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# "We were Meant to go Down One Road, but Now We Have Rerouted": A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Experience of Aging Out-of-place

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Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy  
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## Abstract

In an age of globalization, the experience of aging in a foreign land is part of the late-life experience of many older adults. However, studies of aging and migration have largely failed to conceptualize the unique resettlement experiences of immigrants entering North America as older adults. This dissertation asked, “What is the experience of aging out-of-place?” Specifically, this research question aimed to understand how late-life immigrants relate to, and connect and engage with places through aging processes, and the essentiality of daily occupations within such engagement. An interpretive paradigm and a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology guided this inquiry. The hermeneutic phenomenological method informed by the work of van Manen (1990, 1997) informed the study processes. A phenomenological interview and a photo-elicitation interview were conducted with ten Sinhalese late-life immigrants who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years. The essence of the aging out-of-place experience was captured through three essential themes. Late-life immigrants 1.) negotiate new and familiar ways of aging, 2.) mitigate loss through everyday occupation, and 3.) live between two worlds. Wilcock’s Occupational Perspective on Health (2006; 1998a) and the transactional perspective on occupation, informed by Dewey’s theory of transactionalism, were integrated in the discussion of this dissertation. From this work, I posit two key conclusions. First, late-life immigrants renegotiate ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging in the post-migration context. Second, late-life immigrants engage in continual transactions, through integrating elements from their past and present, within everyday occupations and places. By examining the nexus of ageing and immigration, this study addresses acknowledged gaps in literature concerning aging out-of-place from an occupational perspective, and the scarcity of literature examining the experiences of late-life immigrants from such a perspective.

## Keywords

human occupation, aging out-of-place, late-life immigration, phenomenology, transactionalism, occupational science

## Dedication

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යා යුතු තැනට යනවාමයි ගලන ගඟ

This work is dedicated to my late-grandparents,  
Seeli and Stanley Fernando.  
I hope I have made you proud.

## Acknowledgments

This academic journey has been a profound, life-changing experience. Undertaking this once unthinkable project has been both challenging and rewarding. I would like to acknowledge the people who have supported and guided this PhD journey, for without them this work would not have come to fruition.

I must express my immense gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jan Polgar, whose critical questions and feedback furthered my thinking, allowing me to grow as a researcher and as an occupational scientist. Your words of advice have provided me with invaluable tools that will remain with me beyond the work of this dissertation. I am also deeply grateful for the support of my supervisory committee. The wisdom and guidance received from Dr. Debbie Laliberte-Rudman and Dr. Carri Hand, as well as Dr. Suzanne Huot during the early stages of this work, is greatly appreciated. I also wish to extend a warm thank you to the examining committee for taking the time out of your busy lives to read, evaluate, and provide feedback on my work.

I am forever indebted to my parents for their sacrifices, unconditional love, and unwavering support throughout my life. To my husband whose smiles, hugs, and encouraging words have brightened this journey. To my brother for shouldering my share of the responsibilities in my absence and being my role model. To my cousin, Sugee, aunt, Sujatha, and friend, Gyanika, for being my sounding boards and keeping me sane throughout this process. To graduate school colleagues, a thank you is extended for the friendship and the opportunities for candid and thoughtful discussion.

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction to the study

*To see my son, and the little one  
I came to Canada with eyes wide open  
I cannot put into words how I feel right now  
The body is here, but my heart, my mind was left behind*

This dissertation presents an interpretive phenomenological study exploring the experience of aging out-of-place, from the perspectives of late-life immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ontario, Canada. The title of this dissertation is a direct quotation from a study participant who described aging out-of-place as a rerouting from his intended life trajectory. This was a prevailing opinion among the late-life immigrant participants of the study. Each chapter of this dissertation begins with a stanza of a poem that was written by a study participant as a letter to his mother in Sri Lanka. The poem, which describes his experiences in Canada, was originally written in Sinhalese, and translated to English by the researcher. In the poem, he speaks of immigrating for the love of his children and grandchildren and gratuitously speaks of experiencing greater quality of life in Canada. However, these feelings are tempered by experiences of desolation and disorder in the post-migration context, as well as emotional attachments to his motherland. The poem in its entirety can be found in Appendix N.

This chapter serves as a preview of the contents of the dissertation. It formulates the problem, situates the research, elucidates the objectives of the study, introduces the research population, defines terminology that are frequently drawn upon throughout the dissertation and identifies the significance of this research. At the end of this chapter, the plan of presentation of the dissertation is outlined.

#### 1.1 Introduction

In the last decade, the desirability and importance of “aging in place”, or growing older in one’s home (Black, 2008), has come to the attention of various stakeholders (Black, 2008; World Health Organization, 2015). There are claims that older people prefer to age in place (American Association of Retired Persons, 2005) because it enables

the maintainance of independence, autonomy and connection to social support (Black, 2008; Cristoforetti, Gennai, & Rodeschini, 2011; Cutchin, 2003; Wiles, Leibing, Guberman, Reeve, & Allen, 2012). However, in an age of globalization, the experience of aging in a foreign land and experiencing unfamiliar environments is part of the late-life experience of many older adults (Batalova, 2012; Johansson et al., 2013; Sadarangani & Jun, 2015; Treas, 2008b). Due to economic considerations and cultural norms surrounding filial piety, the emigration of adult children to host countries is often followed by the emigration of their elderly parents (Zhou, 2012, 2017). In the host country, these older adults make substantial contributions within the immigrant family (Choudhry, 2001; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Krishnagiri, Fuller, Ruda, & Diwan, 2013; Ng, Northcott, & McIrvin Abu-laban, 2004; Treas, 2008b; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004a; Zhou, 2012, 2017). Simultaneously, they confront numerous challenges to healthy aging and to integration in the post-migration context (Acharya & Northcott, 2007; Choudhry, 2001; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Zhou, 2012, 2017).

In occupational science, within which this work is positioned, immigration has been acknowledged to be a stressful life transition (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Krishnagiri et al., 2013), particularly due to its disruptive and disorganizing effect on one's habitual occupations. However, emerging perspectives have argued that occupations are integral to negotiating relationships that connect people to different places in a global context (Johansson et al., 2013). Immigration has been a topic of increasing interest within occupational science (e.g., Bennett, Scornaiencki, Brzozowski, Denis, & Magalhaes, 2012; Boerema, Russell, & Aguilar, 2010; Gupta & Sullivan, 2008, 2013; Kim, Hocking, McKenzie-Green, & Nayar, 2016; Krishnagiri et al., 2013; Nayar & Hocking, 2006; Nayar, Hocking, & Giddings, 2012; Nayar, Hocking, & Wilson, 2007; Wright-St Clair et al., 2017; Wright-St Clair & Nayar, 2017), however, studies of aging and migration, until recently, have failed to conceptualize the unique resettlement experiences of immigrants entering North America as older adults (Sadarangani & Jun, 2015). The daily lives of older immigrants also remain concealed from gerontology's line of sight (Becker, 2003). This dearth of empirical knowledge has impeded understanding of the impacts of globalization on aging, and the everyday experiences of older adults who resettle in unfamiliar nations and

cultural environments after they have developed a life-long attachment to their homeland (Zhou, 2012).

## 1.2 Situating the researcher

I was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka to Sinhalese, Buddhist, middle-class parents. Naturally, I was immersed in the culture and conditionally aware of the cultural, religious and societal norms, fluent in the Sinhalese language, and tolerant of the tropical heat.

In search of better economic and educational opportunities, my family immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka in 1999. I was 9 years old. As an immigrant child in a foreign land, I was confronted with many obstacles. Many of my early days were spent indoors shielded from the elements and from foreign strangers I could not yet relate to. Initially, my poor English fluency and latent acculturation to North American culture hindered efforts to keep pace with my peers.

Over the years, I have strived to maintain my Sinhalese identity in Canada through interacting in my native tongue of Sinhalese with family and community members, attending cultural and religious events and places (e.g., Buddhist temples), and through occasionally visiting Sri Lanka. While I cherished the aspects of my mother culture that nourished me, I have discarded aspects that were unbecoming or foreign to Canada. Thus, as my identity as a Canadian strengthened, my identities as a Sri Lankan, a Sinhalese, and a Buddhist became diluted. I felt neither as an insider nor an outsider among the Sri Lankans or the Canadians, and yet an insider and outsider to both.

At the time of the study, I was a 28-year-old doctoral candidate in the Occupational Science field of the Health and Rehabilitation Sciences graduate program at Western University, in London, Ontario, Canada. I identify myself as both an occupational therapist and an occupational scientist. I have always gravitated towards working with older adults. During my occupational therapy clinical fieldwork placements, I made sure to select opportunities that would allow me to work closely with the geriatric population. Immigration took away the two most influential people in my young life, my maternal grandmother and grandfather. Separated by bodies of water, I

was no longer able to enjoy the mundanity of everyday - walking to the market with my grandfather or combing and braiding my grandmother's beautiful silver hair.

Unexpectedly, I even missed my grandfather's occasional scolding. While I never consciously 'grieved' this loss, having the opportunity to work alongside older adults during volunteer opportunities or during fieldwork placements drew me back to past memories and allowed me to give back care and respect to my grandparents.

My maternal grandparents arrived in Canada under a visitor visa in October 2006, seven years after we had emigrated from Sri Lanka. The first few days after their arrival were spent with family members reminiscing old memories, acquainting us with developments in Sri Lanka, and speaking about what they were most excited to see in Canada. I took pleasure in the simple details – taking in the familiar signature scent of my grandmother, and my grandfather's distinct voice that commanded the attention of all those who were present. My parents, brother and I stayed up for the first few days embracing and listening to my grandparents never-ending stories. After living a very isolated life in Canada following immigration, my family finally experienced a sense of home when we were reunited with our beloved grandparents. The feelings were mutual. Despite their absence over the years, my grandparents quickly caught up to speed with our lives in Canada. After a few days, my family returned to the daily grind of school and work.

My grandparents' initial enthusiasm was short-lived. I saw their moods change with each passing day as the novelty of Canada wore off. My grandmother, an excellent cook, no longer knew her way around the 'foreign' kitchen, my grandfather was deprived of the daily exchange of chatter and pleasantries with neighbors. Instead, I would find my once active grandparents sitting idly in the kitchen waiting for the other members of the family to return home. As the temperature dropped, their enthusiasm followed. A few weeks later, they expressed a desire to return to Sri Lanka. They said that they could not tolerate the cold. Dismally, we dropped my grandparents at the airport. They returned to their native Sri Lanka to be embraced by the tropical sun.

A couple of years later, they passed away. I never had the opportunity to re-visit them or inquire about their experiences in Canada, or their decision to return to their native country. To this day, I live with the guilt of not speaking to my grandparents about their experiences in Canada. I meditate on whether I could have done more to make their stay more enjoyable.

Moreover, I am married to an Italian immigrant to Canada, whose elderly parents maintain their residence in Italy. To advance our careers, my husband and I have considered travelling to other parts of the world. This would mean leaving behind our parents in their countries of residence during their twilight years. I expect that this migration would disrupt intergenerational relations, filial piety and care arrangements. Despite aging-in-place, I often wonder how our parents would fare without the expected and traditional familial resources.

These curiosities about my grandparent's experiences in Canada, as well as my parents and parents-in-law's experiences as they move into their old age encouraged me to study aging out-of-place. I wondered about the experiences of older adults who resettle in foreign nations after having developed a life-long attachment to their homeland.

This work is inextricably linked to my perspective and understanding of aging out-of-place. These experiences have informed my interpretive lens. van Manen (1984) posits that the starting point of phenomenological research involves identifying what it is that fascinate the researcher and identifying this fascination as a true phenomenon. I reveal these anecdotes to offer a glimpse into the perspectives that molded my interaction with the central phenomenon in this study - the experience of aging out-of-place.

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

Using an interpretive phenomenological methodology and method, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Sinhalese late-life immigrants who are aging out-of-place. This dissertation presents anecdotes, themes and conclusions induced from Sinhalese late-life immigrants' descriptions and understandings of aging out-of-place as experienced and negotiated through occupation.



This study sought to enhance understanding of the interactions between occupation and late-life immigration. The increasing interest in immigration within the discipline of occupational science has resulted in the emergence of understandings of this life transition from an occupational lens. Through generating knowledge of how late-life immigrants connect with different places through their daily occupations, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature on occupation and immigration. More specifically, this work will give visibility to the concept of aging out-of-place and late-life immigration within occupational science.

In addition to occupational science, this phenomenological work contributes to the gerontological and migration literature by furnishing understandings of this radical life-transition. This study will inform various stakeholders, including older adults, families, ethnic and broader communities, service providers and policy makers, of the essence of aging out-of-place. Moreover, this knowledge may facilitate continued discovery that can shape and inform aging and immigration policy and practices.

