the participants of my stance while not discouraging them from continuing the interview.

Some asked me what I would do with the interview data and how it would impact them,

the Iranian immigrant community, and the relevant immigration policies. I took the time

to have an informal conversation to respond to their questions and clarify my contribution

to the field of my study and its potential benefit for them as a community. I explained the

importance of studying immigrants' everyday life in Canada and how it might shape

policies from their on-the-ground experiences of immigrants and, therefore, will be

indirectly beneficial to them, to the future immigrants in a hyper-mobile era, and to the host societies such as Canada.

Another challenge was the relevance of the political issues in Iran and the participants' reluctance to engage in any discussions about it. They hesitated to participate because they were unsure which political side I take, how I am potentially connected to them, and my "real" intentions about this work. A participant specifically asked questions about these issues and emphasized that she was not interested in participating in any political discussion. I reassured her that my research had nothing to do with Iran's political situation and she had every right to withdraw from the study at any point or refuse to answer any questions she might not be comfortable with. These further explanations and efforts in clearing my stance helped to gain the participants' trust, and I could still arrange most of my interviews in the interviewees' homes if they were comfortable. Conducting the interviews at home allowed me to see what they were discussing and observe their home and neighbourhood.

The last limitation is related to my insider position in the community. It created a reputation for me as a researcher, and as Bikos (2018) states, the participants will likely read my work after I am done. It caused me to be cautious during my writing and in balancing my role as a researcher and group member (Adler & Adler, 1987). For instance, writing about gender relationships at home from a critical perspective is controversial to some extent as it can disrupt the Iranian immigrants' representation of self as a group of immigrants as enlightened and open-minded about gender discussions. Therefore,

presenting data could cause distrust toward future researchers. Therefore, I was cautious about articulating my data and observations to minimize any potential negative reaction.

COVID-19 outbreaks impacted and delayed my research several times. At first in December 2020, I decided to delay my fieldwork in order to be able to conduct my interviews in-person. However, it became evident that COVID-19 was going to last longer than I expected. My alternative research method during the COVID-19 outbreak was online interviews and I started with the participants in Newfoundland for two reasons. First, I was already familiar with the community, and it made the recruitment process more feasible. Second, I had a deeper understanding of the context in Newfoundland compared to other province and conducting online interviews did not disconnect me from the context. I managed to continue my fieldwork in-person in the field during non-outbreak times. Still, twenty participants overall had either medical conditions or preferred to participate online due to COVID-19 restrictions or personal preference. Therefore, I switched to online interviews when it was not possible to continue in-person. I ended up conducting twenty interviews online and forty-seven interviews in-person. Ten interviews were at cafes, three interviews at the participants' workplaces, twenty interviews were online, and the rest of them were conducted at the participants' homes.

Switching between the online and in-person interviews even in the field work impacted my research as I was not able to see the physical home the participants talked about. Also, the in-person interaction with its peripheral impacts provided more data that was likely to be missed in the online interviews. Also, the online interviews had a stricter

timeline for the participants whereas the in-person interviews were more relaxed and

flexible. All these circumstances impacted the quality of the online interviews. I ended up

collecting seventy percent of the interviews in-person.

Chapter 3: What is Home? A Place or an Imagination?

Where is Home? Where Do We Call Home Now?

Buildings and homes reveal the power dynamics and the socio-cultural settings of the society from which they emerged (van den Scott, n.d; Rapoport, 1982) as our relationships do. Considering belonging as a feeling of being at home and a discursive resource of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (Antonsich, 2010) and defining home as a highly relational concept provide a framework to study their connection and their impacts on each other. In this section, I elaborate on how participants defined home and how it works with their sense of belonging. I also elaborate on how their definition of home is related to their unique life circumstances primarily based on the participants' case. Throughout my analysis, I demonstrate how the participants are using agenting strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) in doing home-ing (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017) to make sense of. I also analyze how their definition of home and home-making practices speaks back to Cross's (2015) interactional place attachment processes, Duyvendak's (2011) three aspects of home (familiarity, haven, heaven), or generate new meanings such as a concept that I introduce, *temporary belonging* which is a result of a situational and temporary attachment to people and places. Most of the participants did not bring any photos to the interviews. Therefore, my analysis is more focused on the interviews.

Home in the participants' definition varied across generations, religions, gender, and immigration status. It is connected to the reasons they left Iran, their gendered experiences of home, the community, friendship, and familial ties, lingual experiences,

connections to the city, and the racialized patterns they experience in Canada. These all affect the immigrants' approach toward conceptualizing the notion of home and provide a variety of definitions, as you can see below. The participants' definition of home sometimes falls into more than one category, which indicates that home is not a static objective reality for the participants, but a dynamic fluid process (Mallett, 2004).

I categorized the emerging themes from the interviews about the participants' definitions of home and presented them as 1. A Universal Sense of Home and Belonging; 2. A Puzzled Definition: Home is Iran, Canada, and More; 3. Home is Where I Am Now, 4. Home is Where the Loved Ones Are: A Geographically Fluid Definition; 5. A sense of Loss and Nostalgia Toward Home; and 6. No Home: Neither Canada Nor Iran is Home. This categorization moves gradually from a geographically expanded definition of home from the extent of the whole world to no sense of home, where the participants have the least attachment to their surrounding world and resonate with Cross's (2015) processes of place attachment. These categories do not have rigid boundaries. They drip and resemble a spectrum. As a sense of home is fluid, the participants' sense of home might also fall into more than one category. However, I selected the most prominent aspects of the participants' meaning of home.

Overall, the category of "Home is Where I Am Now" was the most prevalent one among other definitions. Some of these definitions were more recurrent than others. For example, the male participants conceptualized home as "Where I Am Now," whereas the women participants referred to home as "A Puzzle," more connected to where the "Loved Ones Are," or they have "No Home." In addition to these gendered differences in

defining home, the Bahá'í participants had a more unified sense of home compared to other participants. They were the only participant whose definition fell in the category of "A Universal Sense of Home and Belonging," although not every Bahá'í participant's definition was situated in this category. Moreover, while the nostalgic feeling toward home existed among different participants, "A Sense of Loss and Nostalgia" was more prominent in the definitions of the participants who left Iran by force, mostly after the 1979 revolution and have not had the opportunity to go back,

I presented these categories near each other in the table below to provide the opportunity to understand better how these definitions constitute a spectrum. I discuss each category of the description of the home in the following.

A Universal Sense of Home and Belonging	A Puzzled Definition: Home is Iran, Canada, and More	Home is Where I Am Now
Home is Where the Loved Ones Are: A Geographically Fluid Definition	A sense of Loss and Nostalgia Toward Home	No Home: Neither Canada Nor Iran is Home

Table 4: Definitions of home emerging from the interviews with Iranian immigrants

A Universal Sense of Home and Belonging

In this section, I indicate how some participants from the Bahá'í community conceptualize home as a place they live in Canada while they talk about their love for Iran at the same time. I also demonstrate how the Bahá'í Faith works as a source of ideal

culture for the Bahá'í participants, encouraging them to see the entire world as one (see picture 1). Here, I acknowledge the diversity of the Bahá'í participants from within the community. They come from different ethnic identities and communities in Iran, but their Bahá'í identity was among the most prominent part of their identities. A Bahá'í participant's wall decoration with a world map with the animals in each region, for instance, was fascinating to me since it indicated a united world without borders, which was interesting to me. The interviewee told me that her grandchild made that decoration which was fascinating, and I found it relevant to her worldview affected by her faith. Therefore, while talking about a universal sense of belonging, they also reveal that they still consider Iran their first home, even if they have not been there for about forty years, as in the case of one participant.

The meaning of home for this group of participants was more straightforward than for others. They often mentioned Iran as their first home and referred to their current physical home, city, or Canada as their second home. In other words, they often mentioned they had two homes while they emphasized their first home was and had always been Iran. Some participants did not have a strong relationship with Iran and mostly conceptualized the whole world as their home.

Picture 1: The Globe: The Wall of a Bahá'í Participant's Home (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Bahá'í Faith as a Source of Collective Identity Impacting A Sense of Home

One of the stated aims of the Bahá'í Faith is to bring about global unity (McAuliffe, 2015). The individuals are considered as global citizens as the Bahá'í Faith supports a cosmopolitan globalist perspective of world relations and problematizes allegiance to national identities (McMullen 1999; Warburg 1999; McAuliffe 2005; McAuliffe 2007). Collective identity emphasizes similarity. It refers to the shared attributes by members of a group. It is constructed based on group identification and categorization (Guibernau, 2013). Bahá'í participants often shared similar values and perspectives toward a given phenomenon. For instance, many Bahá'í participants talked about universal belonging. Members of the Bahá'í community are highly supportive of

each other. In fact, they are encouraged to look after each other and help other Bahá'ís anywhere they are. The Canadian community of Bahá'ís, for instance, helped the first group of Iranian Bahá'í refugees resettle in Canada after the 1979 revolution.

I found being Bahá'í was often the most prominent part of these participants' identities. Therefore, whenever the participants emphasized this part of their identity, I considered the Bahá'í Faith as a significant source of shaping their definition of home and regarding a sense of belonging. Though I have close Bahá'í friends and immensely respect and value my participants' dedication to speaking with me, I acknowledge that I am not Bahá'í, and my analysis comes from an outsider's point of view.

Data suggest that the meaning of home for the group of participants in this research who had been forced to leave Iran usually during and after the 1979 revolution — who are all Bahá'ís in this study— is very closely connected to Iran as a homeland. As a limitation of access, my participants from this period of time are restricted to the Iranian Bahá'ís. A sense of loss and nostalgia are attached to their feelings and definitions of home. Iranian Bahá'ís often hoped very much to return to Iran someday when they could practice their religion in freedom without the fear of being oppressed and persecuted. They share a collective identity that ties them together based on their faith. I learned that being Bahá'í for most of these participants was equally important to them as being Iranian (in a few cases, it was more important than being Iranian). For this group of participants, Iran is not only a home but a holy place that is the origin of the Bahá'í Faith. Therefore, Iran is important in national terms, but might even have more transnational significance for the participants.

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Anousheh, living in Charlottetown for decades, said:

Our first country is Iran… We are living in Canada, so Canada is also our second

country… we are also comfortable and feel like home here in Prince Edward

Island… but our main home is Iran, and we will go back to Iran the moment we

can.

Anousheh established a life in their "second home," and she was content with that.
However, her memories and experiences from the past remind her of a yearning for a
deeply rooted notion of home, Iran. Considering the Bahá'ís Faith, the participants
idealize Iran not only as a place of memories from the past but also as a holy place that
will be glorious in the future. It was a recurrent theme among Iranian Bahá'í participants.
Most of the Bahá'í participants mentioned that they had not been in Iran since they left
there, and Anousheh was one of them. This was the result of the challenging relationship
of the current Islamic regime in power which had oppressed the Bahá'í community since
the day they were in power (McAuliffe, 2015; Zabihi-Moghaddam, 2016). Therefore, the
fear of being arrested and persecuted held them back from visiting Iran. There was one
participant who said they had travelled to Iran twice since they arrived in Canada after the
1979 revolution, but it was not an easy decision to make and it was a less common
practice than it was among the non-Bahá'í participants.

Fariba and Parsa's emotional moments in describing Iran as a home, like
Anousheh, reassured me that their two-folded sense of home roots in both their beliefs
and memories. However, in a situation where a sense of loss and nostalgia could
dominate the participants' notion of home, the Bahá'í Faith opened a door for hope to see

the whole world united as a place that belongs to everyone. Therefore, the participants did

not feel lost even after leaving Iran, possibly forever. This is what Parsa, living in

Moncton, explicitly talked about. All the "but"s that Parsa used after expressing his

deepest emotions about what he lost demonstrated the psychologically challenging

emotions he was dealing with: the love of Iran because of the family members there and

the entailment that the Bahá'í faith called the followers to rise above nationalism and

gather around in unity, based on their religion.

> When you talk about home, actually, there was a period of my life that it wasn't
>
> very long ago it was a few years ago that start thinking about the sense of
>
> belonging. It's really… it's a big issue. It's a big issue for immigrants. Where do
>
> we belong? And so, sense of belonging it's a big issue, but what I miss the most
>
> from home is relatives. Relatives are the really… uncle an aunt and cousin and
>
> grandparents that even when I think about it, I want to cry... [he gets emotional
>
> and cries] I cannot… it's sad… it's very difficult… You see your grandparents
>
> passed away, and you don't get a chance...
>
> Anyway, it's.. that's it. That's the difficult part. But what Bahá'ís faith did to us or
>
> to grow up as a Bahá'í, it take… kills the sense of patriotic feeling or nationalism.
>
> Like from childhood, you read about the Bahá'í writing or the parents telling you
>
> your job is to love mankind. So… and your job is to get along with everybody, so
>
> with that mentality, we grow up. And with that mentality, when I came to Canada,
>
> I didn't even feel stranger… yes, I was [a] foreigner in the eyes of people. But the
>
> principle of the Bahá'í Faith talks about wherever you live, that is your home. So

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right now, I'm living here so this is my home. But you do miss… you do miss your… your family really... And there is no way you can bring that back. (Parsa, Moncton)

A part of the reason for Parsa's mixed feelings about Iran comes from the encounter with ideal culture, rooted in the Bahá'í Faith, and everyday culture, deriving from Parsa's real on-the-ground lived experiences. A sense of loss and nostalgia for Parsa and other participants was fueled by the fact that Iranian Bahá'ís did not freely decide to leave. Life circumstances forced them to choose to leave Iran. Even after that, it was difficult for them to visit Iran as some never did. I argue that Iranian Bahá'ís share a collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992) impacting their identities and definitions of home that involves nostalgic memories from living in Iran, a revolution that disrupted lives and scattered Bahá'í families around the world, and a bright future that is yet to come. Yearning for a future the participants know they may or may not see in their lifetime allows them to call Canada a second home. While the current home was rarely perfect, a prosperous Iran in the future was the ideal place for many Bahá'í participants to live. Considering the whole world as a place for all humanity in the Bahá'í Faith opened an alternative way for them to settle in a place outside of Iran and call Canada a second home, or in the case of Pravaneh and Mehri, "the home."

Although the analysis above accords with most Bahá'í participants' sense of home and belonging, there were alternative definitions of home. Parvaneh and Mehri's cases showed that not all Bahá'ís feel the same toward Iran and do not conceptualize home in connection to Iran as a homeland. Mehri, for instance, had not visited Iran for about forty

years and had travelled and lived in many places before settling in Canada. Though she

and her family felt excluded in Fredericton because of their unfriendly and sometimes

conflictual relationships with their neighbours, she considered there her home. Parvaneh's

husband's business was in competition with other locals in the area, and they were

constantly being excluded from neighbourhood relationships. Parvaneh emphasized that

her home was where she lived:

> My home is where I am living now… Fredericton. Absolutely. Absolutely. This
>
> is home... When you are Bahá'í, you are never lost. You have always a
>
> community who supports you no matter what. It doesn't matter where you are,
>
> you know you always have them, and you can rely on them.

Though both definitions still fit in this category, Parvaneh and Mehri are not as

much impacted by the experiences of home from Iran, as other Bahá'ís were. Parvaneh

and Mehri's life experiences of living in Iran were different since they left there in

childhood, which had an impact on their relationship with Iran compared with other

participants who mostly left Iran in their 20s or 30s and had already rooted in the country.

The category of a universal sense of home and belonging speaks back to the

spiritual process of place attachment that Cross (2015) has introduced. This process

produces a deep feeling or sense of belonging that is fortified by the feeling of the

oneness that Bahá'í Faith promotes. These kinds of deep feelings do not change

dramatically over time (Cross, 2015), as the participants also mentioned that their sense

of belonging does not change by moving across different places since they see the whole

world as one. This definition of home connects to what Duyvendak (2011) has

conceptualized as "heaven." This aspect of home has rich meanings and indicates the sense of connectedness to relatives and friends through shared memories, history, or common cultural practices (Sixsmith, 1986; Duyvendak, 2011). As Duyvendak (2011) argues, home as heaven implies membership in other social groups. For Bahá'í participants, the primary source of this sense is the Bahá'í community. Heaven promotes the concept of home from physical materiality to a more symbolic, ideological realm and likens it to the notion of belonging (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019), and this is the reason why the Bahá'í participants mostly talked about a sense of home and belonging in a harmonious and unifying way.

A Puzzled Definition: Home is Iran, Canada, and/or More

The next conceptualization of home emerged as pieces of a puzzle. Mona, 35 years old in Toronto, who previously lived in St. John's, described the home strikingly. She stated that she had given much time to think about the home before the interview. She said: "the meaning of home to me is like a puzzle… our home in Kermaan… our home in Gilan, and our home in St. John's… every place I lived at constructs a part of the meaning of home for me." Mona referred to the home as not a single place or space but multiple images from the past and present. The future was also a part of her puzzle when she mentioned she is hopeful to have her family members in Canada and to hold their gatherings as they did in Iran. Her definition captures the contested notion of home and belonging for immigrants who struggled to introduce their home as one place or two, or in the form of a place at all. Mona's living circumstances contributed to her feelings about home. She was happily married, had a secure job, and had a stable life. Though she was

frustrated about Iran's situation, which led her to leave her hometown and live far away from her family, she was enjoying having more freedom as a woman in Canada. These experiences impacted her definition of home and made her content with the life she established as an immigrant.

Picture 2: A Participant's Home (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Picture 3: A Participant's Home (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Pictures 2 and 3 show the inside of a participant's home, which resonated with the definition of home as a puzzle. Zhila's definition of home was mostly related to food, but in a way that was bringing Nova Scotia (her place of residency), Newfoundland (her husband's hometown), and the North of Iran (where she had meaningful memories from) together. I found this theme in her home decorations, too, where she used both Iranian and Canadian decorations at her home.

Another participant, Tara, in her sixties, living in St. John's, who had first landed as a refugee in Fredericton, defined home in pieces:

"for me… my first home is Iran, and it always had been there. My second home is

Fredericton because my family members are there, and the Bahá'í community

embraced me… If I needed something, there was always someone helping me."

Finally, she mentioned that she lives in Newfoundland with her husband in their own

house, so her home also involves "here," where she currently lives. As stated in the

beginning, the participants' definition of home might fit into more than one category, as

Tara's last part of her definition also fits in the next category: Home is Where I Am Now.

Similar to this group of participants' perceptions of the home, their sense of

belonging was also in pieces. Most of the participants stressed that they were not sure

where they belonged while describing home in connection to multiple places they had

lived and not to a particular place. For women specifically, Iran could not be an option

since they did not have as much freedom to express themselves in their appearance,

language, and "true" selves, especially in institutional settings. They also did not feel they

belonged to Canadian society or local communities since they were too "unfamiliar."

Therefore, their sense of belonging was uncertain and unclear, at least by the time of their

interview. Here, the participants' sense of belonging also fits in the No Home category,

where the participants do not consider anywhere as their home. In other words, their

definition of home and belonging is a combination of both categories.

Despite the lack of a *deep* sense of belonging, they could act as if they are a part

of the setting at the workplace, university, or any other professional environment. Before

his description of home, Behzad in Ontario, for instance, stated how sometimes he feels

excluded in the conversations with his co-workers and tries to find a way out, while he sees himself as a part of the group at the workplace:

> I don't want to exaggerate, but it's been years that 90 percent of the meetings, groups, and companies I go to consists of White people, and I am the only manager whose first language is not English among them. Everything had been positive, but one thing that annoyed me… or maybe caused me discomfort was when I went out with them for dinner or a business trip. When the work is over, and we get together, I feel drained and become silent because I cannot keep up with their discussions. I would understand if they talked about work, politics, or our friendships, but I cannot understand when they become a group and talk about hockey, basketball, alcoholic drinks, special trips, etc. In those situations, I don't have anything to say; neither does my general information allow me to keep up. Sometimes, the subject completely changes until I understand what they were talking about in the previous discussion. Sometimes, the jokes come from shared childhood memories, like what we saw or mimic from Barareh (an Iranian popularseries :برره) language. If we talk like Barareh people for a person who learned Farsi at Oxford University, they won't understand what we are talking about. These are the situations I cannot keep up with, and I honestly retrieve them by working with my cell phone or making an excuse and telling them that I need to talk to my wife because I know that I will get exhausted.

Behzad is a successful manager in his company and has a good collegial relationship with his colleagues at the workplace. However, his story shows how he

cannot relate to other White colleagues' experiences in the less formal conversations outside the workplace. Therefore, he either feels excluded or finds a way to get out of the conversation. Behzad's example shows how he walks on the boundaries of belonging in relationship with his co-workers. It shows how Bahzad's sense of belonging gets interrupted in these interactions. In a greater context, it demonstrates that a sense of belonging might get aborted while immigrants try to negotiate their boundaries of belonging. As a consequence, a sense of home to Canada or any other setting beyond the physical home would be out of reach once the immigrants encounter a deeper layer of cultural differences that they cannot relate to, nor ignore it. In the following, Behzad explains how his sense of home is paradoxical and, in pieces, partly connected to Iran and partly connected to Canada.

Such experiences resonate with what I conceptualize as a *temporary belonging*. A temporary belonging is not a deeply rooted sense of unity and connectedness with the surrounding world. Sadeghi (2023) introduced the concept of "conditional belonging" as a result of the contradictory experiences of Iranians in the United States between formal citizenship and constant "othering" based on their race that marginalizes them. This concept explains how racialized others' sense of belonging is conditional and context-dependent as a result of partaking in the host society's cultural practices but not feeling an unconditional social membership. It resonates with the concept of *temporary belonging* that I introduce here since it is also context-dependent. However, I emphasize a temporary form of belonging derives from an agentic choice (Guibernau, 2013) of the participants to put the profound differences aside and focus on the shared and common

culture and practices in a specific setting such as a workplace and make sense of it no matter how temporary and context-based it is. In other words, I conceptualize it not only as a result of the feeling of exclusion, which is passive, but as an agentic and active choice of the immigrants that choose to belong, even if it is not profound and temporary. A temporary belonging explains why the participants in Ontario particularly mentioned that apart from their friendship or family groups, they have a sense of belonging to their collegial workplace groups, while it changes in other settings. It explains and conceptualizes the nuances of the Iranian immigrants' agentic strategies of action in navigating their connection to the world and, consequently, their sense of belonging.

Picture 4 shows one of the participant's Haft-Sin table decorations for Nowruz (an Iranian and Bahá'í holiday) with various cultural objects from different parts of the world where she had lived before (Iran, Africa, Canada). Her definitions and home decoration both implied that any place she lived before as well as New Brunswick constitute some parts of her sense of home.

Picture 4: A Participant's Home-Nowruz Haft-Sin Table with Many Cultural Objects from Different Cultures (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

I found describing home as a puzzle as an interesting strategy of action (Swidler, 1986) that the immigrants exercise to deal with uncertain times after migration and to not only make sense of their home and belonging, but also the way of being in a constantly changing world. A puzzled definition of home opens the capacity for re-rooting in multiple places and calling them home. It involves positive feelings of personal achievements, having "your people" around, who might be family members, Iranian and non-Iranian friends and community members, and reciprocity in sharing commonalities. It induces a sense of hope for developing a sense of belonging and imagining a future that involves a sense of ease and accord with the surrounding world.

Home is Where I Am Now

This definition has two sides. First, the theme refers to the conditions that require some level of stability as a part of being an immigrant in Canada and buying a home was an important part of it. Moreover, most men participants referred to the commodifying aspects of place attachment (Cross, 2015), which involved listing the desirable traits of a physical home. It included specific features of the home, such as having a garage, woodwork at home, lighting, etc. The other side of this definition involved the temporal aspects of the home, referring to home now, wherever it is.

The participants who framed home as "where they live now" dug deeper to expand their definitions during the interviews. This definition demonstrates how some Iranian immigrants made a living in Canada, approached their immigration positively, and accepted their decision as a permanent one. These participants mentioned that they confirmed their feelings when they travelled to Iran recently and saw how the situation had changed politically, economically, and socially since they moved to Canada. In other words, they became confident about their decision to leave Iran when they compared the level of comfort and safety they experienced during their travel to Iran and in their everyday life in Canada. Gisoo, in Lancaster, Ontario, for instance, talked about how she feels toward Iran; but she finds her home in the new home they have recently bought:

> Right now, this is my home. I feel like, okay, Lancaster is my home. I only lived here for six months. But I feel like because the way that me and my husband built this house, not built, I mean, like started life here. Since we started living here, it feels like home to me. The last two apartments that we lived, the last two places, it

was not home. I never felt Mississauga to be my home. I never felt Burlington to be my home. I'm guessing, maybe because we finally purchased our own home, that helps. And I always thought that this is just like a home that I call home. It's because I live [here]. Iran is my home because I grew up there. You know, my relatives still are there. My old childhood home is there. But after 11 years, last month, I went to Iran. And I just felt, I mean, I have connections, I love it. But it's not home. I just… just was like, after two weeks, I was like, Oh my God, I want to go home. So I realized that even if I say, oh, Iran is my home and I love it, and you know, be like very like, you know, loving towards my country. At the end of the day. I want to come here.

The feeling of being at home in the current house the participants lived in was more prevalent among the homeowners who lived on their own property. Almost every participant who had purchased and lived in their house framed their home as "the place they live at." Some of them, like Gisoo, explicitly mentioned that their feelings toward home changed once they bought their house and started living there. This shows the significance of commodifying aspects of home (Cross, 2015) and, consequently, the meaning of being a homeowner for immigrants and how it elevates their sense of rootedness in the host society.

While women participants like Gisoo discussed "here" as their home, I found this definition prevalent among women and men participants. Behzad, for instance, called "here" his home:

You will find a big paradox in my definition of home. When you listen to this, you would say what did he say eventually? So, I will talk about what I believe.

I have been extremely in love with Iran since childhood. I used to attend Iranology classes since I was 10 or 12. My entire adolescence and youth were spent in famous master's classes. I was in love with Iran, I am now, and I will be. This is a slogan I am saying now. I am in love. If you take a look at my artwork such as pottery or woodwork, you will find a sign of my love to Iran on them, like the Iran's flag or Farvhar [A Zoroastrian symbol, an Iranian religion. Despite its religious nature, it is a secular and cultural symbol for Iranians] so my existence is somehow mingled with what I was interested in since childhood… But where is home and not house? It is where one feels safety and love… and as Soosan said, it is here, where I feel safe, I work, and where Soosan is. It was not like that before. It took 7-8 years for me to feel this way… After five or six years of being an immigrant, when I was coming back to Canada from a trip, the plane took off from Iran, and I felt like I'm going home…

If you ask me, who would you like to win if there is a match between the football teams of Canada and Iran? I would immediately, without any thinking say Iran. Regarding the matches like volleyball or political matters, I would say Iran. I will be Iran's fan, now and forever. But if you ask, where is home? I would say here. That's the reason I say there is a paradox [in immigrants' feelings]. However, my heart's roots are there [in Iran]. Do I feel comfortable there? Yes, I feel very good when I go to see my father, mother, aunts, and my brothers, but, I have felt strange

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recently [when I go to Iran]. As I told Soosan recently, I feel strange in my own homeland, with my mother tongue. It seems that I do not root or belong deeply to Canada, and I cannot live in Iran anymore.

I remember my uncle who has passed away, lived 50 years in Canada, and my other uncle lived for 65 years in Los Angles and Germany had mixed and strange feelings, too and their answer to your question might be different from time to time. For example, I remember my uncle used to ask: "why did I do that to immigrate? My friends are there, a friend is in Mellat park now, where my house was." After a while, something was happening in Iran, and my uncle used to say: "well, I was really wise to leave Iran fifty years ago, and I rescued my children, too." So, you can find the paradox I am talking about. You will lose a dear person in Iran, and you will say I wish I was there with them in this hour, I wish I was there more. And then, you still hear about the political news, and you would say, I did the right thing to come here. Therefore, my answer might look full of contradictions, but it is the inner psychological ups and downs of an immigrant.

Immigration brings the most serious threats to the sense of stability and continuity of the individual's relationship with the world outside. Contrary to what Behzad said about my probable confusion when I listened to his voice, I found the paradox he talked about quite relevant to every participant as immigrants. The experiences of Behzad, like other participants in this category, show that home is never a static phenomenon. Home as a paradox notion challenges the idea of a stable home. On one hand, the notion of home has changed for Behzad over time in Canada, where he developed new routines, turned

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the unfamiliar to familiar, and created new meanings for the notion of home. On the other hand, Iran and anything related to it had changed without Behzad's presence there over decades. This contributed to creating ambiguities for Behzad and turning a familiar context to a confusing one, where many things are still familiar, but some do not make sense in the same way Behzad used to comprehend anymore.

Home, indeed, is a process (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020), and the participants constantly work toward accomplishing it in their everyday lives. The experiences from the past, the attached emotions, the personal feelings of being at home, and the narratives around it construct and reshape the idea of home. Behzad's contradictory feelings toward his experiences represent how the participants work toward making sense of the home even if they never reach an ideal state of homing. I argue that defining home as "here" and "now" is another participants' agentic strategic action (Swidler, 1986) to highlight the temporal aspects of it in response to their contradictory experiences as immigrants. Such a definition of the home provides a direction for the participants to put their present moment at the centre and make sense of the home despite the constant inconsistency they experience in their everyday life. Picture 5 shows a picture of a participant's kitchen, where she had decorated it in a way that highlighted the present and being in the moment. The sun, the plants, a view of the backyard, and the wooden curtains all involved elements of nature and material objects that were constantly reminding us of the present moment and *now* through the sensory aspects of home that are being experienced through our five senses (Cross, 2015).
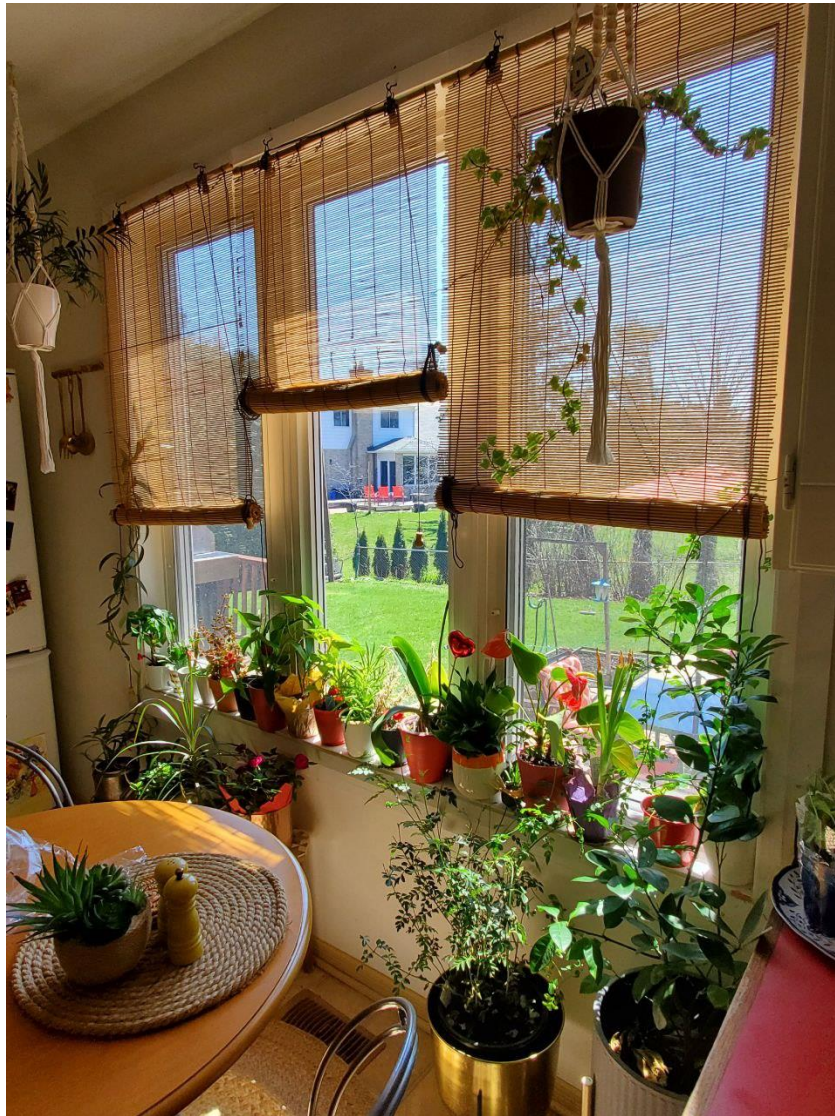
Picture 5: A Participant's Kitchen (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

In general, I found it difficult for the participants to call Canada their home. However, defining home as "now" was invisibly referring to their description of Canada. In other words, Canada as home was an integrated part of "now," but in a less threatening way without provoking a sense of betrayal to their home country, Iran.

The second group of immigrants in this section added another aspect to their definition and said that they "can" consider Canada their home. This group was

comfortable enough to refer to Canada as their home at some level. They were mainly the younger generation of Iranians, especially the ones who immigrated to Canada after the 2009 Green Movement in Iran. Aylar was among one of these participants, living in Ontario:

> Since I immigrated to Canada and arrived here, I've had some trips outside of Canada. When I came back from these trips and entered Canada, a sense of belonging, a sense of home, occurred for me. I went to London. I went to the Dominican and Mexico. I even went to Iran, my original country, where I come from, but I don't have a sense of belonging there when I arrive here in Canada. And it doesn't matter which city [in Canada], but I feel at home there, meaning in general to Canada. So when I arrive, I take a deep breath, and I say: "I arrived home." So, I totally feel like home in Canada. It gives me a sense of safety and freedom. Canada gives me a sense of safety. If I see the police in Iran, I get scared. But when I see the police here, I feel they are kind people and they want to help you. I don't feel scared in relation to the police and security officers. If I have an issue somewhere, I know there are people who will help me. This feeling of safety and comfort in a place where you live will bring you a sense of home, and it is a good feeling.

Aylar's quote suggests how a sense of belonging is connected to a sense of safety. She also talked about when she leaves Iran, she does not necessarily feel the same as when she is in Iran. On the one hand, her definition of belonging shows that it is dependent on her presence in a particular geographical location. On the other hand, it

shows her strategy of action in an unsettled situation where she prefers to suspend her sense of belonging once she is out of the country.

Mahmoud, Aylar's husband, also put safety at the focus of his sense of home and added a sense of comfort to it:

> I think like Aylar, too, which means I consider Canada my home. This is something that even if we went to Iran, I felt like I went back home the moment I was back in St. John's. The reason for that is the sense of safety and comfort that Aylar mentioned. It means that when you are leaving Iran, especially at the last moment, at the airport… you know, you've seen Iran's airport… You are always concerned if you've paid the departure tax, if you did everything right, if everything is in order… It is not a sweet experience… but once you enter the first Canadian airport, seeing people smile at you, the vibe changes. We've seen other places, too. People are lovely here, and I think if I had the option to select a country, knowing the situation in each country, I would select Canada again. I feel like home, here. And I feel nobody can disrupt my sense of safety, while it was doable in my own country. There were little incidents in which you never felt safe… a place where I am not comfortable cannot be my home.

What Mahmoud says about his negative feelings and the uncertainties he feels at Iran's airports at the time of leaving Iran is embedded in a greater picture. Iran's leader and the government are reacting to the brain drain Iran is experiencing right now. On the one hand, the leader had endorsed a situation for various formal and informal pro-regime groups to treat the anti-regime groups arbitrarily. On the other hand, the regime has

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officially announced to the professors, educational institutions, and other relevant institutions that they must police the process of applying for higher education outside of Iran and prevent it from happening in any way they can. For instance, professors are advised not to write recommendation letters, and educational institutions try not to award their students degrees. The intersection of such policies and practices is highly tangible at the airport. There are IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) levels of security checks, in addition to the airports' security checks, and many guards feel the freedom to treat the passengers arbitrarily and prevent them from leaving the country or interrogating them for the reasons they are leaving Iran.

These incidents that happen haphazardly, especially at the airport, as Mahmoud and other participants explained in the interviews and as I observed and experienced them personally, too, make the experience of leaving Iran complicated. While you are sad because of leaving your loved ones and putting the beautiful, memorable places, the smell of the homemade Iranian food, and many other memories behind, and doubting or assessing if it was a good decision to emigrate, you get frustrated and disturbed at the utmost level. These experiences at the airports also remind you why you decided to leave the country. Therefore, while it is extremely sad and emotional, it also gives you a reason to be strong and tolerate those feelings in the hope of not being treated like that again. The political situation and the level of uncertainty sometimes help immigrants to overcome the bitterness of the paradoxical situation they experienced: the love for Iran, their memories with families, friends, places, food, music, etc., on the one hand, and the deep anger and frustration of being treated as a second-class citizen on the other hand.

Therefore, they found a sense of safety and comfort in another geographical place outside of Iran – ranging from the physical dimension of a home to Canada as a country — which led them to call "here" and "now" their home. The definition of home in this category resonates with the haven aspect of home (Duyvendak, 2011). "Now" and "here" implies the home's physical space, architectural structures, and experiencing home through our senses (Duyvendak, 2011; Cross, 2015). It emphasizes being somewhere at present and refers to the basic necessities and feelings of safety, privacy, and comfort, as the participants in this category described (Duyvendak, 2011). Home may not be ideal in this sense, but it provides a sense of comfort as well as the necessities for the participants to carry forward their life without being lost in an unfamiliar world.

Home is Where the Loved Ones Are: A Geographically Fluid Definition

This section discusses definitions of home that have one thing in common: They are not a specific physical-geographical place; they are a condition that brings the sense of home whenever they are met: the condition of having family and loved ones around. Therefore, I call this definition a geographically-fluid one. This definition brings a sense of hope or loss depending on whether the loved ones are close to the participants or not. For instance, Fariborz said: "my home is where my spouse is, and where we are sitting in front of TV, watching Netflix… It doesn't matter where the geographical location is as long as we are near each other, feeling comfortable at our physical home."

Picture 6: A Participant's Celebration of a Newborn in the Family (Source: A Participant's Collection)

Many participants emphasized that having their families around would bring them a stronger sense of home. Picture 6 is among the few photos that a participant brought to the interview as a reminder of a sense of home. This is a picture of a newborn member in her family and shows the connection of this theme to the participants' conception of home. She said she brought this baby's cloth with her to Canada since she did not have the chance to be near her family. Her niece was a grown-up now, and the cloth worked as a reminder of home and loved ones for her. She also brought the pictures of her mom and

dad and explained that they are her home. There were other photos that were taken with her husband or from their home in Canada. They were pointing out the meaning of home in a connection to loved ones and also a new life in Canada. This was one of the multifaceted meanings of home among the participants and demonstrated how the participants' definition of home dripped from one category to another.

Some participants were trying to achieve this hope by getting their parents to visit and encouraging their siblings to migrate. However, some were disappointed that this never happened or that it would not be the same experience as it was in Iran, even if they had their families near them. As Mona, one of the interviewees, explained, even if her parents were here, they would still struggle with different challenges and new things like the language barrier as the most important one in their everyday lives. They cannot have the same independence as they did in Iran. They suddenly lose their great network of connections or would need their children to go everywhere with them. Moreover, the everyday interactions, as Ali described, are different here (in Toronto) due to the different pace of life, and it prevents the immigrants and their families from exercising the same practices as they used to do in Iran.

Minoo defined home based on a condition she had not yet achieved in Canada: "home to me is my mom. I feel like home wherever she is. Even watching her doing things around the house brings me joy and a sense of comfort."

Moreover, Anousheh specifically talked about how having guests and offering hospitality is a constituent of her sense of home:

"When I invite guests, I'm very happy because I kept my Iranian side of culture. Not that I want to try to do that, but it naturally exists in me. For example, for Nowrouz, or Bahá'ís ceremonies, I invite people to come here. I host them, and when I invite Iranians or even Canadian people here, I serve Iranian food because I want them to know what Iranian hospitality is, how it looks, and how rich our culture is. So home for me is the guests. When I invite guests, it means that I am still alive."

Anousheh brought my attention particularly to the meaning of "*having people around*" and the significant role of gatherings, friendship communities, and communications in general in creating a sense of home, especially in its connection to the physical realm of home for people in Iranian culture. In other words, these gatherings turn a house into a home, and home provides a place for connection and interaction. Again, this is the "heaven" aspect of the home that carries a rich meaning of connectedness to family and friends through shared memories, history, or common cultural practices (Sixsmith, 1986; Duyvendak, 2011). Therefore, heaven promotes the concept of home from a tangible material realm to a more symbolic, ideological realm and likens it to belonging (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019), as it did for many Bahá'í participants in the first category of home, too. Some participants, like Anousheh, put the disparities, difficulties, and challenges of an uncertain world behind them. The participants' memories, the previous meaning of home, and the feeling of being in a physical home in Canada intersect and produce the new home's realm that constantly reproduces meanings and fortifies the feelings toward home.

A Sense of Loss and Nostalgia Toward Home

Home in the previous definition category for the participants evolved around the people they love and care about. In other words, the right people around provoke a sense of home and fortify the meaning of home.

Home to the participants in this category is no longer strictly attached to the physical realm of a house or apartment. Home for these participants has become bigger and bigger: it takes on the dimensions of a city or a country: Isfahan or Iran. "*The quality I am seeking doesn't exist here… There is no Khajoo bridge here (like in Isfahan, Iran).*"

This definition of the home involves imagination about the past. The participants were constantly recreating it in their own minds based on their memories. In other words, they were doing home-ing (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017) not only through recreating memories in their minds, but also through their home-making practices, such as decorating their home. The way they talked about home was nostalgic. They either hoped they could return to what they had lost someday or recreate another home here. Mahtab explicitly stated, "The home that I would miss [in Iran] does not exist anymore in reality… Maybe if I buy a house someday, I can feel at home again."

Some participants had idealized the notion of home in their minds even if they had escaped from the country. In fact, home for those who had to leave Iran was an incomplete process that was interrupted by reasons out of control. The abrupt decision to leave the country over some incidents like a revolution had them missing the chance of completing a proper goodbye process or grief over home. Thus, the notion of home was

deeply rooted down in Iran. The inside of these participants' homes who could not visit Iran anymore for various reasons or chose not to visit Iran was extensively decorated with Iranian objects or things that reminded them of Iran. They included various objects, including Persian rugs, decorative pieces of art, Termeh table sheets, etc. Amir, living in PEI, was one of these participants who had Iran in his mind as his ideal home:

> A sense of belonging is not a political, economic, or social matter. To me, it is an emotional, I don't know how to say it… a cultural and identity-related thing. And it [Iran] is my identity… Therefore, I hardly understand the people who say here is their home. It is difficult for me to get it. The story for people who cannot be in Iran is different… but I don't know what is in it for others [to call here their home]. It is interesting to me, and I tell myself that it might come from anger and resentment… but even if it is that, it is very bad and would be stubbornness and self-manipulation. But I cannot understand it if it is not that, and a person who has grown up in Iran has honestly such feeling toward here to call it home, and Iran is not their home, without any resentment.

Amir's description of home is one of the closest ones to a sense of nostalgia. He also described how their home is heavily decorated with Iranian objects, to the extent that everyone feels like Iran at their home. The historical aspect of place attachment (Cross, 2015) was significant in the participants' definition of their home as well as their homemaking practices. The presence of the cultural objects was a piece of strong evidence for that, highlighting that history is an inseparable part of the meaning of home for the participants.

Picture 7 demonstrates the importance of Iranian objects at homes that I found almost in every participant's home that I visited. Even if not all the objects were Iranian, the participants mentioned that they bought those objects because of their similarity to Iranian decoration.

Picture 7: Iranian Handmade Arts and Crafts at a Participant's Home (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Another participant, interestingly, centred her definition of home around food as a reminder of a sense of home:

I grew up in a family where they were making pickles [and things like that]… well, I'm doing a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering, and that's what I do on the side [making pickles]. So, we used to make everything in our own home. For instance, my grandmother's family who was from the North of Iran, were making

diaries [and many other things] … I am in Canada and making my own yoghurt. I grew up this way… So, the home was the kitchen for me. When you talk about home, it's always food for me. The smell of the food, and the taste of the food… when I go to a new city, I go to find the Iranian restaurants there first… So [the food] is the biggest reminder of home for me… So, home means food.

Food as nostalgia, a reminder of home, and a rejuvenator of a sense of home from the past was at the centre of participants like Zhaleh when they talked about the meaning of home and also the "homemaking" practices. It was another piece of evidence demonstrating how the memories from the past were reproducing a sense of familiarity. Food and decorative objects were essential symbols for the participants to map a new field of home in a way that not only accepts the present but also brings the past and manifests it in the present.

Baran, in the Atlantic region, says:

Yeah. I'm not quite sure about home but for a sense of belonging or just to creating an atmosphere for myself to feel like it, I'm home, I find cooking in like baking some traditional Iranian foods very comforting. I think part of that or like, the big part of that is because it reminds me of the good feeling that I have from a place that I used to call home… Yes, I have some, like, Iranian decorations that I brought from Iran here. And I also have some, like poetry books that they remind me of Iran. As well as some, like crafts. Yeah, yeah, I do have some, And I think yes, they help. They help you to feel like you're creating this environment that is close to the idea of home… And as I've mentioned, cooking is a big part of my

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day. And it plays a huge role in my mental health. And we lost that during the pandemic time that we needed it most… So, yeah, without cooking, that's [surviving] impossible (laughs).

These participants were accomplishing and doing home-ing (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017) by creating a new present that does not deny the past but embraces it. In other words, reminding themselves of Iran and bringing it to the present was a part of the process of accomplishing an ideal home, though it was rarely ideal in practice.

No Home: Neither Canada Nor Iran is Home

The story of Baran was somehow overarching, especially for the women who had dual feelings toward Iran. They talked about the "betrayal" feeling due to the socio-political complications they had experienced in Iran. They had no sense of home in a particular place. The home had been in Iran previously, but their feelings toward it changed after the difficulties the participants experienced:

The meaning of home has changed after immigration. So, it was very easy to answer where is home when I was back in Iran, like yes, this is my home country, this is home. And when I went to the University in Tehran, and it was like away from my hometown, I was like, Okay, I'm going back home to my family. So the building I was raised in was called home, and it was a very easy answer. It was an easy answer. And even after immigration for, like, years, it was, Iran was home. So okay, I'm going back home for a holiday, or I'm visiting home, and I didn't have any problem calling Iran home, as a country, and my parents' house as a home like um. But like, after few years, I started feeling that I cannot answer that

question easily anymore. I find it challenging I find it was like I'm confused. I'm not sure. Where can I call home Iran kinda? I don't know. I still don't have any answer. After the Ukrainian flight [was shot down], I think I got certain that Iran is not my home anymore. I'm not comfortable calling Iran my home anymore. I felt… I felt betrayed or like, it was like how can I call this place home when it killed its own children. So, I kind of become certain that I cannot call that place home anymore. But at the same time, I didn't have any other places to call home as well. So, I don't feel that I mean home in Canada or in Newfoundland, I don't have that sense of belonging to this geographical place.

The notion of home for participants who had immigrated to Canada for non-religion reasons was more divergent and obscured. Some participants, especially women, felt angry about the socio-political situation they were living in. They preferred to live far away from their families, at ease and at peace, where they could get more recognition for what they were doing outside of the realm of home. However, Iran used to be their home, though they did not quite feel at home when they were there. Things had changed, as they articulated, and Iran could no longer create similar experiences for them. Many friends had migrated to foreign countries, families were scattered around the world, and a sense of hopelessness and regret had influenced their relationships with Iran.

Canada was also not quite their home since their relationship with Canadian society was more focused on everyday matters, like having a job, maintaining a legitimate formal status, etc. Arezoo said:

I don't have a home, to be honest. I was back in my country my whole life, but I don't feel like home there. I cannot call that place home just because a couple of people that I like are living in that land (Iran). I am living in here (Canada). I love people. This country helped me reach my goals, but I cannot call this place a home because I still don't feel that much connected to or involved in the society. I still feel different, so I have no home at this moment.

An agentic action in such a situation was resisting a sense of belonging. Some participants explicitly stated that they refused to belong. "Since I move around a lot for work, I choose not to have a sense of home in any place" (Vandad, residing in NL). They chose not to root in a place and not to have emotional attachments so they could move easily around places. They said that any attachment would probably make them suffer in the near future. Therefore, they resist belonging to any place, community, or group.

Finally, Baran explained how the concept of home in relation to Iran changed for her and how difficult it was to make sense of it:

Coming to the conclusion that Iran is not my home anymore, it was very difficult. It was like emotionally very difficult for me and I'm still trying to just making sense of it. Find some answer or Doctor Sonja Boon has a book it's called *What Oceans Remember* (2019). And it's about the home and sense of belonging and everything, and she has this sentence in her book that she says: "Home is impossible." And I agree with her home is impossible. It's that. It's not easy to answer this question.

In Baran's case, like other participants such as Sirous, Vandad, and Arezoo, I saw the non-existence of a sense of belonging. Some participants, like Vandad and Sirous, resisted belonging, and some, like Baran and Arezoo, did not find enough reasons to have a sense of belonging to any place. In both kinds of cases, the absence of a sense of belonging is notable. These participants were all in their 30s, and all were living in one of the five Atlantic cities included in this study, and they were only a few among others with similar feelings. However, the participants' experiences of belonging from the same generation in Ontario also resonated with the participants in the Atlantic cities. Therefore, I see the role of generational difference, religion (in this study, being Bahá'ís or not), duration of stay in Canada, and establishing a life (immigration status (student, worker, PR, citizen), working, buying a house, having children (possibly) more important than the role of the place the immigrants lived at in having and doing belonging. This non-presence of a sense of belonging also adds much to our understanding of a sense of belonging and Iranian immigrants' situation. Scott (2018), in her work on the Sociology of Nothing, explains how "disengaging from a group or finding nothing to relate to in a dominant cultural script can all be considered demonstrations of individual agency, suggesting a critically distant interpretation of one's situation." She helps us understand how nothing is always productive of something.

The absence of belonging tells us about the separation among the participants and their lived place, whether it is considered on the borders of a nation, Canada, or the Atlantic provinces. Building on Scott's work on the sociology of nothing (2018), I argue that the absence of a sense of belonging for participants like Baran and Arezoo comes

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from the uncertainties and complicated feelings about Iran due to the socio-political situations. In other words, the absence of a sense of belonging is the participants' agentic action strategy in dealing with their ambivalence of the notion of home.

Moreover, the absence of working toward creating a sense of belonging or doing belonging, in the case of Sirous and Vandad, demonstrates the consequences of living in a globalized world. While immigration increases and people must constantly move to get a job and live in a better condition, lack of settlement raises as an agentic action strategy in response to their unstable situation, such as the resistance to belonging.

Conclusion

I started this chapter by asking what home means to the participants in this study: a place or imagination or maybe both or even none. My analysis suggests that the concept of home is fluid for the Iranian participants, depending on gender, religion, immigration status, where they live, how and when they left Iran. Depending on the participants' experiences, emotions, and ideologies, their definitions capture different dimensions. It sometimes includes the entire world, sometimes in pieces that make sense near each other as a whole, sometimes with its temporal aspects at the centre, sometimes depends on having the loved ones around or not regardless of the geographical place of residing, sometimes attached closely to a sense of nostalgia, and sometimes there is no place to call home. Home in this sense is an idea rather than being a specific place with geographical dimensions. It is in the form of an image from the past, present and/or future. The puzzling definition of home and the diversity of the participants' definition of home

affirms that home is a multi-dimensional process. Rather than having each place as the pieces of the puzzle as Mona described, the individual's ideas and images from home compose the notion of the home for the participants. These images and ideas flow into and intersect with each other and change constantly over time. Therefore, home is an ongoing ever-changing process that develops over time.

One thread attaches all of these definitions in a spectrum: the agentic choice of the participants in dealing with their sense of uprootedness and instability. In other words, home is not only a relational concept but also a matter of choice for the participants. They determine how and where they put the centre as the home, based on their past and present experiences of home and their future aspirations toward it. Similar to their definitions of home, a sense of belonging for the Iranian immigrants in this study does not have a homogenized certain definition. Rather, it is an impossible and ongoing project, a paradoxical notion that they constantly work toward, to make sense of it through their agentic strategies of action.

This chapter reaffirms that the sense of home and belonging are relational, connected to the places, and contribute to one another. Moreover, I argue that a sense of home is an integral part of a sense of belonging. Some participants accomplished a sense of home in their physical homes and talked about "here" as their home. For these participants, a sense of belonging was attached to their gatherings at home, their friends, and community. However, they did not necessarily have a sense of home in Canada or a sense of belonging to the Canadian cities in this study, though they talked about the uniqueness and warmth of the Atlantic cities they lived in.

This chapter contributes to understanding the nuances of the definition of home among the Iranian immigrant group in Canada and in relation to their social location. It demonstrates how a sense of home for the participants is an agentic strategy (Swidler, 1986), depending on their social location, action strategies in dealing with uncertainties and uprootedness, and possibly re-rooting in a new place.

Another central contribution of this chapter is introducing the concept of *temporary belonging* in explaining the participants' agentic choices in not having a deeply rooted sense of unity and connectedness with the surrounding world. This form of belonging derives from an agentic choice (Guibernau, 2013) of the participants to put the profound differences apart and focus on the shared and common culture and practices in a specific setting, such as a workplace and make sense of it no matter how temporary and context-based it is. It adds to our understanding of performing or doing belonging. It highlights how immigrants can set the profound differences in special settings, such as the workplace, apart and focus on the shared and common knowledge and practices to perform a *temporary belonging.* In this way, they feel appreciated and equal to other colleagues, especially in a traditional immigration gateway such as Toronto, where 46.6% of the population are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2023e). Therefore, they enact a sense of belonging to their collegial workplace groups, while it might change with the same people in other settings.

Chapter 4: Socio-Cultural Barriers and Boosters of a Partial Sense of Belonging: Language, Immigration Status, Material Objects, and Friendship Relationships

In the previous chapter, I focused on the meaning of home and its implication for a sense of belonging among the participants as individuals. This chapter takes a deeper look at how the participants are home-ing (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017) (or not) and doing (or not doing) belonging (Bennett, 2012). To do so, it draws attention to the most significant emerging themes as the barriers or boosters of a sense of belonging from the interviews. I take a deeper look at the Iranian immigrant participants' agentic strategies of action in dealing with the uncertainties they experience at different levels and explore how they try to make sense of a new home and how they are doing belonging. In this, I focus on how language has a dual role: how it (mother tongue) functions as a contributor to a sense of home and how it (English language) creates a barrier in the participants' everyday interactions.

Immigration status is another emerging theme and reveals the role of formal status in the participants' sense of belonging. The chapter continues on the role of Iranian art, food, music, handicrafts, and the importance of light and of friendships in creating a sense of home for the participants. Then, I bring my analysis of gender relationship changes and how they bring new opportunities and restrictions for participants at home. These changes in gender roles are related to how they work toward making a new home and adapting to new values and practices. It shows how these new relations affect the participants' sense

of home differently. The chapter highlights overall how home is a multifaceted phenomenon in relation to place, material, imagination, memory, status, and interaction. I also touch on the experiences of students and their difficulties in making a home in Canada due to the barriers they face, especially in turning their status from a student to a permanent resident. Building on Wu and Wilkes' (2017) model in relation to international students' experiences, I demonstrate how a lack of planning for and operating the post-university intentions harms the students' sense of home in belonging.

In addition to introducing and analyzing the contributors and barriers to a sense of belonging and investigating how the participants are home-ing and doing belonging, I pay attention to the question of at what levels home is achievable in the experiences of Iranian immigrants. Therefore, I examine the participants' sense of home in relation to Duyvendak's (2011) three aspects of a home: familiarity, haven, and heaven. Finally, I demonstrate how these three aspects of home had been achievable through the interactions of the participants with their physical home in the context of five provinces and as a result of their agentic strategies of action.

Language: A Home and a Barrier

English language proficiency is a mediator of social capital for newcomers in Canada (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). Studies such as Shin's (2016)find language proficiency to be a decisive factor in the integration and formation of inter-ethnic friendships for immigrant students and negotiating marginalization. Also, language is found as an important aspect of identity construction for immigrants (Han, 2012; Shin H. , 2012). The English language barrier — as the participants called it — and cultural

differences significantly influenced the participants' relationships with non-Iranian and Canadian people and communities. Ziba, residing in Toronto, for instance, explained that she feels she belongs more to the Iranian community, which did not surprise me. Then, she added:

> Maybe the reason for that is I consider myself a social and gregarious person. I feel my personality in English is different from my personality in Farsi. Therefore, getting integrated into communities other than Iranians was difficult for me. I like to get involved in non-Iranian communities, but Ziba's character among Iranians is my true self, while I might be shy in other communities. This caused me to communicate mostly with Iranians because I am my real self.

Ziba's situation, like many others, shows that the participants preferred to restrict their time and energy to relationships with the Iranian community, where they could build relationships and proceed more quickly and share more common interests and concerns. Mahmoud, previously living in the Atlantic region, also explained how his personality gets lost in translation and, therefore, he cannot build the same types of relationships with Canadians:

> Since we came here, we tried to integrate with Canadians, but it didn't happen. A reason for that is that the real me, A Mahmoud, who has the strength to communicate with people and make relationships in Persian, is not the same in English. I can explain exactly what happens with the "lost in translation" idiom. For instance, if I can communicate with a person through a joke, but the joke does

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not work in this [English] language and therefore does not make the same impression.

The other side of Ziba and Mahmoud's quotes shows how much the participants feel comfortable talking in Persian with other Iranians and how it brings a sense of familiarity, continuity, and shared history. I argue that Iranians' mother tongue language, including but not limited to Farsi or Persian, Lori, Kordi, Azari, Arabi, Armani, Baluchi, etc., works as a home for the participants. Mother tongue provides a suitable stage for the participants to perform their "true" selves and connect with other people through their shared knowledge, history, and memory deposited in their language. Mother tongue, in this sense, brings a sense of comfort and retreat to the participants, especially if they work in an English-dominated environment at their workplace.

Amineh, residing in Ontario, explained the relationship between language and shared culture and the importance of it in creating and sustaining friendship bonds and continuing the relationship with other Iranians:

I saw a video clip on the internet a few days ago that I found very true. It said people could make friends easily here when they are young… When you get older, your friendship group gets limited to the people who are your colleagues, the community you are studying at university with, or the people you have to communicate with. It makes you have more relationships with them because you have some common points. You also make friends with people with the same language and common characteristics because you have the feeling of being away from your homeland (in Farsi: Vatan, وطن). Then you feel you can be good

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friends with each other. Your relationship grows with them, giving a good feeling

for both of you. Therefore, our friends here are mostly Iranian, and we get good

feelings from each other when we are together. We have fun. We play Mafia

games and have a good time together.

Amineh's quote explains how language fortifies friendship bonds and plays a vital

role in strengthening the Iranian diaspora. They bring a sense of stability and continuity in

a highly uncertain and unstable situation. The participants' stories demonstrate how

language, just like home (Duyvendak, 2011), manifests three aspects of home regardless

of its physical dimensions of it: familiar, haven, and heaven. While a sense of home is

disrupted, uncertain, and challenged after immigration, language provokes these familiar

senses for immigrants and works as a tool in making sense of home. In other words,

language as a cultural and interactional tool plays a significant role in constructing a sense

of home, home-ing among the community, and doing belonging (Boccagni & Brighenti,

2017; Bennett, 2012).

Immigration Status

Immigrants' status contributes to their feelings about themselves and their

relationship with society. Canada has various programs for immigrant resettlement. Still,

when it comes to the real on-the-ground relevance to immigrants' experiences, there is an

incompatibility between the goals and the bureaucratic system. For instance, retaining

international students after their graduation in each province is a goal for IRCC (Choi,

Crossman, & Hou, 2023). However, students struggle to stay in the same province since

they often need a job offer in order to apply for permanent residency, which is more

difficult in the Atlantic provinces. Many jobs are only available to PRs and citizens, or

they prefer them in the process of hiring, as shown in the job descriptions. Moreover,

while there are some special programs in the Atlantic provinces in effect to attract

immigrants and graduates after their studies (i. e., Atlantic Pilot Program) (Government

of Canada, 2023e), the participants talked about the difficulties they have with an

extremely prolonged waiting time. The waiting process keeps the immigrants in limbo,

bringing extreme mental and emotional pressures on immigrants. Some participants had

to wait for more than eighteen months after their initial invitation to receive permanent

resident (PR) status. These wait times put the immigrants, who usually have studied for

years in Canada, at a disadvantaged position in finding a decent career in the region as

many places do not hire non-permanent residents.

In addition to prolonged times for getting PR, getting qualified for it from inside

Canada is not that easy. International students, for instance, must wait until after

graduation and find a job to be eligible to apply for a PR program. Any work during their

studies does not count toward their Canadian work experience except for passing the

minimum requirements to enter the applicants' pool (Government of Canada, 2023b;

Government of Canada, 2023c), which does not count in the final applicants' score.

However, either Canadian work experience or a job offer is usually a criterion to be

eligible to apply for a PR from inside Canada. This situation is the worst for Ph.D.

students since their education often lasts 4-6 years. While they work and contribute

intellectually, socially, and economically to Canadian society, their job in any skilled

work does not count for any program. Therefore, they must wait until after graduation and

find a job to get eligible for a PR program. On the one hand, having a job is important to get a PR; on the other hand, many skilled jobs prioritize applicants with Canadian PR or citizenship, which basically means they are the last candidate to be considered for a job. Therefore, as I will indicate below, many participants feel stuck in a vicious circle that prevents them from establishing a decent life in Canada. All these bumps on the road for immigrants to get a job or PR happen when Canada already cherry-picks the immigrants.

The participants found getting PR or skilled work frustrating and disappointing, particularly when they would have been happy to stay in the region otherwise. One of the participants, Narges, who had been waiting for her work visa for ten months, stated:

I have to apply for several applications to be eligible for applying for permanent resident status finally. How can I develop a sense of belonging in a place with no stable status? How can I develop a feeling of belonging when I have to wait for a very long time to obtain a status?

In addition, the immigration programs have a long way to go to become much more equal and inclusive for various groups, including Ph.D. students. While international students carry multiple identities (student, worker, family member, etc.) in the host country, they move in and between the blurry boundaries of student migrants, the knowledge-seeking migrant, and other categories of migrants. This creates challenges for them, especially before transitioning to the role of a worker or obtaining full permanent residency (Raghuram, 2013; Baas, 2010). Afraa, living in NS, talked about how obtaining PR was frustrating for herself and her husband:

The first thing was a permanent residency (PR)... I honestly feel that [the government] is throwing rocks in the way of Ph.D. students, rather than helping them… It makes their path [to a permanent residency] longer. Then, it gives permanent residency to some people I cannot believe it, and I ask, do you seriously need them more than these educated people? So, the pathway to permanent residency was longer for us as Ph.D. students. For example, many folks come here for a 1 or 2 years program and immediately get their permanent residency. However, if a student intends to get a Ph.D., the process (to get a PR) is extremely prolonged. There was a Ph.D. stream available before I arrived here. Ph.D. students were able to get their PR during their education. They eliminated this immigration program before we got here, resulting in a prolonged waiting process toward a PR for us. It was disappointing that you had to wait until you finished your Ph.D., then find a job and work for at least a year, then become eligible to apply for a PR, and wait at least 7 or 8 months to get a result. This is not fair. It means that they [the government] made the PR process more difficult for a person who studies more and gets more education. Many people come here only for the investment process, a job, or college and get their PR immediately. On the other hand, they made the situation much more difficult for a Ph.D. student who gets an education at the highest level and serves society.

Afraa talked about how it is difficult for a student to get to a point where they can reach a form of mental stability and feel like home by getting PR. Her quote indicates the importance of being able to imagine a stable life, especially after years of studying in

Canada. Wu and Wilkes (2017) propose a model in relation to student migration that provides the means of synthesizing how international students perceive home in complex and different ways. Their model demonstrates that the international students' conceptualizations of home are closely connected to their post-university migration intentions. Therefore, not being able to see a stable future prevents them from being able to imagine having a home. Another participant, Sepehr, in NS, mentioned:

> The government invests in us, but they do not take advantage of our presence and our potential. We are stuck in a vicious circle to find a job and apply for permanent residency, which frustratingly takes several years for a highly skilled Ph.D. student.

The waiting time both to become eligible to apply for PR status and to receive the results within the Atlantic provinces frustrates immigrants in the Atlantic cities. The bureaucratic process of obtaining PR is unnecessarily drawn out for these participants, which depletes the immigrants' energy and their motivations to strive and thrive and deprives society of the immigrants' contribution to the Canadian social and economic context. Since the immigrants in the Ontario cities had already spent some years in the Atlantic cities, they already had their PRs, and they often had not gone through the processes of applying for a PR in Ontario. Even if they did go through these processes obtained a job offer, the process had moved forward much faster compared to the immigrants who landed in the Atlantic cities as students or tourists.

Maintaining immigration status and turning a work/student visa into a permanent residency usually takes several years, creating instability for the participants. For

instance, the renewal process of documents was a whole other story for the participants that I could spend hours hearing about. Several participants mentioned that they were exhausted from establishing a new life in Canada and therefore, it was impacting their relationships with non-Iranians.

Citizenship is a multilayered construct that enables citizens to participate in society through their rights and responsibilities. It encompasses the experiences of belonging and recognition in a given society (Yuval-Davis, 2004; Nodberg, 2006; Delanty, 2000). Belonging in this sense is a matter of power, politics, displacement, and exclusion and highlights the macro social dynamics and constraints (Yuval-Davis, 2011b). The experiences of the participants, especially in their difficulties in getting a permanent residency — which is a pre-condition for applying for Canadian citizenship (Government of Canada, 2023e) — contributed to a sense of exclusion and segregation between the community of immigrants and Canadian communities. The unstable early years of resettlement, the exhaustive costly time, and the energy-consuming processes of getting a permanent residency pushed immigrants to hold tight to the Iranian community. They utilized the resources they could get from their community to proceed with and make a living in Canadian society. Although it was not ideal, the participants made new social fields where their everyday lives seemed familiar and made more sense to them.