## 1.4 Research population

### 1.4.1 The Sinhalese

I sought to uncover the experience of aging out-of-place through authentic voices and pure meanings that did not include prior interpretations and translations. I turned to the recently immigrated older adults in my own ethnic community. Late-life immigrants of Sinhalese descent were purposefully selected due to my fluency in Sinhalese, the native language of the Sinhalese people, which facilitated communication with older adults who did not have a good command of the English language. I felt confident that my Sinhalese language skills and insidership within the Sinhalese community in Canada would grant me access to raw and authentic data. Moreover, an ethnically homogenous sample allowed for a thorough investigation of the phenomenon, particularly when cultural and religious norms and beliefs were implicated in the aging out-of-place experience. This contextual information prefaces cultural and religious threads that interweave through the findings of this dissertation.

The Sinhalese are an ethnic group native to the island of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is a developing country with a multiethnic, multi-religious society where the Sinhalese majority constitutes 74.9% of the population. Their ethnic identity is founded on language, historical heritage and religion. The Sinhalese are predominantly Theravada Buddhists (70.1%), although a small percentage of Sinhalese follow branches of Christianity (Department of Census & Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012).

Family- and kinship-based intergenerational arrangements continue to be the cornerstone social institution of elderly care in contemporary Sri Lanka (Siddhisena, 2005). Traditionally within Sri Lankan families, adult-children are considered the primary caregivers of older parents. While the Sinhalese tend to live in nuclear families, customary intergenerational relations are maintained (Amarabandu, 2004).

Filial piety, which emphasizes that children have a responsibility for taking care of their elders (Choudhry, 2001; Sudha, Suchindran, Mutran, Rajan, & Sarma, 2007), is a moral obligation and a societal expectation among Sri Lankans (Siddhisena, 2005; Watt et al., 2014; Welgama, 2016). Buddhism plays a vital role in Sri Lankan society in maintaining the traditional social values of elderly care (Perera, 1999). Filial piety is believed to be an act of beneficence that brings high merits to the caregiving child (Siddhisena, 2005). However, transnational migration of these traditional caregivers is challenging the family as the social institution of elder care (Reeves, 2013).

International migration has been a dominant trend in Sri Lanka for the past forty years, with 14% of the Sri Lanka's total population estimated to be abroad (Reeves, 2013). Sri Lanka was the fifth largest source country of immigrants to Canada between 1991 and 2001 (Hyndman, 2003) due to factors including armed conflict, political instability, and economic inequities, among many others. The majority of these entrants were from the Tamil minority who were fleeing the civil war which persisted from 1983-2009 (Reeves, 2013). While the end of the armed conflict has brought peace to the island, Sri Lanka continues to experience emigration, particularly of professionals who seek improved quality of life, better earnings, and greater opportunities in their chosen host country (De Silva et al., 2014).

Although the Sinhalese constitute the main ethnic group in Sri Lanka, the majority of immigrants from Sri Lanka to Canada have been of Tamil descent (Reeves, 2013). According to the 2016 census, there are 152, 595 Canadians who claim Sri Lankan ancestry, but only 7,285 claimed to be Sinhalese (Statistics Canada, 2017). The available statistics are not reported by age groups.

Sri Lankan immigrants in Canada have settled mostly in metropolitan regions of Ontario and Quebec (Ferdinands, 2002). Collectivities based along ethnic lines have provided this diaspora with support in settlement and enabled the development of cultural and religious institutions and celebrations. These ethnic networks nurture the development of various groups such as alumni associations and foster co-ethnic and co-religious transnational marital unions. Several Buddhist temples catering to the Sinhalese community exist in the GTA. Besides being places of worship, these temples teach the native tongue, the Buddhist philosophy, and organize cultural, religious and social events and celebrations such as Sinhalese New Year (Reeves, 2013). Upon immigrating to Canada, new Sinhalese Buddhist immigrants often connect with these Buddhist temples to engage in familiar cultural and religious practices and expand their social capital, allowing them to preserve their ethnic identity, while simultaneously integrating to Canada.

#### 1.4.2 The Sinhalese Buddhists

The following section briefly introduces Buddhism and the Buddhist philosophy, to frame findings related to the participants' religious devotion that are presented in Chapter Five. Specifically, participants of this study interpreted life events through the perspectives of their religious orientation and incorporated religious virtues in their everyday lives.

Buddhism is centered around finding an end to human suffering, or to attaining enlightenment (Nirvana). The Four Noble Truths form the foundation of Buddhism (Keown, 2013d). The first of these truths state that life is suffering because it is impermanent and ever-changing. For instance, a healthy body is not eternal, rather it is susceptible to frailty, sickness, and death. We are also vulnerable to fluctuating levels of

power, status and wealth throughout our lifetime. This instability and changeability provokes suffering. The second Noble Truth implicates desire and ignorance as being the root of suffering. Specifically, desire refers for the craving for pleasure, material goods and immortality, all of which can never be fully gratified. Ignorance refers to an undeveloped mind that is blind to the nature of reality, which gives rise to vices such as greed, envy, hatred and anger. The Third Noble Truth is the truth of end of suffering in this life or in the spiritual life through achieving Nirvana. When one reaches Nirvana, a transcendent state free from suffering and Samsara (the cycle of rebirth) spiritual enlightenment, is reached. The Fourth noble truth identifies the Noble Eightfold Path as the method for attaining the end of suffering.

The steps of the Noble Eightfold Path include 1.) right understanding (to see the true nature of life without succumbing to illusions or pretenses), 2.) right thought (to act out of love and compassion), 3.) right speech (to refrain from harmful/deceitful communication), 4.) right action (to not exploit oneself or others), 5.) right livelihood (to earn one's living righteously without resorting to nefarious activities); 6.) right effort (to use one's energies to overcome ignorance and destructive desires), 7.) right mindfulness (to develop awareness of things, oneself, people and reality), and 8.) right concentration (to become absorbed in one's mind). Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration form the basis of Buddhist meditation (Keown, 2013d). These two steps are the most vital of the Noble Eightfold path, as without proper meditation, one cannot reach the spiritually liberated state of Nirvana (Keown, 2013c).

Along with the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, lay Buddhists are also encouraged to abide five basic rules for moral conduct, known as the five precepts. These include abstinence from 1.) killing, 2.) stealing, 3.) sexual misconduct, 4.) lying, and 5.) mind-altering intoxicants. Buddhists remind themselves of the commitment to protect these precepts by reciting them frequently. Additionally, these precepts are also observed during formal ceremonies at the temple specifically on Poya days, the full moon day of each month. These ethical guidelines are aimed at advancing one's spiritual journey by preventing misdeeds through words and actions that are harmful to others (Keown, 2013a).

Buddhists believe in Karma, a Sanskrit term that means “action” or “doing” but refers broadly to thoughts, speech and actions (Keown, 2013b). Karma is the law of moral causation that alludes to the cause and effect of one’s actions. Instead of fate or destiny, Buddhists believe that one’s own good or bad actions affect oneself (Narada Matha Thera, 1993). Good actions involve the absence of bad actions, or positive acts such as generosity, righteousness, and meditation. Contrastingly, bad actions include violations of the five precepts. The weight of these actions vary according to various factors such as frequency, intentionality, and level of regret felt by the perpetrator (Keown, 2013b)

Karma is implicated in the cycle of rebirth or reincarnation, referred to as samsara. It is believed that all living beings undergo a cyclical movement and are continually reborn until nirvana is attained. This recurring existence is believed to bring on suffering. Buddhism indoctrinates that there are six separate realms into which any living being can be born – three fortunate realms and three unfortunate realms. Those with positive karma are reborn into one of the fortunate realms as a demigod, god, or man. The realm of man is considered the highest realm of rebirth, as it is the only realm to offer an opportunity to achieve Nirvana. Thus, to be born human is an opportunity for spiritual liberation, a rare opportunity that should not be taken lightly (Keown, 2013b).

## 1.5 Clarification of language

This section provides brief descriptions of important constructs that permeate this body of work.

### 1.5.1 Aging out-of-place

While aging out-of-place has been used to describe the experiences of a variety of older adults, including homeless older adults (McIlwain & Burns, 2015), this term is primarily used to denote the physical and emotional experiences of retired migrants, aging labour migrants, and refugees who are growing older in a foreign nation (Sadarangani & Jun, 2015). This dissertation broadens this definition to include the physical, emotional and social experiences of older adults who have experienced migration in their old age.

### 1.5.2 Late-life immigrant

While a concrete definition of late-life immigration is unavailable in the current literature, research examining late-life immigrants typically refers to older immigrants who recently-arrive in a non-native country (Mukherjee & Diwan, 2016; Sadarangani & Jun, 2015), where old age is unspecified. While many immigration scholars allude to foreign-born adults who arrive in the non-native country at age of 65 years and older (Bhattacharya & Shibusawa, 2009; Sadarangani & Jun, 2015; Treas, 2008b), other researchers have included participants as young as 50 years old (Choi, 2015; Hill, Angel, Balistreri, & Herrera, 2012). Sadarangani & Jun (2015) and Treas (2008) also quantify ‘recent’ as immigration within the last 10 years. In this dissertation, late-life immigrants are defined as older adults, 65 years and older, who immigrated to Canada in the last 10 years.

### 1.5.3 Immigrant Acculturation

Acculturation has been chiefly explored among persons who have relocated to a culture that is divergent from their own (Santisteban & Mitrani, 2002). Acculturation refers to the modification to culturally informed values, attitudes, and behaviors as a result of exchanges between individuals and groups of people (Berry, 2001; Lopez, Ehly, & Garcia-Vazquez, 2002). For instance, one’s involvement in another culture can influence “the way they dress, what they eat, their greeting procedures...” (Berry, 2001, p. 621). Early on, Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as two or more cultures coming together, resulting in cultural changes in both parties. Over the years, these terms have taken on more specific meanings related to minority groups embedded in a dominant culture. Moreover, the notion of change within the process of acculturation has been modified by Berry (1990) who stated that “acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups than in the other” (Berry, 1990, p. 294). Yet more recently, acculturation research has shifted its focus to the process of mutual change (Berry, 1997).

Within migration research, acculturation recognizes that recently arrived immigrants belonging to minority groups possess experiences from their native culture,

and consequently, introduce these experiences to the dominant culture of the host country. Acculturation also encompasses the process of adaptation and culture modification (Berry, 1997; Choi & Thomas, 2009) and have four possible outcomes, namely assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration (Krishnan & Berry, 1992). Assimilation, often recognized by the term ‘melting pot’ (Berry, 1997), occurs when persons within minority groups willingly or reluctantly relinquish their cultural heritage, and gradually embrace the customs, values, language, and lifestyles of the dominant culture (Berry, 2001). Separation involves the maintenance of the original culture while avoiding interactions with the dominant culture (Hernandez, 2009). Marginalization occurs “when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance... and little interest in having relations with others” (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Finally, integration alludes to the harmonious union of two cultures, wherein immigrants maintain and value their original culture, and simultaneously engage in regular interaction with the host culture (Berry, 1997; Choi & Thomas, 2009). Integration thus simultaneously facilitates participation as an integral part of the larger societal framework and the maintainance of cultural integrity and movement (Berry, 2001).

#### 1.5.4 Occupation

Various definitions of occupation emphasize its multifaceted nature. Law, Polatajko, Baptiste and Townsend (1997) stated that occupations are activities or a group of activities that are classified, coordinated and given value and meaning by the doer and the culture in which he/she is embedded. Occupation includes all that people do to occupy themselves including self-care, leisure and productive contribution to the social and economic fabric of their communities (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2002). These occupations are purposeful and meaningful, and influence and are influenced by the environmental context in which they occur (Christiansen & Townsend, 2004; Creek & Hughes, 2008; Polatajko et al., 2007). Moreover, occupational engagement engenders feelings of value, meaning or worth to the doer (Christiansen & Townsend, 2004; Harvey & Pentland, 2004; Polatajko et al., 2007). Rather than solely attending to the act of doing, identifying the meaning and purpose of one’s occupational

choices will acknowledge the complexity of human behavior and enhance understanding of these behaviors and choices (Singlehurst, Corr, Griffiths, & Beaulieu, 2007).

Wilcock (1998, 2006) made an important theoretical contribution to the disciplines of occupational therapy and occupational science with the proposal of ‘An Occupational Perspective of Health’ in which occupation is deemed a “a central aspect of the human experience” (Wilcock, 1993, p. 17). Wilcock (1998) put forth a definition of occupation “as a synthesis of doing, being, and becoming” (p. 249) and elucidated the relationship between occupation and health. For Wilcock (2006) occupation is fundamental for human existence. In this context, occupation is broadly defined as “All that people need, want, or are obliged to do; what it means to them; and its ever-present potential as an agent of change” (Wilcock, 2006, p. 343). The study of doing, and how doing influences and contributes to what it means to be human can offer profound insight into people’s day-to-day existence. In fact, Yerxa (1990) stated that, “individuals are most true to their humanity when engaged in occupation” (p. 7).

## 1.6 Significance of the study

This study will add to the emerging body of literature addressing aging out-of-place. More specifically, this work helps to fill a gap in the occupational science and gerontological literature that currently neglects late-life immigration. This work provides insight into how late-life immigrants make sense of and come to accept their new environment, and the concomitant disconnection of familiar way of life, through the development and establishment of new occupational routines.

This research is also timely particularly in light of globalization and changing North American demographics (Torres-Gil & Treas, 2008). Over the last few years, Canada has welcomed many refugees (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). Canada has also committed to buttress the national economy through opening its doors to more economic immigrants (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017). Thus, it is not implausible that these waves of immigrants will be accompanied by their aging parents and grandparents. Thus, research that identifies the experiences, needs, capabilities and contributions of this subset of older adults will need to evolve.



While the experiences shared in this dissertation are specific to ten Sinhalese late-life immigrants and cannot be generalized, these findings can provide insights that can be considered in other similar contexts and circumstances. These understandings can encourage various stakeholders to consider the complexity of aging out-of-place. Service providers and policymakers will find the results of this study useful in understanding the impact of social and immigration policy on the occupational lives of late-life immigrants. Moreover, this research furnishes understandings to tackle misperceptions of late-life immigrants as being less than ideal immigrants and drains on society.

The influence of environment on human behavior has been a long-standing interest in occupational science. Specifically, the environment is understood to impact occupational participation. For instance, Kielhofner (2008) asserts that occupational participation emerges from the dynamic interaction of the person and the environment, wherein the environment provides opportunities, support, demands, and constraints for the person. Whiteford (2005) and Christiansen and Townsend (2010) highlight the context dependency of action. Thus, occupation and environment are understood to be inextricably linked, interwoven, and interdependent (Stadnyk, Townsend, & Wilcock, 2010). This study appeals to the discipline's interests in the interaction of occupation and environment. Using an ecological lens on occupational issues, this research provides knowledge of the person-environment interaction.

Western conceptual frameworks, with "assumptions of individualism, autonomy, purposefulness and meaning, progress and dominance over the environment" (Nayar, 2017, p.399), have monopolized occupational science (Hammell, 2013; Iwama, Thomson, & MacDonald, 2009). However, occupations are enacted in diverse milieus and by people with divergent worldviews. Occupational science has also failed to adequately incorporate non-Western perspectives, resulting in an ethnocentric body of literature (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004), and risks imposing these perspectives on the lives of persons with divergent cultural backgrounds. By developing an understanding of cultural differences, cultural norms, and insights of late-life immigrants and how they relate and connect to different places through their daily occupations, this study has the potential to further understandings of occupation beyond a western paradigm. Moreover,

the availability of divergent perspectives encourages stakeholders, including service providers, to re-think their approaches to culturally responsive, relevant and accountable services (Iwama et al., 2009) in this era of globalization.

As long as domestic immigration policies continue to permit the entry of late-life immigrants, stakeholders must give due attention to this currently under-noticed, vulnerable group in society. Their capabilities, contributions and needs must be recognized, to preserve the continuity and inspire the resilience of these older adults who venture into foreign lands during one of the most precarious stages of life.

## 1.7 Plan of presentation

This manuscript is written in a monograph format. Although the actual research process was not linear as is suggested by this dissertation, each stage of the study is reflected in a separate chapter for ease of readability and clarity of study processes. This first chapter offered an introduction to the study that situated myself as a researcher, elucidated the phenomenon under investigation and highlighted its purpose, introduced the research population, and clarified terms used throughout this work. The chapter concluded by identifying the significance of this work to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of aging out-of-place within occupational science. Chapter Two provides a literature review, examining the concepts of late-life immigration, ageing out-of-place, and how they have been understood from an occupational science lens.

Chapter Three elucidates the philosophical and theoretical positions that guided study methods. The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach to this research problem is described as is the rationale for choosing an interpretivist paradigm and a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. This chapter introduces Husserl, Heidegger, and van Manen whose thinking has informed this work. The theoretical implications of this methodological approach for the study methods are then discussed. Finally, this chapter prefaces Wilcock's Occupational Perspective of Health (2006; 1998a) and the transactional perspective on occupation which served as interpretive guides in the discussion of this dissertation.

Chapter Four describes how the methods of this research study were designed and implemented. This chapter first discusses the recruitment process and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. It then describes data collection and data analysis in depth. Originally, one phenomenological interview and one photo-elicitation interview were planned for data collection. However, due to a lack of success with picture taking, only a few participants took part in the photo-elicitation interview. The remainder of the sample participated in two phenomenological interviews. Data were analyzed using van Manen's (1997) framework for phenomenological analysis. Where applicable, the theoretical constructs from Chapter Three are highlighted to demonstrate how they informed the study methods. A discussion of how quality criteria were achieved and how ethical considerations were maintained is presented.

Chapter Five is devoted to the results of the study, which described the experience of aging out-of-place, through the perspectives of Sinhalese late-life immigrants. Three themes emerged as being essential to the late-life immigration experience. Late-life immigrants 1.) negotiate new and familiar ways of aging, 2.) mitigate loss through everyday occupation, and 3.) live between two worlds. To provide a comprehensive view of the data, each theme was supported with subthemes with a particular focus.

Chapter Six presents the discussion of this dissertation. The significance of the findings is described in light of what is known in the existing literature. New understandings and insights are discussed. Two theoretical frameworks, namely Wilcock's occupational perspective of health (2006; 1998) and the transactional perspective on occupation, informed by Dewey's theory of transactionalism, are used to interpret the findings. From this work, I posit two key conclusions. First, late-life immigrants renegotiate ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging in the post-migration context. Second, late-life immigrants engage in continual transactions with place, through integrating elements from their past and present, within everyday activities and places. The chapter then presents personal reflections that were collected and documented throughout the dissertation journey. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the strengths and limitations of the study, as well as the policy, practice and research implications of this work.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Background to the study

*Roads meander in different directions  
like the organized chaos of the nervous system  
Food, shelter, and for spending my life  
the comforts of this country are abound*

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of a review of literature, examining the concepts of late-life immigration and ageing out-of-place, and how they have been understood from an occupational science lens. This chapter first introduces the topic of late-life immigration, detailing older adults' motivation for, and means of immigrating to Canada, as well as the current understanding of the late-life immigration experience in the North American context. The discussion then moves to a synopsis of the concept of aging out-of-place by first examining the concept of aging-in-place and how this conceptualization may not resonate in the lives of immigrant older adults. The final section explores the occupational dimension of aging out-of-place. Given the inattention to late-life immigration within occupational science scholarship, this section explores additional bodies of research that examine how immigrants use occupations within the process of migration. This chapter concludes with a summary of issues revealed in the literature, putting forth an argument for the need to explore the everyday experiences of late-life immigrants.

#### 2.1 A profile of the late-life immigrant

In an age of globalization, the experience of aging in a foreign environment is part of the late-life experience of some older adults. In Canada, immigration and multiculturalism policies have given rise to an ethno-culturally diverse population (Edmonston, 2016; Mahmood, Chaudhury, Kobayashi, & Valente, 2008; Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). While most immigrant older adults have resided and grown older in North America over decades (Hossen & Westhues, 2013; Treas, 2008a), older adults continue to account for a small portion of new immigrants entering Canada (Edmonston, 2016; Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). Just over 4% of new immigrants who entered

Canada in 2012 were aged 65 years or older compared to approximately 15% of the Canadian population as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2016).

### 2.1.1 Push and pull factors of late-life immigration

Considerable Sri Lankan migrant communities, composed mainly of skilled immigrants, are located in Canada, United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Britain at present (Reeves, 2013) in a phenomenon known as the 'brain drain' (De Silva et al., 2014). Most immigrant Sri Lankans complete their education and migrate during young adulthood when their parents are in their 50s to 60s. The migration of adult children, who are the traditional caregivers within the Asian family, has significant impacts on familial eldercare by disrupting filial piety, intergenerational relationships, and self-identity (De Silva, 2017; Zhou, 2017). To maintain the traditional ideal of dependency in old age, older parents and grandparents follow their skilled immigrant children to North America (Zhou, 2017). Specifically, older immigrants are enticed by personal desires and requests of adult children to assist with the maintenance and operation of the household and with the rearing of grandchildren, and are attracted by the material comforts available in the non-native country (Kalavar, Kolt, Giles, & Driver, 2005; Nandan, 2005; Treas, 2008b), depending of course on the country to which they are immigrating. Moreover, retirement, failing health, and lack of family support in the native country serve as push factors that propel migration (Gupta, 2006; Rangaswamy, 2000). These push and pull factors facilitate family reunification as older adults immigrate in late-life to unite with their family members (Carr & Tienda, 2013; Kalavar et al., 2005). However, their hearts remain in their homelands as they traverse to unfamiliar lands (Treas, 2008a).

### 2.1.2 Family reunification via Parent and grandparent sponsorship

Canada's immigration policy primarily admits older parents and grandparents (PGP) through the sponsorship program. For instance, the majority of new permanent residents aged 65 and older (81.6% in 2015 and 82.7% in 2016) (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017a) arrived in Canada as family class immigrants (Ng et al., 2004; Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). Family class includes spouses, partners, dependent children, parents and grandparents, and siblings under the age of 18 who are

sponsored for immigration by a relative who is a citizen or permanent resident of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018). While the number of PGP admitted to Canada under the family class has fluctuated over the years, sponsored PGP generally constitute a small proportion of the overall family class immigrant group (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017).

The fluctuating number of admitted PGP has been attributed to the constantly changing parameters of the “ideal immigrant”. Opponents of PGP sponsorship reinforce the view of parents and grandparents as less than ideal as they are considered to be dependent, have diminished capacity for economic contribution, and drain Canada’s social welfare system (Bragg & Wong, 2016). Specifically, Fitzpatrick (2013) reported that opponents have disparagingly described older immigrants’ as burdens on Canadian taxpayers and their use of social welfare systems as “an abuse of Canada’s generosity” (para. 8), particularly with regard to the healthcare system (Stoffman, 2002). In 2013, the Canadian Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenny bluntly stated: “If you think your parents may need to go on welfare in Canada, please don't sponsor them. We're not looking for more people on welfare, we're not looking to add people as a social burden to Canada. If their expectation is that they need the support of the state then they should stay in their country of origin, not come to Canada” (Fitzpatrick, 2013, para. 16).

Canadian immigration has replaced social values with economic goals by encouraging the entrance of economic migrants such as skilled immigrants and investors (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). However, proponents of PGP sponsorship highlight the insignificant increase in the use of the systems by the small number of immigrants who belong to this category. Furthermore, they argue that the benefits of PGP sponsorship are not unilateral (Dench, 2006; DeShaw, 2006; McLaren, 2006; Vanderplaat, Ramos, & Yoshida, 2013). Specifically within the immigrant family, these older immigrants have been reported to be an important resource in coping with the disruptions caused by immigration (Treas, 2008a). The improved quality of life and economic outcomes for the families who have co-residing parents and grandparents’ offsets, if not surpasses, the cost of utilization of services in the host society (McLaren, 2006; Tummala-Narra, Sathasivam-Rueckert, & Sundaram, 2013; Zhou, 2017).

Furthermore, the availability of the option to sponsor PGP and other family class members may attract or retain 'desirable' immigrants (DeShaw, 2006).

Based on compassion, humanitarianism (Daniel, 2005; Ley & Hiebert, 2001), and the value granted to family relationships, family reunification has been a longstanding fixture of Canadian immigration, appearing in immigration policy as early as 1908 (DeShaw, 2006). However, the Canadian federal government froze sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents in 2011 to deal with the massive backlog of wait times and reopened the door slightly by accepting 5000 sponsorship applications under a newly reformed PGP program in 2014. That number was doubled to 10,000 in 2016 (Forrest, 2018). The process of sponsorship of parents and grandparents underwent, yet again, another change in 2017 as the government proposed the use of a lottery system. For the year of 2018, the Canadian government is requesting eligible sponsors, who meet the program's income requirement, to submit their interest. Their applications are entered into a pool from which the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada randomly draws 10,000 applications which permit the sponsor to submit an official application to sponsor a parent or grandparent for permanent residency (Government of Canada, 2018a).

To ensure that PGPs will not need to seek social assistance from the Canadian government, the new program requires sponsors to assume financial responsibility for the PGP for a period of 20 years, a rise from the previous undertaking of 10 years. To ensure the financial responsibility remains with the sponsoring child, and not on the Canadian taxpayer, the Old Age Security Act was amended to align with the changes made to sponsorship regulations, wherein the immigrant must have reached 20 years of residency in Canada prior to eligibility (Government of Canada, 2018b). Consequently, the sponsoring adult children become an important source of financial security for these older adults. In fact, many recently arrived older immigrants co-reside with their sponsoring child (Da & Garcia, 2015; Ng & Northcott, 2013).