Iranian Art, Food, Music, and Hand Crafts

Art and architecture, food, music, exquisite Iranian traditional handicrafts, and any other tangible and intangible cultural heritage constitute an integral part of the Iranians' identity. The insides of the participants' homes were a reflection of these parts of their

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identities. Remarkably, the homes of those who could not visit Iran anymore for various reasons or chose not to visit Iran were extensively decorated with Iranian objects or things that reminded them of Iran (see picture 8 and 9).

Picture 8: Iranian Hand Craft Arts at a Participant's Home (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

The participants, family members, or friends from Iran usually shipped their home decorations to Canada. They included various objects, such as Persian rugs, decorative arts, Termeh table sheets, etc.

Picture 9: And Iranian-Style Home Decoration at a Participant's House (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Food, music, art pieces, and handicrafts are the cultural heritage the participants could carry and move across international borders. They played a significant role in creating a sense of home for them. They also work as constant reminders of a previous home, Iran, and allow the participants to bridge their experiences and bring their past to their present. I remember that the four suitcases for my husband and I were full of these

Iranian arts and handcrafts, food ingredients, and any other reminder of home and the

beauty of our culture that we thought could help us bear missing home.

Picture 10: Iranian-Style Table Decoration and Nowruz Homemade Cookies (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Food was at the centre of the participants' discussion when they talked about

"homemaking" practices. It was another piece of evidence demonstrating how the

memories from the past were reproducing a sense of familiarity. Anousheh was a

participant who was living in one of the Atlantic cities with very limited access (or

sometimes none) to Iranian food ingredients or any other Iranian items. However, picture

ten shows her Iranian-style sable decoration and her Nowruz homemade cookies that she

prepared for hosting guests during Nowruz visits.

My first visit from St. John's, with very limited access to Iranian food ingredients,

to Toronto, the most important hub for Iranian immigrants, was memorable. I always

remember the breathtaking moment of seeing all kinds of Iranian food ingredients, with all their smells, sorted on shelves, exactly like Iran, in an Iranian supermarket in Toronto. It brought tears to my eyes and felt like home for the first time in Canada. That moment was significant for me since I realized I might be thousands of kilometres far from home, Iran, but there might be some corners like this supermarket full of food and people with the same feelings toward them who seek and cherish these things as memories from the past. So, being an immigrant does not mean I have to lose any reminders of the home. I can provide these things in Canada, too, and I am not alone in this.

Picture 11 Haft-Sin Nowruz Table (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

For Baran in the Atlantic region, the home was not Iran or Canada. She was not quite sure about where her home is or where she belonged, but she was confident about what could bring her comfort:

I'm not quite sure about home, but for a sense of belonging or to create an atmosphere for myself to feel like I'm home, I find cooking and baking some traditional Iranian foods very comforting. I think part of that, or like, the big part of that, is because it reminds me of the good feeling, I have from a place I used to call home.

Food was provoking a sense of home and familiarity, connected to Baran's home in the past, Iran, where she was content and happy. When I asked about how having Iranian food and other Iranian stuff mattered to the participants, they explained that any reminders from the past make it easier to cope with the feeling of missing home in Iran, especially at the beginning. Amineh, for instance, stated:

Having access to Iranian things has a positive impact initially after immigration. When we came to Montreal from Iran or came to Toronto from Montreal, we were so happy that there were Iranian things around, like the Akhavan supermarket. However, your taste, culture, and everything changes over time. Also, you need to ride for a long time to go to an Iranian supermarket. It is not accessible and easy to do that all the time. Of course, I prefer Sangak [an Iranian traditional bread] bread, but if it is not around, I buy some other kind from Costco. When I moved to St. John's, I realized there were not many Iranian things around. Therefore, I was

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very happy when I saw something Iranian, but I was also fine when there weren't the things I wanted around.

Samira, in the Atlantic region, also talked about how decorating her home with Iranian objects, cooking Iranian food, and listening to traditional Iranian music created a sense of home for her, especially in the early years of her immigration. Her story was special in her kind and shows the importance of material object in continuing a sense of home in a new context, even if it is not the same experience. Her story was fascinating in terms of the thick descriptions she provided. She explained her migration story from the first place she landed until she ended up in Newfoundland:

> When we moved from Calgary to this province, I was trying to get used to the new environment. I had the chance to bring most of my stuff, which helped me bring the things I was attached to compared to others. I understand that you have to move all your life in two suitcases in general, but I had the chance to bring approximately 600-700 kilograms cargo with me. This helped me to bring my painting materials, sculpture equipment, and other things related to my job in my art institution. I also brought the furniture, clothing, traditional Iranian objects, and many other things that you may not necessarily be attached to, but once you know you are going to leave them, you'll start to miss them and say that I should take them with me. Therefore, once I arrived here, I had the things that helped me make here similar to my home. It was fortunate luck for me… Therefore, I felt I could go back to my previous world. However, once I moved to this province, I

couldn't continue my job anymore, and it separated me from the previous feelings I had among the [friendship] community in Calgary.

The other thing in Calgary was that I was curious and excited about new things. I believe people have the same feeling once they arrive [in a new environment]. Therefore, you won't be devastated by the feeling of missing, and you can comfort yourself with similar situations you used to have [back home in Iran]. But after a while, you gradually start to realize that [you have missed many things]… I also faced many challenges in my personal life, and my plans changed entirely with those difficulties… However, I tried to make my home with the things that I cared about as an Iranian, like our traditional and cultural belongings [from Iran]. I understand that I have that exists more or less for us [as Iranians]. I decorated my home with the format, quality, and colours that mostly belong to our culture or from specific cities like Isfahan, Kashan, Hamedan, and other provinces to have a traditional aura to the extent that anybody who enters my home tells me: "Ah… your home is so Iranian!"

I tried to have my own work office at home and wanted to decorate the living room. I had two Persian carpets that were taking you to Iran… Even I myself was opening the entrance door and one I hear the Iranian food's smell, I was telling ah, it's so good! I must mention that I like emphasizing on being Iranian but it's not in a way that I prevent any non-Iranian things. For instance, my son might enter our home, play the music he likes in his room, and have his own system while I listen to master Shajaryan [an Iranian singer and master of Persian traditional

music] and do my own things… My current home is mostly a place of retreat and safety for me, like a shelter, and I didn't get the chance to make it my own yet because of the hardships I experienced… but I try to hold the Iranian ceremonies and occasions at least, and play the music or paint from time to time for myself… In addition to those, my home also has a good view to the harbour, making it a safe space and provoking a positive feeling for me.

The participants remind themselves of Iran by bringing it to the present. It is a part of the process of accomplishing an ideal home, though it is rarely ideal. Like Samira, Afraa, in Halifax, mentioned how living in a temporary rental space restricts her from making the place her own home and creates a different feeling from living in your own home. Still, some touches help her to feel at home:

Our home has no balcony, and the windows open only slightly with difficulty. It also doesn't have a dishwasher, and we kept [the apartment] to save money since it has a low rental fee, and it is close to the university. However, I did my best to transform the dormitory style into a home through how I furnished it. We brought Iranian-style had crafts from Termeh tablecloth to carpet frame wall, and many other handicrafts. These things turned the dormitory into an Iranian home. The person in charge of checking on the units always tells us that the residents in these units who are from other countries continue living in the dorm-style of their homes and they see it a temporary, but when I go to Iranian students' unites, they have a sense of home. They are mostly decorated beautifully and neatly. Other students have very few things, but Iranians' homes are decorated and furnished

carefully with details, and I always tell myself how their [inside of] homes are different from other units.

Afra's story and the surprise of their repairman are evidence of the importance of material objects and Iranian decorative handicrafts in creating and provoking a sense of home. These material objects, food, and music provoke a sense of familiarity with the past home, even if the participants have no home anymore. In other words, the home might be only an image from the past. However, the material objects remind the sweet memories of the past for the participants and allow them to celebrate their positive feelings toward them even if they do not exist anymore. Home, in this sense, is closer to the imagination but still closely tied to material objects in the present. Food and decorative objects are essential symbols for the participants to bridge their experiences and map a new realm of home in a way that not only accepts the present but also brings the past and manifests it in the present. In this way, the participants created a sense of identification with and connection to the Iranian culture, without feeling lost in the new destination (May, 2013).

In this section, I go back to the argument that home is a process consisting of social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects. While we construct the places, they also influence our minds and lives (van den Scott, n.d). The use of home by the participants in this section demonstrates how they try not only to navigate their identities by using the material and cultural objects, but also enact belonging in a way that the new world makes sense to them.

In Search of Light

Picture 12: In Search of Light (Source: Researcher's Photo Collection of the Fieldwork)

Lighting was a strong contributor to creating a sense of home for Iranians. Almost every participant mentioned that they seek light when they choose a home to buy or rent. Ali, for instance, talked about the importance of the "south light," an expression that people use in Iran in selling a house or in choosing a home: "The light. Light is very important for us who come from Isfahan or Iranians in general. Therefore, when I was seeking a home in Montreal or in Toronto, an apartment must have had to face the south to have enough light."

For Hiva, the importance of light was almost as important as the people who were there:

Home for me is a place full of light, full of flowers, and a full of crowd. My mom

is there, and our family members are there. My father and my brother are there.

The things that I love are there. We left everything behind and came here.

Anything you may think of.

Also, Roham explained that a basement is never going to be an option for him to

live in because it is dark:

When I go home, I like the curtain folded so that I can see the outside and see the

people walking. The most important part of the home for me is the light. It makes

it attractive to me. If a place is dark, it's not comfortable. Therefore, I saw some

good places, but since they were in the basement, I didn't choose them since I

knew I could not stay there.

The participants often seek the "proper" natural light at home because it is

essential to creating a sense of home for them. Anousheh's home windows' design caught

my eye when I saw how her husband had designed and created a frame for their window

that resembled typical traditional Iranian colourful windows (see picture 12):

Natural light and the sun shining in the sky have always been present phenomena

at home in Iran for the participants. It has been something that might be taken for granted

when they were seeking a home in Iran because they used to consider it omnipresent.

Geographical characteristics have shaped the meaning of home closely attached to a place

full of light and sunshine. Mahtab stated how the cold weather keeps her home warm

during the cold season, and not enough sunny days make her life challenging. "The

challenge of not having the sun makes it depressing for you. You always ask: why the sun is not here? Why is the sun not shining directly?"

Light, as a sensory aspect of the place attachment (Cross, 2015), used to be a taken-for granted aspect of home for Iranians. The attachment of light to the meaning of home makes it challenging to provoke a sense of home through daylight, especially during the winters and springs in the Atlantic provinces, when there might be no sunny days, sometimes for two continuous weeks. Newfoundland, for instance, does not experience extreme temperatures due to its temperate marine climate (Newfoundland and Labrador Canada, 2023). However, it experiences prolonged winters with less than the average of Canadian sunny days (35% annual sun average) (Current Results, 2023) which impacts the people, especially immigrants from warmer countries that have a high average of annual sun.

Friendship Relationships

As Iranians, offering hospitality was at the centre of the participants' relationships when they talked about inviting their friends and neighbours. This resulted in being accepted by and making peaceful friendship relationships over time with their neighbours, though someone like Anousheh had rarely been invited to her neighbours' homes in her forty years of living in the Atlantic region. Anousheh, for instance, stated:

> I have a good relationship with my neighbours. They usually come to our house, and I invite them, but we've never been to their houses. We've never been in their houses, but whenever they have any trouble or difficulties in their life, I invite

them for dinner and ask them to come here to my house to say prayers for them. And then, yeah, I am waiting for them to know if they have any trouble that they need help with. I will invite them to come and talk about their problems and say prayers for those problems together. So, they come to our home, and we have this kind of relationship with each other.

Thus, offering hospitality allowed the participants to gain trust even among the most conservative, White-dominated communities and set a suitable stage to create friendships with non-Iranians.

In addition to the friendship with Canadians, a sense of belonging was partially created among various participants in relation to their Iranian friendship groups. For instance, the Iranian friendship community was a primary source of being at ease, having informal conversations, and where the participants could be their "true" selves for the participants from different generations, especially non-Bahá'ís. These communities, however, did not usually last for a long time, particularly in the Atlantic provinces, due to job-related displacements across Canada. Therefore, some participants learned to build *trust-based relationships* where they easily entered relationships with trust without knowing the other Iranians very well. They made an agentic decision to overcome the absence of access to larger Iranian communities in the Atlantic cities by trusting other Iranian fellows right away.

While Iranians usually let their guards down gradually in the diaspora to protect themselves from the harm of being completely open and honest, due to Iran's political landscape, I found this rare relationship pattern in the Atlantic region compared to other

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Iranian communities in larger cities like Toronto and Ottawa. While such trust-based

relationships often result in strong friendship ties, the segregation among immigrants and

Canadian communities is exacerbated. Mahmoud's (in ON, previously lived in the

Atlantic region) quote shows how much the life circumstances lead the immigrants to

stick to their community:

> I was not successful in communicating with Canadians. A reason for that is my
>
> lifestyle is generally different from Canadians. I've gotten used to my Iranian
>
> lifestyle, even about small things. I like to sleep at 12 a.m. at night. I like to spend
>
> my weekends in an Iranian way. I like to make Iranian jokes in Iranian gatherings
>
> and laugh at Iranian jokes. Neither can I relate to their [Canadian] jokes, and
>
> neither can they understand my jokes. Therefore, if I had any relationships with
>
> particularly Canadians, it was restricted to the workplace. My attempts did not
>
> succeed either for them or for me, meaning that I did not enjoy as much as I could
>
> spend that time with an Iranian. I know the other person did not enjoy it because I
>
> could not show my genuine self to that person... And it was not only the language
>
> problem. It was more cultural-related. If I made a joke that made the Iranians die
>
> laughing was a very unusual and different one here that did not make sense to
>
> them and vice versa. The same story happens for childhood cartoons or sports…
>
> In general, I did make a lot of effort, but it did not happen, and I regret that.
>
> Therefore, I don't have as many Canadian friends as Iranian friends.

Contrary to them, the Bahá'í participants implied a universal belonging in their

interviews as they talked about humanity or seeing the whole world as a home

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(Anousheh, Maritimes; Parsa, New Brunswick). As the Bahá'í participants were connected to other non-Iranian Bahá'ís who were from different backgrounds in devotional gatherings, I learned that they had been exposed to diversity and had the opportunity to build relationships with people from different backgrounds, as it is also encouraged in their faith. I have also observed this kind of dynamic in the devotional gatherings I attended.

Also, Bahá'í communities in the Atlantic region had been settled when there were none or very few Iranians, not only in the Atlantic cities but in Canada in general (less than five thousand by 1980) (Garousi, 2005). Atlantic Canadian provinces, including New Brunswick, were among the initial point of landing for Iranian Bahá'ís refugees (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2010). However, one-third to one-half of them have left the region since their arrival. In 2010, van den Hoonaard and van den Hoonaard (2010) estimate that there were roughly fifty Persian Bahá'ís in New Brunswick. Therefore, they gradually expanded their relationships with non-Iranian non-Bahá'ís, though they faced unwillingness on behalf of the employers to hire them or prejudice in including immigrants in the local people's lives in their interactions (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2010).

Apart from difficulties of integration for Bahá'ís and non- Bahá'ís, the Iranian communities are diverse in terms of population numbers (NS: 1,040; NB: 520; PE: 184; NL: 140) (Statistics Canada, 2023b) and access to Iranian amenities across each province in the Atlantic region. There is no formal statistic about the population of Iranian Bahá'ís across Canada, but the population of Bahá'ís has been growing since 1898 (The Bahá'í

Community of Canada, 2023). It is now estimated to be around 35,000 Bahá'ís across

Canada, of which 2,000 reside in Toronto (Bahá'í Community of Toronto, 2023). The

access to Iranian amenities is also different in each city and province, too. Anousheh, for

instance, explained how the limitation of access to Iranian food ingredients made her

creative in using the closed Canadian available ingredients as a part of Iranian food since

her arrival, and she is completely satisfied with it. Though there is one store that brings

Iranian food ingredients from time to time, she said she has become self-sufficient and

does not buy them necessarily. This situation is and used to be different in Halifax and

Fredericton, where there are Iranian businesses running in the city, and access to the

mainland is different from the islands of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island.

I witnessed these differences during my fieldwork in the number of Iranian

businesses, the community connections over significant events like Nowruz or Yalda

Night, and the connectedness and the amount of support among the community. Iranian

Bahá'ís in Charlottetown or Moncton were more scattered across the city, and I found the

connections more formal compared to Fredericton. St. John's was in-between Fredericton

and Moncton or Charlottetown, but I found more diversity in the Iranian communities in

Halifax. There were different groups who had been gathered around students, seniors of

the community, or certain professionals such as faculty members. The size and diversity

of the community resulted in the creation of different groups being gathered around

similar statuses or goals. However, I observed that these communities still shared the

biggest moment of the year, Nowruz, and gathered for a celebration in the shape of a

united community during my fieldwork.

My observation of the relationship between Bahá'í and non- Bahá'í communities also brought insight into how the communities of friendship shape around similarities or non-similarities. The Bahá'í participants tended to attend the community gatherings such as Nowruz and Yalda night. Here, the Iranian identity played a central role in creating and maintaining the relationship with the Iranian community who were mostly non- Bahá'ís. Faith, age, and shared socio-economic status played a more central role in more intimate friendship relationships. Age and socio-economic status also played an important role in shaping friendship relationships for non-Bahá'í participants. I found these patterns prominent in creating the friendship relationships between Bahá'ís and non- Bahá'ís. In other words, religion was not the only contributor factor in shaping Bahá'í participant relationships. The Iranian identity, being an immigrant, and other shared similarities such as the same ethnic background or being from the same city created spaces for various forms of friendship. I did not have any Bahá'í participants in Halifax, but these forms of relationships were evident among the Bahá'í participants in Charlottetown, St. John's, Moncton, and Fredericton.

Home, Gender, and Self

Home is a relational concept and a dynamic process consisting of social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020). Home as a gendered space is understood and formed by social constructions of identities and positionalities (Pease, 2009). Feminist literature has largely addressed the relationship between space and gendered experiences (Duncan, 1996; McDowell, 1999; Massey D. ,

1994). The meanings of home experience dramatic changes after immigration. As the meaning of home for women changes, the meanings of masculine identity in migration also change (Hibbins, 2009; Pease, 2009). In this section, I focus on the unequal gendered division of household labour as one of the aspects of gender equality that was recurrent in the interviews. The gender relations in the home for Iranian immigrants demonstrate how gender perceptions change in a new context for immigrants and how they continue to reproduce inequalities. Also, I argue that gender relationship changes bring new opportunities and restrictions for participants that affect their sense of home differently. I trace these relationships through the participants' household responsibility sharing, job and household economic contributions, and more nuanced language implications.

Iran is a culturally diverse country, from very traditional to modern contexts. According to UNESCO statistics, the literacy rate among the population aged 15 years and older in 2016 was more than 80%, and it is still growing. In this, the available gap between women's and men's literacy from 23.8% in 1976 has reached 9.6%. This gap has decreased to 0.4% for the population aged 15-24 years (UNESCO, 2023). The accessibility of education for men and women has led society to a new era where women are increasingly participating in the economy. Apart from the lack of wage parity and the accessibility of job positions for women, gendered relationships at home and the workplace are still significant (UNESCO, 2023). Things have changed and are still changing slowly. However, there is a long way to go to reach equality at home and beyond, especially when it comes to care-work and running household errands.

I traced the gender inequalities in the relationships where the participants tended to frame them as "changes" they were experiencing. Whereas the married women in my study talked about gender relations at home and beyond, especially in connection to their partners, single women mostly talked about it as the changes they felt about themselves and their relationships with society. The male participants also mostly spoke about their sense of self and their relationship with society. The gender implications in the interviews show how gender expectations are negotiated in women's everyday lives and how new routines gradually replace previous, unequal, taken-for-granted relationships at home. In this section, I address how couples, specifically, created these new routines and how the new arrangements were transmitted to their children. In the following, I address how immigration, coupled with the new household arrangements, contributed to fundamental changes in women's self of self. I further demonstrate that immigration has also has an impact on men in a way that they feel more empowered as well.

A study on Iranian immigrants in Canada shows how the concepts of sexuality and gender relations change for the participants after migration (Shahidian, 1999). Shahidian (1999) demonstrates how spatial displacement transforms gender relations and sexuality with a general pattern characteristic of modernity in a way that opens new spaces in societal relationships for individual reflexivity. This is among the very few studies done on the gender relations transformation in Canada that focuses on Iranian participants in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver between 1991 and 1997. My participants' experiences, however, are focused on the Atlantic Canadian cities and speak

to these gender relation transformations as well as the changes in the sense of self for both men and women after migration to Canada.

Marzieh, in Toronto, previously lived in St. John's, talked about the gradual changes she experienced since she emigrated from Iran:

My husband and I were working in Iran, and our children had nannies. When we got back home from work, my husband was not doing anything special. He was playing with our children or watching TV, or something like that. I was preparing the meal, and he was helping to serve the food or load the dishwasher at best. That was only it. I would say I was doing 80% of the work at home. After we immigrated to St. John's, the situation was the same because I was not working for 4-5 months. After that, when I went to work, the situation continued as it was. Our house did not have a dishwasher, and when I was back from home, I had to deal with dirty dishes in the sink.

After a while, I couldn't do it anymore. I talked to my husband and asked him to fix it together. Some of our friends also told us [Marzieh and her husband] that she [Marzieh, the woman] would be done this way… I was back from work after 8-9 hours of standing up, and then I was home, working 2-3 more hours in the kitchen to take care of things.

Then, things started to get better gradually. For example, my husband took care of

40% of the work, and I did 60%. However, since we came here, his participation

has increased even though I do not work yet and my husband is working. Now it's

50%-50%. I think the reason for that is the many relationships we have and the

communications we made with Iranians who had these things [more contributions

of men in household works]. My husband, for example, saw how much men are

more involved in these types of work. Some of my friends do not cook at all and it

affects us in a way that my husband cooks 2-3 times a week. This is really

satisfying for me to see that he contributes at home while I am not working

outside yet.

What Marzieh experienced was the transformation of gender roles at her home. It

was a repetitive theme among many participants. Juggling between household, family-

related, and job-related work and situating themselves in a new setting encourages young

educated couples to participate in care work without questioning the man's masculinity

and leads them to negotiate new routines. Friendship patterns and their living conditions

often work to legitimize the new routines and ensure that it is for the best and works

better for everyone in the long run.

Ladan, in Ontario, who previously lived in Halifax, talked about how immigration

to Canada has changed their life balance and helped them create new routines.

[Immigration] has 100% affected the responsibilities we share at home. The

differences, I believe, come from the situation rather than the geography

[compared to Iran]. For instance, the situation had to change if we lived in the

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south of Iran. However, we lived in the north of Iran. Though I liked my

independence, I was close to my mother and Fariborz's (her husband's) mother.

Therefore, they used to help us in many aspects of life. For instance, if we needed

help, it would come from everywhere. Thus, we had more time to do other things.

Now, I am far away from them, and it doesn't matter how I am far. Therefore, we

need to do everything on our own. I feel the same thing happened with sharing

responsibilities at home, too. When we were in Iran, I had a part-time job, and

Fariborz used to work long shifts. Thus, I was in charge of household chores.

Since we landed in Canada, Fariborz and I have been similarly busy right. We

were both students, and our working shifts were the same. For example, Fariborz

learned to cook, and we mostly shared household chores. Now we have the 50-

50% balance, right?

Fariborz said the balance is 60-40, and Ladan restated that Fariborz is doing most of the

chores in their home now.

Another married couple, Faezeh and Farhad, with children in Fredericton, talked

about their living arrangements at home and their business in the city. They were from

different generations, and I noticed different arrangements to practice equality in their

home. Their arrangements involved more job-related work for Farhad [the husband] and

more household chores for Faezeh [the wife].

Do I cook food? Well, the thing is, we've been married for 40 years, four zero

years. So our life has evolved in different ways. We were in love from the day one

we got married, and we are still in love, crazy. It's great. So as I said, when I say

evolved, it means I have changed tremendously. Faezeh changed tremendously. When there was a need for me to cook in the house, I will do that. Because there was a time that Faezeh worked in a different company than I did. And she would arrive home at six o'clock… And by the time she was home 6:30-7 o'clock, I used to be home at 5, so I did all the cooking.

Farhad compared himself to the men inside Iran. He emphasized that he is very hands-on with the kids and said, "It's usually… equality between men and women is really practice here." At some point, I saw Farhad was trying to control the narrative about gender relations in the home based on how they discussed this part. When he talked about taking care of household chores, Faezeh interrupted him and said, "Not chores, but other stuff." Apart from these interruptions in the conversations about how Faezeh and Farhad tried to represent gender relations at home, their slight disagreements showed a demonstrated a deeper layer: Farhad (the husband) saw a necessity to represent himself as a *"hands-on"* father or husband at home. It shows that Farhad had been exposed to progressive ideas around gender equality and did not want to appear indifferent to them.

While the older generation of participants had different and sometimes more traditional arrangements to practice gender equality in the form of labour division at their homes, the female participants were clear about teaching their children to get involved in the household chores and internalizing this practice for them. Anousheh, for instance, talked about how she was always concerned with this issue and how she tried to make her children involved in household chores:

"Actually, a lot of changes were never planned. The things we had in Iran and India, we continued here as well. My kids have been like that since they were kids. For example, when Sepehr [her son] was only three years old, he had to collaborate with me. He has to see what I am cooking and learn it because I know they will be grown up someday, and they should be able to do that by themselves. For example, for washing dishes, I was bringing a chair near the sink for him, and well he was playing with the dishes and he could not wash the dishes thoroughly, but… but it was good because he was learning what he was doing and what he was required to do when he is a grown-up. We continue that here as well. My children had to cook once a day, and now Mahan [her other son] is cooking really well. Sepehr also cooks very well. They know how to cook. And I'm very happy about that, because I made them learn cooking. I made them [get] involved in the kitchen responsibilities."

For older Bahá'í participants like Anousheh, gender equality also has another aspect. There are serious challenges for women to get involved in higher levels at the Bahá'í world centre in Haifa. However, the Bahá'í Faith is a contemporary faith that pays attention to inclusivity and unity of all humankind. In fact, many participants felt proud that gender equality is promoted in their faith. Anousheh specifically talked about gender equality throughout the entire interview. At some point, I asked her where her concern for this issue came from, and she replied:

It was in the Bahá'í Faith. For example, Hazrate Bahá'u'lláh says: imagine the world as a bird. A bird has two wings, one of them is man. One of them is woman.

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If one of these wings gets broken, or gets weakened, the bird of humanity cannot fly. They should fly together. They should work together. And in that situation, a bird, the bird of humanity, can fly. And I have it in my mind, and I transferred it to my children as well. That humanity is like the globe. And, this bird has two wings. If one of them gets broken, all of that will be broken. So, we should try our best to fly most of us together, as much as we can. So, we keep that unity. I learned these things from the Bahá'í Faith.

The division of labour at home among the Bahá'í and non- Bahá'í participants were not vastly different. On one hand, apart from Anousheh, I observed and heard that women have "chosen" to work at the kitchen more or they "know" the things better than their husband. Therefore, they prefer to run the things while they might gelt help from their husband among the Bahá'í participants. On the other hand, I saw that the educated non-Bahá'í women participants were trying to internalize more equality in the division of labour at their household. One other contributing point in practicing these new relations was the network of the participants. The majority of the younger generation educated women participants were alert toward these differences and tried to practice more egalitarian relationships at their homes and in relationships with their husbands. Therefore, I argue that the role of education, age and generational differences, the network of relationships, and immigration and being situated in a context with more gender-equality concerns are significant in practicing a more equal household labour. I did not get the chance to interview a younger generation of Iranian Bahá'ís, but it will be

worth studying in future research to investigate the role of the Bahá'í Faith with the call for gender equality and its impacts on household gendered practices.

A part of a sense of belonging is in connection with the sense of self to society (May, 2013). A majority of the participants, men and women, talked about how immigration has changed their understanding of self and how they have explored other aspects of their identity. Many male participants talked about the positive changes they experienced after immigration. Behrouz, for instance, stated that: "I also got a better perception of myself in many areas, my abilities in different situations, and my resilience in new conditions. I realized many things about myself."

These changes were significantly gendered-oriented. The male participants, like Ali, residing in Ontario, talked about how they changed to the extent that they feel they are a completely different person:

Two things happened in my life that changed me completely. One was marriage, and one was immigration. I should say these changes were toward good things, toward a higher level, not bad things. Immigration caused me to change my weaknesses into strengths points… I had to go to the North of Iran from Isfahan to work. It was very difficult for me. Now, I am going to another city in Canada to work and come back here… These limitations become less difficult, and a lot of fears are gone. Some of the shyness that we have as Iranians are gone. Self-confidence is more important than anything, which I gained after immigration… Immigration turned me into a strong, powerful man. I feel that immigration gave

me this option to think much, much bigger. As Tatalloo [an Iranian pop singer] says, I am not satisfied with less.

Ali's quote shows how his masculinity became a paramount integral part of his sense of self after immigration. While I expected masculinity to fade out from the men's sense of self, Ali's quote led my analysis in a different direction. I argue that a part of the change in the men's sense of self is about living in a secular country different from the current situation in Iran, which gives the participants more freedom to express themselves and explore the oppressed parts of their personalities. The question of whether this leads the immigrants to develop another kind of toxic masculinity after immigration arises here and needs more investigation. Without reducing the issue and the different aspects involved in it, it is worth mentioning that Canada is a different country than Iran on so many different levels. However, Canada also deals with gender equality issues at different levels than a country like Iran. Therefore, while an ideological regime in Iran might not intend to oppress men compared to women, the whole ideological system damages all genders in different ways. Therefore, participants might feel that certain aspects of their sense of self are under less pressure and have the opportunity to grow in a new context with different challenges and issues around gender.

Marzieh, residing in Ontario, talked about her experiences as a woman in Canada compared to Iran:

I like it in Canada… that they value women. I always tell myself we suffered a lot, but at least we won't suffer anymore. I don't think we immigrated only for my children to be prosperous and happy. I would say I like to have a good time in my

middle and old age. It is not over for me. But it's great that my children learn these things right and fairly. It helps a lot because this is fair and just. So my children will see these [relationships] and learn and make a better life for themselves.

Marzieh talked about a reason why many Iranians say they immigrated. Many parents are concerned about their children's future, and they are the main reasons for emigrating from Iran. It is seen as a sacrifice for children and also justifies the decision among family and friends. Marzieh put herself at the centre of her decision and claimed her right as a woman seeking a better life.

Ladan, living in Ontario, talked about the profound changes that immigration brings to the lives of immigrants and related to them as positive experiences that led her to become more independent:

A beautiful thing about immigration that I like is that the world gets bigger for you, and you learn not merely to stick to the model you have grown with. There are different lifestyles, and you change. Change is good sometimes… Another thing that I learned was to move with four pieces of luggage without stress. It is very difficult but less hard than the first time we did it… It makes you stronger. You learn how to stand on your own feet. When I came from Iran, I was 25. But I am 37 now. Twelve years have passed. I became more independent. We [she and her husband] had to live within distance from each other for more than a year because of our jobs. Behrouz was working in Iran, and I was in Canada. It helped

me to get more independent. Apart from the difficulties that immigration had during these 12 years, it helped me, and I also wanted to go in a direction that I wanted to change. This is good, apart from the difficulties it has.

Ladan then continued that she found her sense of self in a way that does not need others' help to reach her goals:

Immigration has changed my sense of self positively. I had to learn new things because of the situation I had been in. I had to be independent, stand on my feet, and find my role in society. For instance, you will find a job in Iran based on Party (پارتی), based on who you know and who you are familiar with. It happens here, too. But it is much more like that in Iran for women. For instance, your father might say I will go somewhere and ask to hire my daughter or your husband might say I will ask someone to hire my wife… But I had to give my resume to one thousand places to be able to find a job. I feel like my job is completely the result of my own capabilities without having anyone to help me.

Ladan's quote is the story of becoming more independent due to the life circumstance that immigration brings. However, this story has another side. Living in a patriarchal society where women are expected to be taken care of and are not welcome to participate in society equally socializes them to mobilize any resources they have. Therefore, they count on any help they can get from the men in the family and beyond to move toward the goals they cannot reach in an unequal situation. While women have a totally different situation in Iran that impacts their sense of self after immigration dramatically, the Iranian government's insider boundaries are getting tighter and tighter to

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the extent that men are also becoming the target of inequalities based on their ideological differences with the state, as discussed above. Therefore, immigration to a liberal country such as Canada has impacted women and men significantly, in that they have more opportunities to express their identities.