### 2.1.3 Challenges faced by late-life immigrants

Late-life immigrants are unique from other immigrants as they have distinct vulnerabilities. Specifically, the late-life immigrant simultaneously faces the social and biological stressors of aging and challenges of resettlement in a foreign nation. He/she is required to acculturate to a socio-economically, spatially, psychologically, culturally and linguistically dissimilar society. Moreover, long-term and recent immigrant older adults, who arrive in Canada at different life stages, have distinct experiences and vulnerabilities (Angel, Angel, Lee, & Markides, 1999; Ng et al., 2004). Ng et al. (2004) broadly studied the adaptation and integration of South Asian older adults (60 years and older) who immigrated to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The study findings were differentiated based on age at immigration, with recent immigrants defined as those who entered Canada in old age (55 years and older) within the last 10 years. Regardless of age at immigration, South Asian older immigrants in general were satisfied with life in Canada, particularly with their living arrangements, safety, support of social network and cultural participation. Although older immigrants in general experienced difficulties in the post-migration context, economic insecurity, loneliness, discrimination, weather-related barriers, language incompetence, amongst others, were more salient in the lives of late-life immigrants. The study confirmed the divergence of experiences between late-life immigrants and those who immigrated to Canada at a younger age by concluding that “growing old in Canada is easier than spending old age in Canada” (p. 266). Moreover, late-life immigrants are also confronted with the cultural dissonance within the sponsoring family (Blair, 2012; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005). For instance, Kalavar and Van Willigen (2005) found that Asian Indian late-life immigrants in the United States who co-resided with their sponsoring children experienced culture shock. They were conflicted between the Eastern values of collectivity and interdependence across the life course and in old age, and the independence, autonomy and self-reliance in old age favored in Western cultures. These disparate societal values challenge the adaptation process. Despite considerable familial support (Ng et al., 2004), late-life immigrants confront unique problems, at the micro, meso and macro levels, that impede successful incorporation and adjustment (Stewart et al., 2011; Treas, & Batalova, 2009).



The combination of stressors challenges healthy aging in the host country and predisposes late-life immigrants to the development of poor health and social outcomes (Blair, 2012). Specifically, the stress of adapting to their new circumstances and environment (Treas, & Batalova, 2009; Treas & Mazumdar, 2002, 2004b) limited social interactions and intergenerational dynamics (Tummala-Narra et al., 2013) predispose late-life immigrants to elevated risks for loneliness, mental distress and depression. Late-life immigration is associated with poorer English language proficiency and lower levels of education (Ng & Northcott, 2013). Thus, recent older immigrants do not have the mantle of skills and experience or the social and financial benefits acquired by older adults who immigrated to Canada earlier in life (Ng & Northcott, 2013; Ng et al., 2004; Treas, & Batalova, 2009). For instance, late-life immigrants lack skills such as driving ability, essential to independent living in Canada (Chinese Research & Analytics Society, 2017; Ng et al., 2004). The lack of these assets restricts access to the community, including to service providers, and compels financial, physical, social, and emotional dependency on the family (Ng et al., 2004; Sadavoy, Meier, & Ong, 2004; Tummala-Narra et al., 2013; Zhou, 2017).

#### 2.1.4 Invisibility of Late-life immigrants within academia

Migration is a radical transition in one's life course and life prospects. For older adults, immigration transforms the aging trajectory, from aging-in-place to a complex transnational process (Zhou, 2017). Migration literature has primarily focused on the economic and cultural incorporation of working age immigrants and their children (Kim et al., 2016; Nayar et al., 2012; Nayar & Sterling, 2013; Treas, 2015), downplaying the unique resettlement experiences and day-to-day lives of immigrants entering North America as older adults (Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Torres-Gil & Treas, 2008). As a result, late-life immigrants have remained invisible to broader society. Their inconspicuousness has perpetuated stereotypes. For instance, Treas (2008a) identifies a 'myth' that older immigrants are happy and secure within the immigrant family, but contests this notion by pointing out the lack of control older immigrants have over their own lives, and their isolation within the household. Thus, despite emerging research in ethnic aging, the profile of the late-life immigrant remains largely concealed from the

gerontological line-of-sight (Becker, 2003). The dearth of empirical knowledge concerning aging in a changing context has impeded the understanding of the impacts of globalization and the everyday experiences of older adults who resettle in foreign environments after they have developed a life-long attachment to their homeland (Ng, Northcott, & Abu-Laban, 2007; Zhou, 2012).

## 2.2 Aging out-of-place

To understand the concept of aging-out-of-place, it is necessary to first grasp the concepts of 'place' and 'aging-in-place'. Place is conceptualized as a particular location that has acquired a set of meanings and attachments (Cresswell, 2009). It is a site that combines location, locale and a sense of place. Location is about the absolute position in space (i.e., referring to the 'where' of place). Locale is about the material structure that makes it a place and refers to its visibility and tangibility. Sense of place refers to the individual and/or shared meanings, and emotions and feelings associated with place. Additionally, in any given place one encounters a combination of materiality, meaning, and practice. Places have a material structure (e.g., skyscrapers, boulevards, freeways) and a material form (e.g., stadiums, shops), that are often representative of a place (e.g., CN Tower). Material things pass through places (e.g., vehicles, people). Moreover, place is meaningful in that "location became place when it became meaningful" (p. 1). Meanings held by people can be personal, shared, and variable. Finally, the practice of place alludes to people's use of places for different activities, which partly shapes the meaning of place. For an older adult, the home is not merely a physical dwelling, but it enables the preservation of life history meanings and social identity. As an extension of one's self, the home preserves self-integrity and promotes a sense of personhood (Gitlin, 2003).

The concept of aging-in-place often refers to growing older while remaining in one's home, where home alludes to a range of living environments including residential setting, neighborhood and broader community (Black, 2008). Aging-in-place is focused on the maintenance of continuity, place attachment, the maximization of independence, and the optimization of person-environment fit (Black, 2008; Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Cutchin, 2003; Wiles et al., 2012). A growing body of research has connected spaces and places in

later life with concepts such as quality of life, health, and well-being, as well as a sense of safety, social relationships, social support, identity, and independence (Becker, 2003; Peace, Holland, & Kellaher, 2011; Wiles et al., 2009). Consequently, place has received much interest from both policy and gerontological perspectives in addressing aging populations (Black, 2008; Kumar & Quinn, 2012; Wiles et al., 2012; World Health Organization, 2015)

The notion that continuity is beneficial in the lives of older adults is a dominant view that has persisted within gerontology since the popularization of the continuity theory (Johansson et al., 2013), which proposed that ageing persons “have the need and the tendency to maintain the same personalities, habits and perspectives that they have developed over their life course” (Estes, Biggs, & Phillipson, 2003, p. 15). However, the presumed stability or continuity of place, desire to stay in place, and place attachment underlying aging-in-place might not capture the experiences of those who have crossed international boundaries. In fact, aging-in-place studies primarily include samples from middle and upper income populations, who have adequate, secure housing, and key resources that can support aging-in-place (e.g., Graham, Scharlach, & Price Wolf, 2014; Paganini-Hill, 2013). An increasing number of older adults are aging out-of-place, or aging in a place other than their place of origin (Batalova, 2012; Johansson et al., 2013; Sadarangani & Jun, 2015). These older adults are compelled to leave their homes, communities, and countries with which they have formed deep-rooted attachments (Curtin, Martins, Gillsjö, & Schwartz-Barcott, 2017). Thus, aging out-of-place captures the physical and emotional experience of growing older in place where one does not have the resources and/or attachments of a place of long time residence (Sadarangani & Jun, 2015).

Rowles (1986) who drew upon the phenomenological approach to focus on the experience of home and place attachment in old age, argues that older adults who have resided in the same community for a prolonged period of time maintain different types of attachment to their environment. These types of attachment can be framed within the concept of ‘insideness’. Three complementary dimensions of insideness were proposed by Rowles (1986): ‘physical insideness’, which reflects an intimate familiarity with the

physical configuration of the environment; ‘social insideness’, which arises from integration within the social fabric of the community; and ‘autobiographical insideness’, which reflects the way in which a collection of lifelong experiences in a place provide a sense of identity.

These concepts were further explored in a study by Buffel (2015) who examined the ways in which first generation Turkish labour migrants who were ageing in a deprived neighbourhood in Brussels, Belgium experienced and created a sense of ‘home’. The study showed that despite a longing to return to their Turkish homeland, participants had adapted to the idea of growing older in their current neighbourhood in Brussels. They cited good health-care and social security; emotional and social distance from the homeland; opportunities to maintain transnational ties and the length of residence in their current neighbourhood as reasons for their permanent stay. The most important reason, however, appeared to be linked to ‘social insideness’ arising from everyday social exchanges and the creation and maintenance of social roles and networks within their neighbourhood and families, especially with those from the same cultural community. Sharing similar migration histories and religious values, speaking the same language, and living in the same neighbourhood all seemed to facilitate a social attachment to place. Buffel also found that notions of home and place may have different meanings for female and male ageing immigrants due to different rights and different cultural expectations. Furthermore, Buffel highlighted these immigrants’ sense of ‘physical insideness’ was created and re-created through their engagement in transnational home-making practices. Mosques, teahouses and ethnic businesses were material links between two worlds that linked the participants to the Turkish community in their neighbourhood and allowed them to ‘be’ in Turkey imaginatively.

The concept of ‘aging-in-place’ may not resonate with the physical and emotional experiences of foreign-born late-life immigrants who are aging out-of-place. Instead of simply considering aging as advancing of age “in place”, Zhou (2017) asserts that for late-life immigrants, aging is a dynamic, transnational process which coincides with changing roles and interactions with public policies and intergenerational relationships.

## 2.3 Occupational science

The discipline of occupational science, named by Dr. Elizabeth Yerxa, is a relatively new science that emerged in the late 1980s at the University of Southern California (Zemke & Clark, 1996). Its original intention was to provide foundational knowledge for the practice of occupational therapy (Yerxa, 1990), investigating occupation “as it related to both ability and disability” (Molke, Laliberte-Rudman, & Polatajko, 2004). From its inception, occupational science, defined as “...the study of the human as an occupational being including the need for and capacity to engage in and orchestrate daily occupations in the environment over the lifespan” (Yerxa, 1990, p. 7), has been concerned with health and well-being (Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa, 1990). Over the years, the discipline has evolved into a growing, interdisciplinary, academic field (Molke et al., 2004), which investigates the purpose, meaning and complexity of the relationship between people and their occupations, as well as where and how they do it. This dissertation considers occupational science as the science of everyday living, which is revealed through the study of occupation (Wilcock, 2006, 2005). The objective of occupational science is to produce knowledge and action regarding the construct of occupation, relating to scholarship, policy and society (Rudman et al., 2008). This dissertation aligns with the foundations of occupational science in developing empirical knowledge on “the capacities, knowledge and skills required for participation; who participates and what is done; the rules, norms or processes governing participation; where and when participation occurs, using what resources; ...the kinds of meanings it holds; [and] its sociocultural” context (Hocking, 2009, p. 142).

### 2.3.1 Interpreting Immigration, Place, and Occupation from an Occupational perspective

Research on immigration in aging, informed by aging-in-place, often starts from an assumption that discontinuity or lack of stability in place in late life is essentially problematic (Johansson et al., 2013). Historically, the environment has been recognized as a critical factor in human performance within occupational science and occupational therapy (O'Brien, Dyck, Caron, & Mortenson, 2002; Peachey-Hill & Law, 2000; Rowles, 1991, 2008). Immigration entails a change of one's physical, economic, political, social

and cultural environment (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010). Relocation to a foreign environment with unfamiliar cultural norms, behaviours, and expectations has been acknowledged to be a stressful and disruptive experience (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002; Farias & Asaba, 2013; Gupta & Sullivan, 2013; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Huot, Rudman, Dodson, & Magalhães, 2013; Krishnagiri, Fuller, Ruda, & Diwan, 2013; Suto, 2013). Specifically, this environmental change has been implicated in the disruption of familiar roles, routines and habits (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Meleis, Sawyer, Im, Hilfinger Messias, & Schumacher, 2000), sense of place, self-image and ultimately one's identity (Blair, 2000; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Laliberte-Rudman, 2002; Nayar, Hocking, & Wilson, 2007). While this section primarily draws on occupational science scholarship, the inattention to late-life immigration within the discipline promoted the exploration of bodies of literature from other fields, such as nursing, social work, and anthropology, that examine how immigrants use occupations within the process of migration. These findings are interpreted using an occupational perspective.