Language

In the previous section, I addressed the new routines the participants talked about and how they contributed to creating a space for women to work in their profession without being buried by the amount of work at home. I also gave examples showing how men were also experiencing changes in their sense of self. In this section, I pay attention to the language use of women and men participants in defining the home, describing household chores, how they frame their gendered perceptions, and demonstrate how language provides a deeper understanding of these more nuanced layers of gendered relationships.

Several examples in the above section indicated the changes both men and women were experiencing and the women's push toward reaching more equality in the realm of the home. Anousheh was a senior member of the Iranian community and had relationships with other Iranians from different generations. She talked about the importance of gender equality and contributing to home labour in her family:

> One thing that was not beautiful for me that wasn't nice was that an Iranian family came to my house. And they saw that the children were involved in household chores; one was cooking one was vacuuming the floors. And they told me it's

really good that your children are helping you with household chores. And I said well, they should do that because I am alone. I am only one woman, and they are three or four men, so they must help me. The next week, they came that family came again to my house to visit. And then she looked around and asked me, "Where are your girls?" and it really impacted me. I was thinking oh my God, we ourselves think that duties belong to women and don't belong to men. And men should not be involved in household chores. They should not wash the dishes. It really moved me, and I asked her what she meant by that. And she said, "Well, where are your girls who were cleaning and washing the dishes and cooking," and I told her that didn't we talk about the equality between women and men? My children should also learn these kinds of work. Why do you think like that? It really impacted me, and I am still thinking why did she think that these words belonged to women, and in her opinion, it was like these are girls who are supposed to do these works… I am very at ease to see my children are self-sufficient, and they know what to do and what not to do. And if people think being like that is like being a girl, that's okay.

Anousheh's experience of hearing about her children reveals that gendered expectations in relation to household work are deeply rooted in society. It actually does not matter where the geographical location is and what beautiful mottos are being repeated in society about gender equality. When it comes to on-the-ground practices, the reality is different. The important point was that another Iranian woman used sarcasm concerning Anousheh's sons. The other interesting point is Anousheh's way of

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responding to her guest. She mentioned that she is the "only" woman at home, so the boys had to "help" her. While Anousheh was a progressive woman who fought for equality, she was also affected by the traditionally-gendered norms, which is reflected in how she responded to her guest.

Language also significantly revealed the deeper layers of men's views toward gendered roles and expectations. Illia, for instance, talked about the important physical aspects of the home in comparison with his wife:

A home is more important for my spouse (wife) than for myself. Wherever we go, it's the same. However, the safety of the home is more important to me. Discussions for men… like where to park a car are very important to me. But being spacious is more important for my spouse. Well, women like a house to have more square feet in the house… but safety is more important… Thank God, the safety aspects are good here, and the routine discussions for men, like the parking space, have an important role for me. Because women usually are sensitive about the square feet of the house to accommodate the furniture and other house-related items, but I am not sensitive about the furnishing and other items. If someone tells me to move from one place to another… like when I was a student and left a lot of things behind in my dormitory… so it's not a big deal for me. In general, parking space and safety are essential to me… Being very spacious or having particular facilities are not my concerns. However, these can obviously be difficult for women. The women's ruling realm is in the kitchen, and it's important to my wife.

Illia prioritizes the safety aspects of the home and parking lot above the enlargement of the home and its facilities. Moreover, he explicitly mentioned how he sees the kitchen as a feminine realm. His definition of home and his emphasis on comparing his definition with his wife's signalled the importance of picturing a masculine self.

Shahrouz also brought up a gendered division of being at home when he talked about his daily routine:

> My wife is the only child in her family, but I have two other brothers. She is used to being alone, and she is comfortable with that… And girls can deal with themselves alone, but boys cannot do that, to sit in a corner and play with a doll. We must go to the alley and ride a bike.

The transformations in the sense of the self impacts the participants' relationships with society. It also significantly influences how they conceptualize the home in Canada and how they feel about it. Women specifically moved toward pushing for gender equality in their spousal relationships. Also, they were pretty satisfied with the opportunities they had experienced as women in the workplace, though it was rarely ideal. Moreover, the above examples demonstrate that gender divisions are rooted in the participants' expectations, roles, language, and practices. The significance of these examples is that Iranian immigrants, especially women, look up to new gendered relationships and try to fit in once they see how gender roles impact both men and women. Adopting more equal approaches to gender is a sign of being progressive to participants, and many male participants told me how they believe in gender equality, though it was not the case for all of them. For many participants, the deeper conceptions

of gender roles were different and reflected in their daily actions and language. Home after immigration brought the opportunity for the participants to learn and apply new relationships at home. Home, thus, became a place for revising and resetting gendered patterns for middle-class, educated Iranian immigrants.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the socio-cultural barriers and boosters of a partial or temporary sense of belonging as a result of the participants' agentic home making practices to understand how they are home-ing and doing belonging in the context of after immigration. Language, material objects, immigration status, friendship communities, and negotiating gender roles play a pivotal role in these experiences that not only changes the immigrants' sense of self, but also their relationship to home and their conception toward it. In a hyper-mobile era and in a context of after migration that breaks the sense of continuity from the home country, memories, and loved ones, it is important to understand how immigrants construct new meanings of home and belonging in connection to the new place. My participants' experiences demonstrate that feeling at home might be achievable on a personal level after immigration, especially when friends and family are around. The participants used different agentic strategies to conform to the new form of home, routines, and relationships and to strive toward making a home at different levels. I argue that the participants used cooking food, listening to music, creating or bringing Iranian arts to home, and other home-making practices as tools to suture the past and present together and create new meanings that become familiar over

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time for them after immigration. Using Iranian decorative objects extensively in their homes was a part of their efforts to make sense of the new place they were living in their home.

This chapter also demonstrates that whereas language proficiency might be a barrier for immigrants to feel socially accepted (Tajrobehkar, 2023), connecting with friends through their mother tongue provides the capacity for creating spaces and communities of belonging, even if they are temporary. Immigration status also impacts the sense of connectedness to society, and the chapter shows that instabilities before getting PR are a significant contributor to a sense of uprootedness, especially for the student participants. Being socially excluded from the PR and citizenship rights in society in the early years after immigration while the participants contribute to it academically and economically and plan to stay after education not only creates and sustains sense of instability, but also depletes the participants' energy in that they are exhausted even after obtaining a PR. It has a significant role in the participants' experiences of belonging and prevents them from thinking of Canada as a home.

Both female and male participants experienced more freedom to develop new aspects of their sense of self. The women specifically sought more egalitarian relationships at home and started by addressing the gendered division of household labour as some men developed a different type of masculinity. They pushed for adopting and practicing new routines and worked toward it. All these new home-making practices, new relationships, and development in the sense of self contributed to revisiting a sense of

home: one that involves new routines and practices in response to new opportunities and challenges.

A sense of belonging, however, was not easily achievable. In the case of non-Bahá'ís, the participants mostly felt unsettled and uprooted without having a meaningful substitute among the Canadian communities. They either had the closest experiences of belonging with their Iranian friendship groups or refused to belong. Therefore, friendship relationships have the central role in emphasizing the familiar as negotiating the unfamiliar that consolidates the sense of continuity. This disconnectedness from the Canadian context is also a symptom of exhaustion from the prolonged instability after immigration, talking in a language that might bring a sense of exclusion and you have no deposited memory in, and the confusion in making sense of home while uprooted from the past experiences.

As I addressed in the literature review, a sense of belonging is a fundamental, inherently relational feeling that emerges from being at ease with the relational, cultural, and material surroundings. However, the participants could rarely achieve such continuity and unity in all these realms. In its physical meaning, the home was a unique place the participants had control over to perform their "authentic" selves; where they could put other disparities behind them. Home, in this sense, worked as a haven for Iranian immigrants. It offered physical space, provided the basic necessities, and feelings of safety, privacy, and comfort. The participants' use of Iranian food or objects in their new home created a familiar space for dwelling. In the midst of experiences of noticing racial

differences and being discriminated against based on that, the home was a context for self-expression and an extension of self (Sixsmith, 1986; Duyvendak, 2011).

According to the three aspects of a home, we can define its ideal nature: familiarity, haven, and heaven. These aspects of the home are tied to our complex sentiment toward home on social, personal, and physical levels (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019; Sixsmith, 1986). Data in this study suggest that home is achievable for the Iranian participants to some extent in the familiarity, haven, and heaven aspects through friendships, language, food, music, and decorations, but never as a complete experience, according to Cross's (2015) processes of place attachment that highlights the roles of memory and history in making sense of a home. The central contribution of this chapter is to show the transnational practices of the Iranian immigrants in a more individual aspect at the physical home in a way that makes the unfamiliar more familiar through homemaking practices.

This chapter leads us to the more fundamental question of what prevents the immigrants from experiencing a deeper sense of home in relation to the new society, and how do they experience the segregation and exclusion in their everyday lives? In the next two chapters, I address these questions by focusing on the experiences of the participants is the Atlantic cities to explain how participants' conceptions of these areas in Canada impacted their sense of belonging. Then, I take deeper look at their exclusionary experiences of belonging in the interaction and everyday life and conceptualize them according to the literature.

Chapter 5: How do Iranian Immigrants' Conceptions of Remote and Centre or Rural and Urban Shape their Experiences of Belonging?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on home-ing and doing belonging beyond the more individual level in chapters three and four and questions them at the community and group level.   In this, it addresses the questions of how Iranian immigrants conceptualize the Atlantic Canadian cities and how such conceptualization shapes their experiences of friendship communities of belonging in the region. I demonstrate how the participants refer to the unique characteristics of Atlantic Canadian cities and pay attention to their imaginations about living in bigger cities, such as Toronto. To do so, I engage with the literature to show why Iranian immigrants tend to leave the Atlantic region after their education or working for a few years in the first part of the chapter. Then, I briefly elaborate on the few cases of senior Iranian immigrants who chose to stay in the Atlantic cities and demonstrate why they came to that conclusion. The second part of the chapter focuses on the significance of the friendship communities of belonging and their pivotal role in transferring knowledge to the newer immigrants. I engage with the literature on collective identity (Melucci, 1989), group culture (Fine, 2012; Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003), and community theories (Anderson, 1983; Calhoun, 1999; Cope et al., 2019) I analyze the mechanisms through which these communities shape and function in the

Atlantic cities. Before the concluding marks, I compare the Iranian community ties in the Atlantic region and Ontario and explain what implications they have in the participants' everyday life.

Canadian Atlantic provinces with rural characteristics have a considerable aging population (Reid, 2011; Government of Canada, 2023b). The concepts of remoteness and centrality are helpful in comparing the characteristics of the Atlantic region and Ontario from immigrants' points of view and examining their probable impacts on a sense of belonging for immigrants.

Remoteness is a constructed concept that depends on the adopted perspective and the location of the person who uses the term. However, a remote location, in its general meaning, "is defined as being secluded or placed apart, distant, existing far away in space... a remote place implies a distant site with reference to where the one person positing such a qualification is located" (Bocco, 2016). Bocco (2016) offers two dimensions of remoteness: the absolute, geometric dimension, which depends on the distance, and the geographic dimension, which is relational and subject to connectivity. In addition to these measures, Ontario and Quebec have traditionally been the centre of economic and political power because of the concentration of population, wealth, and industrial resources. These reasons have led Ontario and Quebec to be considered "central Canada" (Flaherty, 1988, p. 101) while the rest of Canada has a critical view toward such concentration and conceptualization. In this situation, regions shape political decisions, and as a result of this dichotomy, central Canada prevails over the periphery (Flaherty, 1988).

Having these differences in mind, I emphasize that all of the notions that describe the characteristics of regions, such as central, periphery, remote, rural, urban, etc. are socially constructed as they depend on the perspective of the person or group who accepts and defines them. Therefore, centrality and remoteness are relational concepts and the products of the social construction of meaning in a given society. In the same manner, the claims that consider Atlantic provinces as remote places because they are geographically located in the far east, apart from the rest of Canada are social constructs. These definitions and conceptualizations have roots in a specific time and place-dependent definition that certain groups of people have adopted to describe their social world. Therefore, it is vital to reconsider these concepts, to think of the underlying reasons for the emergence of these meanings, and to question their origins in relation to power.

Limited career opportunities, distance from the urban centers, and a lack of amenities were the repeated reasons for leaving the Atlantic provinces for more traditional immigration gateways such as Ontario in interviews with Iranian immigrants. These reasons were not unexpected. However, I explored other layers impacting their thinking about leaving the Atlantic region, their decision-making, and finally the leaving. How were the real on-the-ground experiences of the participants in their everyday lives, and how did they draw such conclusions? How did they overcome the challenges of remaining in the Atlantic region if they decided to stay? How did the situation change when they left for a major urban centre like Toronto? What did they imagine living in Ontario would look like, and how did it look in their everyday experiences? What do

they suggest about the two regions offering the immigrants a place to live? Finally, what are the implications for a sense of belonging for the Iranian immigrants in each context?

These more profound questions revealed different aspects of the participants' experiences. They traced the potential and challenges of living in each region for immigrants that have rarely been addressed in the available literature in the Atlantic cities. Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal are characterized as "three cities" (Kaida, 2020, p. 192). These are more traditional immigration gateways and experience different urban change patterns. However, many Canadian midsized cities are declining due to economic restructuring (Filion, 2010). Additionally, these cities are less diverse and have been unsuccessful in attracting immigrants until recently (Carter, Morrish, & Amoyaw, 2008). In addition to the economic and social needs of the region to attract more immigrants, the low retention rate has impacted the public's view toward immigrants "because of the underlying expectation that newcomers will eventually leave" (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2020, p. 23). This is one of the reasons why Pottie-Sherman and Graham (2020) explain that Newfoundlanders, for instance, are being regarded as welcoming but "on the surface" (p.23). The midsized cities across Canada hold a quarter of Canada's population (Lewis & Donald, 2010), and it is important to understand how they are doing in accommodating immigrants. My study fills the gap in understanding the lives of immigrants who land in the Canadian Atlantic midsized cities, many of whom do not stay there and leave for Ontario. It sheds light on knowing how the Atlantic cities can become more immigrant-friendly and how immigrants could make a permanent home there.

From Atlantic to Ontario: Why do Immigrants Tend to Leave the Atlantic Region?

While the concepts of remoteness and centrality are socially constructed and depend on where we define the centre, I paid attention to the participants' conception of the rural/urban or remote/central character of the places they reside, including the Atlantic region and Ontario. These concepts demonstrate how the participants refer to these places, imagine them, and see their relationship as Iranian individuals and community members in each context. Moreover, it shows how the immigrants' conceptualizations and imaginations of these places and communities impact their sense of belonging to home and Canadian society.

Job Opportunities and Capacity for Progress

According to my interviewees, obtaining a secure job is the most fundamentally important thing constituting a sense of belonging for immigrants. It is the most basic necessity immigrants seek, affecting their feeling of safety, productivity, and satisfaction immensely, and influencing their sense of belonging. Many participants mentioned that they are inclined to stay in the Atlantic region if they have a proper job relevant to their studies. However, their main obstacle is job scarcity in the Atlantic region and the limited capacity to advance their career. In other words, if they have no decent job relevant to their education, they prefer to leave to obtain a job in a bigger Canadian city.

Afra talked about how she used to live in bigger cities, but her mind changed about living in Halifax after a while.

I had been in Tabriz and Tehran for my whole life. I lived in Tabriz, a big city

until I was 23. Then I went to Tehran for my Master's and remained there. So, I

came from big and crowded cities in Iran. When I came here, it was like a punch

in the face, being deserted and small compared to [Iran]. But after a while, I felt

that I like the peacefulness and quietness of here. It is peaceful. The fact that it is

near water made it like a familiar place for me like I know here. Maybe because I

started our married life here… and then the friends we found here… and we

became family for each other… This make me feel like home… I started to feel

like home after 3-4 years. When I go to other cities like Toronto, Montreal, or

Vancouver, and people ask where are you coming from and I say Halifax… I feel

a sense of belonging to here. Maybe it's emotional way to say it, but the first place

that opened arms for me as a second home was here… And I don't like to leave

here. My husband is working remotely in Ontario, but they told him that he must

go there… And I should probably go to because there is no job to find here…

But if it was possible to find a job here, my husband and I liked to stay here

forever. We even bought a house recently to have something here to come back to

and have a connection to here.

Her intrinsic motivations changed, but the situation in Halifax did not work in favour of

necessary incentives to keep them in Halifax:

You can't find a job here… it is a student-based and retirement city… There are

new things happening right now in recent years, but not much that you can find a

job. You have to leave here, like the majority of our friends did. Many of them

liked to stay here, but they had to leave eventually because bigger cities like Toronto and Montreal have more job opportunities. Most of our old friends are gone. Some of them liked to live in bigger cities, but I would say 60-70 percent of them had to leave for a job. The rest of them left because they liked to live in bigger cities. For instance, I have a friend now that says she wants to leave since she came here. She says this city is not alive and it is very small. She says she likes somewhere like Toronto that feels like Tehran. However, the friends in our community like Halifax and its peacefulness.

The imagination of living in larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver were tempting to my participants in the Atlantic region. Some of them had not even travelled outside of their initial landing province, but they talked about how they imagined their lives would be in other places in Canada. The same story was true about living in the United States. During my fieldwork, more than ten potential participants left Newfoundland, two of whom were for the United States to find better jobs. Interestingly, I also saw that tendency in Ontario among my participants. When I asked the participants in Ontario about where they see their future, many replied that the United States is an option for them.

On the other hand, many other participants, like Rayan, living in Fredericton, stated that they would like to stay in Canada (as opposed to the United States) if they can find a suitable job position in their area of expertise. He was preparingto leave Fredericton for Montreal at the time of the interview. However, Rayan said he could also

see his future in the United States. He said he might go to the United States if he cannot find a proper job relevant to his education.

Ladan, residing in Ontario, and previously living in Halifax, also talked explicitly about the second or third wave of immigration she was witnessing to the United States:

> We are witnessing a growing flow of immigration from Canada to the United States, which we may call a brain drain. The reason for it is only and only the job and income issue. In my area of expertise, there are much bigger companies with more jobs in the United States than Canada. For my job, it is like swimming in a small pool compared to a lake, if not the sea. The United States has a big economy and big industry, which is not deniable. It is not Canada's fault. They are actually two different countries with different natures. We are not leaving for the United States yet because we are unsure if it is the right financial decision. We are getting settled here and working on our financial matters, and a third migration might be damaging for us. Therefore, we are having more thoughts and brainstorming about it. Not that we are fantasizing about Canada, but we also understand that Canada is a healthier society for a living. The people's mental health is much better. It has better insurance. Therefore, Canada might be a better country to raise children. There might be some exceptions in the United States, but Canada has a higher general social health, which is important to me.

A third wave of migration gradually became evident to me. Although a study in 2000 demonstrates that the tax differences between the United States and Canada was a cause for the migration of Canadian to the United States (Wagner, 2000), the most

important reason for this third wave of migration among the participants was better job opportunities in the United States. The participants talked about the job market as their most important reason for leaving the Atlantic region, and interestingly, they mentioned the same reason for leaving Ontario to the United States. Data from the interviews, my observations, and informal conversation in the fieldwork suggest that while the job market was more attractive for the participants in Ontario, the living expenses often did not allow them to build their desirable life conditions — most importantly, their housing. Therefore, many Iranian graduates, with or without jobs, were thinking about a third migration to the United States. When I asked Shahrouz, in Ontario (who had previously lived in Alberta and Nova Scotia), if he thinks they will ever leave Ontario, he answered:

> We (he and his fiancée) are doing a post-doc, and since it is a temporary job, we need to seek our jobs. In fact, our job will determine our location for living. Therefore, there is a possibility that we will leave Toronto. My fiancée and I discuss this a lot and never reach a clear conclusion. Vancouver has a better climate, but we like here. Therefore, I suspect we will leave Toronto if we find good jobs and incomes here. However, we are thinking about leaving for the United States, too. We won't leave for any place in the United States but think about New York and California. My fiancée's parents are going there, and her Green Card is in process. Therefore, it is an option for us to go there. However, we like to stay in Toronto or Vancouver if we stay in Canada. We have been here in Toronto. We like the city, the Iranian community, and the availability of Iranian stuff. Also, the climate condition is Vancouver's advantage for us.

The above examples were only a few among many that I included showing not only do the participants leave the Atlantic region in search of a better job, but they often think or plan for a third migration to the United States. The common thread, pulling all these reasonings together, was to find a proper job and better living conditions. Interestingly, this resonates with the reason many participants in the Atlantic region had left or were going to leave for other cities in Canada: "in search" of a job. The point of difference between them and the participants in Ontario is that the participants in the Atlantic region did not have a job offer. They were leaving for a city they liked in the hopes of finding a job in the near future, whereas the participants in Ontario already had a job but were thinking about both a better job and better living conditions.

Housing plays a key role in this "better living condition" reasoning. The participants in Ontario hardly talked about their negative experiences, but they often mentioned the commute and housing affordability as the major issues they were dealing with in Ontario, contrary to the Atlantic cities. The housing price for rent and for buying is not comparable as many participants mentioned, and therefore, they often live in a small apartment in Toronto for years, and when it is time to buy, they do that in the Greater Toronto Area. I conducted the interviews in 2021, when the COVID-19 impacts on housing were not still completely obvious. Later on, the government cognized that there is a housing crisis occurring across Canada (Rivard, Merkley. & Stecula, 2023) to the extent that the federal government introduced a two-year foreign homebuyers ban to alleviate the housing market (McQuillan, 2022). This new regulation is an attempt to cool

down the housing market but there is still the need to increase the housing stock in a way that the supply and the demand match (Labine, 2022).

Unfriendly City Structure and Access to Evening Life

Unfriendly city structure and the problem of having no or limited access to evening life emerged as another theme in the interviews, preventing the participants from connecting to their living environment beyond their physical house. I use evening life instead of nightlife to emphasize the different characteristics of each. Nightlife in Western culture usually regards spending time in bars, restaurants, and clubs, and consuming alcohol is often a part of it. Evening life, however, means being outside of the home in the city in the evening and continuing activities like shopping, eating, walking, and socializing in different urban spaces like the streets, parks, cafes, or restaurants.

Immigrants come from various backgrounds for various reasons. Re-rooting in a new place is what the immigrants hope and yearn for. Considering the language barriers and cultural differences, it takes considerable time to get used to the new environment (if it ever happens). Their connection to their living places usually helps the immigrants to bear the process and feel involved in society. This is even more significant for single students in the Atlantic provinces.

Baran, who graduated from university, and lives in the Atlantic region, explained that she missed many things from Iran in St. John's. She believed she could be more connected to the city and her living environment if there were "more cafes... more street foods... More longer hours in cafes, working... It's very frustrating… frustrating to see

that they are all closed at five or six. So yeah, I think having more evening life definitely helps, and I missed it."

Baran's quote highlights the importance of evening life in the lives of Iranian immigrants in this study. It also demonstrates a cultural disconnect between the participants' expectations about evening life and the meaning of nightlife in North America. However, while a city like St. John's prides itself on having the most bars per capita in North America (Smellie, 2023), it does not accommodate many different social groups who do not necessarily use alcohol for socializing or relaxing and have a different approach in this regard. Oldenburg (1991) conceptualizes such refuge spaces as Baran mentioned as the *third place*. Third places are what Baran and other participants regard in their quotes, and they include places other than home or workplace, where people can regularly visit with friends, neighbours, or even strangers. These places can include places of small businesses, cafes, bars, pubs, restaurants, community centres, general stores, etc. Having no or minimal access to spaces, places, and events that the participants could participate in was a serious concern among participants, as I demonstrate with more quotes in this section. Comparing their situation with the locals, providing such spaces and events might be helpful and meaningful for immigrants who usually have no or only a few family members around with whom to spend time.

Apart from the major cultural expectations among the participants that had not been met in the Atlantic cities, I should emphasize the diversity of the Iranian communities and the Iranian businesses and amenities within these five Atlantic cities in my study. Iranian food ingredients play a pivotal role in making Iranian food and,

therefore, an essential role in bringing a sense of comfort to immigrants. Food works as a reminder of home and a sense of nostalgia for the past. It also has cultural and social elements that Iranians are proud of. As a robust Iranian cultural element, they often share it as a symbol of their Iranian identity with other Iranian or non-Iranians and socialize over food.

I observed more Iranian amenities and businesses in Fredericton than in any other city. There was a Persian restaurant, a photo studio run by an Iranian, a gas station with primarily Iranian food ingredients, and an Iranian supermarket. They had both Iranian and non-Iranian customers, but they were famous among the community, and everybody mentioned that they knew where to go to find the essential Iranian food ingredients, though they are not comparable with the diversity of Toronto businesses. After that, Halifax was the most affluent one. There was an Iranian restaurant and some other stores that sold Iranian food ingredients. I also realized that there are more private businesses related to medical services or criminal lawyers in Halifax. There was also a Persian restaurant in St. John's that had very recently started to operate, and Iranian food ingredients were available in two Arabic stores. I did not see any Iranian businesses in Charlottetown or Moncton, but I heard that an Iranian store or a restaurant had opened their business in Charlottetown but could not continue due to the lack of interest. I understood that the availability of Iranian food ingredients plays an important role in allowing the immigrants to create a sense of home, in relation to Iran.

The Iranian restaurant opened its business after I did most of the interviews in Newfoundland. However, I found that the participants talked about the available Iranian

restaurants in Fredericton and Halifax with limited enthusiasm. Iranian foods, and the

most popular one, kebabs, are tricky to cook and require experience, availability of fresh

Iranian food ingredients, and many other factors. Therefore, the participants were not

huge fans of the Iranian restaurants in their city. However, they were all talking about the

diversity of Iranian restaurants in Toronto and how they look forward to tasting good

Iranian food there. In addition to that, some participants decided to overcome the

challenge of not having access to good Iranian food by getting better at cooking,

especially learning to make kebabs.

Many participants stated that the evening life and an "alive" city would

dramatically change their relationship with the city they live in. Salar described the night

vibes of downtown Fredericton after the sunset as the *"dead city."* This finding

accentuates the experiences of frustration and alienation of other immigrants from a non-

European background in Canada after sunset in the context of suburbs or cities without

engaging third places other than bars. For instance, the Asian immigrants in suburban

Vancouver with 24/7 nighttime landscapes found the suburbs dead after 6 p.m. In

response to that, they created the Summer Night Market in Richmond, British Columbia,

Canada, where they sell different products, including food and clothing and use it as a

venue for the expression of cultural identity (Pottie-Sherman & Hiebert, 2015)

Another Iranian participant, Shahram, in New Brunswick explained,

"Urban spaces can be suitable for people to get together and spend time, like what

happens in social media... However, this city is heavily family-oriented. If you

enter the city in winter, you feel you are entering a ghost town while people have

their lives inside of their houses. No entertainment or event occurs during

Christmas or New Year's Eve in the city, and it is very difficult for an alone

person to deal with."

Shahram interestingly mentioned that life is happening inside people's homes but

not in the streets. The participants noticed these cultural differences and understood the

differences compared to what they used to experience in Iran, especially during the

Persian new year, Nowruz, when the streets are full of people preparing for the big

moment of change to the new year: the spring equinox. Stores operate until near

midnight. Vendors operate in the neighbourhoods, bazaars, and downtown and sell

different products from clothing, fresh food of the season, the decoration necessities for

Haft Sin (Persian new year's table setting), etc. At other times of the year, the stores close

between 8 to 11 p.m. and city life continues until almost midnight. It is reflected in their

usual dinner time too, which is around 9 p.m. The second and more important part of life

starts after 5 p.m., and people often start to get together around 7 or 8 p.m. For cities in

the south of Iran, which experience very hot summers, the situation is even more different

than in Canada. Evenings are the most important part of the 24-hour day, and people start

to socialize after sunset, when the weather starts to cool down and continue until after

midnight, sometimes to 2 or 3 a.m.

Coming from this mentality and expectation of evening life, the participants found

the city structures in the Atlantic cities problematic, particularly in not accommodating

the immigrants' night lifestyle: spending time at restaurants and cafes near the street or in

downtown until midnight, window shopping until 9 or 10 p.m., having open shops in the

streets (rather than being centred in the malls or at a plaza). In the current situation, a significant, meaningful part of their lives suddenly stops and become *dead*. These immigrants are agents of action and often find other ways to socialize in informal friend gatherings or other similar ways. However, the connection between the participants and city life and evening life suddenly become to suspension and does not change much during that time.

This is also challenging for people who are not Christian and do not celebrate Christmas. Some participants, like Shahram or Rayan, contrasted Montreal as an example of a city structure that is friendly, inclusive, and suitable for people from different backgrounds. Rayan was actually about to leave Fredericton for Montreal at the time of the interview.

Baran highlighted another aspect of these differences she experienced in her previous home, Iran, that she misses not having them now:

> What I like to see in St. John's is more walkable streets with more lights, more
> open stores, and more pedestrian passageways, so you can see people interact with
> them. I think in St. John's, when you just leave your physical building or your
> house, it feels so foreign [used as the opposite of familiar] to you. There is
> nobody, nobody's there, even when you go for a quick walk. It's just all cars and
> cars and cars. And back home, when you go to the street, it's always like many
> people, many stories, and I really miss that, and I wish I had that here in St.
> John's.

Walking can be considered as one of the most sustainable and democratic ways of

travelling within a city.It provides benefits for both pedestrians and the urban

environment (Papa, Fistola, & Gargiulo, 2018). Walkable places and streets create the

opportunity for social interaction and enhance a sense of belonging (Cattell et al., 2008;

Wood, Frank, & Giles-Corti, 2010). Also, streets are an important part of everyday life

that provide a context for travel, shopping, interaction, and social life learning. Good

streets are defined as democratic streets — "streets that have meaning for people, invite

access for all, encourage use and participants, are loved, and are well cared for by their

users" (Francis, 1991, p. 23). Baran's quote points the direction to the importance of the

third places, like walkable and democratic streets and their importance for a sense of

inclusivity and belonging for the immigrants. It shows how the newer parts of the Atlantic

cities, as any other city across Canada, are often designed for cars, not passengers, in

contrast to downtowns that are more walkable with welcoming streets that have a

different history in relation to the humans and automobiles. There are also parks,

walkable plazas, or farmers' markets (like in Fredericton) across the cities that offer third

spaces, but they are not so many that the immigrants can have access to them easily. This

turns the city (other than downtowns) and new streets into a place to pass, not to be,

linger, or socialize. Cities in this situation are less democratic, less inclusive, and

damaging to people's sense of participation, especially for the immigrants who come

from more walkable engaging streets and places and consider them as an integral part of

social life.

Sepehr, another student in Halifax, liked some parts of the city, like the harbourfront and its connection to the water as a familiar part of nature in Iran. Still, he found many other elements lacking in the city to be inclusive, which caused him to experience difficulties making more connections to the city:

There is no significant evening life going on here. I don't mean an evening life for dancing and drinking. You can see almost nobody is out at 6 or 7 p.m. It feels like everyone is gone. There are more people out on the weekends, though. However, the city gives you a deep feeling of being cold in every aspect, which dramatically bothers me. For example, a bus with a serious bus driver comes to pick you up. You sit in a cold dark place on the bus with one or two other people. Such a cold feeling even provokes a sense of insecurity in me occasionally. It also annoys me as an Iranian who used to have an evening life in Iran. We had not been going to sleep soon at night. We were much more active. Our city was brighter, and it had more movement. I do not intend to compare Halifax to Tehran, but even smaller cities in Iran were much more alive. However, a small city like Kish, with 25,000 population had much more evening life than Halifax, with almost 400,000. The other thing that bothers me here is the abundance of cemeteries in the city. It is much worse on a foggy dark day. If you had a problem or had some issues and discussions with your supervisor, you would not think of anything other than ending your life if you passed a cemetery. It makes it much harder. And the nights212ifelesseless, and you feel hollow. These two things really bother me in the city.

The existence of cemeteries in the cities is not an Atlantic Canadian-specific phenomenon. It is similar to the rest of Canada. Sepehr talked about the meaning of cemeteries in an entirely different direction than in Canada. Cemeteries in Canada are the results of the historical evolution of cemeteries and the development and expansion of cities within urban areas (Quinton & Duinker, 2019). Cemeteries in Iran, however, are places of sadness, sorrow, and horror. They are usually placed out or in a separate part of the cities. Many stories and myths about cemeteries exist, and people try to avoid going to them, especially at night. They are unwanted places, and many believe you might be haunted if you pass them at night. Seeing many cemeteries in the cities and their frequency of them brings a huge amount of surprise for Iranian immigrants, especially in the early years of immigration. Therefore, Iranians usually avoid buying or renting a house near a cemetery and complain about why cemeteries are located at the heart of the city: a point that highlights their different meaning in Canada. I remember how an agent tried to sell my husband and me a rental place in our first year by emphasizing its good features. We generally liked the unit, but once he presented his ace card by showing us a window opening to a cemetery was a moment of surprise and, consequently, the end of that apartment for us.

These cultural differences explain how meanings are socially constructed in different cultures and how knowing, recognizing, and valuing these differences are paramount in accommodating people from different cultures. Participants like Sepehr thought they did not have much opportunity to get involved with city life and contribute to it as immigrants.

In addition to the cultural difference and a lack of mutual understanding over the meaning of evening life or the sign of cemeteries in the cities, there are other challenging factors that contribute to preventing immigrants from rooting in the Atlantic region. Weather in different parts of the Atlantic region is challenging during the prolonged cold seasons, and people struggle to continue their lives without mental issues. Mona, for instance, stated: "A reason why many people migrate from Newfoundland is the weather, but since it gives you affordable economic opportunities, you can think about it [to stay here]."

On the other hand, Sepehr's quote demonstrates that the city structure is also designed to discourage social participation and exacerbate the sense of isolation. But why is getting involved in city life an important issue for the participants? Mark Granovetter (1973) argues that while strong ties (such as close relationships with family and friends) are important for emotional support, weak ties (more distant and casual relationships) provide access to new information and opportunities and are more effective when they link people from different social locations. I argue that inclusive design of urban spaces and third places would facilitate the creation of weak ties and significantly improve the immigrants' sense of community and belonging. Moreover, third places provide a suitable context to bridge the social distance.

Moreover, my analysis demonstrates that the participants think the structure of the Atlantic cities has a long way to go to become immigrant-friendly and more accessible and inclusive for various groups in society. This concerns opportunities for inclusion that encourage communication and accessibility to potential third spaces through the

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appropriate amenities, such as walking streets, plazas, or having more reliable public transportation.

The other obstacle for immigrants that prevents them from establishing a life and roots in the region is the lack of access to social and cultural places and events. Compared with a metropolitan area like Toronto, fewer immigrants reside in the Atlantic cities, and the cultural diversity is more limited. The communities of immigrants are smaller in number. Moreover, immigrants often have fewer or no familial ties, and they aspire for more multicultural events and a more social structure of the city to be able to spend time exposed to various communities. This gets more challenging when the immigrants get excluded from decision-making at the level of municipalities. According to the current rules and policies, non-citizen immigrants are not able to participate in municipal elections, although some cities like Halifax and Toronto have proposed to extend the voting right to permanent residents (Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 2023). Specifically, designing and building more inclusive social spaces (other than bars and restaurants) in the city helps different groups strengthen their sense of connectedness to the surrounding environment. In other words, the immigrants would like to see they have the opportunity to participate in the city's social life and that their needs have been considered in the city planning and in providing services.

Spaces show the place and social location of individuals in society. Moreover, third places set the stage for social participation and civic engagement and allow immigrants to manifest their presence in society. In this sense, the Atlantic cities do not provide sufficient spaces and places for immigrants to be a part of, spend time, and

socialize. Downtowns, harbours, farmers' markets, and weekend bazaars were among those spaces where the immigrants felt they could linger, connect, and spend time as participants, as Sepehr mentioned earlier. However, downtowns, for instance, are not necessarily alive during weeknights outside of bars and restaurants. Also, farmer markets in a city like St. John's are not situated around other activities. Not seeing immigrants in planning third places implies the social location of immigrants in Canadian cities, specifically the Atlantic provinces. While the participants' decision-making to leave the Atlantic region involves various reasons, comparing major urban centres such as Toronto and Montreal to Atlantic cities contextualizes why immigrants prefer to leave the Atlantic provinces for those major urban centres: they are seen in the city and have the opportunity to participate in the city's social life. But what must be done to create more inclusive spaces in the Atlantic region? Magidimisha-Chipungu and Chi (2023) discuss spatial inclusion, social inclusion, economic inclusion, environmental inclusion, and political inclusion as the anchors of building inclusive cities not only for immigrants but for all groups in society. More specifically, Mehta and Bosson (2010) propose four characteristics in cities to create third places based on their study in Massachusetts: (a) personalization of the street front by the business, (b) permeability of the business to the street, © seating provided by the business, and (d) shelter provided by the business on the street space. Mehta and Bosson's study focuses on a main street and two towns and does not provide a strategic plan for providing inclusive cities. However, their study shows many ways to think about planning more inclusive spaces for social interaction and inducing the social engagement of various social groups across the Atlantic cities.

Access to Bigger Opportunities

A significant number of the participants based in the Atlantic region were either thinking about leaving the Atlantic region or at least had given this some thought in the past. From the time I started interviews until writing my dissertation, many participants and other potential participants had left the Atlantic region for Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and the United States. When I asked why they thought about it in the interviews, even with an established life, they illustrated how they view job opportunities, the capacity for progress, access to the Iranian community, and more amenities, resources, and services are more accessible in major centres in Canada. Almost every participant who had been residing in the Atlantic region for less than ten or fifteen years mentioned that they are thinking or have thought about leaving the Atlantic region. They also explicitly said that they might someday consider leaving the Atlantic more seriously.

Shahram, for instance, loved living in New Brunswick, and he related his positive experiences mainly to the people around him, especially White Canadians. He bought a house with his wife, has a decent job, and has a positive reputation in the Iranian community. However, he said he might leave the Atlantic region for the United States to live there someday and challenge himself. Not only was he unsatisfied with the Canadian economic system, i.e. the ownership system of the house which one cannot own it fully unless their loan is completely paid off, but also he read a poem in Persian showing his willingness to try different things and explore the world during his life span: "we are alive because of not to stay, we are waves, so our stagnation is our death!"

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As I proceeded with the interviews, I learned that the Iranian community in Canada mainly chose here as a developed country. They usually come from the educated middle and upper-middle economic class that has been "qualified" by the immigration system to enter Canada. Leaving Iran was usually not an easy decision for them. Therefore, they strive for better and to be "successful." They must have various options for jobs, amenities and services and the capacity for progress to feel content.

As an insider, I understand that a part of such sensitivity about the quality of life is presenting the image of being "successful" and "advanced" to themselves, their friends, and their family in Iran or the communities with which they are involved in Canada. In other words, access to such resources demonstrates that they made the right choice to immigrate. Therefore, their life satisfaction is partly dependent on and achievable by living in a major urban centre and having access to various choices. This is one reason usually prefer to land initially in bigger cities or leave for those places later.

In addition to having access to various choices, access to a proper medical system and family doctor was another factor the participants mentioned as disturbing and frustrating conditions in the Atlantic provinces. The scarcity of family doctors and the prolonged waiting times to see a doctor are critical for chronic and life-threatening diseases. Shahram also talked about his worst experiences with the medical system in New Brunswick. Data in this study suggest that the same conditions exist throughout the Atlantic region. Shahram said:

> The Canadian medical system does not believe in prevention strategies. It is
>
> necessary to have access to a family doctor to have regular check-ups, but it's

been three years now that I am in the waiting list to have a family doctor. The emergency rooms are always full, and the waiting time is 7-8-10 hours. If you have a simple injury, you will be stuck there for hours… Even the medical exam for the immigration system seems to be a monopoly. You have to visit certain doctors, and they are extremely hard to get a response from, not to mention an appointment. It is extremely stressful.

Responsiveness of the health care system is a significant parameter for measuring patients' perception of the quality of health care (Bazzaz et al., 2015). The amount of negligence and waiting time for some participants was so significant that they mentioned they would prefer to go to Iran or Turkey to take care of their medical issues. It is in a situation where the Iranian participants are used to going to the emergency room and being taken care of immediately after being admitted. The integration of medical education and health services has evolved in a way that boosted the quality of health services around the country significantly after the 1979 revolution (Mehrdad, 2009). The previous experiences of immigrants, coupled with the extremely prolonged time in ERs or in being referred to a specialist, led the participants to often seek for alternate medical services. Rayan in New Brunswick, for instance, stated: "I prefer to go to Iran if I need a medical service, especially related to dental care." Moreover, Modjdeh in Nova Scotia found a tumour in her throat and flew to Turkey for surgery and to return to work. She arranged everything and flew back from Turkey in one week. However, she explained how frustrating her situation was in Halifax and how she had no other choice than to seek help outside of Canada if she wanted to survive due to her critical condition.

While the participants did not directly cite their housing or medical experiences as a reason to leave the Atlantic region, considering these issues as part of this section's theme, access to bigger opportunities, directs our attention to the more subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle ways that disrupting the participants' everyday lives, particularly in the Atlantic cities.

Participants like Shahram also raised housing scarcity as a pressing issue in Moncton. He reported that almost all new students have difficulty finding housing in Moncton. Also, Arash in Halifax, who previously lived in Newfoundland, mentioned that housing scarcity is the biggest challenge for an immigrant in Halifax. He stated that he heard from three different sources that the available vacant housing in Halifax is usually less than one percent of the total housing:

> Finding proper housing is the only [serious] challenge for newcomers. We experienced this challenge when we came here too. The local people were saying that only one percent of the houses and apartments are available for rental in Halifax. Three different persons told me that nighty nine percent of the total housing is occupied, and the situation is always like that. For example, if advertised, the housing is gone in two days. One reason is that immigrants come here to the Eastern part of Canada to get their permanent residency and leave. Halifax is a more developed city compared to Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island in Eastern Canada. Also, many people come here to Dalhousie University, a high-level rankings university. Therefore, the number of immigrants is very high and the type of housing we all seek is medium, between

$1000-1500. This kind of housing is rarely available… My friend said that two couples in his faculty had to get a house together for six months or one year because they could not find proper housing in their budget. Some others also had to get a house with foreign people (khaareji: a term Iranians use for non-Iranians, usually with a Western background), which is especially difficult for couples. Therefore, I believe housing is the biggest challenge here.

Ahmad, who had landed in Nova Scotia more than eight years ago, also had the same issue with housing in Halifax. Ahmad and his wife finally ended up building their own house:

> We have changed six or seven houses in Canada, but it is about a year since we have been living in our own house. We bought land and built the house ourselves, and we, especially my wife, were involved in every aspect of constructing the house.

The housing situations are very different across Atlantic cities and Ontario and have experienced different trajectories. For instance, the Newfoundland housing market did not change dramatically after the COVID-19 pandemic and the remote option of working, but the Halifax housing market experienced robust changes. The participants explained how the people from bigger cities such as Toronto changed the housing market in terms of price and availability by buying big houses during the pandemic in Nova Scotia for much lower prices than in Toronto. While many participants in the Atlantic cities have dealt with housing scarcity at least once, the participants in Ontario were dealing with other housing issues, including high prices in their everyday life and a big

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challenge. The cost of housing was so high that none of the participants neither had nor were thinking about buying a house inside of Toronto, especially around downtown. It was one of the biggest things the participants mentioned as a negative aspect of living in Toronto compared to the Atlantic cities, even though finding a house might sometimes be difficult in the Atlantic cities due to scarcity or the problem of the price jumping after the pandemic.

Access to More Amenities and the Larger Iranian Community

Having access to life necessities with lower prices – usually other than housing – was also another reason people in the Atlantic provinces cited as a motive to live in larger cities. There is more competition among businesses in larger cities, such as Toronto, while they are located at the "centre" and pay lower transportation costs. Rayan in New Brunswick talked about the lower living costs in a major city like Montreal compared to a smaller city like Fredericton:

> I can say the main reason for me to leave the Atlantic is my job. I didn't have any negative experiences with Fredericton or Atlantic. It was all good incidents and good friendships… It is interesting that none of my [Iranian] friends have gone to Montreal, but since I have a close friend in Montreal, I will go there. Another reason for leaving here is the lower living expenses in Montreal. Interestingly, some living expenses here in Fredericton are more than in Montreal, despite being a much smaller city, like the car insurance and internet. So the reason I chose Montreal was job-related and financial.

Rayan's quote explains that since immigrants often do not have strong familial ties in the host country, they prefer to settle in a place that makes the living conditions easier.

Another reason I found as a taken-for-granted cause for relocating to major cities, such as Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, or Vancouver, was access to the larger Iranian communities. As Ali in Toronto explained, having access to Iranian communities and businesses might not be a critical condition in choosing where to live, but it is a robust optional factor:

> There are two dimensions in choosing where to live: critical factors, which are necessary for you to have to live in a place. The other factors are optional, resulting in living in a better condition and having the things you want around. Having Iranian things are not critical for me, but it is a strong optional factor in where I choose to live.

Larger Iranian communities usually mean more access to Iranian food ingredients, more Iranian businesses and restaurants, and more Iranian social events. Nowruz, or Persian new year and Shabe-Yalda or Yalda night, for instance, are the most significant occasions that Iranians celebrate regardless of their religion and ethnicity. They mark the most meaningful cultural days for Iranians. These days even might become more important for Iranian immigrants since they see these ceremonies as the practice of their Iranian identities. Therefore, they celebrate these occasions wherever they are in Iran or elsewhere in the diaspora. Baran, in the Atlantic region, stated:

> So, I celebrate Iranian ceremonies here. And by Iranian, it's just the two big ones that we celebrated back in my family, Nowruz and Yalda. And I usually try to join

the Iranian community to celebrate that together [in here]. I really enjoy that. And I've never missed any of those events. So, I always try to be part of that. It really helps with the sense of belonging and celebrating with other Iranian people here. Yeah, eating Iranian foods with other Iranians listening or dancing. With Iranian music... It's just... when you notice that, oh, you are like two oceans away from home, and still you have these small events that… I'm really grateful for having the opportunity to attend these events with my Iranian friends.

Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic cities usually celebrate the most important Iranian events — Nowruz and Yalda Night — often in *one* organized ceremony by volunteers in the community in St. John's, Charlottetown (which has recently started to do that), and Fredericton. For Moncton, the community has started to shape these gatherings, and they were in the process of testing the community's response to an organized ceremony. One reason for that was the smaller number of Iranian immigrants. However, the situation was changing, and Shahram, the senior graduate in the community, talked about starting to think about moving from smaller familial and friendship gatherings to creating a formal ceremony for the growing Iranian community in Moncton.

While there might be a few formal or informal gatherings overall for Iranians, only for the most important events: Nowruz and Yalda Night in the Atlantic cities, there are various choices for celebrating these occasions in cities with larger Iranian communities. There are often many other occasions, like Tiregan, that are only accessible to celebrate in a ceremony among larger Iranian communities in major cities of Canada,

such as Toronto. Halifax has an in-between situation. I observed that if different communities are holding different ceremonies in some occasions, they are not being held at the same time. Thus, the participants have the opportunity to choose between them or attend both of them (if they intend to attend). These different kinds of celebration across diverse communities overall bring a sense of ease, comfort, and confidence to Iranians that even if they are not strongly connected, they have their people around.

As I discussed earlier, the role of material objects, language, and food is paramount in creating a sense of home for the participants in this study. Therefore, the benefits of access to a variety of options among the larger Iranian communities directly impact their sense of home. In other words, larger Iranian communities automatically create suitable conditions for Iranian immigrants to practice the Iranian side of their identity and fortify a sense of belonging while surrounded by the community.

How do Iranian Immigrants Overcome the Challenges and Stay in the Atlantic region?

Marriage and Building a Job

Most participants residing in the Atlantic cities for a significant amount of time, usually more than ten years, were Bahá'ís. One reason is that Iranian Bahá'ís landed in the Atlantic region for the first time after the 1979 revolution in Iran. Many of them remained in the Atlantic region by establishing a business or marriage with a local Canadian partner and establishing their lives. There were also non-Bahá'í people from

younger generations of Iranians, often in their forties or fifties. However, accessing the non-Bahá'í people who had been in the Atlantic cities for a long time was a severe barrier in this study. Therefore, I will mostly refer to my observation rather than interviews with them.

Some participants, mostly Bahá'ís, were married to non-Iranian people, and some were married to local Canadians. They had created a transnational field where their connections included people from more diverse backgrounds. Yet, connecting to local White people was challenging, even if one of the spouses had a White European background. It revealed how the issue of race in the Atlantic region, and being White, Canadian-born, or Canadian-born and with the same background as the major community of local people plays a significant role in social relationships. Staying in the Atlantic region is hard work, and during my fieldwork, I only saw a few seniors in the community who had stayed for decades in the Atlantic provinces. Except for two cases, they were all Bahá'ís, and they either established a business or had been married to Canadian locals in the region. I will expand on the racialized component in the next chapter.

Friendship Communities of Belonging: The Role of Collective Narratives and Meta-Stories in the Decision-Making of Iranians in the Atlantic region

In the previous section, I addressed the rationale the participants referred to in their interviews for leaving or thinking about leaving the Atlantic region. In this section, I focus on the latent reasons they did not explicitly express, but touched on nuancedly.

These reasons are sociologically interesting as they often lie in the back of the participants' minds and drive them to act.

Iranian Communities, Friendship Bonds, and Collective Identity in the Atlantic Iranian Diaspora

Before discussing the role of meta-stories in Iranians' collective behaviour and decision-making in the Atlantic region, I lay out the characteristics of Iranian communities in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario based on the participants' narratives and stories and my own observations. I also conceptualize them in connection to Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, Melucci's (1989) concept of collective identity, and the role of stories and narratives in shaping these communities.

The role of these friendship bonds is significant in characterizing the communities of Iranians, as imagined category, in the Atlantic region. Melucci (1989) has introduced a model of collective identity in relation to social movements. He defined collective identity as an interactive and shared definition that several individuals produce in the forms of groups or other conditions to act together. Melucci's concept of collective identity works as an intermediate process that explains how collective actions take shape and how individuals are motivated to act. Individuals learn that they share specific common orientations and decide to act together on that basis. While Melucci used the concept of collective identity to explain how people act collectively, especially in social movements, I use it to indicate the distinct characteristics of Iranian communities in the Atlantic region. I demonstrate the role of meta-stories and narratives in developing these

collective identities and how they shape the decision-making of Iranian immigrants in leaving the Atlantic region.

The community of Iranians is growing in almost every province of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023b). More Iranians are landing in the region even if they eventually leave for the major cities. As a result, the community gets bigger, making it almost impossible to know everyone. However, the size of the community is still small enough for members to become acquainted with the group's culture. In this section, I demonstrate that the community's idioculture (Fine, 1991) is a source of their collective identity in the Atlantic region.

The formal Iranian communities in the Atlantic provinces usually gather around an association, university communities, and cultural events. For instance, MUNIranian is the society of Iranian students at Memorial University of Newfoundland, including non-students and their families. Iranian Bahá'ís in St. John's also participate in the association's gatherings and events such as Nowruz and Yalda night. Since the number of Iranians in each Atlantic province (including non-PRs and non- dual citizens) varies from roughly a couple of hundred to 2500 people (compared to Ontario, where the permanent residents (excluding students and workers without a PR) alone are 103,795), these associations play a significant role in holding the communities of Iranians together. They have the potential to create third places for Iranian immigrants. For instance, reading and interpreting Persian poetry in groups every week is one of the popular practices among Iranian immigrants. There used to be one poetry group before the pandemic in St. John's that might resume their activities at some point in the future. There is also one in Halifax.

There might also be informal ones across other cities in the Atlantic region. These events provide the space for socializing, exchanging experiences in dealing with immigration challenges, and friendship-making, in addition to the central goal of reading and interpreting poetry.

These associations often hold welcoming cultural events and work as a glue for community members, linking newcomers to the elders. They also play a significant role in introducing the community to the new members and encouraging the newcomers to connect with other members and continue the momentum in the future. This is extremely important for holding the Iranian communities together in the Atlantic provinces because the elders often leave the region for bigger cities. Therefore, the function of formal associations goes beyond holding cultural events and continuing the traditional Iranian events in the Atlantic region. These events convey the group's culture and the community's collective memory by connecting newcomers to the older Iranian residents in the community. Shahram, in this regard, stated:

> My cousin was here when we came arrived. We hadn't seen them in Iran more than once or twice because they had immigrated to Canada by the time we got married. However, they were the reasons we connected to other Iranians here gradually. We were new here. It usually takes time to build a friendship. Now, we have a very good relationship with them with Iranians, and we get together for different occasions, Iranian or non-Iranian. We try to have a party every now and then, which has increased since we bought a house because it is not an apartment that limits the invitees' numbers. We invite each other at every opportunity,

creating a way for newcomers to connect with the older ones. We also have a Whatsapp group and we try to support anyone who arrives here. We support them as much as we can and we don't do any huge thing. We just convey the information we know, or we try to get everyone together. For instance, we reserved a place in the city to get together and celebrate Chaharshanbe Suri [or Charshanbeh Suri (Persian: چهارشنبهسوری), is an Iranian festival of the fire dance celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday of the year, of ancient Zoroastrian origin. It is the first festivity of Nowruz, the Iranian New Year (Wikipedia, 2023)]. We have the same procedure for Nowruz, and you can join us tomorrow if you are staying here.

I was not there for Norwuz and celebrated it with my other friends in Fredericton during my fieldwork. However, Shahram's kind invitation showed me how the elder residents try to be supportive of newcomers to the city, including myself.

When most Iranians leave the region, the formal and semi-formal associations help transmit the elders' accumulated knowledge to newcomers, help them find other members easily, and stay as a community. Apart from the formal shape of the Iranian community, another form usually evolves around friendship bonds. These friendship bonds help to build stronger ties to the community and facilitate the transmission of the group's knowledge. These friendship communities are often a larger group, around thirty to sixty people, constituted by smaller groups. For instance, Ahmad said,

We were a group of sixty friends (in Ottawa, around 2008), and people's lifestyle was much simpler. We were in this larger friendship group for the first few years.

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Then, we decreased through time since people try to find closer friends when the groups are bigger. We turned into fifteen to sixteen familial groups in a relationship. The same thing happened in Halifax for us, too. We are now a community of fourteen to fifteen families with whom we are mostly in contact.

Having previously lived in St. John's, Ziba, in Toronto, described the Iranian community with its unique character and culture in St. John's:

The majority of people (of the Iranian community) in St. John's are students. They are mostly from certain strata that are similar to each other, maybe a little more up and down. The fewer differences caused the Iranian community to be closer to each other. There is also a trend that seniors help Iranian newcomers when they arrive. Such a trend has been established and transmitted throughout time. Since everyone helps one another, it would be weird if somebody acted differently. Because the community has grown, sometimes, there are some complications in these relationships, but it is natural.

Ziba used to be involved in every community aspect, from MUN Iranian events and social media to gathering newcomers and elders at her home and connecting them together. She is a well-known and respected member among Iranians, and she still advises the Iranian community of St. John's from Toronto. Ziba's quote shows the role of education migration in transmitting knowledge in the short to medium-term settlement processes. Iranian immigrant students have created a network of support that is run by students and benefits the students, their families, and any other non-student Iranian immigrant who is willing to be a part of the group and benefit from it. With their potential

and restrictions, Ziba affirms that Iranian immigrants have gained a unique character in different Atlantic cities. The small size of the cities, the small size of the Iranian community, the limited resources, the city structure, and the fact that local people are mostly family-oriented pushed Iranian immigrants to stick to and rely on their community. Extending and offering support to the people you know or do not know and presenting your best self sustains the community and creates a positive reputation for members. Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic region value this positive collective representation to make meaning of their collectively in everyday life and present the concept of "group style" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003). In this way, they make meaning through collective representation, and it provides a meaningful, shared ground for interaction. This shared ground is called "group style." Group style filters the collective representations, and the result is "culture in interaction" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003). The concept of group style intersects with the notion of "idioculture" (Fine, 1987), which is the unique culture of each group or the system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviour, and customs that define a group together. In his concept of idioculture, Fine illustrates that action, meaning, institution, and eventually culture roots in small groups. The small groups hence have a pivotal role in organizing social life. The Iranian immigrants have created their unique idioculture through their interaction in small groups, and then it transcended to the greater context of the social world in the Atlantic region (Fine, 2012). Collective interaction was the key to creating a culture and transitioning it beyond the small formal and informal groups.

This situation in the Atlantic cities has created a reputation in most of these cities that Iranian immigrants are warm, supportive, and look after each other. These forms of interactions between groups of people define society (Blumer, 1969). Individuals create a social reality through their collective and individual actions, and this is an ongoing process. According to the scarcity of recourse and community, Iranian immigrants created a framework for their interaction model: context, time, place, and audience-specific. Therefore, they present a version of self that is in accord with their community's idioculture, strengthens a positive self-presentation, and avoids embarrassing others and themselves (Goffman, 1959). Mahmoud, in Ontario, explained how shaping the Iranian community around the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed to creating a trust-based culture of relationships in St. John's:

> The (Memorial) University had created a unique situation in Newfoundland. Most of the people in St. John's were students or had entered (St. John's). It caused them to have colonies of friendships. If you were making a friendship with one, you were entering a colony, creating an opportunity to become acquainted with five other people. This chain continues, and your friendships proliferate like a pyramid model. However, we are concerned now that we cannot find those models of simple, pure friendships here, which is also not feasible to happen again. It means that you see someone suddenly and have no idea about them. It makes it (the relationship) risky. However, you know that person is usually a graduate student, mostly a Master's or Ph.D., in St. John's. You know that at least they are students, and they probably have an affiliation with Memorial University.

Knowing that a person is capable enough to get admission in a graduate program is enough to ensure that the chances for that person to be decent are fifty percent. Many things can be critical, but you will not be worried about them. However, we went to Toronto, and when I heard some people talking reminded me of being in Tehran and some typical characteristics that I cannot make a relationship with. I never had such feelings in my relationship with any Iranians in St. John's.

Trust plays a key role in creating and sustaining these communities in the Atlantic region. When Iranians land for the first time in the Atlantic cities, they are mostly aware that the community will welcome them and they will not be left alone. This trust-based relationship is difficult to find in the diaspora due to Iran's political situation and the relationship created during the early years of Iranian immigration after the 1979 revolution. However, this is changing due to the increase in tendency to student migration and education migration to countries such as Canada (Iran Migration Observatory, 2023). Iranian students are increasingly growing in Canada. Iran was not among the top 10 sources of international students in Canada overall between 2013-2014, though it ranked the second and sixth in Ph.D. and Master's students among the top source countries for international students (Statistcs Canada, 2023). Now, in addition to being among the top 10 counties of origin for immigrants in Canada, Iran is also among the top 10 sources of international students in 2023 (Singer, 2023). It shows that an increasing number of students from Iran are choosing to study in Canada. It impacts the group culture of immigrants, especially in the non-traditional immigration gateways, where the number of Iranian students might prevail the number of Iranian PR and citizens, as it does in St.

John's with 140 PRs (Statistics Canada, 2023b) vs. more than 200 students (Statistics Canada, 2023a; Iranian Students' Association at MUN, 2023). Offering kindness and support becomes a routine, and everyone learns to pay it forward.

> I remember when my husband and I landed in Newfoundland for the first time, my sister's friend and her husband welcomed us at their home. They acted like family, and we felt at home near them. We were surprised and touched by their friendly behaviour. The community members helped us without knowing my husband and me. We were feeling in debt with the kindness around us, and whenever we told our friends how we felt, they told us that this was the support pathway the community had created, which they had received, too. They reassured us that the path continues and that someday we will pay their kindness forward by helping the newer members. By the time we got more settled, we had become a part of the pathway, and we were among the seniors passing this narrative to the newer members. (Field Notes)

This is one of the most prominent meta-stories of the community that the Iranian immigrants learn about. The Iranian community culture, in the case of the Atlantic cities, is a product of collective interactions and performances in formal and informal groups. In this way, Iranian communities socially constructed their idioculture (Fine , 1991), and the reality of their lives through their interactions in Atlantic Canadian cities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Imagined Community, Meta-Stories, and Decision-Making in the

Atlantic Iranian Diaspora

Iranian immigrants usually eventually leave the Atlantic region, and they often mention their previous city as a part of their home in the past. This is more accurate for medium-sized Atlantic cities like St. John's (Kaida, 2020) or Fredericton. The situation in Halifax and Charlottetown is slightly different, which might be impacted by the size of the city and the Iranian community. Still, such a reputation made the Iranian communities in the Atlantic cities proud of their warm, supportive, and friendly culture, making it a significant element of their identity.

Anderson (2006, p. 6) conceptualizes imagined communities in relation to nationalism and how "nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." In other words, a nation is an imagined community by the people who perceive themselves as a part of it. Therefore, a nation is socially constructed by its members. Anderson's definition of imagined community ties in with the concept of collective identity when he explains that people of a nation see themselves as part of it.

The concept of the imagined community is extendable to describe how people who do not necessarily know each other see themselves as part of a group. I use this concept for the Iranian community in the Atlantic provinces as well as the previous Atlantic region residents in Ontario. It is useful in analyzing and describing the participants in two different settings: the characteristics of Iranians in the Atlantic

provinces and the characteristics of previous Atlantic region residents in Ontario (due to their different experiences and expectations of their friendships in Ontario).

Community as a story is introduced by Cope et al. (2019). It refers to the narratives and meta-narratives that members create about their community and their changes. Based on Phillips (2002) and Calhoun's (1991) work on imagined communities, Cope et al. (2019) assert that "community as story, then, is portrayed through the observed or imagined relations between specific actors who occupy a particular place in time and the inherited stories of that place" (p. 2). Thus, stories constitute the members' collective identity that takes part in creating an imagined community. Iranian immigrants' collective identity in the Atlantic provinces is closely formed by these stories and meta-narratives, shaping their motivation to act. While they do not necessarily know other members, their decision to leave the Atlantic region comes from shared knowledge created and deposited in the community throughout the time that it is an eventual fate for everyone:

> The Iranians In Newfoundland are primarily students. They are mostly graduate students in higher education, Master's and Ph.D. Iranians usually do not select there at the undergraduate level and rarely come for their undergrad education. Also, Newfoundland has minimal job opportunities for graduates, creating an atmosphere where everyone wants to leave that city. The other point is that Newfoundland has put all its investment into the oil industry, and after 2008 when the oil industry collapsed, people and companies lost their jobs. The companies had to lay off the employees, and the workers could no longer stay in the

province. They had to leave for other cities, and where did they attract them? Industrial provinces: Ontario, somehow Quebec, and maybe British Columbia. Thus, the atmosphere has been created in a way that everyone in Newfoundland wants to leave. With the arrival of more tech-companies, I think the atmosphere is changing and might change in the future. Nonetheless, the most important reasons for people to want to leave there are the job situation (first) and the psychological situation (second), which everyone says that we must leave. (Amin in ON, previously lived in NL)

Amin's quote highlights one of the biggest international students' challenges in Newfoundland: the scarcity of jobs in relation to their field of study. Once the Iranian immigrants enter the Atlantic region, they learn through the collective narratives and meta-stories that a second immigration is probably inevitable. It creates an imagined future that eventually happens, usually after the end of the students' education. However, other than a few participants who had a job and transferred to Ontario to have access to more opportunities as they framed it, the rest of the students or graduates mentioned that they would prefer to stay in Newfoundland if they had a secure job, even though the issue of access still exists. In other words, while the initial impression of leaving the region is their minds, they start to build a life and connect to other aspects of their living environment, such as culture and nature in Newfoundland.

In addition to job and access-related pressures, every immigrant group, students and non-students, experiences friendship loss after a while and has almost no previous friends left: "maybe a reason for leaving [New Brunswick] is that many people I know

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have left here. It is a factor. The sense of belonging I had also been gone along with what happened" (Rayan, NB).

Therefore, not only does the image of bigger cities impact the immigrants, but having no old friends left and the peer pressure as a consequence leads the immigrants to consider moving to other cities seriously.

Past Memories as a Source of Idealizing Friendship Bonds

I also traced the concept of imagined community among the Iranian participants in Ontario, especially during their first years of relocating from the Atlantic provinces to Ontario. Ziba described the different characteristics of Iranian communities in Ontario, emphasizing that they are not the same as the Atlantic region:

Welcoming newcomers and the initial help they do for each other rarely exist in Ontario. I am unsure about other cities than Toronto, but I suspect it exists. Contrary to St. John's, some people in Toronto landed through the investment programs and still brought the money from Iran and did nothing. We even have some people who came as refugees with different situations. Also, there are students, and they are all different from each other. If you go to an event, you can choose the strata of the people you want to sit with by the amount of money you pay. The level of affection and support in St. John's do not exist here.

I argue that previous Atlantic residents started to create an imagined community in their minds, knowing that their other fellows had been scattered around Canada. Seeking the previous model of friendship groups and support would not be the only source of

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communication for Iranians if they ever form. However, considering that as an ideal form of friendship matters to consider the different dynamics of Iranian communities in larger cities. For the participants in Ontario, they imagine that the previous community in the Atlantic cities does not exist with the same members as before. Still, the memories from the past have left a remarkable impression on their minds about the models of community and friendship:

> Halifax was our first experience of living in Canada. Apart from the culture shock, difficulties and challenges we faced, we realized how much the culture in Halifax, which means the Atlantic, is rich and how welcoming they were. When we came to Ontario. I have not seen such things in Ontario, but the Atlantic has a unique culture, and people are kinder. This is characteristic of small cities or environments, and as an immigrant, I feel like it was an enjoyable start for me. Not that we did not feel the difference, but we felt less different from the host society in the Atlantic. However, we felt like people were not kind here… It is also difficult for us to go back to Halifax because if we want to go, all our friends are gone now, and nobody is there except very few ones. (Ladan, ON, previously lived in Halifax)

The participants use their imaginations to portray what they have experienced before and even may romanticize it:

> Many of our Iranian friends in Newfoundland have also moved to Ontario with us. I hope you do too and join us. Therefore, our relationships have remained, and we were lucky not to have friendship-seeking challenges or not feel the need.