Habitual occupations in new environments may come to be characterized as uncomfortable, unfamiliar or energy-intensive, and thereby give rise to feelings of ineptitude, exasperation, and foreignness (Nayar & Hocking, 2006). Furthermore, challenges in the post migration context such as limited English proficiency, lack of mobility, lack of awareness of community services, and lack of culturally relevant or responsive services present challenges to establishing new occupational routines (Trang, 2008; Treas & Mazumdar, 2002). To find threads of continuity and stability in the new environment, immigrants are required to adapt and adjust valued occupations of daily life that hold meaning and purpose for them (Christansen & Baum, 1997; Dyck, 1989; Martins & Reid, 2007). In a small-scale qualitative study into the everyday activities of Indian women (age 19 to 45 years old) who have recently immigrated to New Zealand, Nayar & Hocking (2006) found that occupations are altered or abandoned in exchange for new occupations following immigration. For instance, participation in self-care, productive and leisure activities changed over time as the women learned about their new environment, the resources available to them, and how things are done in the newly adopted country. Another study (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002) found that young

Burundian refugees (age 19 to 42 years old) in Canada altered or abandoned former occupations and entrenched values, in place of new occupations. These included engaging in domestic activities themselves instead of supervising domestic help, and modifying the way of dressing, the amount of clothing worn, eating practices, and leisure activities. Choudhry (1998) found that the middle-aged and older immigrant women participants in his study were unable to continue the same occupations and health behaviours after immigrating from India to Canada because of social and physical constraints. Although Choudhry's work is situated in nursing scholarship, the findings of this study can be examined through an occupational perspective to identify the occupational implications of immigration. The colder Toronto weather prevented them from going for walks regularly as was their custom in India. The lack of independent means of transportation also restricted their opportunities to go out and purchase fresh produce on a regular basis. The inability to participate in community-based occupations also had social consequences contributing to the lack of social interaction. These studies highlight the disruptive nature of immigration on occupation.

However, the assumption that the process of immigration is disruptive to everyday occupations neglects how occupations are involved in creating a sense of place. Instead, scholars (Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Cutchin, 2003; Johansson et al., 2013; Wiles et al., 2012) advocate for a transactional view of place which involves ongoing coordination between space and person and that results in the redefinition of both entities. Thus, person and place share a co-constitutive relationship (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Occupation is understood to be central within this transaction (Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Cutchin, Dickie, & Humphry, 2006; Wiles et al., 2012)

Occupations are drawn upon to negotiate place in the process of migration and the subsequent integration. For instance, Becker (2003) conducted a 10 year-long qualitative study with 211 older immigrants from three ethnic communities (Latinos, Filipinos and Cambodians) in the United States. The older immigrants actively worked to lessen their sense of displacement through occupations that connected their past and present experiences of home and community. For instance, through living together in multigenerational families, the Cambodian refugee participants maintained cultural

traditions such as caring for their grandchildren, while the middle generation worked. Similarly, Lewis's (2009) ethnographic study with elderly Cambodian refugees in the United States found that these older adults actively and continually attempted to create and re-create a sense of place through integrating elements from their past and present within everyday activities and places.

Finally, a New Zealand study (Nayar et al., 2012), positioned within occupational science, found that Indian immigrant women, aged 18-65, engaged in occupations that facilitated and enhanced, or challenged their settlement process. The women employed specific strategies by “working in Indian ways”, “working in New Zealand ways”, and “working with best of both worlds” to participate in occupations that enabled them to achieve a sense of comfort with being Indian immigrants in a New Zealand context. Influenced mainly by a desire to make their children remain aware of their cultural origins and the need to feel comfortable in their new surroundings, the women actively practiced Indian culture through their choice of clothing, diet, entertainment and enactment of religious and cultural festivals. Simultaneously, they actively worked to push aspects of their Indian culture to the background and engaged in New Zealand activities. These New Zealand activities were prompted by the women’s perceptions of their abilities and of how society responded to them. While the women maintained their Indian selves, which shaped certain occupational practices, being in the New Zealand space afforded the women opportunities to engage in many occupations that differed from traditional customs (e.g., consumption of alcohol, wearing western dress, socializing with male colleagues). Thus, these findings reveal how these women adopt strategies to subdue their cultural values and their cultural selves in order to participate in the activities of the adopted culture and simultaneously highlight their Indian selves. By modifying actions to respond to the environment in which they were now embedded, these immigrant women engage in a continual process of meaning making.

Wright-St Clair and Nayar (2017) also found that Asian late-life immigrants (aged 60 or older) experienced disruption to former habitual occupations as a consequence of entry to New Zealand in late-life. However, these late-life immigrants strategically recreated their familiar everyday occupational worlds through engagement



and participation in their respective ethnic communities. Engagement in these co-ethnic groups, in which a common language, cultural practices and principles were shared, bred a degree of inclusivity for the older immigrants. This emerging body of research demonstrates how occupation is contextualized as central to the relationship of person and place, and how place is dynamically created through the doing of occupations.

While occupational scientists are increasingly directing their attention to the occupational nature of immigrants in general, late-life immigrants have received little attention (Wright-St Clair & Nayar, 2017). Specifically, the ways in which older adults establish relationships to multiple places, cultures and identities through everyday occupations, and the role of occupation within these acts have been neglected (Johansson et al., 2013). This leaves us pondering, what happens among older adults who resettle in unfamiliar cultures and nations, and how are occupations drawn upon to negotiate relationships that connect this subset of immigrants to different places on a global scale? Further research to strengthen the conceptual knowledge of the interaction of aging and immigration within occupational science can furnish a complex understanding of how late-life immigrants relate and connect to different places through daily occupations.

## 2.4 Summary

Although late-life immigrants constitute a small portion of the older adult population in Canada, the changing demographics of the Canadian population warrant the exploration of late-life immigrants' experiences, particularly considering their invisibility in Canadian society and in aging, migration and occupational science scholarship.

The current perspectives of aging, informed by aging-in-place, may not capture the unique experiences of foreign born immigrants who enter North America in their old age. The limited available literature has alluded to the vulnerability of late-life immigrants. Regardless of age at arrival, immigration has been acknowledged to be a disruptive and disorganizing experience. Nonetheless, immigrants have been shown to adapt and create a place in their new context. The examination of late-life immigrants' occupational lives and the role of occupation in placemaking in the post-migration

context may offer novel understandings of the aging process, particularly from a non-western paradigm.

## 2.5 The Research Question

The above noted gaps in knowledge indicate the need for greater depth of understanding of the aging out-of-place experience. My research was guided by the following primary question: What is the experience of aging out-of-place, from the perspectives of Sinhalese late-life immigrants? Specifically, this research question aimed to understand how late-life immigrants relate to, and connect and engage with places through aging processes, as well as the centrality of daily occupations within such engagement and processes. Moreover, this dissertation work increases the core body of knowledge regarding minority aging within gerontological research, recognizing the late-life immigration experience as yet another portrayal of the diversity of aging in Canada.

The following chapter establishes a relationship between the research question and the design choice of this dissertation. Specifically, it provides the broad philosophical underpinnings the chosen research methods.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodological and theoretical approach

*We felt the frigid cold when we came  
Muscles, nerves and bones numbed  
Everywhere, the sight of barren, leafless trees  
Like fleshless skeletons, all around*

To reiterate, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experience of aging out-of-place. The voices of late-life immigrants were at the core of this qualitative inquiry as their lived experiences shed light on this phenomenon. The researcher's philosophical assumptions, or ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological beliefs, influenced and guided each aspect of the study, from question to conclusion (Creswell, 2013). For instance, the methods were guided by the chosen methodology, which was persuaded by my theoretical perspective and epistemological stance (Crotty, 1998c). This chapter presents the paradigmatic, methodological and theoretical perspectives informing this dissertation. The details of the study design and process are presented in the methods chapter that follows.

The research question of this dissertation aligned with the qualitative approach and interpretivist paradigm. This chapter begins with an introduction to qualitative inquiry, which then segues to an overview of the interpretive tradition as the epistemological underpinning. Phenomenological methodology and two prominent phenomenological philosophers, namely Heidegger and Husserl, are then introduced. This is followed by an introduction of van Manen's (1990, 1997b) hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, which attempts to understand the participant and the experience of the phenomenon itself. Husserlian and Heideggerian influence over van Manen's writing is also examined. This chapter introduces the four procedural activities proposed by van Manen and discusses the first of these four activities (i.e., turning to the nature of the lived experience) in depth. The subsequent chapter explores the remaining three activities. Each of these sections is accompanied by an explanation of its compatibility with the research study. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the two theoretical perspectives that informed the discussion chapter of this

dissertation: Wilcock's Occupational Perspective on Health (2006; 1998a) and the transactional perspective on occupation.

### 3.1 Qualitative research

This study is founded on a qualitative approach to inquiry. As a field of inquiry, “qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 3). Qualitative data, which could include interviews, photographs, audio recordings, fieldnotes, et cetera, are descriptive portrayals of the world. Inquiry takes place in an uncontrolled and natural setting, as the researcher interprets phenomena by examining how individuals construct personal meanings and knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Here, the participant is the expert and the researcher, the pupil. This collaborative dialogue between two parties has been likened to a “dance” (Janesick, 2000). Qualitative data analysis, both inductive and deductive, determines patterns or themes. The final product of qualitative research comprises the voices of participants, researcher reflexivity, description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the larger body of literature or suggestions for future research directions (Creswell, 2013)

In taking advantage of human-as-instrument, qualitative inquiry offers contextual relevance and richness that is unmatched by any other paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The goals of qualitative research are to elucidate, explain, interpret, represent, reflect, and criticize. Language is used to attend to the literal and intimated meanings. Such research connects the researcher to the human condition, and is ideal to uncover the complexities of what it is to be human (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These premises of qualitative research appropriately align with this study's objective in researching the experience of aging out-of-place from the perspectives of late-life immigrants.

### 3.2 Philosophical choice: Interpretive paradigm

A paradigm is a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17), that can be distinguished through their ontology, epistemology and axiology. These

characteristics create a comprehensive view of how knowledge is viewed and understood, the researcher's position in relation to this knowledge, and the methodological strategy used to discover it. The following sections will delineate the two primary paradigms, namely the interpretivist paradigm from the positivist paradigm, to set the stage for the subsequent discussion.

Proponents of positivism emphasize empirical data and scientific methods (Crotty, 1998b). To understand the world, positivists test and verify theories that govern the world to identify universal features of humanhood, society and history (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). An objective approach to truth is seen as being the crux of positivistic research (Crotty, 1998a). Specifically, the positivist researcher shapes knowledge through close observation and measurement of the objective reality (Crotty, 1998b), and develop Erklären or explanations to describe causal relationships (Crotty, 1998b; Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Thus, positivism maintains that the value-free and detached methods and procedures used in the natural sciences provide an ideal framework in the investigation of the social world (Crotty, 1998). Furthermore, positivism is also reductionistic in that it is believed that ideas are reducible to more basic entities that can be tested, such as hypotheses and research questions (Creswell, 2009).

Interpretivism is fundamentally different from positivism. The interpretive paradigm seeks the meanings that are embedded in everyday occurrences (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006; Lopez & Willis, 2004), by moving beyond the description or core concepts of the experience. This dissertation adopted an interpretive stance to investigate the lived experience of aging out-of-place. Specifically, my assumptions of reality, knowledge construction, the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the role of values and biases are aligned with an interpretive paradigm.

The disparity between natural and human sciences is a contentious issue (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994). German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) proposed the need for one scientific method to apply and cater to both natural and social inquiry, citing the obscurity between natural and human science. Specifically, he advocated for the need for scientifically valid historical and social data, and the importance of substantiating *Verstehen*, or understanding, by empirical evidence (Crotty, 1998). In questioning the use of natural scientific methods to investigate human phenomenon (Madison, 1988).

Wilhelm Dilthey (1848-1915) demarcated natural and human sciences as being fundamentally distinct, and thus demanded distinct methods of investigation (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994). In this view, human or social science is idiographic as it depends on the understanding and interpretation of the intrasubjective and intersubjective human meaning and understanding that reciprocally shape the actor and the world within which he/she acts. Contrastingly, natural science seeks nomothetic characteristics, or general laws, to seek causality of human and worldly affairs (Crotty, 1998).

Proponents of interpretivism seek *Verstehen* of the complex world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live it (Crotty, 1998). Taylor (1985) emphasizes human consciousness and the meaningful and directed nature of human behavior towards achieving a purpose. Human consciousness facilitates experience and interpretation of the world, which encourages behavior that is congruent with one's subjective reality. Social reality is a subjective construction based on interpretation and interaction. Thus, all human actions are imbued with meaning. The action cannot be understood separately from this meaning. Understanding, therefore, involves recognition of the meaning and values of the actor. Specifically, the interpretivist approach seeks "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67).

This qualitative study drew on interpretivist paradigmatic beliefs as the interpretive paradigm "portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing..." (Thomas, 2003, p. 6). Interpretivism's objective of understanding how people perceive and make sense of their social world is congruent with the research question of this study. Through a process of "deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding" (Punch, 2009), I undertook this qualitative approach to achieve *Verstehen*, or to explore, explain and understand, the individual late-life immigrants' views of reality regarding aging out-of-place. Rich descriptions presented in this dissertation facilitated an in-depth understanding of the participants' contexts and revealed the world through their eyes. Late-life immigrant participants were acknowledged to be complex and possess unique experiences and understandings of the same 'objective reality'. In acknowledging the existence of multiple realities, this

dissertation avoids broad generalizations, and instead attributes these realities as belonging to the Sinhalese late-life immigrant participants.

### 3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study, designed within an interpretive paradigm, is founded on a relativist ontology, which acknowledge realities as “multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature” (p. 110). These relativist assumptions reject the positivistic assumption of the existence of a unitary absolute reality (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Crotty (1998a) asserts that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). Furthermore, humans are embedded in the lifeworld of language, and as such, human understanding is continually negotiated through ongoing conversations and dialogue (Kvale, 1996). Thus, understanding is facilitated through interpretation, and interpretation is subject to change. This dissertation is open to multiple subjective views of reality from the various perspectives of late-life immigrant participants, from the researcher’s own interpretations, as well as the different interpretations the readers of this work will take away.