Moreover, since we came to the centre of Canada and we had family in other near provinces, we had the opportunity to connect with them. For instance, we had guests from Montreal last weekend, including my husband's relatives and my close friend. It was really nice. We are also in contact with our families from Iran and our friends in Newfoundland… And to be honest, we did not try very much to go into any communities than our friends. My husband and I just tried once and went to a game event but honestly it was not a positive experience compared to Newfoundland. As Fariborz said, Iranian folks are more homogenous, they have the same situation in both the age range and thought lines. Everyone is students, and their immigration reason to Newfoundland was Memorial University and it has made the folks more homogenous. (Maryam, Ontario, previously lived in NL)

The impression of being a part of a kind, supportive community leads some immigrants in Ontario to seek their previous friends and gather around the groups who had previously lived in the Atlantic region:

All friends we have here are the ones we had in St. John's. We had much more opportunities for our friendships in St. John's. It means that any new person we saw we felt that they can be our close friend. Many people were trustworthy. We do not see many Iranians here, and the dynamics are different. For instance, if you see an Iranian in a supermarket, you can't invite them to come to your home tonight [for a gathering]. Contrary to that, you could ask someone who you might have only met twice and had said hello to or had the same course with at the University to your home [in St. John's]. (Mahmoud, ON, previously lived in NL)

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I argue that the culture of out-migration in the Atlantic provinces for Iranian immigrants shapes the migration and settlement patterns of immigrants in Ontario after migration. In other words, a shared background —living in one of the Atlantic cities — shapes a part of the Iranian immigrants' network after a second migration. Shahrouz, in Ontario, who previously lived in Nova Scotia, also explained:

> The reason I decided to leave Nova Scotia was to continue my education. I wanted to pursue my Ph.D. in a different field than my Master's, and according to my investigation, I needed to go to Alberta for that specific field. I really liked Halifax, especially at the end of my second year. I liked it in the first year too, but it was the only place I had seen, and it was not that special to me. However, I liked returning to Halifax for a long time when I went to Alberta. It happened to me to go back to Halifax for a conference and such, but it was ideal for me to go back to Halifax and live there. It has much nicer people compared to Alberta, and I liked the ocean. Overall, I believe it was a cozy city. Then I came to Ontario, lived in London for a year, and went to Waterloo. I figured out that wherever I go, I miss my previous city. Then I thought maybe Halifax was not that special, and it was my mind bug. I still like Halifax for living, but there are other things that you need to consider [in your decision]. Halifax is located in, like nowhere, the job opportunities are limited, and the community of Iranians is coming and going because most of them are students, and it is far from everywhere. It is an outlying place.

Shahrouz's quote indicates that since many Iranian immigrants, especially students leave the Atlantic region, it is sometimes feasible to gather together again in bigger cities, such as Toronto and Ottawa. In fact, the Iranians on the "mainland" try very much to bring their friends close to their community. The effort starts when they decide to leave the Atlantic region. They try to convince or encourage other friends at the goodbye parties to seek a job in the same city where they are going to live. With the friendship community's effort in Ontario to bring other friends couples with other reasons such as job opportunities and better access to the major urban centres in Canada, the possibility of leaving the Atlantic cities increases. Therefore, the role of incentives in various levels in the Atlantic cities becomes more important to function in a way that encourages the immigrants to stay rather than leave in competition with major urban centres' attractions.

Zerubavel (1999, p. 7) asserts, "I experience the world not only personally, through my own senses, but also impersonally, through my mental membership in various social communities." Such mental membership affects both current and previous residents in the Atlantic provinces. Those still in the Atlantic region learn gradually and prepare for their next destination. Also, the ones in Ontario learn that their previous membership in the Atlantic community of Iranians opens the potential for them to have access to pure, trusted, warm relationships with other former Atlantic residents.

Finally, as the stories in a community offer members a set of canonical symbols, plots, and characters, they can interpret, negotiate, or create the reality of their world with them (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). While the Iranian participants in this study left the Atlantic provinces for Ontario for several reasons, including access to larger Iranian

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communities, Ontario does not offer the heartfelt dynamics of friendship and community bonds as the Atlantic region. Therefore, the previous residents of the Atlantic provinces idealize their previous friendships, seek to bring their friends, find them, and keep their friendships as a part of their social world in Ontario.

Friendship Communities of Belonging and Segregated Islands

The creation of friendship communities of belonging results from living in a remote and sometimes isolated area for Iranian immigrants. However, there is another layer impacting the participants' sense of community. Rambod had immigrated to St. John's, NL, with his wife. They both have decent jobs that they like. He stated that,

> I like it here, but I always think of making more progress… Therefore, I like to go to a place where I can have different options for my work, entertainment, etc. I also made a lot of efforts to connect to the [local] people from Newfoundland, but they were not enthusiastic about letting me into their communities. I am not sure why it happens, but I would like to root in a place where I live. And not being able to enter their community discouraged me from staying here.

One aspect of Rambod's reasoning for leaving the Atlantic region was recurrent throughout my interviews as being preventive to rooting in the Atlantic provinces. While the participants talked about how peaceful the Atlantic region is, they emphasized that their relationships are mainly with the Iranian community, not the local people. They mentioned that the language barrier is usually an obstacle, but entering the local people's community requires much effort and time. This reason was the same for the creation of friendship between Iranian participants and non-Iranian and non-White individuals.

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Therefore, they prefer to stick to the Iranian community and use those resources and friendships to navigate their everyday lives. This theme existed among different generations of immigrants like Rambod, who had been in Canada less than five years at the time of the interview. Rambod and his wife left St. John's for Ontario a few months after the interview.

The pattern of friendship with non-Iranians, however, was different in Toronto. On the one hand, the time for socializing with non-Iranians and even Iranians is much more limited due to the scale of the city, which imposes longer hours of commute and long distances from one another. As a result, the socializing gathering and even relationships with Iranian friends were limited to weekends or special occasions. Thus, the friendship gatherings had different dynamics compared to the Atlantic cities, where the participants had much time to spend with others after working or studying hours in the evening. The time and distance limitations had changed the way of socializing in Toronto.

On the other hand, Toronto is a metropolitan city with diverse groups of immigrants. According to the 2021 Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 2023f), 57.0 percent of the residents of the metropolitan area belonged to a visible minority group. Therefore, people are exposed to diversity much more than in the Atlantic cities, which have the lowest immigration rate across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c). Therefore, the boundaries of friendship making are open toward diversity. As Mona, one of the participants, mentioned about people in her workplace in Toronto, "even if they are not immigrants, their previous generation, like their parents, had immigrated [to Canada]."

The theme of not making strong relationships with locals in the Atlantic cities was also repeated among more established people like Mehri in New Brunswick, who had spent more than thirty-five years in Fredericton. She had been out of Iran since childhood and was more comfortable interviewing in English. She surprisingly mentioned that she had not entered a White, local neighbour's house for more than twelve years since being in her new home in Fredericton. She said, "they are not willing to be in contact with us [as Irani an], and I am at peace with it right now."

Sometimes, communication with the CFAs – people who "come from away" – was much easier for the participants, even if they were local Canadians. CFA is an expression that local people in the Atlantic provinces use to describe someone who was not born in their province. I became curious to know why the pattern of difficulty in creating and sustaining a relationship with locals exists in the Atlantic region, even in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is known across Canada for its people's warm behaviour. The challenges of entering friendships with locals are happening, while many participants who previously resided in NL said they had never experienced such friendly behaviours in other parts of Canada, including the Atlantic provinces.

I noticed a part of the cause for difficulty in making relationships with the locals is in defining neighbouring or friendship intimacy differently. Newfoundlanders, for instance, are very family and community-oriented. They do not intentionally exclude others from their relationships, although the low immigration retention rate has impacted the public's view toward immigrants "because of the underlying expectation that newcomers will eventually leave" (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2020, p. 23). This might

be one of the reasons Newfoundlanders, for instance, are welcoming to immigrants but "on the surface" (p.23). Moreover, they often have established their lives, and they are content with the relationships they already have. In other words, they do not feel the need to extend their relationships with the newcomers, although they are warm and friendly with them. This is what van den Hoonaard and van den Hoonaard called the "wall of good-willed indifference" in explaining what they observed in the relationship between Iranian Bahá'ís as newcomers and the local people in Fredericton (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2008). Although racism, prejudice, and exclusion exist in Canadian society as in any other society, not every local necessarily excludes newcomers and the CFA people from other communities and their relationships. The point is the locals are not necessarily engaged in working toward building a relationship with the immigrants and CFAs. This can also leave more time and openness for Canadian CFAs to build a relationship with immigrants.

In addition to these, there are different cultural nuances in interactions and exercising friendship intimacy between the local Canadians and Iranian immigrants that prevent them from growing a relationship and building a mutual common ground that makes sense for both sides:

> I don't know the reason for it, but there is a warmth, enthusiasm, and a special essence in the Asian, Chinese, Turkish, or Iranian events that I missed here. There are even so many rules to follow that prevent you from doing the same things, like lighting a fire near a river and dancing around it. You can go to a concert in Iran and have a lot of fun without knowing the person sitting right next to you. You

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will laugh, speak, have fun, and leave. The same would happen here (with

Iranians), you see someone, dance with them, drink, laugh, and you may never see

them in your life again. These are not necessarily good or bad, but they rarely

happen here, and I missed them. (Shahram, Atlantic)

Building a relationship with White and local Canadians usually required more

effort on behalf of the participants. This is not surprising because locals usually have their

own community and do not see a need to make new relationships with newcomers, even

if they feel good about them. This is the same with the first generation of immigrants, too.

Ahmad in Nova Scotia, for instance, recurrently mentioned that he has a good

relationship with the Canadians around him. However, when I asked probing questions

about which community or communities, he felt belonged to, he answered: "*Iraniha*

dige!" which can be translated to: "Well, obviously Iranians (as you may/must know)!"

It became more meaningful when he stated,

Well, we were not in contact very much with our neighbours when we were at the

apartment, although they celebrated my son's birthday by standing by and

dropping off some gifts for him one year during the pandemic... We are still in

contact with them… We have only known the new neighbours in our new house

for one year. We have invited them to our house once or twice… There was

heavy snow here while I was away for a trip. When my wife was going to shovel

snow, one of the neighbours from three blocks away came and shovelled it. This

kind of relationship exists, but it's not like I will tell my neighbour if I have a

problem… No, it does not happen… My neighbours are good people. I know

them and say hello to them. In fact, I know many good people, but I do not become close to them very much. This is my lifestyle.

There were some exceptions where the White Canadian friends in the Atlantic region embraced a couple in their families and treated them as family. However, they were rare to hear about, and the participants vividly remembered them, as I did, since there were so few in the interviews.

> We became acquainted with two big Newfoundlander families who were well-known people in Newfoundland. They were very kind and welcoming and accepted us as their family members. We were their guests on every Canadian occasion. Even during the Covid time when the parents were only accepting their children, they included us in Sunday lunches, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We were always at their house, and we were very much connected to them. Thank God, we are still in a relationship with them. (Maryam, Ontario, previously resided in Newfoundland)

The context of Maryam's story was that she and her husband were also interested in communicating with the locals. Finally, Baran's quote shows how getting integrated with the locals and becoming a part of being an insider might be difficult, particularly for the first generation of immigrants:

> I think all the things we discussed today [demonstrate that] it's not easy to blend here. The feeling that you do not belong here, you're not one of them. It's tiring, even if you have a good job, even if you earn good money, just that feeling that you never blend, you can never find a good friend or your community or you, you

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have to stick to your community from your… from your home country. That

doesn't feel really good. You feel that you need to… I think that's part of the

reason that people don't feel that sense of belonging to Newfoundland. And also

the weather doesn't help. The city structure as I've mentioned, it's not walkable,

it's not welcoming to pedestrians, and it doesn't help with the sense of belonging

to get to know your neighbour and everything. And also economic hardship. The

difficulty of finding a job, the high amount of tax, high insurance, all of that…

Oh, there are a number of things that you can't ever blame anyone who wants to

leave here especially if they are newcomers.

Though I found the same pattern of relationships among the participants with

neighbours and friends in Ontario, I noticed that collegial relationships in Ontario were

dramatically different, particularly in non-managerial jobs. Mona, 39 years old, who

previously lived in St. John's, NL, mentioned the considerable difference between her

workplace in Toronto and St. John's. She highlighted that her skin colour and language

barriers do not matter in her collegial relationships. She experienced a positive

atmosphere in her workplace, and she was delighted about moving to Ontario:

If we had a good job in Newfoundland, we would rather stay. I even downloaded

the home-buying application because I always had the thought of staying there in

the back of my mind. Fariborz even tried for a year to find a job but we heard

some stories from our friends' experience that there are hidden layers in

Newfoundland [at the workplace[that they like to give the better [job] positions to

the ones who are closer to them, like a second or third cousin. The ones who are

not close [to the community] can go to another province and keep their family in Newfoundland. We didn't like that kind of lifestyle.

Fariborz, her husband, also compared the situation in Newfoundland and stated:

Many people ask you in Newfoundland where you are coming from? However, it's very rare to ask you where you come from. The [job] positions are more accessible here [in Ontario] than in Newfoundland since there is a big community of immigrants, and you never feel like a stranger here. You don't feel you are an immigrant. You see a lot of immigrants and a variety of people [with different backgrounds], but you feel that you are an immigrant in Newfoundland in your relationship with people. And you can make a lot of progress here because you won't be judged in the same way [with Newfoundland] that you are an immigrant. After all, everybody here is an immigrant.

Mona gave more details and told me that you could think about how these relationships are different by yourself:

People never ask us where we come from because it doesn't matter to them. They expect you to be born here in Canada [as a person of colour]. My own experience is that I wasn't very happy at my workplace in Newfoundland. I could see how Canadians' relationship was different than theirs with me, who was a foreigner. It was disappointing for me. And it was bothering me, though I thought it was natural, and I was trying to understand or take it easy. However, I don't see it here [in Ontario], never, never. Their criterion for making a relationship is not based on your nationality. As Fariborz said, there are many people from different countries.

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Even if they are not immigrants, their previous generation, like their parents, had immigrated [to Canada]. For instance, I work in a company where I see someone saying my mother came from Italy, or somewhere else, and she says she misses her sister very much. Thus, there is a mutual understanding. Even if they haven't experienced [immigration directly], they can understand it from a generation before. But many people in Newfoundland are not immigrants and haven't left Newfoundland. Therefore, this sympathy doesn't exist. But it's different here, and in my opinion, you can make progress based on your talents and capabilities. I witnessed that and am very satisfied that I moved from that work environment to a better one.

My analysis in the above sections demonstrates how Iranian immigrants mobilized their friendship and cultural capital resources to create a community and make sense of their lives in their new home in Canada. While they often experience segregation from the Canadian communities, the Iranian friendship communities provide the opportunity to relax and socialize based on the shared culture and memories from their homeland, Iran, to the similar funny or hurtful situations they encountered after immigration. I refer to the concept I introduced in chapter three, "temporary belonging," here to explain how friendship communities, particularly in the Atlantic region, allow the participants to drop their societal-induced roles and perform an "authentic" version of self. Friendship communities, in this sense, work as a social backstage for the participants (Goffman, 1959). By dropping the Canadian-integrated version of self and performing an Iranian version of self, the participants create a social stage to enact a temporary form of

belonging. This allows the participants to transit among their different versions of selves in different settings and experience a temporary form of belonging based on trust, sharing commonalities, and the group's idioculture.

Snow Shovelling as a Way of Bonding with Neighbours

The initial questions I asked during the fieldwork included the relationship between the participants and their neighbours. Interestingly, the neighbourhood relationship with non-Iranians was significantly limited. From Anousheh, living in the Atlantic region for decades, to the newer generation of immigrants, they all explained their neighbours have hardly invited them to their homes. Putting aside the specific case of Anousheh, who worked significantly in her relationship with her neighbours, there was a completely different dynamic neighbourhood relationship than the participants experienced in smaller cities in Iran. Therefore, there is not a mutual understanding of how to connect to neighbours for both Iranian immigrants and non-Iranians, especially in the earlier years of immigration.

In addition, the immigrants, especially in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, talked about how their efforts to bond with neighbours were unsuccessful. As I indicated earlier, some of the participants, like Rambod, were even confused about how their efforts did not change their relationships with their friends and neighbours. However, I found a special way of bonding among neighbours around snow shovelling and lawn mowing. Shohrouz, for instance, explained that there is not any deep relationship between him and his neighbours and stated that:

I didn't know any neighbours, but everybody was smiling in the elevator. But I didn't know anybody by name and or didn't know which level or which unit they were living at. Here is very different from Iran. They are private. For instance, you may not know the neighbour's name near you. But an Iranian neighbour brought me Shole Zard [an Iranian cuisine]. It was different, though, in Alberta because I was living in a house. I knew the neighbour across my house and the two neighbours on my left and right side. It occurred that I shoveled the snow in front of their house, and then in summer, they mowed the lawn in front of my house. We had these sorts of things going on. We said hi, how are you doing, and such things. But we don't have such kinds of interactions here in Ontario. We don't have many interactions with the neighbours. There are one or two persons in our condo level that we used to nod to each other while waiting for the elevator. It is like New York style.

In other words, certain activities bond the neighbours together. Snow shovelling created one of those moments with mutual understanding intermingled with showing care for neighbours. The newer generation of Iranian immigrants mentioned snow shovelling as a significant moment in which the neighbours interacted with them. It showed that they actually see each other and look after each other even if they do not interact directly.

Weak Community Ties in Toronto and Ottawa vs. Strong Community Ties in Atlantic Canadian Cities and London

The participants' friendship ties in the Iranian community in the Atlantic cities were interestingly stronger than those in Ontario (except London). Throughout time, they produce their own culture or idioculture, which transcends them. This has created a group style where everyone puts their best in their relationship with other community members and trusts each other to make a friendship. But why is it like that in the Atlantic provinces? As Mona and Fariborz discussed, similar to other participants, the Iranian community feels the difference and the hidden layers of exclusion in their relationships. Therefore, this makes the role of the community very critical in the Atlantic region since it is the primary and vital source of capital for members. London friendship groups were interestingly more similar to the Atlantic cities. It seemed like the size of the community there was small enough and separated enough from Toronto to have a dynamic Iranian community distinct from Toronto whereas the Iranian immigrant participant in Mississauga was more dependent on and in contact with the Iranian communities in Toronto metro area.

However, different lifestyles in Ontario due to the size of the city, such as longer hours for commute and transportation, do not allow the freedom to practice friendship routines similar to the Atlantic region:

You have to work here so hard. It [the lifestyle] needs you to work really hard, and they [the employers] expect you to be like that. There is competition, and if

you feel like if you don't make more effort, you will remain behind. Therefore,

the days make you tired, and you have no energy to spend time with your friends

in the evening [Fariborz, Ontario].

Mona continued:

And the distance is far. For instance, if a friend of mine is a far one-hour drive

[from me], we can't make any other plans… Or a friend of ours is in Richmond

Hill… These things caused us not to see each other on the weekends… So, it's a

2-2.5-hour drive in total. Now, we try to see each other once a month or gather at

a friend's house, but it isn't easy.

Many participants, like Mona and Fariborz in Ontario, mentioned missing their

strong friendship communities in the Atlantic region. Still, their best friends are from the

previous Atlantic city they lived in, and they try to bring other friends to Ontario and be

in contact with them, as Mona and Fariborz mentioned they do. This was surprising

because I noticed that building relationships with the Iranian community in Ontario was

much harder for the previous Atlantic residents. In addition to different lifestyles in a

metropolitan, the community of Iranians is so diverse in Ontario to the extent that people

feel they cannot trust each other as they easily did in the Atlantic cities.

As a result of being diverse and not knowing everyone directly or by name, the

level of trust is entirely different from the Atlantic cities where the Iranian immigrants

often know everyone directly or by name. As a result, almost every participant in Toronto

mentioned that they were not as united as immigrant communities from other countries,

except with their previous friends from the Atlantic cities. The Atlantic province context

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was different since the Iranian community was smaller and mainly included students and Iranian seniors who had stayed in the region for a long time and had built up local connections. While it is much more difficult to practice friendship and create and maintain strong ties similar to the Atlantic cities, Ontario provides a more suitable context for weak ties, which creates more access to different opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). This is a reason why participants talked about the possibility of success and getting a higher-ranking job. Not only is the structure of the city more immigrant-friendly, but the frequency of weak ties in the form of relationships where race and skin colour do not matter as they do in the Atlantic provides more freedom to climb the ladder for higher job positions. My data from Lancaster (only 1 participant) was not enough that I can talk about the Iranian community dynamic there, but since it is closer to Montreal, it might be dependent on the Iranian communities there rather than having their own distinct community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I moved from a more individual meaning of home and belonging to group and community levels. In this, I paid particular attention to how Iranian immigrants shape the communities of belonging in the midsized Atlantic cities. I demonstrated how participants explicitly talked about access to more opportunities in the "mainland" as the most significant reason to leave the Atlantic region. Job opportunities, access to a bigger Iranian community, more city life and urban amenities, and lower costs of living were at the heart of the participants' reasoning when they talked about leaving

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the Atlantic region. However, I analyzed the deeper and more nuanced layers of the reasoning, how they are shaped and why the participants pay attention to specific aspects of life, such as being "successful." In short, how do they come to this conclusion to leave the Atlantic region?

I argue that collective narratives and meta-stories work as a source of driving motivations for the participants to leave the Atlantic region. Previous Iranian immigrants have deposited the knowledge of seeking a better fate on the mainland. New Iranian immigrants are immediately exposed to this knowledge and start to imagine their future outside the Atlantic provinces. However, the uniqueness of Iranian communities in the Atlantic region and the closeness of friendship groups leaves a powerful impact on the minds of people who leave for the major urban centres. It drives the Iranian immigrant who left for the major urban centres like Toronto and Ottawa to seek and find old friends and motivate them to move closer to them.

The comparison between the Atlantic Canadian provinces and Ontario also allowed an understanding of the Iranian immigrants' everyday life in a remote and sometimes isolated context and its probable impacts on participants' sense of belonging. Different forms of belonging in these two regions indicated places' impacts and characteristics on participants' relationships. Whereas a remote community seemed isolated with less access to larger Iranian communities, amenities, and resources, there were stronger community ties with Iranians or sometimes non-Iranians in a more limited scope.

To go back to one of the main research questions of my study, I ask how participants define home differently in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario and what it implies? First, I want to point out the stronger sense of belonging among the Iranian community and friendship groups in the Atlantic region that emerged from my data. Contrary to that, there are weaker ties among the Iranian community, and a sense of doubt, distrust, or indifference, at best, that have dominated their relationship with the Iranian community in Ontario. However, these weak ties are the source of more opportunities for immigrants, particularly in their job. In addition to the different dynamics of the participants' friendship and community ties, the participants explained how a sense of "similarity," being "invisible," and "not different" in Ontario brings them more comfort, especially at their workplace while they had been "visible" and "reminded to be different" in the Atlantic region constantly. Moreover, the non-existence of a deep warm neighbourhood relationship implies the importance of a mutual understanding of different cultures and how they interact with each other.

In the next chapter, I trace a sense of belonging beyond what the participants gradually felt at home and in relationships with their friends or colleagues. I explore the other forms of belonging or not belonging they felt in their everyday experiences in society and conceptualize them in relation to the experiences of racism.

Chapter 6: A Racialized Spiral of Silence in the Experiences of Iranian Immigrants

Introduction

The multiculturalism policy was initially designed and implemented in relationship with European immigrant groups and not for the racialized non-White ethnic groups (Kymlicka 2008; Meister 2021). Despite its deficits and the critiques of its reproducing racialized systems of inequality, it is a defining ideology of the nation since Pierre Elliot Trudeau's administration. Thereafter, the Canadian government promoted diversity and claimed to embrace people from different nations in the political discourse (Creese, 2016). However, the multiculturalism policy in Canada has overshadowed the existing systemic racism influencing racialized groups in their everyday lives and beyond. In fact, studies show how the seemingly non-discriminatory race-related concepts and policies, depicted as the imagery of a "mosaic" (Porter, 1965), suggest a colonial meaning and contribute to the racializing and marginalization of non-White individuals and operate at various levels in society (Krysa, Paludi, & Mills, 2019; Mujawamariya, 2007; James, 2007; Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018).

Critics of multiculturalism point out the limitations of the model, as ethnic groups' right to inclusion is accepted on the condition that it does not challenge the hegemonic racial hierarchy imposed by the dominant social group (Fleras, 2019; Lei and Guo, 2022).

Racial inequalities, thus, are an embedded part of the public policies and fabrics of social life in a way that makes the discrimination extremely subtle, often invisible, and, therefore, harder to combat.

In this chapter, I ask how Iranian immigrants experience racialization in their everyday lives, how do they refer to these experiences, and what do they imply about their sense of self and their connection to Canadian society? Using racialization and analyzing it as a process emphasizes the socially constructed nature of the race. As Sara Ahmed (2002, p. 46) defines, "racialization is a process that takes place in time and space: 'race' is an effect of this process, rather than its origin or cause." In other words, race is a human-made phenomenon that exists only because we have created it, made a basis to categorize different groups of people, and define their relationships. As part of an overarching framework, "racialization plays a central role in the creation and reproduction of racial meanings" (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019, p. 506).

Building on the process of racialization, I discuss how the participants use storytelling to share and relate to their racialized experiences in everyday life and I introduce the concept of "a racialized spiral of silence." I demonstrate how the concept of "tacit racism," defined by Waverly Duck Anne and Warfield Rawls (2020), who investigate the racial experiences of African Americans in the United States context but it has also permeated the interaction patterns and the fabrics of everyday life in the Atlantic Canadian context. In the end, I argue how the occurrence of racialized experiences led the participants from carrying what I call a "false racial consciousness" to an "identifying moment" (Charmaz, 1991) when they realized their negative experiences had a deeper

root than personal shortcomings and created a condition that I explain with Du Bois's concept of double consciousness (2005 (1903)) and by extending the Noell-Neumann's concept of spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) that I call: a racialized spiral of silence.

White but not Quite, or A Visible Minority: What Racial Groups do the Iranian Immigrants Belong to in Canada?

Race is a social construct and a product of racialization. It is a highly context-dependent concept that varies across regions, countries, and social groups (Machery & Faucher, 2005; Omi, 1994). However, the definition of race and racialization are impacted by White supremacy, starting in the European context (Mills, 1997). Statistics Canada uses the term "visible minority" to refer to non-indigenous peoples other than Caucasian in race or non-White in colour (Statistics Canada, 2023j). The visible minority is a socially constructed term first used in the early 1980s to indicate groups of people based on their race, colour, or "visibility" in employment equity and program discussions and legislation (Boyd, 2015).

The categories available on Statistics Canada surveys from which to choose are "White, South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai), West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan), Korean, Japanese, and Other group (to be specified). As noted on the website,

Responses of Arab, Latin American and West Asian found in combination with "White" or a write-in response associated with White are **not** included in the count for these visible minority groups. Instead, such combinations of responses result in the respondent being included in the category "Not a visible minority" (Statistics Canada, 2023j).

While the other combined categories with White are still considered a visible minority, the website does not indicate why Arab, Latin American and West Asian are considered White when in combination with the White check-box. Monica Boyd (2015) articulates that this categorization follows, in part, the United States census practice of considering Arabs and West Asians as White. However, it also demonstrates the ambiguity and inconsistencies in defining colour and visible minority (Boyd, 2015).

However, Iranian immigrants' racial categorization does not end in the formal documentation and census. To better understand Iranian immigrants' racialization, I focus on how they see themselves and develop their sense of self in relation to White Canadians and how they think they are perceived by them. This kind of self-perception is explained by Cooley as the "looking-glass self" (2009 (1902)). In this way, I demonstrate how the participants' self-perception changes after migration to Canada. It expalins how race is constructed and changes throughout time and place as bodies move and interact with each other.

Iranian immigrants often do not realize their racialized category falls into the category of non-White immigrants once they land in Canada or the United States

(Maghbouleh, 2017; Tajrobehkar, 2023). Therefore, it automatically puts them in a disadvantaged position. This is also important in the sense that the immigration system has already changed according to the knowledge that most immigrants land in Canada from non-European countries. Thus, their stories and sharing them with me attracted their attention to the racialized issues they were experiencing. In other words, the storytelling contributed to the participants' consciousness about their race. Hence, they often had a more critical perspective toward the issues of race, their disadvantaged positions, and the fact that not every negative experience originates from their individual shortcomings at the end of interviews.

Tacit Racism in the Experience of Iranian Immigrants

Race is a powerful source of differentiation and discrimination, impacting organizational practices based on colonial or non-colonial assumptions (Krysa, Paludi, & Mills, 2019). Theories of race and racism seek to understand how race operates in the society. They analyze how racial inequality is created and maintained (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019). For instance, the concept of tacit racism highlights the universal basis of racism based on creating categories of difference and demonstrates how racist behaviours are embedded in the taken-for-granted interaction orders of race (Rawls, 2000). While overt racism is blamed in the political discourse and often prohibited in Canada, covert racism is a subtle reality of racialized groups, targeting them nuancedly and consistently (Henry & Tator, 2006; Malhi & Boon, 2007). In this part, I argue that tacit racism along with covert racism produce inequality and contribute to stabilizing institutional racism in

the Canadian context. They are the more dangerous and subtle forms of racism in our current world that have a negative impact on both White and non-White people (Duck & Rawls, 2020; Henry, 2006).

The concept of tacit racism introduced by Duck and Rawls (2020) in the United States context illustrates the many ways in which racism is coded into the everyday social expectations of people. It demonstrates how racist behaviours are embedded in the taken-for-granted interaction orders of race (Rawls, 2000) and create a hidden unconscious that is institutionalized in everyday interactional expectations of Americans. I argue that this concept is also relevant and useful in the experiences of racialized immigrant groups in Canada and explains the more invisible layers of racism that they deal with in their everyday life.

One of the interesting stories belongs to Fariborz, when race played a subtle role in his interactions with his colleagues. He was living in Ontario and had previously lived in Newfoundland. His story shows the covert side of being treated differently among his White Canadian colleagues:

> I have felt it [racism] in a negative way that mostly happened in Newfoundland. For instance, I experienced some behaviours that were not negative but made me think that you are an immigrant. They treat you constantly in a way that you are from a different country, which is why they are… kind to and support you. And they see you. Maybe they wanted to say that they are nice people and they wanted to attract you and say how good they are. However, I saw this as: why do you see

me this way and pay extra attention to me [for being different]… Yes, you are good and good job, and your language is good, and it will improve. However, when I came here, the negative feelings about my race reached number five, if it was a hundred in Newfoundland. It means I don't have that [negative] feeling here. It's the same in my workplace, too. We are from different places, and even if my language is not as advanced as theirs, it doesn't matter to me at all, and I feel very ordinary. We also learned that [English language proficiency] is not that much important… and you see your language is better after a while and you can do your job and communicate… and they don't see you like that [different] in Ontario, and they actually appreciate that we are working with a second language.

As Fariborz explained, being treated differently, even in a positive way, to say nothing of in a negative way, provokes a sense of otherness. The participants were often happier not to be seen and reminded that they were different in Ontario since they could perform a version of self without the pressure of being seen and judged by others. In the following, I discuss how these forms of racism exist in the experiences of Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic cities and I present my analysis in this regard. As I continue, I will dip my toe in the vast data collected in the interviews with Iranian immigrants in the Atlantic cities as well as Ontario and conceptualize their experiences. I then explain how these experiences represent a tacit form of racism in the Canadian context.

Clashes of Race: Covert Racism, Boundary Work, and Symbolic Violence

In this section, I explain how a Bourdieusian perspective of class and distinction is applicable in the discussions of race and racism and provides a new view toward these social notions. I engage with the concepts of boundary work, distinction, and social exclusion, to discuss how race and racialization are a story of boundary work and symbolic violence in the Canadian context.

Symbolic boundaries are the tools through which people separate themselves into groups and produce feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232 cited in Lamont & Molnar, 2002). They are the "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Additionally, they are the results of the disposition of the individuals with their symbolic capitals in the field that enable them to acquire status, make their tastes dominant, and monopolize resources (Bourdieu, 1984, Lamont & Molnar, 2002).

Once people in a group agree upon the symbolic boundaries, they become the sources of segregation and social exclusion. Social boundaries are thus the "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources" (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). The boundaries among different races are such symbolic boundaries. Certain groups of people in the majority or in power mobilize it in relation to their own or other races to monopolize resources and exclude other races and limit their access to social, political, and economic resources. This is quite relevant to the

history of colonization, the social construction of race in Canada and the United States, and influences from the superiority of White Europeans over non-Europeans (Bonilla-Silva, 1997).

Distinction is a way for people to establish their power in the field. Exclusion and openness are the mechanisms for such a process. People carry and enter their habitus, which embodies their cultural capitals to the fields. Boundary work is a way for a group of people, or as Bourdieu (1984) discusses it, for a "class" to dominate the field. The demarcation becomes highlighted because "hierarchy" and "superiority" of a "class" are the grounds whereby distinction becomes manifested. In Bourdieu's theory, people practice boundary work to ascribe themselves to the upper class. They also do that to show their distinction for dominating the field, monopolizing resources, and strengthening their authority. Boundary work, in this sense, reveals the ideological style behind this concept that a group of people is capable enough to receive the resources and rule the social fields. This explains the boundaries around the nation and the formation of social institutions, and the concept of citizenship and its affiliated resources in opposition to immigrants' status and their limited access to the same resources (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Boundary work may also be used strategically not only by the host societies, but also by immigrants to mark their identity distinction. For instance, drawing on the theoretical foundation of boundary-work, Ajrouch (2004) explores the identity formation among second-generation Arab American adolescents to distinguish themselves from immigrant culture and "White" society. Her study shows these boundaries provide

significant markers of in-group inclusion and reflect moral superiority in controlling girls'

behaviours as interpretations of religious teachings.

In case of Iranian immigrants, Naseh's story of the media coverage about the

Russia-Ukraine war compared to Afghanistan and Iraq explains how the participants

noticed and experienced the hierarchical categories of race in their everyday lives in a

White Canadian context:

> So, they try to push you down. And I would blame the media as it doesn't show us
>
> good things about a country… or if you know, like, for example, they talked about
>
> Ukraine and Russia a few days ago, and they were saying these European
>
> countries have been hit by rockets. And they are not like the third-world countries.
>
> And then they got to go ahead and mention [compared] Afghanistan and Iraq. And
>
> that was bad. The journalists talking about that in public, on the TV, CNN, that's,
>
> that will be an example of racism, right? Every, like the life of other people,
>
> doesn't matter. But Ukraine is considered a European country. So the life of them
>
> matters more than the life of [us].

While Bourdieu introduced the concepts of habitus concerning class relations in

the field, I aim to use his ideas to explain how and why boundary work is operationalized

among the dominant and racialized groups in Canada. From a Bourdieusian perspective,

racism can be a form of boundary work. It is more invisible when the form of racism is

more subtle. I argue that a passive-aggressive and covert form of racism that is being

exercised in a subtle way is a form of boundary work among the so-called superior and

inferior racialized groups. Maziar's story in Prince Edward Island explains how race and where you come from matters and immediately change people's interaction patterns with racialized groups, even if the differences are not physically visible:

I have had numerous negative experiences with Canadians. One of the problems is that I look white, and thus, they think I am White. Sometimes, they tell me some jokes about people of colour, and I tell them that I am from the Middle East and they can't talk like that in front of me. Or it happened at parties or the university when they told me a racist word or to a Black person directly. Or asked me where I am from. Or while we wait in a queue, they may ask where are you from [and I answer that I am from Iran], and they say, yeah, you are a war refugee, and I'm like, we didn't have a war in the past 35 or so, and you have no idea about it! Maybe my mom had seen the war, but we didn't. I didn't. The war was over 10 years before I was born. Once, a person complimented my beard and said such a cool beard I have. Then, he asked which part of PEI I was from, and I answered I'm not from PEI; I'm from Iran. He asked where it was. And I answered in the Middle East. Then, he immediately jumped to the discussion about war and said that, yeah, it's where the war is. So, from a compliment to my beard and being from PEI, he got to the war. You can't do that and relate it to my race. Take a breath, and then say something! They don't accept anybody but themselves. It happened to me to talk to White people who accepted that they are ignorant and divisional and want to divide themselves from others… who left a closed community in a distant location in PEI and got educated… and they told me that they consider me as a 25 or 26 and haven't seen a Black person until I came

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to Charlottetown. [Moreover,] I work so hard to afford my life and get a car and rent a place, and I can't go to a bar or something, and my friends complain that you have no social life… White people don't see how hard I need to work to afford my life; if they see I have a car or something, they immediately think that a rich father bought it for me while I was a student and worked in five different jobs to cover my expenses.

A Racialized Spiral of Silence: Storytelling to Address Racial Disparities and Micro-Aggressions

Racial discussions were not at the heart of the participants' conversations at the beginning of the interviews. The participants often took a while to think about their experiences and to get comfortable sharing their racialized experiences. There was a tendency among the participants to show their hard work and dedication for success. First, it often took a while for me to gain their trust and reach a version of the presentation of self where the participants were comfortable sharing their vulnerabilities. The participants felt addressing race issues, barriers, or uncomfortable was one of those vulnerabilities. However, once I asked the questions about their racialized experiences in the second part of the interview, the participants often willingly shared their stories and felt comfortable sharing their deeper thoughts and feelings.

The experiences of covert racism were recurrent among the younger generations of my participants. Saba, 32 years old, based in Halifax, highlighted her experiences of renting a car while she was with her husband and friends. She explained that they had reserved an SUV car, but the rental car company denied their reservation and insisted on

giving a sedan car to them instead. Saba said they were sad initially because they could see many SUVs parked in the parking lot, and they were not sure why they could not receive one. Moreover, they had a lot of luggage, but since the woman told them all SUVs were unavailable, they agreed to rent a sedan instead. However, when Saba's friend came back to the woman to ask a question, she saw the same woman offering a White Canadian customer an SUV without prior reservation. They got upset and asked the woman and her manager to explain why they denied their reservation and lied about SUV availability while offering other customers an SUV car almost simultaneously. Once they started to question the woman's behaviour, the rental car company stepped back and apologized for their behaviour and replaced the sedan car with an SUV. When I asked Saba why she thought their request was denied, she related it to her skin colour. She said we were young brown people, and the woman knew that we could get convinced easily. She added that "maybe they felt like they could not trust us to rent an SUV to us because we were immigrants."

Another participant, Babak, 30 years old, in Halifax, shared a different story about his supervisor. Babak said that his professor is originally from a middle-eastern country, but he is also a Canadian citizen. He mentioned that his professor puts a lot of pressure on Babak and even asks him to attend meetings and work on weekends while he is not paid for it. Babak said his professor has a very different attitude toward Canadian students and goes easy on their work while his own workload buries him. He said the professor tells him that he should not be "*lazy*" and he must dedicate most of his time to his work. Babak, however, felt anxious about his professor's double standard toward his students.

He explained his hard work and dedication in opposition to what his professor claimed. Then, he contrasted the U.S. and Canadian ways of operating racism and mentioned that

> It is easy to oppose a racist person who acts violently against you. However, the Canadian way of racism is so subtle that sometimes you don't even notice it. I can hardly talk about my experiences with racism, but it could be easier to resist if I had been discriminated by a White-red-neck person who was acting against me aggressively.

Saba and Babak's stories are only two examples of experiences of covert racism by my participants in the Canadian context. This covert racism is a generic social process that occurs in different settings. I conceptualize it in relation to my Iranian participants' experiences in the Canadian context. Saba and Babak's examples indicate that immigrants' experiences of discrimination are not just being exercised by White people but also by non-White Canadians. Babak was surprised that another Canadian person of colour used his power to abuse Babak's position as an international graduate student. Surprisingly, the professor's actions contradicted his nice behaviour with White classmates.

I explain such experiences as a form of symbolic violence. Bourdieu (2001) introduces the concept of symbolic violence concerning the domination of power and to explain how inequalities and social hierarchies are maintained by forms of symbolic domination rather than by physical force. I relate the participants' experiences to a form of symbolic violence that is being exercised over immigrants based on their race and

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status, knowing that they are not as established and confident about their position as other Canadians to be able to resist it.

These sorts of experiences are recurrent among the participants. A part of the realization of the importance of race occurs during these repetitive patterns for the participants. As a part of my observations as a researcher, I saw this pattern at Memorial University, too. Some students in the Engineering department talked about the unreasonable pressure they often experienced from the professors who were non-White. For instance, they were called to have meetings on weekends or had to work outside their paid hours. This data is in line with the series of reports and articles overwhelmingly showing the patterns of racism and whiteness in Canadian academia (Henry, 2006), which resulted in the interest in bringing anti-racist policies to the academy.

Despite the proliferation of employment equity and anti-harassment policies at Canadian universities, these policies do not address issues with racism profoundly and they encounter three forms of limitation. First, anti-racism policies in many universities emerged as a response to feminist activism and legal changes. Therefore, the introduction of how these policies are tied to a commitment to address racism is vague. Second, these policies lack the procedural requirements for effective anti-racist implementations. Third, members of senior administration resist supporting these policies (Henry & Tator, 2018). In these cases, being a racialized brown man from Iran puts the students in a more difficult position since they are often stigmatized as Middle Eastern masculine men who have no idea about gender equality or other equality discussions. In these situations, a racialized international student with no permanent status, no significant resources of

support, and at the bottom of the hierarchy of power at the university is more likely to remain silent about their experiences. Therefore, being vocal about their issues is even more challenging, making it easier for the offender to take advantage of the situation.

I categorize and bring the different forms of agentic strategies of action that the participants use in an unsettled condition of dealing with different levels of racism based on their immigration status, religion, gender, city of residency, and other significant life circumstances. In the end, I discuss how the participants' social locations impact their cultural toolkit, their conceptualizations of their race and status, and consequently, their action strategies in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario (Swidler, 1986).

The table below demonstrates the participants' different action strategies to deal with their racialized experiences in exclusionary relationships. I designed and categorized the themes in a way that moved from more individualistic strategies to see the issue more systematically: 1. Accepting/Denying racist roots, 2. Seeing the issue on a personal level, 3. Acknowledging the discrimination and racism, 4. Conceptualizing the issue as systemic racism and discrimination. The participants were in one of these four stages of dealing with racialized experiences. However, their place in a category is not static and changes through time toward the bottom of the table: acknowledging and conceptualizing the issue, though some might never reach the last point.

Accepting/Denying
Accepting/Denying racist roots

↓

Seeing
Seeing the issue on a personal level

↓

Acknowledging
Acknowledging the discrimination and racism

↓

Conceptualizing
Conceptualizing the issue as the systemic racism and discrimination
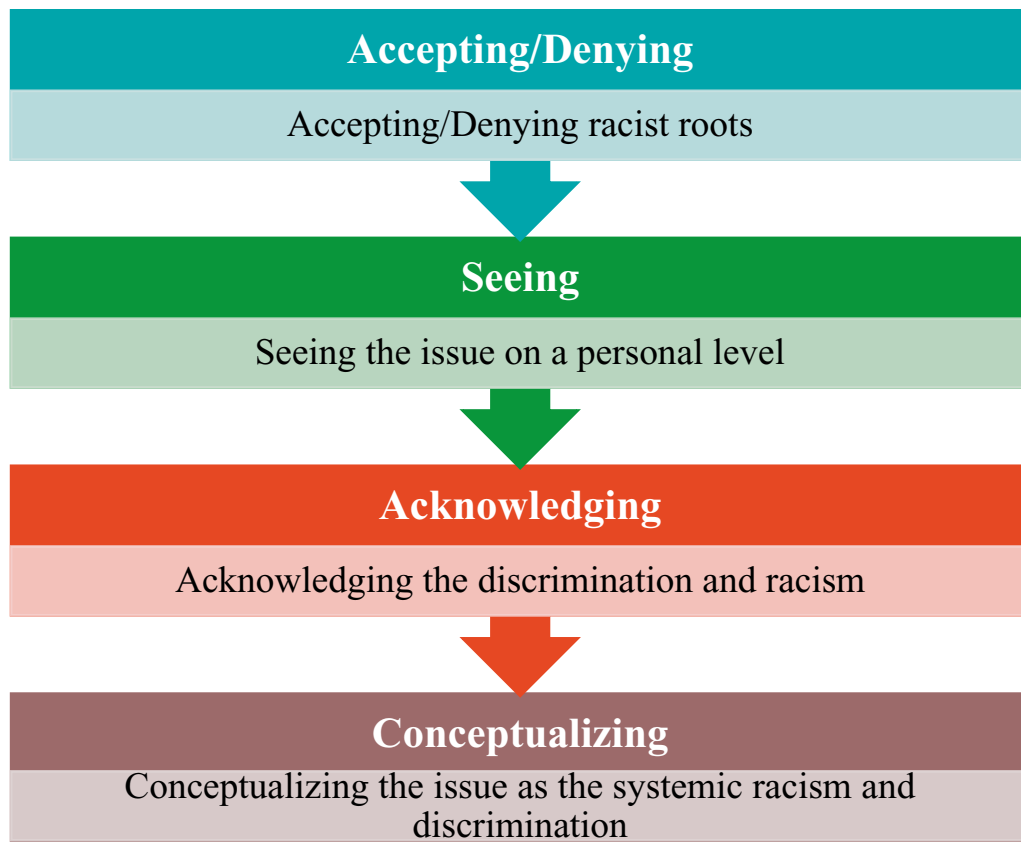
Figure 1: Thematic Strategies of Action in Dealing With Racism

1. Accepting or Denying Racist Roots

Some of the participants had either accepted the inequalities or denied the racist experiences they were dealing with. Hamed in Nova Scotia, for instance, talked about the scholarships he had been excluded from. Despite that, he mentioned he does not have any complaints about it:

There are many scholarships available that I cannot apply for as an international student. But "we" have not complained about it either. We give them the right

(Canadians) to prioritize their own students… I think it's fair, and I don't have

any complaints about it. (Hamed, Nova Scotia)

This demonstrates how some Iranian participants had been influenced by the impression that if you are an immigrant, it is natural to be excluded from similar opportunities that are offered to permanent residents or citizens. While most students in Canada at the graduate level tend to stay in Canada, they face certain obstacles to gaining permanent residency status, which impacts their education and career significantly. On the other hand, Minoo, Hamed's wife, complained about this situation because she believed she had no chance in almost nine applications out of ten, no matter how stronger her CV looked compared to the Canadian citizens. She said she wished to be a permanent resident or citizen to benefit from the same opportunities in her education. Considering the previous discussion on the 1980s major labour market disruptions, Minoo's quote, similar to many other participants, indicates how racist exclusive policies are designed to keep immigrants out of the high-paid labour market and prevent them from building a path toward gaining one. Nevertheless, like Hamed, Minoo aimed for PR status rather than interpreting her experiences as racist.

Similar to Hamed, Rayan in New Brunswick explained that he accepts the double standards between himself as an immigrant and White Canadians in his everyday life, but he repeatedly stated that does not have any problem with that:

When I came here, I didn't have the feeling [of exclusion]. I mean, I felt like

everything was great and everyone was good, and they consider you their own

people. I was naive. I gradually figured out the subtle [exclusion] feeling among Canadians specifically, and I give the right to them to be such. I don't expect otherwise. If I was in Iran and somebody came from a different city to ours, I would have the same feeling, and I think it's reasonable. I felt it among them, but I don't have any problem with it... Any decisions have consequences. I came from Iran to a country that wasn't mine, and they accepted me, so I don't see myself as the owner of this country, but I have the commitment to it to follow the culture and rules of it. I see myself as a guest here, even if I have a PR. It's true that Canada is a country where most people, even the Whites, are immigrants but landed here a few generations ago. Maybe I felt in a job-related situation that a Canadian with less capabilities have more opportunities than me, but I accepted that. I think it wasn't supposed to be like that. Having said that, Canadian culture is shaping and there's a claim saying that the opportunities are the same for everyone in this country. It's not true, but I don't have any problem with that.

In other words, Rayan accepted the situation as it was. Another participant, Mohsen in New Brunswick, emphasized that he knows he is not a first-class citizen and cannot be one. When I asked why he felt like that, he referred to the uncomfortable experiences he has faced in his interactions with Canadians:

Well, there is this feeling [for me] that... I'm not Canadian... We know that we are immigrants. I accepted that and its consequences that I will be an immigrant... I know that I wouldn't be a first-class citizen here... you may see that they talk with Canadians differently than with us. Maybe it's because of having common

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things to talk about or a shared knowledge with Canadians, for instance… What

they want to say to me… or maybe it's my language problems or so… but I say I

think about it this way. (Mohsen, New Brunswick)

Like Hamed and many other participants in this category, Mohsen talked about

uncomfortable moments and feelings on an everyday basis. Ali in Ontario also explained

that being an immigrant might even be an advantage:

I feel like being an immigrant in Canada has been in my favour… I feel like there

are places where I can use it really well… Like they consider my credits and

degrees in Ontario… although it's only in Ontario and not in Quebec… There

are certain positions that you might not get because you are not a native [he meant

local White Canadians]. The employers prefer the natives [local White

Canadians], and it is reasonable, in my opinion. The natives [local White

Canadians] have more information about the society and might do better in certain

[job] positions. I don't have any problem with that, and I totally respect that a

native [local White Canadian] comes instead of me.

The common thread connecting such experiences and conceptualization of

immigrants in encountering barriers is their action strategies in accepting the current

situation and moving on. One explanation is that most Iranian immigrants in Canada

emigrate from Iran, feeling oppressed, neglected, and excluded from many opportunities

and higher-level positions. In other words, they have already experienced such feelings in

their home country. Therefore, it is a common belief that we, as immigrants, experience

much better social situations in a host country, so why bother and complain about some negative experiences here and there? Such a complicated situation has created a condition where most Iranian immigrants begin by feeling grateful for being here and cope with the negative experiences as they come. They constantly compare the situation in Canada with Iran, impacting their critical thinking about the inequalities affecting the immigrants in Canada.

Another explanation for this situation is internalized oppression, which is explained with the concepts of internalized Whiteness and internalized racism. Internalized oppression is partially a result of the interaction with the people who see a group of people differently and as a result, treating them differently. Such kinds of interaction and being treated differently changes the participants' self-image and self-identification. Cooley (2009 (1902)) explains these kinds of transformation of the self-image as a result of the interaction with other people in his concept of looking-glass self. People start to base their sense of self on how they believe others view them and they act accordingly. This concept, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, intersects with W.E.B Du Bois's (2005 (1903)) concept of "double-consciousness." From the critical race theory stand, he analyzed the consequences of living beneath the white gaze and explained the concept as "a peculiar sensation . . . of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 5). Double-consciousness is involved with the feelings of own inferiority and may lead to the individuals endorsing repressive policies and ideologies about their own group (Du Bois (2005, (1903); Fanon, 2021 (1994)).

Internalized Whiteness and internalized racism explain the consequences of seeing oneself and one's own group as inferior. I put more emphasis on internalized Whiteness rather than internalized racism, because the term highlights the internalization of the norms and values of a White society rather than internalizing racist stereotypes and images, leading to feelings of self-hatred and disrespect for themselves (Pyke, 2010). The Aryan myth and the sense of pride it provokes for Iranians provides a shield to protect them from racist stereotypes and feelings of self-hatred, but the White gaze penetrates and dominates other realms. Internalized Whiteness explains the racialized groups' efforts for fitting in the dominant culture such as the Iranian communities' pressure during the COVID-19 period for passing from stigma. Internalized Whiteness demonstrates how stereotypes and colonial portrayals of racialized immigrants shape their identity construction (Pyke, 2010). It has roots in believing in the superiority of the race compared to others and, therefore, trying to fit in by othering your own co-ethnicities, which Pyke and Dang (2003) called intra-ethnic Othering. Internalized Whiteness is a reason that the participants in this study did realize and acknowledge their exclusion, but also *did not have a problem with it* as some participants mentioned. It transforms their self-image in a way that they adjust their actions without being necessarily conscious of or critical about it.

Internalized Whiteness includes "the internalization of discourses of white and Western superiority [that] is often deployed by newcomers as a strategy to deflect stigmatization of their immigrant identity" (Tajrobehkar, 2023, p. 657). During my fieldwork, I observed that Iranian immigrants were constantly nervous about being

represented as "law-breaking" and "shameful" if they got COVID and possibly transmitted it to others. Therefore, they were very strict in cancelling Nowruz and Yalda gathering nights or other social gatherings even if the provincial health department had eased the restrictions.

Fanon (2021 (1994)) explains the nuances of the inferiority complex generated by the enforced superiority of the White man and frames it as the result of colonial history. The deep belief in one's inferiority is one of the consequences of the domination of Western colonial power over racialized others (Chakrabarty, 1992; Liu, 2017). In addition to the categories of skin colour and skin tone as influential factors in the process of Iranian immigrants' racialization, the exploration of the construction of Orientalism by Said (1978) is pivotal in understanding the Iranian immigrants' process of racialization in Canada. Orientalism reveals the categorization of the inferior other through the processes of colonialism and western imperialism and constructing the other as mysterious, eccentric, and intriguing, while also being primitive, despotic and cruel. There was stigma around the members of community who tested positive for COVID, and some people were trying to hide it while in isolation as the positive test could imply that they were not cautious about the mask rules, gatherings, etc. The concern to represent Iranians as a law-abiding group demonstrates the pressure and the feeling of the need to fit in and adjust to the norms in a white-dominant society. It shows the deep roots of pursuing the superiority of white values and practices among the Iranian immigrant communities.

2. Seeing Racism on a Personal Level

2.1. Dealing With Racism as a Personal Issue

The second set of strategies of action in dealing with racism is seeing it as racism but treating it as a personal issue. Naseh, in the Atlantic region, came from a higher middle-class family and talked about how seeing Iranian fellows around complaining about racism is not right because they don't see the roots of racism. Then, he discussed his strategy for dealing with racism, which in his opinion, targets its roots:

> Okay, we have to be realistic about this. The biggest problem about people that come here is that… When I see people from Iran, they always think negatively about life here, and I'm not sure why it could be difficult for you. I wasn't like that, I would understand that the culture is different. And so we have this superficial thinking. And then we have deep thinking. Complaining is the easiest thing in life. Okay? When someone complains about something, that means they, they haven't looked deep into the roots. I would say, take a deep look into the roots of the issues, okay? Just try to sit down with someone that is racist, if you could, and then let them talk and don't get angry or anything. Right?...

> So with racism, it's all about not knowing about the culture that's all about it… Once you get to get familiar with the [Iranian] culture… or the other rich taste in terms of foods, because of spices… we have very beautiful music that can introduce that to people… They [White Canadians] haven't been exposed to that

culture… they haven't been exposed to that delicious food, they haven't been

exposed to that magnificent art and poetry. So, I would just give them the

opportunity, and then make things clear for them… only if, if they're open to it…

Many people are not. But I would say at least 50% of people are. And at that

point, you know what's going on in their mind. You could understand what

bothers them, and what doesn't bother them, and then just expand on that. That

would be much better than going after them and calling them racist and calling

them… that just get upset about it. I've turned around many people that way and

have changed their minds so much.

Naseh, in his quote, demonstrated that he conceptualizes racism and issues around it on

an individual level. He sees racism as a lack of mutual understanding of culture and the

stereotypes around it. Therefore, he tries to solve the issue by changing the offenders'

perspective toward his culture, though he might not be successful.

2.2. Solving Hostility with Kindness and Peace

I found the most potent way of dealing with racism in this way from Anousheh, in

the Maritimes, who explained how she was constantly offering hospitality to her

neighbours and inviting them to her house. However, it took almost twelve years for her

to be invited to one of her neighbours' houses. Moreover, she explained how one of her

neighbours refused her invitation repeatedly to join their family and other guests. When a

mutual friend asked why they refused her invitations, the neighbour said, "they are

Iranians… don't you know that they have rifles in their basement? And they keep it there

to attack us. And kill us?" However, the mutual friend explained that there is no such thing, and they are hospitable. Then, they started going to Anousheh's house, and she took them to the basement and let them take a look to see that there were no rifles:

> That kind of behaviour, in which they wanted to find missiles and rifles in our basement, turned to kindness and support. So, this is the kindness that sticks us together and tracks every good thing. Love and kindness, when they are absolute, without any impurity… penetrate other people's hearts and minds and attract them. (Anousheh, Maritimes)

Anousheh also experienced discrimination and hardships in her relationships at her workplace, and again, she responded to their behaviour with kindness:

> I wasn't answering their hostile behavior. I chose another way. I was more kind to them. Therefore, that hostile behavior disappeared after a while. Because if I wanted to take it personally and answer them, then it could get worse… So, it depends on us what we want to do with the discrimination.

Anousheh's way of dealing with racist behaviours included offering more kindness and peace to change the view of the person with hostile behaviour. An important layer behind such a strategy lies in Anousheh's point of view of the world. She is Bahá'í and believes in offering kindness to humanity, no matter what. Such a worldview impacted Anousheh's strategies in dealing with difficulties and conflict resolution. This perspective helped Anousheh view the world positively and make sense of it with kindness, while preventing her from direct confrontation, especially at her workplace.

Parsa, in the Atlantic region, also talked about resolving issues without conflict or raising his voice to solve them:

Well, your forehead — that's a Persian expression — that the real forehead is a stamp that you are an immigrant. As soon as you open your mouth and have an accent, they say, oh, he's not from here. And so it never goes away. It never goes away. Some people show prejudice against it. Very, very openly. I worked in an environment... In one of the printing shops where I worked there, I worked with a guy who, as soon as he saw me, moved his chair away or turned his face away. That's okay... It's… that is your way. And 35 years ago, we had the company I was working. We had about 50 employees. And every morning, my boss was coming down. And she said good morning to every one of us, including me. And we had one Black worker, and she never said hello or good morning to him. Yeah, very heartbreaking. Very heartbreaking. So that prejudice is there. We are trying to accept each other, or compromise, some compromise, I guess. But things are getting better in my life. I think it depends on the immigrants themselves. If they want to see things better, better relationships. We can sit back and tell the world, oh, you have to accept me or respect me the way I am. No, it's not like that. Yeah, yeah, we have to go forward. Sit down with them, even though I don't drink, doesn't matter, you go there to their home, and they are drinking, and you say, No, I don't, I'm sorry, I don't drink, and they bring you up to drink, and you still have your friendship with them. And we cannot separate ourselves from them. And

eventually, we will come to the point of accepting each other and respecting each other. Yeah.

Parsa, similar to Anousheh, explained how it depends on how immigrants decide to deal with their negative experiences. He felt and saw the negative experiences and chose to compromise in those situations. While these stories addressed the participants' negative experiences, they revealed another deep layer of Iranian immigrants' racialized experiences: Not seeing the bigger picture; a lack of contextualizing their negative experiences as a systemic issue. In the next section, I indicate how participants start to realize the roots of their negative experiences and feel the necessity of raising their voices in those situations.

3. Acknowledging the Discrimination and Racism

My analysis moves gradually from seeing and dealing with racism as a more superficial personal response to targeting its roots. The participants in this category explicitly discuss their negative experiences and relate them to discriminative behaviours based on race. Farhad and Fariba talked about how they had been denied job promotions repeatedly despite their seniority and high ranking:

> Many times… many times… I was assistant manager and went to bring somebody else from outside to become a manager… and the manager left… and like two or three times I've stayed in a store. Finally, I quit my job. (Fariba, New Brunswick)

When I asked why Fariba and Fariborz think these incidents happened, Farhad answered:

I think she (the manager) treated me differently and bypassed my promotion. I was working at McDonald's back then when I was young, and they bypassed my promotions. Because I wasn't speaking the right language with the right accent, or my English wasn't as good as theirs… And I think… if this is not prejudice, then what is? (Farhad, New Brunswick)

Farhad and Fariba's experiences demonstrate that they reached a point where they realized the racist discrimination and acknowledged that. Maziar in Prince Edward Island talked about the stereotypical behaviours and similarly related to his experiences of discrimination and humiliation because of his race and language:

It occurred for my friends to leave their workplace crying… They talk to you like you are, I apologize — so dumb. Like you don't understand the English language, they talk to you like it is a favour to you. These are all discriminations. I used to work in a business [I changed it to protect anonymity] for a month… and I saw so many bad things from my supervisor… So many bad things from my co-workers. I saw so many bad behaviours from people who came to that business… drunk or sober… I didn't pay attention to them, but after a while, you asked how much more I could take it as a human. How much capacity do I have to leave work crying every day? How much humiliation can I tolerate? And you are working for your future and want to build a life… well… you don't give a damn [anymore]. I am fine with having a less luxurious

life and not eating good food. I [prefer to] budget my food expenses until I find a better job. But someone might have to work in a demeaning situation to tolerate the humiliation because of their skin colour or their accent in English… Then, if you work in a society where the racism and discrimination are prohibited, you will get bold and get fired immediately. They can sue you. But if you live in a city where these things are normal, you must take a hundred ways only to raise your voice. I happened to raise my voice and got fired for that. They told me that they don't give me a shift [anymore]. I had stories for simple reasons that a White person could have without trouble. If I explain something in English to you now, I might ask: "Do you understand it?" very kindly, with a kind tone, at the end of our conversation. My supervisor, though, asked [with a harsh tone]: "Understand?" I looked at him and said: "First of all, you are using the wrong tense; you have to say, understood? Secondly, bring down your tone; you're not talking to some dummy kid here." And I got fired for that. But in reality, he shouldn't have talked to me like that.

Maziar's story of frustration about racist behaviour revealed how the participants in the Atlantic region deal with negative experiences in relation to their race. Mona, who left Newfoundland for Ontario, also talked about when she realized those negative feelings were not normal at her workplace in Newfoundland. She explained the racist behaviours she experienced there compared to Ontario, where she never felt them again:

There were different people at my workplace, Canadians and non-Canadians. A Canadian worker of mine was favouring the Canadian, obviously. They [Persian language is gender-neutral and does not show the gender of people by pronoun]

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had very racist behaviour. I even complained and told them once and showed my irritation to them, and they apologized. They certainly couldn't debate about that… but they had a conversation in front of me with someone else, which offended me, though it wasn't about me. I also had another experience with a woman who talked to me in a racist way and extremely offended me. I cried a lot after that conversation, and everyone tried to comfort me after that… But I never had such experiences in Ontario.

Mona, like Maziar, Fariba, and Farhad, is at a stage where she realizes how her racial difference is problematic in the Atlantic cities. This is a stage where the participants start to challenge the unequal situation they are dealing with and get vocal about the inequalities they experience. I argue that the participants who acknowledge the discrimination are more likely to escape the racialized spiral of silence. They have passed the "identifying moment (Charmaz, 1991)," which I will explain later, where they know they are not White, and their race contributes to the dynamics of their relationship with society.

4. Conceptualizing the Issue as Systemic Racism and Discrimination

Interestingly, only one participant explicitly talked about systemic racism in Canada and mapped his negative experiences in a bigger context. Ahmad cited several examples in different contexts, from interpersonal relationships in a café or university meetings to the immigration system that prevented him from bringing his money and

personal belongings to Canada. He explained those experiences concerning political, social, and cultural situations:

> A part of such kinds of discrimination is because of the political relationships [between Iran and Canada]. Also, a part is a way of thinking about immigrants. A big group thinks that we, as immigrants, are second-class citizens, especially in the areas where people were less in contact with [different groups of] people.

> I am a calm person, but I am also vocal, meaning that if I see an issue, I react. I am like that in the Iranian community and the university community. For instance, I am our department's graduate program officer, and 90% of our students are international. If I am not vocal in this situation, their rights will be wasted, and they will be discriminated. Therefore, I always react. (Ahmad, Maritimes)

Ahmad is a university professor and ishighly educated and trained about social issues in Canada. He was the only participant who saw the problems in a bigger context and tried to relate them to a "systemic" issue. Ahmad had passed the racialized identifying moment and escaped the racialized spiral of silence. He sees the bigger picture and actively tries to be vocal. He intends to provide a non-discriminatory space for the students and protect them from racism at various levels at the university.

Identifying Moment: A Transformation of False Racial Consciousness

A False Racial Consciousness: Being White or What?

Saba and Babak's stories, in the beginning, showed how much Iranian immigrants felt negative experiences because they were confused when they saw discrimination, but it did not exactly make sense to them. In their stories, reality suddenly hit them, and nothing else except their "skin colour" and their race made sense to explain why they experienced double standards. These moments of realization of the importance of their race were recurrent among the participants. Mahsa, in Newfoundland, for instance, noticed the double standards in treating Ukrainian refugees compared to Afghan refugees. Also, like almost every other Iranian, she felt anxious and disheartened at the beginning of the Woman, Life, Freedom revolution in Iran. She said she saw almost nothing, no media coverage in local news, no compassion in social media, and was not being contacted by people at her department and faculty about how she was doing in those difficult days. The same story happened when the Ukrainian 752 flight was shot down by Islamic Republic Regime in Iran:

> The famous story of the news reporter who said, "these people are not from the Middle East [in a war], they are White people from Ukraine" made me sensitive about other's relationship with us, internationals. It was a moment that I changed. The view that I saw everything nicely and well and feeling good about being a friend with them [White Canadians] and making a good relationship because

everything was fine transformed. Since then, the deeper layer of how they see us as internationals and the difference between Whites, Middle Easterns, or being black or brown and their feeling toward us became very important to me. (Mahsa, Newfoundland)

Mahsa's story reaffirmed my understanding of a transformation in how Iranian immigrants see themselves in relation to White Canadians. In fact, these stories show how Iranian immigrants have been identifying themselves and their relationships with White Canadians based on what I call "a false racial consciousness." Such a moment of realization about race is a unique transformation of identification of self as well Iranians as a group and in relation to others, in this case, White Canadians.