### 3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology provides the basis for determining the kinds of knowledge that are possible, how knowledge is acquired, and the situatedness of the research in the human world as well as in the inquiry process (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998c). My ontological beliefs, or the beliefs of the nature of reality, dictated my relationship with what is being studied. The adoption of a relativist ontology necessitated researcher-participant interaction to gain in-depth understandings of the experiences and contexts that shaped the realities of participants. Thus, I adopted an emic approach (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016) .

The interpretive paradigm is based on the epistemology of idealism, which views knowledge as being a social construction (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Specifically,

knowledge and meaning are understood to be constructed from interactions between persons and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context (Crotty, 1998a). Moreover, context and standpoint influence the way human beings engage with the world that they interpret, resulting in unique multiple constructed realities (Crotty, 1998). Thus, interpretivists uphold a subjectivist epistemology and assert “objective reality can never be captured. I only know it through representations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Considering the inseparability of knowledge and the knower, the interpretivist paradigm emphasizes the inherently value-laden nature of research (Crotty, 1998).

### 3.2.3 Axiology

Axiology deals with the involvement of the researcher’s values and opinions in the study. Qualitative research is a personal venture. The researcher embodies his/her respective cultural values, as well as his/her needs. Heidegger (1962b) stated the researcher’s pre-understanding of themselves and the world serve as the origin of all research, and in fact these preconceived notions “enables rather than constrain the researcher” (Hasselkus, 1997, p. 82). He/she is “positioned” in relation to that which they are researching (Marcus & Fischer, as cited in Hasselkus, 1997), and it is through this lens that the researcher views reality and his/her research. The qualitative researcher acknowledges and celebrates his/her positionality and clearly explicates their values to position themselves in the study (Creswell, 2013).

I acknowledge that the values and experiences that have shaped the positionality I bring to this work colors my research encounters, choices of processes and interpretations. Within this social research, the researcher and participant inhabited multiple, shared and/or unshared positions, in relation to each other (Sands, Bourjolly, & Roer-Strier, 2007). An insider positionality refers to “the aspects of an insider researcher’s self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants” (Chavez, 2008, p. 475). In immigration research, an insider researcher is a member of the migrant group under study (Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2014). Thus, the insider researcher’s lived familiarity and nuanced understanding and emic perspective of the community is thought to result in "privileged access to particular kinds of knowledge" (Merton, 1972, p. 11), as



well as trust, acceptance and openness in participants. In contrast, an outsider is classified as a “nonmember” (Merton, 1972, p. 21) or visitor (Greene, 2014) who is interested in learning more about a group, to which he/she does not hold membership. Their etic perspective is thought to restrict understanding and thereby influence the accurate representation of the experiences of participants (Bridges, 2001; Pitman, 2002).

The researcher’s relationship with the researched is subject to constant fluctuation along a continuum of possibilities, “from one moment to the next, from one location to the next, from one interaction to the next, and even from one discussion topic to the next” (Mercer, 2007, p. 13). The researcher negotiates rapport within the spectrum of social identity to “make a new culture” (Lim, 2012, p. 2). The complex negotiations of culture-making blur the binary perceptions of insider/outsider status and problematize the benefits of assumed cultural knowledge granted by insiderness. Thus, neither insiderness or outsidership has “a monopoly on advantage or objectivity” (Chavez, 2008, p. 476). Over the course of this study I grappled with the fluidity and instability of my positionalities as they related to the social position of my participants.

I am a first-generation immigrant, a child of aging parents, a granddaughter of elderly grandparents whose overall health rapidly deteriorated following the immigration of their children/grandchildren to foreign lands, as well as an occupational therapist who has worked closely with older adults from diverse backgrounds. Throughout the research study I discovered that my self-ascribed positionality was not always synonymous with participants’ perceptions and positioning. Participants’ acceptance of my self-ascribed positionality wavered in stability and in consistency. Shared national and religious background and migration experience forged a sense of “we-ness” (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1328) among my participants and myself, which implied a shared insider status that was highly contingent. However, I was crossing boundaries of age, culture, and education, among other identities. The constructed “we-ness” was challenged by cultural and language attrition (limited to conversational Sinhalese) as a result of my childhood immigration. Additionally, the generational gap between myself and my participants contested my self-ascribed positionality and challenged participants’ acceptance of me as an insider. At 28 years of age, I was closer in age to participant’s

grandchildren and children. Thus, my position as the researcher wavered among being an insider, being an outsider, and being in-between these positions.

The simultaneous proximity and distance to my participants offered interesting dimensions that contributed to both enriching and weakening the researcher-researched relationship. By virtue of the values held, I carry presuppositions and preunderstandings that are difficult to set aside (Heidegger, 1962), thus shaping the nature of the questions asked, and the ways findings were generated and interpreted (Foote & Bartell, 2011). Although my apparent insider-ness encouraged access, acceptance, and rapport to an extent, participants' fear of judgement created by our shared value systems and my social proximity to the community were seeming deterrents. In contrast, my youth, gender, student status and cultural attrition appeared to confirm a harmless and vulnerable identity and promoted a view of naivete. This perception was advantageous to the research process as participants recounted their experiences with fine detail.

### 3.2.4 Fit between aim of study and philosophical paradigm

This study asked, 'What is the experience of aging out-of-place?'. Considering its primary focus on understanding experience, this study is appropriately framed within the interpretivist philosophical paradigm which is based on a life-world ontology. Specifically, by understanding the world from a subjective point of view of the participant and in seeking explanation within their frame of reference, this study acknowledged reality as a social construction by the human actor. In doing so, this study brought hidden social forces and structures to consciousness. Furthermore, the dissertation adopted a relativist ontological position that is consistent with the interpretive paradigm in acknowledging multiple realities of individuals. The recognition of multiple realities of late-life immigrants assisted the creation of a shared social reality of aging out-of-place.

## 3.3 Methodological choice: Phenomenology

Methodology is "a way of thinking about and studying social reality" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3). It refers to the research design, methods, approaches and procedures (Keeves, 1997) that articulate the logic and course of the methodical processes

undertaken in an inquiry to gain knowledge about the world, or at least part of it (Moreno, 1947). The methodology chosen for this research study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a blanket term encompassing both a complex philosophical movement and a method of inquiry (Dowling, 2007) that is central to the interpretive paradigm (Clark, 1998; Crotty, 1998; Koch, 1995).

Phenomenology originated as a response to positivist science in which the discourses of the natural sciences were applied to all forms of human inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Opposingly, Husserl and his adherents rejected this orientation and considered the role of humans in the actual construction of the world as it is experienced.

Phenomenology became the compromise between an objectifying view, that postulates that the world exists independent of human consciousness, and a mentalist view, which advocates for the view of the world as a mental construction (Crotty, 1998; Willis, 2001).

Phenomenologists “go back to the things themselves” (Husserl & Moran, 2001, p. 168), by attending to the way phenomena actually present and manifest themselves in the human consciousness (Crotty, 1998). It is the study of the lifeworld, or “the world of immediate experiences” (Husserl, 1970, p. 103) without categorization, theorization, or conceptualization (van Manen, 1984a). The researcher returns to, and reexamines what is taken for granted or those things that are commonsense, in order to uncover new and/or forgotten meanings (Husserl, 1970). To gain plausible insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world, and the meaning of these everyday experiences, phenomenology asks “What is this or that kind of experience like?” (van Manen, 1984b, p. 37). Furthermore, phenomenology seeks to reduce and capture the individual experiences through a description of the universal essence (Creswell, 2013). Essence refers to the structures or essential characteristics that makes the phenomenon what it is. Phenomenologists are ultimately gratified through “moments of seeing-meaning” (van Manen, 2007).

There exist two main phenomenological approaches: descriptive and interpretive (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Descriptive phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl who advocated for a rigorous science within the tradition of its time; interpretive phenomenology was advanced by Martin Heidegger who expanded on the work of Husserl (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). One of the main differences between these two

types of phenomenology is the treatment of presuppositions through bracketing. While Husserl used the concept of bracketing, or putting aside, preconceived notions of the experience under study to maintain objectivity (Dowling, 2007; Lopez & Willis, 2004), interpretive researchers consider it impossible to contain preconceptions. Instead they argue that it is these very preconceived notions that are used to guide research questions, and interpret the experiences of others (Koch, 1995).

### 3.3.1 Descriptive phenomenology

The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) has been credited as the 'father' of modern phenomenology (Draucker, 1999; LeVasseur, 2003; Maggs-Rapport, 2000). His background in natural science sculpted his philosophical perspective. He proposed a rigorous science that sought to understand human consciousness and to describe, versus explain, phenomena through the lived experience (Spiegelberg, 1960).

Husserl's phenomenology was a departure from the Cartesian split between the subjective thinker and the objective world, and where the separate and distinct outer reality can only be understood through deduction. The objective of Husserlian phenomenology is to "describe things as they appear to consciousness" (Moran, 2000, p. 1). In fact, Husserl (1970) defined phenomenology as "the science of essence of consciousness", where consciousness is the agent between person and their world (as cited by Giorgi, 2005). It must "describe what is given to us in immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions" (van Manen, 1990). Husserl purported that reality could be grasped through structures of consciousness by applying intentionality, a process where the awareness or consciousness is directed toward objects of study (Koch, 1995). By intentionally directing one's focus, one could develop a description of particular realities. He regarded experience to be the fundamental source of knowledge and as such Husserl's phenomenology was epistemological in nature (Racher & Robinson, 2003). Descriptive phenomenology thus aims to identify and describe the essence of a phenomenon by staying close to the descriptions provided by the participant and making minimal interpretive assumptions.

One-to-one interactions, such as active listening, interaction and observation between the researcher and the object of the research, were believed to facilitate the

construction of more enlightening representations of reality than previous understandings (Husserl, 1970). To arrive at the true nature, or the essence, of the reality under investigation, Husserl proposed epoché where researchers bracket, or suspend, their personal biases about the phenomena to see its essence (Deutscher, 2001; Giorgi, 2000; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Bracketing was seen as crucial to achieving a “phenomenological attitude”, which involves examining our perceptions of objects, to encounter “things as they are in themselves” (Finlay, 2011, p. 44) devoid of preconceptual influences.

### 3.3.2 Interpretive phenomenology

The aim of interpretive phenomenology is to achieve a deeper understanding of the experience (Flood, 2010). When method and focus of inquiry are interpretive, the phenomenological research is referred to as hermeneutic. Hermeneutic approaches originated from the work of philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, who argued that it is impossible to separate the meaning of a text from the creator of the text. Instead, the hermeneutic stance acknowledges “our embeddedness in the world of language and social relationships” (Finlay, 2011, p. 11). People are deemed inseparably linked to and entrenched in their life worlds (MacKey, 2005). As a result, their subjective experiences are shaped by their socio-cultural realities (Flood, 2010; MacKey, 2005). Thus, knowledge generation within interpretive phenomenology requires clarifying individuals’ narratives of their experience while accounting for their specific circumstances (Lopez & Willis, 2004). In entering another’s world, the interpretive phenomenological researcher discovers the wisdom, possibilities and understandings therein (Polit & Beck, 2008). The participants’ meaning of a phenomenon is identified from a mix of meanings stemming from the researchers’ understanding of the phenomenon under study, and from understandings gathered from participants and other data (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The ultimate understanding of the phenomenon is identified by Flood (2010) as ‘co-constitutionality’, by Gadamer as ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, Weinsheimer, & Marshall, 2004) and by Heidegger as ‘hermeneutic circle’ of understanding (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

Martin Heidegger (1887- 1979) was the student and successor of Husserl. He deviated from Husserl's philosophical foci on consciousness and essences of phenomena, instead extending hermeneutic (interpretive) dimensions (Racher & Robinson, 2003). Rooted in an academic background in theology and philosophy, he integrated the works of prominent philosophers, such as Aristotle, Kant, Plato, and Hegel into his vision of phenomenology (Sokolowski, 2000).

While Heidegger concurs with Husserl's declaration "to the things themselves", he dismissed the existing Husserlian phenomenological ideal of description for understanding (Racher, 2003). Instead, Heidegger advocates for interpretation of experience and explication of "the meaning of being" (Cerbone, 2008; Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2005; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Moran, 2000).

Heideggerian phenomenology adopts an ontological stance focusing on the nature of being. In contrast to Husserl who sought to capture objects of study that were graspable and that could be objectively studied, Heidegger employed the notion of 'Dasein', or the human way of being-in-the-world (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger's opinion was that it is through the experience of interacting with the world and with others that humans discover everyday life and ways of being (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1962). From a philosophical stance, Heidegger asked "what does it mean to be?" (Heidegger, 1927/2011). Thus, there is a transaction between the person and the world as they co-constitute each other (Munhall, 1989).

Heidegger (1962) asserted that consciousness is not separate from the world. Instead it is a formation of the individual's background (ontology/context) or historicity. Dasein was thus presented as having preunderstandings or "fore-structure of understanding" (Heidegger, 1927/2011, p. 191) of the world. In other words, these fore-structures dictate how one understands the world and how these understandings influence the interpretation of reality. As such, one cannot approach an object of study without presuppositions. Reality and consciousness are co-creations. Hermeneutic researchers maintain that prior to phenomenological inquiry, a researcher must reflect on and acknowledge his/her past experiences, preconceptions, and biases to account for interpretive influences (Benner, 1994; Heidegger, 1962). Instead of its suppression, these fore-structures of understanding can provide valuable guidance to inquiry (Flood, 2010).

Interpretation is vital to the process of understanding, wherein, to be human is to interpret. According to Heidegger, the interpretive process is reciprocal and circular. The researcher enters the hermeneutic circle where he/she moves back-and-forth between the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience, and between the researcher's fore-structure of understanding and what was learned through the inquiry. The true meanings of the experience, as articulated by the researcher and participants, emerge from this cyclical process (Koch, 1995; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009).

### 3.3.3 Fit between aim of study and methodology

Considering the aim of the study was to understand late-life immigrants' experiences, an interpretive phenomenological methodology was chosen to examine the direct experience of aging out-of-place in a pre-reflective state and interpret the meaning of this phenomenon. Phenomenology allowed in-depth examination of subjective knowing, interpretation, and development of an idealist understanding, rather than one of universal truths, that led to insight and greater self-understanding. Heideggerian phenomenological focus on the everyday aspects of life was congruous with the study's focus on the everyday experience of aging out-of-place and the negotiation of occupation within this experience. This phenomenological methodology also supports the understanding and interpretation of meaning of the lived experience through an emergent and collaborative approach with participants. Moreover, I acknowledge that my fore-structures, stemming from past experiences, assumptions and preconceptions, undoubtedly shaped the topic, questions and interpretations of this inquiry.

Finally, this methodology is also appropriate to the study of occupation and my own positionality as an occupational therapist and occupational scientist, particularly with regard to beliefs of holism, validity of the individual experience, as well as the saliency of everyday life and everyday doing (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Moreover, Park Lala and Kinsella (2011) posit that the phenomenological perspective emphasizes occupational engagement as being graspable through human perception. Phenomenology incorporates the dimension of being in the concept of occupation, acknowledges the body as being the medium for occupational engagement, and gives importance to experiential

accounts of occupation as being critically insightful of the social, cultural and political issues.

### 3.4 Method choice: van Manen's methodological

### 3.5 structure

The method of analyzing phenomena in the phenomenological tradition is reflective. In phenomenological research, the person who has undergone a particular experience engages in the initial reflection and primary interpretation. The researcher gains access to this reflected experience and its meaning through thematized verbalization (Von Eckartsberg, 1986). While there is no universally accepted method for data analysis, the method of research must be congruent with the phenomenological philosophical underpinning of the study. The four procedural activities of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, informed by the work of van Manen (1984a, 1990, 1997b), were deemed coherent for a project of this nature.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is another procedure that can be used to explore how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds. Specifically, IPA is “a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.1). IPA is grounded in psychology and uses an interpretative framework in which participants, or “co-analysts”, are asked to describe and interpret their experiences. Subsequently, the researcher interprets the participant's interpretations. The researcher also attempts to understand the client's psychological “problem” by assessing the “symptoms” (p. 123). Thus, IPA is more psychologically oriented, rather than having a phenomenological focus. Moreover, IPA focuses on the “person”, on the experiences of the participant, and on his or her views and understandings, rather than on the phenomenon itself. Instead, phenomenologists search for meaning structures that describe the individual meaning of a certain phenomenon (van Manen, 2017). To provide genuine phenomenological understandings and insights, this dissertation opted to followed van Manen's approach to phenomenology.



Fundamentally oriented in pedagogical tradition, Max van Manen is a Canadian phenomenologist who explicated a methodological structure (1984a) that was helpful to the conduct of hermeneutic phenomenological research. To van Manen, “the aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 36). In his exploration of lived experiences, van Manen was influenced by the writings of several phenomenological philosophers, including Husserl and Heidegger. Considering these influences, van Manen embraces both descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. He states,

hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. (p. 180)

van Manen (1984a) provides four procedural activities in doing phenomenological research and writing, 1) turning to the nature of the lived experience, 2) existential investigation, 3) phenomenological reflection, and 4) phenomenological writing. Each activity includes several recommended steps. First, the researcher turns to the human phenomenon that captures his/her interests. The researcher gathers and collects lived-experience material of different forms. He/she investigates the experience as it is lived through, rather than as it is conceptualized. Thus, acquired knowledge is not the starting point for exploring the phenomenon in question. van Manen concurs with Husserl that the essence of a phenomenon is universal. In other words, regardless of multiple variations or perceptions of a single object, a universal quality of the object makes it known to us (van Manen, 1997b). van Manen explains that the understanding of essence emerges from the structures of meaning of a phenomenon. Thus, the researcher determines the themes, or the essence, that distinguish the phenomenon under investigation in order to respond to “What is it that constitutes the nature of this lived experience?” (p. 32). This reflective component questions the meaning of the phenomenon by taking the lived experience as a piece of the totality of consciousness and aims to find its meaning. Heidegger (1927/1962) explicitly defined this quest for meaning: “That which has been articulated

as such in interpretation and sketched out beforehand in the understanding in general as something articulable, is the meaning” (p. 154). Thus, structural or thematic elements are present within lived world descriptions, and phenomenology as a hermeneutic, studies the descriptions to elicit meaning-structures. Finally, the researcher engages in the act of understanding by stepping back (van Manen, 1997b) to constantly consider the whole of the study/text against the significance and contribution of each part in the whole.

Despite these recommended series of steps, van Manen (1997) asserts that the “method of phenomenology is that there is no method” (p. 30). Research conducted using this school of inquiry attempts to understand the participant and the experience of the phenomenon itself. It attempts to unfold meaning of the life world itself by asking “What is this or that kind of experience like?” (van Manen, 1984b, p. 37). After identifying the experience, the hermeneutic phenomenological method seeks a deeper understanding of the meaning of that experience (Smith, 1997) through increasingly deeper and layered reflection using rich descriptive language (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Each of the four activities include several recommended steps. While these steps are not absolute, nor fixed, nor linear, I found these steps to be a useful guide when engaging with the phenomena under investigation. The following section discusses the first of these four activities, turning to the nature of the lived experience, in depth. The three remaining procedural activities will be discussed in the subsequent methods chapter.

### 3.5.1 Turning to the nature of the lived experience

Phenomenological inquiry is a “quest, a true task, a deep questioning” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 31) of the phenomenon of interest. Turning to the nature of lived experience entails three steps to committing to a research endeavor (van Manen, 1984a). These steps include 1.) orienting to the phenomenon, 2.) formulating the phenomenological question, and 3.) explicating assumptions and preunderstandings.

#### 1. Orienting to the Phenomenon

van Manen (1997b) posits that the researcher must identify an experience which they “feel called upon” (p. 41) to investigate. The researcher uses his/her “orientation” or “vantage point in life” (p. 40) “to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence” (p.

31) which is, in this instance, to make sense of what it is like to age out-of-place. My positionality as an occupational therapist and occupational scientist, with clinical and research interests in gerontology, as an immigrant, and a child/grandchild of immigrant parents and grandparents ignited my interest. These experiential vantage points allowed me to subjectively orient to the phenomenon of aging out-of-place.

## 2. Formulating the Phenomenological Question

To understand what something is “really” like, van Manen (1997b) proposes that the researcher develops the phenomenological question through living and becoming the question. The questions asked of participants must be connected to the life and experience of the researcher. Thus, my orientation allowed me to remain “steadfastly oriented to the lived experience that makes it possible to ask the ‘what is it like?’ question” (p. 43). Aware of the barriers my family overcame as immigrants to Canada, I began to wonder what it was like for my own grandparents and other immigrant older adults who left their homeland, after working-age, to age in Canada. I extended this curiosity to my own parents who, despite having immigrated during their working-age, are aging in a country that is drastically different from their native land. Furthermore, awareness of the influx of new entrants to Canada as immigrants and refugees over the recent past heightened my fascination with the topic. Thus, ‘What is your experience of aging out-of-place as a late-life immigrant?’ emerged as a phenomenological question.

## 3. Explicating Assumptions and Pre-Understandings

Similar to Heidegger, van Manen (1990, 1997b) rejects Husserl’s view of bracketing. He asserts, “If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already “know”, we might find that the presupposition persistently creep back into our reflections” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 47). van Manen posits that a researcher’s previous experiences, knowledge and beliefs invariably permeate reflective thought, influence all stages of the research process, including the interpretation of the participant descriptions, and may sway the researcher to prematurely interpret the nature of the phenomenon. In fact, everyday knowledge and exposure to existing scientific knowledge “predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question” (p. 47). van Manen recommends explicating these

assumptions underpinning what we know, or our way of knowing, so that they can be viewed in parallel with the interpretations emerging from the data. My presuppositions and preunderstandings were detailed in a field journal. This journal was maintained throughout the study to document changes in understandings and beliefs as the research progressed. Some of these reflections, particularly with regard to my positionality, are documented in Appendix M.

### 3.5.2 Fit between methodology and research methods

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology assisted the discovery and understanding within the data-rich environment evolving from the lived experiences of the late-life immigrant participants. By gathering data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, the phenomenological methodology and method captured the very nature of aging out-of-place through what is experienced and how it is experienced.

Furthermore, the phenomenological methodology brought occupation to the forefront. Occupation is under the conscious control of the individual, at least to some degree. Although it is possible for occupations to have shared similar cultural meanings, the meaning of the occupation is primarily determined by the person participating in it (Gray, 1997). By attending to the first-person descriptions of conscious experience, the phenomenology examined how late-life immigrant participants experience occupation, and what these occupations meant to the participants.

Moreover, everyday human occupation is “seen but unnoticed” (Hasselkus, 2006). By returning to the things themselves and investigating phenomena through how they appear directly in day-to-day life, the phenomenological approach elicited new knowledge and deeper insight into seemingly mundane and ‘normal’ day-to-day occupational experiences, generating important, meaningful insights to the study of human occupation. The reconsideration of taken-for-granted assumptions through fresh eyes compelled me to reflect on my own situatedness in the research process and individual and cultural assumptions that impact my interpretations. Phenomenology also allowed occupational experiences to be seen as much more than an observable phenomenon. For instance, participants of this study spoke of spending ample time

engaging in reflection and introspection, both in solitude and amidst crowds such as bus terminals and food courts. By directing attention to how human occupations are experienced through being-in-the-world, this methodology and method also contributed to understandings about what late-life immigrants want to do, are able to do, and how they do it, within the everyday social, cultural, political contexts in which daily occupations are embedded. Thirdly, phenomenology offered understandings about the way people engage in everyday occupation in embodied ways (Lala & Kinsella, 2011), such as the impact of functional deterioration on aging out-of-place.

### 3.6 Theoretical standpoint

Acquired knowledge is not used as the starting point for exploring the phenomenon under investigation. Rather within phenomenology, the lived experience of the phenomenon is distinguished over theoretical knowledge. However, van Manen (1997b) proposes an analytical approach as one of five ways for textually organizing phenomenological writing. The analytical approach involves describing how the current understandings in social science relate to a certain phenomenon. This approach elucidates how the experience as presented by traditional social science is poorly understood and how the implicit, taken for granted conceptualizations overlook a “more thoughtful understanding of the nature of a certain topic” (p. 171).

Following the development of the study themes, using thematic analysis, the theoretical analysis at the level of discussion abstracted out beyond the themes. This took place in the discussion chapter of this dissertation. The theoretical analysis created larger meanings of the data and thus broadened the understanding of this phenomenon. This section introduces the two theoretical standpoints, namely Wilcock’s Occupational Perspective of Health (2006; 1998a) and the transactional perspective on occupation that served as interpretive guides in the discussion of this dissertation. This section first explores the concepts of doing, being, becoming, and belonging as used by Wilcock (2006; 1998a) and more recent understandings of these concepts. Secondly, the transactional perspective on occupation is discussed, along with Deweyan pragmatism which serve as its theoretical frame.

### 3.6.1 Doing, being, becoming and belonging

Wilcock (2006) acknowledges humans as occupational beings and deduces occupational participation as a key element in one's health and well-being. Wilcock, however, perceives occupation as more than doing. Instead she posits that it is a synthesis of doing, being and becoming (Wilcock, 1999), to which Rebeiro, Day, Semeniuk, O'Brien, and Wilson (2001) have added belonging. While this introduction describes the dimensions of occupation separately for theoretical purposes, these dimensions are intricately integrated and are not experienced independently of one another (Hitch, Pépin, & Stagnitti, 2014b).