"Identifying Moment"

I use the "identifying moments" concept introduced by Kathy Charmaz's work on chronic illness to explain the experiences of Iranian immigrants in identifying themselves, often accidentally, as a person and a group in relation to White people in Canada. Charmaz defines identifying moments as "telling moments filled with new self-images … telling because they spark sudden realizations [and] reveal hidden images of self" (Charmaz, 1991, p. 207). Van den Hoonaard (2009) also uses this notion in relation to her work on widows when they acutely became aware of their new identity as widows. In the context of Iranian participants' racialized experiences, this concept explains the situation where they suddenly realize a new version of self in relation to Canadian society, revealing the deeper roots of their negative, exclusionary experiences. From that moment,

the participants take a critical perspective on their relationship with White Canadians, sometimes leading them toward learning more about racialized groups at the personal and institutional levels. Suddenly, they become aware that race is their master status (Hughes, 1945) in Canadian society, especially in the Atlantic provinces.

Another question arises here about why the participants were surprised about their race in the Canadian context. The answer to this question lies in the conceptualization of race in Iran. Iranians consider themselves "White" when they are in Iran and have different reasons for doing so. First, the basis for discrimination and exclusion in Iran is ethnicity rather than race. The tensions are often about the allocation of resources in the social, political, and economic governance in society and the positionality of diverse ethnic groups, including but not limited to Kurds, Turks (including Azerbaijani, Turkmen and Qashqai), Gilakis, Lurs, Tats, Talysh, Baloch, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, and Georgians. There are also complex feelings about the people from the neighbouring countries, which can be more related to the discussions on race and racism. Arabs in the neighbouring countries and people from Afghanistan are in this category.

Second, while race is a scientific misnomer and does not have biological roots, and there is no specific race dividing people from each other, Iranians mostly consider themselves "White." They relate their race to "Aryans," which is also an obsolete racial concept. Therefore, they see their race as other "Whites" who fall into the category of people with Proto-Indo-European origins. Therefore, once they enter Canada, despite the contradictory messages they receive in their everyday interaction and significant skin colour difference, they do not see themselves as racially segregated from White

Canadians. After all, they see themselves and White Canadians coming from the same "Aryan" race (Maghbouleh, 2017).

Such a definition of race among Iranians usually exists for years or even decades after entering Canada until an "identifying moment" leads them to a significant change in their conception of race. Rouzbeh, Mahsa's husband, mentioned one of his assumptions about his race in the middle of his conversation concerning his workplace experiences. He believed he was White: "I am being treated better than other people in my workplace who are not White… because we [as Iranians] are White" (Rouzbeh, NL).

Neda Maghbouleh (2017) addresses this shifting racial status for Iranian immigrants in the context of the United States and explains how a White American immigrant group can become brown in America. For years, carrying a false racial consciousness in the Canadian context created a specific social position for Iranian immigrants that impact them individually and as a group. I elaborate on this specific condition in the next section.

A Racialized Spiral of Silence

Covert racism experiences were recurrent across all genders, Bahá'ís, Muslim-born, and non-religious participants in my study, as it was among different generations of immigrants with different immigration status. It reveals that race becomes a master status for the immigrants in Canada and a more critical source of discrimination than other characteristics, such as gender or religion, for my participants. It is worth mentioning that

most of the participants had a middle-class background. Therefore, I cannot extend their experiences to potential participants who come from a different class status. In some of the above cases, being a student or a non-permanent resident exacerbated the situation and made the participants feel powerless in encountering these incidents. In addition, being a visible minority, even if they are a permanent resident or citizen, caused them to feel underestimated and exposed to such behaviours or discriminations. I argue that such a complicated position creates a "spiral of silence," a term coined by Noelle-Neumann (1974) in communication studies. She explains the silence of people when they think they are alone or very few, believing that their opinion is unpopular. However, this term is also helpful in describing racism by racialized people who have not yet found their voices. Though her concept is widely used in communication studies, I find the gist of her concept quite relevant in explaining racial silence among the Iranian immigrant group in the Canadian context.

The current literature has only recently touched on the Iranian immigrants' silence pattern in experiencing racism at interactional, institutional, and structural level. A recent study demonstrates that Iranian immigrants downplay the existence of racial prejudice of their experiences, such as at the school setting (Tajrobehkar, 2023). Tajrobehkar (2023) argues that her Iranian female participants at schools in Toronto persistently circled the conversation back to English proficiency as an explanation for their social exclusion. In other words, the participants remained silent about the racialized nature of their experiences. Similar to Maghbouleh's (2017) work about the racialized experiences of Middle Eastern participants in the United States, Tajrobehkar (2023) refers to the Aryan

myth among Iranians in considering themselves as White and also their capacity to pass

as White. Building on the Goffmann's (1963) theory of stigma, she explains that "passing

as the deliberate or mistaken replacement of a stigmatized identity with a less

'threatening' one" (Tajrobehkar, 2023, p. 667) enables Iranian immigrants to negotiate

and navigate their identity in a less stigmatized way. She uses passing as White as an

explanation for referring to language by the participants in conceptualizing their social

exclusion. I observed several other instances among Iranian communities, such as their

cautiousness in the COVID-19 pandemic that demonstrated their effort for passing from

stigma and framing themselves as the people they are not to enjoy the privileges of the

dominant group (Renfrow, 2004; Leary, 1999).

While Tajrobehkar (2023) and Maghbouleh (2017) have centred their explanation

of Iranian immigrants' mechanism of understanding their racist experiences and social

exclusion in the United States and Canada around the Aryan myth and walking on the

boundaries of Whiteness, I pay attention to their silence in referring to race to

conceptualize their mechanism of dealing with racism. My study shows that the position

of Iranian immigrant participants is located on a spiral of silence. Missing race as a

foundation for reasoning in relation to racist nuances of everyday life emerged in my data

from the experiences of Iranians as non-White, non-black, and non-indigenous people in

Canada, who are not at the centre of the race discussion, especially before they become

aware about their race. As previous studies demonstrate (Maghbouleh, 2017;

Tajrobehkar, 2023), Iranian immigrants who come from Iran usually consider themselves

"White." This is not only a result of the prevalence of Aryan myth among Iranians, but

also a consequence of thinking they cannot be categorized as Black, Asian, or completely brown. Also, it is a symptom of internalized Whiteness as a result of the oppressive colonial power and constructing a double-consciousness without being critical about it. Therefore, they think they can walk on the boundaries of Whiteness. Rouzbeh, a participant in St. John's still identified himself "White" after living in Canada for five years, which surprised me and showed how prevalent this idea is among Iranians.

In addition to missing the race element and silence of the participants about it, covert racism and tacit racism are central to my participants' experiences. They operate as boundary work and as a subtle tool for symbolic violence. This is the most dangerous and subtle form of racism because it maintains racist policies, thoughts, and actions and provides a suitable context for them to be perpetuated (Duck & Rawls, 2020), while they are not visible. Covert democratic racism (Henry & Tator, 2006) supports the claims around diversity and colour-blindness on individual and systemic levels and racist discourses. It is a result of addressing racism superficially in the form of Multiculturalism or colour-blindness, celebrating diversity, and creating a mistaken understanding that the racist roots have been addressed in society. It provides a suitable context to blame the target of racism or denying that racism exists. Covert democratic racism is manifested very subtly in the fabric of the everyday life in society (Malhi & Boon, 2007) and allows the racist policies, thoughts, and actions to continue operating without being questioned profoundly.

I argue that covert democratic racism and tacit racism coupled with the Iranian immigrants' identification of themselves as "White" push them to enter a spiral of silence,

either resulting in their taking racist experiences for granted and random or in falling silent after an identifying moment. I call this *a racialized spiral of silence* in which the experiences of discrimination are based on a covert and tacit form of racism. Covert, democratic, and tacit racism reinforces the position of the Iranian immigrants on the racialized spiral of silence and warrants their silence in dealing with social exclusion and racism. Let's consider White people and other Canadian citizens as the dominant group in the Canadian context, and black and indigenous people as marginalized communities who are in the process of finding their voices. Then, we can relate to Iranian immigrants (and possibly other racialized groups who have not been racially categorized as and exposed to White and non-White in their home country as a silent group in the racialized spiral of silence. This concept extends Noelle-Neumann's idea of a spiral of silence (1974) in the field of communication to the area of race and racialization. It can fill the gap in explaining the racialized experiences of "other" marginalized groups in Canadian society who do not see themselves necessarily as racialized but nonetheless experience racism in their everyday life, even though they are not vocal and willing to be such to frame their racialized experiences as a form racism. It also related back to the discussion of seeing themselves in proximity of the boundaries of Whiteness and explains how and why Iranian immigrants do not see themselves at the centre of race discussions in Canada.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how Iranian immigrants experience racialization in their everyday lives, and I paid attention to the way they referred to these experiences. I

also analyzed what these exclusionary experiences imply about their sense of self and their connection to Canadian society.

As I showed throughout the chapter, a tacit form of racism is a pervasive reality of the participants' experiences, encroaching on their everyday lives and exercising a symbolic form of violence in various levels of their daily lives. It is also transforming the participants' understanding of their identity as Iranians to a category of racialized groups in Canada, especially the Atlantic provinces. It is leading them to enter a *racialized spiral of silence*, where they are often silent about their discriminative experiences, because they think that they are "White," or they can penetrate the boundaries of Whiteness since they are mostly middle-class and highly educated. Neda Maghbouleh (2017) explores a similar situation among Iranian immigrants in the United States, but I found it a prevalent theme among Iranian immigrants in Canada, as well. However, whether an identifying moment occurs or not, Iranian immigrants gradually learn to see themselves through the eyes of White Canadians. They perform their Iranian-style selves among the Iranian friendship groups. Furthermore, they also learn how to perform a version of themselves that understands the "rules of the game" in relation to Canadians to enact a temporary belonging despite their everyday exclusionary experiences.

While Du Bois (2005 (1903)) used the concept of "double consciousness" concerning Black Americans in relationship with White Americans, I argue that it is applicable and extendable to explain the relationship between the Iranian immigrant racialized group and White Canadians. Putting all the pieces of the puzzle next to each other, racialized experiences of Iranian immigrants work as a barrier to calling Canada

home. The boundaries of Canadianness are tied to Whiteness and racial minorities experience the exclusion in various levels in society even if they check all the boxes other than Whiteness. This chapter also affirms that the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in a response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their race. In other words, the communities of belonging are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups for Iranians rather than in negotiation with the Canadian communities. There might be a few sporadic examples that the participants had a strong relationship with their Canadian friends, but they were not frequent enough to be a theme among the participants in this study.

In the midst of experiences of noticing racial differences and being treated differently or being discriminated against based on that, the physical home is a context for self-expression and an extension of self. How can an immigrant have a sense of belonging to a place where they feel excluded even if they are Canadian citizens? I conclude this discussion with Mahsa's quote that depicted the experiences of many other participants: "I realized that even if you are a settled legal immigrant with a permanent status, it's always about being White or not."

Summary of Findings

The present research contributed to answering the major question of how communities of belonging emerge, rather than communities around the division of race, nationality, or ethnicity through micro and meso-level processes by Iranian immigrants. I specifically asked how the participants' everyday practices contributed to creating, developing, or resisting a sense of belonging. In this, I focused on the Iranian immigrants' experiences in the four midsized Atlantic Canadian cities, including Halifax, St. John's, Charlottetown, and Moncton, as well as Fredericton, and asked how communities of belonging emerged and functioned through the Iranian immigrants' transnational practices. I also included the Iranians who left these Atlantic cities for five cities in Ontario with different Iranian community sizes: Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Lancaster, and London.

Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured, in-depth interviews with sixty-seven first-generation Iranian immigrants residing in the five Atlantic Canadian cities and five cities in Ontario, I also explored the meaning of home for immigrants who left Iran during the 1979 revolution and showed how it is in conversation with a sense of belonging. In this exploration, I used a symbolic interactionist lens, and I focused on the context of mundane everyday life. I illustrated the dynamics of a sense of belonging in two different regions with different characteristics and considerable inner diversity. In this, I focused on home as a dynamic process consisting of imaginary, sensory, social, architectural or material, and cultural aspects (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Cross, 2015; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019). Home, as the study shows, took the dimensions of a

physical home, neighbourhood, city, and even to the extent of a country or the whole world, as some participants described.

I categorize the objectives and findings of this research at two different levels: micro and meso, and moved gradually from the experiences of home and belonging from a more individual level to a group and community level. The participants in this study used different strategies of action in dealing with uncertainties, negative feelings, facing new things, or a lack of familiar things in their lives. The role of material objects, for instance, was significant in creating home as a familiar space while adopting new routines and practices imposed by the architecture of the homes or the model of neighbouring. In other words, the participants in this study created transnational social fields that sutured the past to the present and future at their homes.

The findings in chapter three showed that home is a fluid concept for Iranian immigrant participants, depending on gender, religion, immigration status, where they live, and how and when they left Iran. Similar to their sense of belonging, home for the Iranian immigrants in this study did not have a homogenized certain definition. Rather, it was an impossible and ongoing project, a paradoxical notion that they constantly worked toward to make sense of it with their agentic strategies of action in the physical home and neighbourhood. Swidler's (1986) cultural toolkit theory and her conceptualization of the agentic strategies of action in uncertain times provide the analytical tools to illustrate the Iranian immigrants' definition of home and their homemaking practices after migration. I also use theories that view home as a relational process (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020) to analyze how it is achievable according to the three levels of home (familiarity, haven, heaven) introduced by Duyvendak (2011). Finally, I introduced the concept of *temporary*

belonging in explaining the participants' agentic choices in not having a deeply rooted sense of unity and connectedness with the surrounding world by focusing on the shared and common culture and practices in a specific setting such as a workplace in a way that makes sense for everyone even if it is temporary and context-based.

This research demonstrated a segregation between Iranian immigrant communities and mainstream White Canadians. Language and mutual cultural understanding played an important role in creating and exacerbating such segregation. Though it was a general theme in the participants' relationships in the Atlantic cities, the experiences of the participants in Toronto, Mississauga, and Lancaster showed that they were able to enact *temporary belonging* especially in their work settings. The participants in London, however, experienced the same barriers as the participants in the Atlantic cities. It shows the diversity of these regions in shaping the immigrants' experiences and highlights the fact that they are not homogenized and similar within. They are as diverse as the experiences of the participants in the Atlantic cities of the Iranian communities.

Chapter four addressed how the participants were home-ing (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017) (or not) and doing (or not doing) belonging (Bennett, 2012). I highlighted the most significant emerging themes as the barriers or boosters of a sense of belonging and the roles of language, immigration status, Iranian arts, food, light, music, and friendship relationships in home-ing and doing belonging. I indicated how language plays a dual role: the mother tongue functions as a contributor to a sense of home and how the foreign language (English) creates a barrier in the participants' everyday interactions.

Moreover, the role of friendship groups was significant in creating a space of interaction, mutual understanding, and performing an Iranian-style version of self. These close friendship groups played the most important role in creating a sense of belonging. They have a pivotal role in operationalizing *temporary belonging* for Iranian immigrants. I called it a temporary belonging because, first, friendship groups are always changing due to the movement of people across different places, mostly for jobs. Second, the participants never potently addressed their feelings about a sense of belonging. They mentioned they felt they had a sense of belonging to their friendship groups, but there were so many other realms that they felt confused about, and they did not have a unified sense of belonging in relation to their surrounding world. Thus, they are time and context-specific.

Chapter five asked how the Atlantic cities shape the experiences of immigrants in relation to their community building, decision-making to leave the Atlantic region, and their sense of belonging. Also, it asked how the communities of belonging emerge and function in the Atlantic cities. To answer these questions, I engaged with the group culture creation (Fine, 2012; Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003), Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, Melucci's (1989) concept of collective identity, and the role of meta stories (Cope et al., 2019) and narratives in the shaping and functioning of these communities. The findings in this chapter described how the friendship communities of belonging emerge. It also showed the role of meta-stories and narratives in sharing the common imaginations of Iranian immigrants about remote and central locations, impacting their decisions to leave or stay in the Atlantic region.

Finally, race and racialized experiences emerged as influential driving forces in navigating the sense of home and belonging for the participants. However, they did not necessarily address them as direct issues of race and racism. While general claims at the political level call for equality, diversity, and openness to the racialized other, tacit racism is omnipresent in the participants' everyday lives, from day-to-day interactions to immigration policies and working conditions. Participants used storytelling to explain different action strategies in dealing with racism. A general theme was the confusion around identification as a racialized group, which was influenced by different categorizations of race in Iran. However, the reality of being racialized changes the participants' identification. I call that transformation the "identifying moment," a concept I borrowed from Kathy Charmaz (1991) that explains how race suddenly becomes a master status by which Iranians identify themselves. I also notice the position of the participants in a racialized spiral of silence resulting from the false racial consciousness coupled with covert forms of racism in Canada.

Chapter six asked how Iranian immigrants experienced racialization in their everyday lives, how they referred to these experiences, and what did they imply about their sense of self and their connection to Canadian society? Using the concepts of "tacit racism" (Duck & Rawls, 2020) and extending its use in relation to the experiences of racialized groups other than Black people in the Canadian context, I explained how it has also permeated the interaction patterns and the fabrics of everyday life in the Canadian context. Then, using the concepts of "identifying moment" (Charmaz, 1991), double consciousness (Du Bois, 2005 (1903)), and building on my research data and by

extending the concept of a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), I introduced the concept of *a racialized spiral of silence* to explain the positionality of Iranian immigrants in relation to their race and in connection to Canadian society. This concept fills the gap on why Iranian immigrants take their racialized experiences for granted and often remain silent about these exclusionary experiences.

While the first wave of Iranian immigrants had a more nostalgic relationship with Iran as a homeland, the Bahá'í Faith provided a context for them to see the world as a unified place. However, the rest of the participants had a more challenging relationship with Iran. They could travel to Iran and see the social, political, and economic situation getting poorer compared to when they were in Iran. Therefore, having the strongest connections to family and loved ones Iran in mind, they became more confident about their decision. Thus, the nostalgia had less of an impact in their picture and imaginations about Iran as the homeland. This did not necessarily translate into a strong sense of belonging to Canada, but it provided a context for the participants to seek other forms of being and belonging.

Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the main results of my study and their significance. To explain the findings, I link back to the research questions and objectives. In the following, I reflect on the analytical contributions of the research in the field. Then, I review the

limitations of the study and suggest the future directions and possibilities of knowledge mobilization.

Theoretical and Analytical Contributions

The present research contributes to the major question of how communities of belonging might emerge, rather than communities around the division of race, nationality, or ethnicity through micro and meso-level processes by Iranian immigrants. I defined communities of belonging as communities where the members are gathered around shared values and goals and benefit for all regardless of their gender, race and ethnicity, religion, class, status, ability, age, sexual orientation, or any other identifying characteristics. I considered them fluid and constantly changing and argued that the communities of belonging for Iranian immigrants evolved around two main goals: building and fortifying the networks of support for members and remembering and practicing Iranian identity to ensure its continuity after migration.

I explored the lives of Iranian immigrants who landed in Atlantic Canadian cities: many of whom do not stay in the region and leave for Ontario. This research contributes to the fields of sociology of race, home, and belonging in Atlantic midsized cities and Ontario and to the understanding of diverse experiences of immigrant groups — in this case, Iranian immigrants —within these contexts. It highlighted the diversity of immigration across Canada and the importance of decentralizing immigration policies and plans to create more welcoming contexts for diverse immigrant groups in different parts of Canada. Compared to the current diverse literature about the immigrant communities'

functioning in traditional immigration gateways such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, focusing on the Atlantic context allowed me to advance the scholarship in understanding the immigrants' experiences in non-traditional immigration gateways. As a result, the present study revealed how Iranian immigrant communities function differently in these cities and how their transnational practices contribute to creating communities of belonging.

Through a symbolic interactionist and social constructionist lens and using the sociology of home and belonging theories, transnationalism, group culture, and critical race theories, this study demonstrates that Iranian immigrants have shaped various communities of belonging within the Iranian diaspora with different characteristics in the Atlantic cities and Ontario, which are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups for Iranians rather than in negotiation with the Canadian communities. In other words, the formation of the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their immigration status, language, and cultural differences with the centrality of *race*.

This research also contributes to understanding how a sense of belonging within one's physical home might affect immigrants' sense of belonging to the host society. It demonstrates how the context of a physical home creates a unified realm contrary to the world outside to accomplish a sense of belonging within the home, among the other forms of a sense of belonging, i.e., a sense of belonging to the host society. Moreover, it shows that Canada, especially Atlantic communities less exposed to immigrants, has a long way to go to become more inclusive in different realms, from social and cultural to political

aspects. The city structure, for instance, plays a significant role in creating inclusive third places for immigrants and increases their participation and sense of belonging in the city.

The novelty of my research in the field is that it presents a detailed description of how the friendship communities of belonging emerge from the everyday experiences and interactions of Iranian communities in the Atlantic cities that have a different dynamic compared to the Iranian diaspora in the more traditional immigration gateways. It shows that the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in a response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their immigration status, language and cultural differences with the centrality of their race. In other words, the communities of belonging are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups for Iranians rather than in negotiation with the Canadian communities. While studies of Iranian immigrant communities are very limited and mostly focus on the more traditional immigration gateways, my study has implications for policymakers in both regions. The most important aspects of these policies involve creating more inclusive cities for immigrants (i.e., the importance of third spaces and evening life), more welcoming communities for the international students, especially in their struggles in transitioning to permanent residents, and questioning and restructuring the definitions of being considered Canadian and thus the democratic racist policies that harm both immigrants and locals.

Moreover, it shows that the inconsistency between the claims around inclusivity and diversity, the racist rules and policies, and the deep-rooted racist thoughts and feelings toward immigrants close the conversation about what must be done in Canada to equally become a home to immigrants. It has created a situation where the tacit form of

racism vigorously exists in everyday life of immigrants but does not get critical attention

due to invisibility. However, as Duck and Rawls (2020) state, it is the most dangerous and

subtle form of racism because it maintains racist policies, thoughts, and actions and

provides a suitable context for them to be perpetuated. By focusing on the Iranian

immigrants' struggles in walking the boundaries of the Canadianness and their challenges

in navigating their identity in a racist society, I demonstrate how racism is a pervasive

taken-for-granted experience for the Iranian immigrants. Thus, my study advances the

knowledge of the racialization processes in the Atlantic Canadian cities and fills the gap

in understanding the Iranian immigrants' racialized experiences and the transition of their

master status after migration to a White-dominated society.

While belonging in the current theoretical literature was regarded mostly in

relation to place belongingness (Antonsich, 2010; Bennett, 2012), the politics of place

(Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011a), in relation to the connection of the individual to

society (May, 2013), my study tried to capture all these realms in the experiences of

Iranian immigrants in Canada. The concept of *temporary belonging* that I introduced as

an agentic strategy of action dependent on the context and time highlights the fact that

immigrants are agents of action and actively negotiate and penetrate the boundaries. Thus,

in line with Bennett's argument (2012) that considers belonging as something active that

agents do, *temporary belonging* highlights that belonging is something that immigrants do

in their everyday rather than something that they carry or feel in a passive way.

Moreover, as I showed in the introduction, the available empirical research

examines a variety range of topics regarding a sense of home and belonging for racialized

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and immigrant groups like the sense of belonging of immigrants to Canada and their

home country (Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2018); immigrants' racialized experiences

and the unequal relations in society (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007; Wu, Hou, & Schimmele,

2011; Hogarth, 2011; Moghissi, Rahnema, & Goodman, 2009); community belonging

within and beyond the immigrants' diaspora (Salami, et al., 2019; Sadeghi, 2023;

Deckman, 2022; Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018; Miller, 2003); and more recently, the

contradictory racialized experiences of Iranian immigrants and other Middle Eastern

Americans and Canadians and their struggles to navigate their identity in relation to their

race (Maghbouleh, 2017; Tajrobehkar, 2023). Despite that, the current literature on

immigration and belonging has not addressed the racialized experiences of Iranian

communities as one of the largest immigrant communities in Canadian Atlantic cities in

relation to their transnational practices, community building, and decision-making to

make a secondary migration away from theseAtlantic cities.

Though my findings in the area of race and racialization is in line with

Maghbouleh (2017) in the United States context and Tajrobehkar (2023) in Canada, the

concept of the racialized spiral of silence that I introduced advances the knowledge of the

racialized other groups who are silent about their racialized experiences and do not

recognize or sometimes even notice where their exclusionary experiences come from.

Another novelty of my research in the fields of sociology of belonging, race, and

migration is that it presents a detailed description of how the friendship communities of

belonging emerge from the everyday experiences and interactions of Iranian communities

in the Atlantic cities that have a different dynamic compared to the Iranian diaspora in the

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more traditional immigration gateways such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. It shows that the Iranian friendship communities of belonging is in response to the exclusionary experiences of the participants based on their immigration status, language and cultural differences with the centrality of their race. In other words, the communities of belonging are mostly shaped around the co-ethnic groups for Iranians rather than in negotiation with the Canadian communities, with acknowledging the temporary forms of belonging among the colleagues in the workplace settings in more diverse contexts such as Toronto and sometimes Halifax.

Limitations

Access to the non-Bahá'í first-wave Iranian immigrants was a limitation in this study. They were less willing to participate in any study that could potentially relate to politics. Moreover, their children sometimes were the gatekeepers of their parents' relationships, and it was not easy to contact them directly and gain their trust to conduct an interview.

Moreover, I chose to conduct ethnographic interviews with the participants rather than spend significant time with the Iranian community in each province. I had spent about four years during the interviews with the participants in Newfoundland, and I had been among the Iranian community in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia before my fieldwork several times. Therefore, I had a significant understanding of the Iranian communities in these provinces, with a deep understanding of the dynamics of their relationship in Newfoundland, as a member of the community. However, the time and

resource restrictions in my Ph.D. studies were a limitation of the study that restrained me from spending a significant amount of time (about three months) in each community.

The COVID-19 restrictions also delayed and interrupted my fieldwork. The situation was uncertain, and I could not plan my trips before the end of the first round of vaccination. The rules were constantly changing, and it was impossible to plan a solid, uninterrupted plan. Moreover, many participants were hesitant to have me at their homes because of their family members' vulnerability, and they preferred to conduct the interviews outside of their homes. Therefore, I had to switch between online and in-person interviews, which prevented me from seeing the inside of the participants' homes.

Additionally, a few participants restricted the interview time to an hour or 1.5 hours due to their tight schedules. Therefore, I had to ask questions quickly in a few cases and did not have much time to ask probing questions. In most cases, however, I did not have such restrictions, and the interviews lasted as long as the participants were willing to give more details.

Future Directions

My research offers an insider analytical research perspective about the first generation of Iranian immigrants' everyday experiences of home, belonging, and racialization in the Canadian Atlantic cities and Ontario. The future direction of this study can address the sense of belonging for the non-Bahá'í first-wave Iranian immigrants.

Another direction would be to address the second wave of Iranian immigrants' experiences of belonging and how they negotiate the boundaries of Canadianness. Such studies are necessary to understand how the issues of race and racialization evolve around the place of born, skin colour, language, culture, access to resources, etc.

My study addressed men's and women's experiences of home, belonging, and racialization. Future studies can extend the gendered experiences of home and role transitions to broader contexts and study the intersections of gender, belonging, and racialization in the realm of home, community, workplace, and other social settings. This is important since we lack attention to the intersections of gender, race, class, and space and place in relation to Iranian immigrants in the global diasporic communities.

Also, studies on the other side of immigration, the locals, are necessary to show how White Canadians see and operate their interactions, such as friendship intimacy. It is useful to know how the two different worlds of immigrants and locals collide and interact with each other. It opens a new direction to analyze how stereotypes and prejudice around communities take shape. It can also contribute to decreasing stereotypes through mutual cultural understanding.

The role of third places in connecting Iranian immigrants to Canadian society and navigating their sense of belonging became evident in my study. A future direction that is worth exploring in more depth is related to the role of these places and how they impact immigrants in more traditional immigration gateways vs. other medium or small size cities in Canada. Such studies can be comparative and provide a detailed narrative of how these spaces impact the immigrants' ability in doing belonging and connection to society.

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My findings reflect the participants' point of view about the most significant aspects of a sense of belonging in a specific period of time and specific places, depending on the social location of each participant. Therefore, while they advance our understanding of creating communities of belonging in the Atlantic cities and beyond, the process of racialization in Canada, and the immigrants' retention, these findings are not generalizable. My dissertation evolved around the overarching argument that the first generation of Iranian immigrants contributed to shaping the communities of belonging within the Iranian diaspora in a way that differs from each other while having significant similarities. It demonstrated how Iranian immigrant communities function in these Atlantic cities and how their transnational practices contribute to creating the communities of belonging within each region with their own diversity. Moreover, it advances our knowledge of the racialization processes in the Atlantic Canadian cities and fills the gap in understanding the Iranian immigrants' racialized experiences and the transition of their master status after migration to a White-dominated society.

Another avenue to continue the research is the exploration of the relationship between Iranian immigrants and other immigrant groups. This exploration will reveal the impact of internalized Whiteness on Iranian immigrants in conjunction with the Aryan myth on how they see and categorize racialized others and as a result of the dominance of the colonial power.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide and Questions

Topics:

- Being away from home (Iran)
- Pathway to immigration (PR/Citizenship)
- Everyday life practices and interactions
- Using different spaces
- Relationships with friends, family, neighbours, co-workers
- Home design, home décor, touchstones
- Celebrations, rituals, ceremonies: Iranian/Canadian/International
- Personal emotions of being at home
- Being an immigrant at home (in a broader meaning)
- COVID-19 impacts on the relationships and a sense of belonging
- Intercultural influences and exchanging cultural practices
- New routine balances: Gender roles, Time management, Work-Study-House errands

Questions

1) Tell me about yourself (age range, occupation, marital status, any children, etc.?), When and why did you come to Canada?

2) What was your initial immigration status? What is your immigration status now?

3) How did you learn to manage yourself here in Canada? Opening a bank account, finding jobs, mortgage, transportation, housing, medical system, etc,.?

4) What was the most challenging thing in your everyday life? What surprised you the most here? What was the hardest thing to figure out here?

5) How did your family react to you coming here?

6) Describe your previous house(s)/home(s) in Iran and tell me about what you have missed the most about it/them? What do you do when you miss it/them?

7) What does home mean to you? Where is your home now? Tell me about your home decoration in here.

8) Tell me about your current home. How did you find it? Where is the most favorite part of your house in here? Why?

9) What do you do at your house to feel comfortable and make yourself home? Tell me about your Decorations/Food/Music, etc.

10) Tell me about your daily routines in here about: Time management, balancing work-study-household errands. Who usually cooks? What kinds of foods do you cook? How your daily activities have changes? (i.e., how often you cook, who cooks, what you cook, cleaning, partying, etc).

11) Do you have access to the Iranian food supply? How do you provide the Iranian cooking essentials and other ingredients? How important is it to you?

12) How have COVID-19 situations impacted your daily life at your home? What changes have you experienced at your home during the pandemic?

13) What was the most challenging effect of COVID-19 on your life, and how did/do you cope with it? How did you try to alleviate them for yourself?

14) Tell me about the people you are in connection with here. Who are they? (Iranian/Canadian/International/Through social media and online platforms)? How often do you meet them, and why are they important to you? (Neighbours, friends, family).

15) What communities do you feel you belong to?

16) Tell me about your neighbours and your neighbourhood in here. Who are your neighbours? How do you communicate with your neighbours? How often and where do you see or meet them? Where are they from?

17) Tell me about how you are feeling about being an immigrant in Canada?

18) How is your experience of raising children here? How do you imagine it would be in the future if you decided to have a child?

19) Has it occurred to you to think about leaving this city/province?

20) Where do you see your future? Do you think you will stay in this province?

21) Describe your ideal home to me. Where would it be? What would it look like? Who are there living with you, and who is around you there? (in the neighbourhood/city/country). Give examples.

22) Tell me about the places/areas/groups/communities ("Jaa, Kojaa" in Persian which grasps the physical and social aspects of space) or groups you feel you belong to?

Final Questions:

23) Is there anything that I should have asked, and I did not?

24) Please show me the picture/s that implies the feeling of "home" in your mind and describe them to me.

25) Is there any one you could introduce to me, or could put me in touch with to conduct this interview with them?