#### 3.6.1.1 Doing

Doing has been a core construct of occupational therapy and occupational science. In fact, Wilcock (1998a) synonymized doing with occupation, where doing refers to the process of engagement in purposeful, goal-oriented occupations. Doing is also a social instrument which forms the basis of "community, local and national identity,...to the extent of the national government or to achieve international goals" (Wilcock, 1998a, p. 25)

Doing also extends beyond physical activity to encompass sedentary and mental doing (Lyons, Orozovic, Davis, & Newman, 2002)

The need to "do" is uniquely human (Kielhofner, 2002; Wilcock, 1993). Doing provides the prerequisite for homeostasis, good health and survival, particularly when the occupations "offer meaning, choice, satisfaction, a sense of belonging, purpose and achievement" (Wilcock, 2006, p. 107). Moreover, through doing one can derive positive effects, such as stimulation and enjoyment, and negative sentiments, such as boredom, stress, alienation and depression. Conversely, not doing disrupts health and wellbeing. Within western culture in particular, doing is an inherent aspect of daily life (Wilcock, 1998a). However, it is noteworthy that Wilcock writes from a Western perspective that may color her conceptualizations and theory. The findings of this study expand upon the concept of doing from a non-western perspective.

The mundanity of doing has lent itself to be overlooked by scientific inquiry. Occupational scientists contend that it is indeed the taken-for-granted nature of doing that demand scientific acknowledgement (Wilcock, 2006).

### 3.6.1.2 Being

Rowles (1991) posited that the emphasis in doing in occupational therapy "has tended to overshadow being as an essential ingredient of human experience" (p. 265). Elusive in nature, being is defined as "being true to ourselves, to our nature, to our essence and to what is distinctive about us to bring to others as part of our relationships and to what we do" (Wilcock, 1998b, p. 250). In their critical analysis of doing, being, belonging and becoming, Hitch, Pépin, and Stagnitti (2014a) identify three ways in which being has been used within the occupational therapy discourse; 'being as essence', 'being as entity' and 'being as existing'. 'Being as essence' is the closest to Wilcock's description of being as "how people feel about what they do" (Wilcock, 2006, p. 113). Being has also been discussed in the discourse as 'being as entity', referring to who someone is as an occupational and human being or "who we understand ourselves to be, our nature, and individual capacities" (Del Fabro Smith, Suto, Chalmers, & Backman, 2011, p. 45). Finally, 'being as existing' alludes to reflection, introspection, and self-discovery of their inner nature (Wilcock, 2006) and to savoring the moment (Donovan, VanLeit, Crowe, & Keefe, 2005). The manifestation of pleasure, joy and appreciation through being (Young & McNicoll, 1998) demonstrates that purpose is not essential to derive personal meaning from occupation (Hammell, 2004a).

### 3.6.1.3 Becoming

Wilcock (1998) described the transformative potential of occupation, whereby occupational engagement facilitates development and change. In support of this transformative potential, Kielhofner (2002) asserts "when we work, play, and perform activities of daily living we shape our capacities, our patterns of living and interacting with others, and our comprehension of our world and ourselves. To a large extent, we each author our own development through what we do" (p. 145).

Becoming involves “growing or coming into being; of living, moving, evolving energy, of aiming towards the higher levels of personal development and self-esteem, of potentialities, of full humanness; of self-actualization” (Wilcock, 2006, pp. 149–150). Becoming is tied to the concept of self (Wilcock, 2006) and being (Hitch et al., 2014b). It refers to the notion that people continuously seek opportunities and nurture visions of who or what they wish to become in their possible futures throughout the lifespan, through doing (Hammell, 2003). For example, older adults derive feelings of purpose, meaning and self-actualization, comparable to their pre-retirement careers, by engaging in ongoing and new interests in their retirement. These interests stimulate aspirations, which encourage, direct, and assist the use of their capacities to maintain their engagement (Wilcock, 2006). In doing so, they can portray themselves as more than that meets the eye and demonstrate their capabilities and contributions towards their personal growth and advancement of their communities. Becoming is a perpetual process which shapes one’s being and alters their position within the societal structure (Wilcock, 2006).

#### 3.6.1.4 Belonging

Conceived by Rebeiro et al. (2001) and advocated for by Hammell (2004), belonging was included in the second edition of the Occupational Perspective of Health (Wilcock, 2006). Wilcock has primarily associated belonging with the interpersonal connections of people as they engage in occupations. Other descriptions of belonging allude to social interaction and connection, social inclusion, mutuality, reciprocation, and contributions to others in exchange for a sense of being valued and affirmed by others (Hammell, 2014; Hitch et al., 2014a; Rebeiro et al., 2001). Unsurprisingly, research examining belonging refers to groups (Hitch et al., 2014b) which facilitate safe and accepting environments (Hammell, 2013). Hammell (2014) emphasized the association between belonging and connecting to others as being an important dimension of quality of life and one that can be met through occupational engagement. Moreover, the positive sentiments associated with belongingness serve as a powerful stimulus for occupational engagement.

Rooted in the Western ideology of independence, occupational therapy and occupational science literature has predominantly attended to this ideal by emphasizing



the self-oriented nature of occupation (Hammell, 2009). However, independence and autonomy are not universally shared values. Some cultures consider independence to be an inferior value, and prioritize social obligations over occupations that are deemed ‘self-centered’ (Ng, Ho, Wong, & Smith, 2003). Instead, cooperative and collective occupations reinforce social connection and cultural identities (Peralta-Catipon, 2012), resulting in the manifestation of meaning and satisfaction from doing (Hammell, 2004b).

Over the years, occupational science literature has expanded Wilcock’s (2006) conceptualization of belonging to capture other dimensions. Peoples, Nissen, Brandt, and la Cour (2018) state that occupational science literature has captured belonging through social belonging, spatial belonging, existential and spiritual belonging and belonging through artifacts. Social belonging refers to the emotional and shared connections associated with contributing to the lives of others (Rebeiro et al., 2001) and is in line with Wilcock’s (2006) conceptualization. Belonging has also been understood to be more than relationships with persons. Spatial belonging alludes to a connection to places in which people pursue certain occupations (Rebeiro et al., 2001; Rowles, 2008; Wilcock & Hocking, 2015). For instance, a “place” for occupation has emerged within the discipline as being important to the emergence of a sense of belonging (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Lala & Kinsella, 2011). In fact, the stability of context has been shown to sustain occupational engagement and provide a sense of home (Hitch et al., 2014a). Thus, relationships with places, communities, cultures, and times also facilitate a sense of belongingness (Hitch et al., 2014b). Finally, existential and spiritual belonging refers to the meaning, value, transcendence and beliefs (Blank, Finlay, & Prior, 2016; Hasselkus, 2011) and may be experienced through connecting with nature and ancestors (Hammell, 2014). Everyday objects, such as artifacts, may allow one to belong (Hocking, 1997; Rowles, 2008). These four dimensions of belonging are dynamic (Wilcock & Hocking, 2015) as they change significance over the course of an individual’s lifetime.

### 3.6.1.5 Context within doing, being, becoming and belonging

Occupations are performed in a context. The context shapes occupational choices, influences health and well-being, and structures options for social inclusion or exclusion (Law et al., 1996). For instance, an occupation is named by the culture where it is

performed (CAOT, 2002; Law, Polatajko, Baptiste, & Townsend, 1997). The social, cultural, and physical environments impact occupational engagement, and interacts with one's being, becoming and belonging. For instance, the physical environment can serve as a "place" for occupation (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Lala & Kinsella, 2011), but when engagement in purposeful and meaningful occupation is limited due to external restrictions and lack of resources, people experience occupational deprivation (Blakeney & Marshall, 2009). These restrictions impinge on the person's doing and becoming (Hitch et al., 2014b).

Conceivably, a change in context, as is the case with immigration, influences the sense of doing, being, becoming and belonging. Specifically, migration has been shown to change engagement in and performance of meaningful occupations (Boerema et al., 2010; Gupta & Sullivan, 2013; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Krishnagiri et al., 2013; Nayar et al., 2012). These occupational changes and disruptions have implications on one's identity (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010) and health (Kristiansen, Mygind, & Krasnik, 2007).

### 3.6.1.6 Summary

The discussion chapter uses Wilcock's Occupational Perspective of Health (2006; 1998a) to understand the process of aging out-of-place. The changes in late-life immigrants' occupational participation, the way they managed these occupational changes, and the centrality of occupation in relating to, and connecting and engaging with the post-migration context is explored using Wilcock's conceptualization of occupation. Specifically, the discussion is centered around how late-life immigrants renegotiate ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging in the post-migration context.

### 3.6.2 Deweyan Pragmatism

John Dewey (1859-1952), an American philosopher and a prominent thinker in the philosophical school of pragmatism, argued that human action is continuous with, and inseparable from the context with which it occurs (Dewey, 1938, 1959). The pragmatist considers the presence of the external world as real and as a basis of our existence as humans. However, the external world is not fixed, nor stable. The instability and

singularity of situations facilitate endless possibilities for actions to unfold in everyday life (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Dewey focused on the processes used to achieve a resolution of dissonance in the environment (Garrison, 2001) and believed human life was about securing stability. Specifically, he posited that actions to fulfil needs change the environment, giving rise to new needs. These new needs demand further change in the activities of the organisms to achieve satisfaction (Dewey, 1986). Thus, the basis of the pragmatist philosophy is grounded in the changeability and contingency of reality; it regards the world as evolving and impermanent (Moore, 1961; Scheffler, 1974).

The context, or situation, instigates a unique behavioural action (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008). The situation is either indeterminate, which refers to uncertainty, instability or uniqueness, or determinate. While determinate or stable situations necessitate habitual action that does not require careful decision making, problematic or indeterminate situations may lack obvious possibilities of action. To overcome the problematic situation, Dewey posited that humans constantly modify their behavioural responses to the prevailing situation through inquiry, thoughtful reflection and experimentation with different actions (Dewey, 1959; Garrison, 2001). The application of knowledge through everyday action facilitates the establishment of stability in situations. By shaping experience and effecting a positive future, this problem solving results in a spiral of growth (Aldrich, 2008).

### 3.6.2.1 The theory of transaction

Dewey's theory of action, known as transaction, is an essential part of his philosophy. Transaction refers to the combination of continuity and action in the world (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Garrison, 2001). Specifically, transaction is an "inquiry in which existing descriptions of events are accepted only as tentative and preliminary, and where new descriptions of the aspects and phases of events based on inquiry may be made at any time" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 113). Dewey's transactional view posits that elements that were perceived as being separate from one another are in fact co-defining, co-constitutive parts of each other (Sullivan, 2001). The relationships between person and world continually alter the ongoing transactions that occur due to the precariousness inherent in the changing world. Dewey described functional coordination,

habit, context and end-in-view as being the essential elements of the complex character of transaction. As per Dewey's view of transaction, the objective of human behavior is to achieve functional coordination through the complex and creative interaction of habit and context (Aldrich, 2008).

The mutual co-construction of the individual and the context is referred to as functional coordination. The objective of functional coordination is to achieve greater harmony between people and their indeterminate and determinate situations (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). For instance, ascending a flight of stairs is ordinarily an unconscious and taken-for-granted activity. However, following a lower extremity injury climbing stairs requires functional coordination, as the climber is now required to consider logistical information such as stair dimensions (height, depth) and stair surface (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012).

Functional coordination is dependent on Dewey's theory of habit, as habit configurations subconsciously foster harmonious transactions with the environment (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2012, 2013; Garrison, 2002). Dewey (1922/1998) posited that habits are movements and thoughts that are "ways or modes of response" (cited by Aldrich, 2008, p. 152) to particular situations. Habits are inextricably linked to context. As people encounter different contexts, they adopt distinct habit configurations to harmoniously transact with those contexts (Kestenbaum, 1977). The more habits one has at their disposal, the more equipped they are to respond to the changes in the situation (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). These predispositions are acquired through participation in the social, cultural and physical world. The unique relationships between individuals and their contexts results in habit configurations that are unique to that relationship (Cutchin et al., 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Habits are modified when they fail to achieve functional coordination within particular situations. To resume function, humans engage in "dramatic rehearsal", a process of inquiry in which the possible lines of action, or habits, are deliberated, tested and selected as schemas of possible action to the indeterminate situation (Fesmire, 2003). It is an imaginative experiment of sorts. Determining the lines of possible action, leads to the discovery of what the resultant consequence would be. Ultimately the best course of action is decided (Ralston, 2010). This exercise of empathetic and imaginative capacities has been compared to method

acting, where actors use direct or related personal experiences to adopt the mentality and nature of their characters to develop a comprehensive understanding that allows them to face various conditions and “stay in character” (Hamington, 2010, p. 126).

Human activity is understood as being continuous. Thus, “ends are, in fact, literally endless, forever coming into existence as new activities occasion new consequences” (Dewey, 1983, p. 159). Ends-in-view guide inquiry and are hypothetical ideas that organize and guide action towards reaching the aim of the transaction. Garrison (2009) likened ends-in-view to a blueprint for constructing a building. The end-in-view is continually evaluated and adjusted throughout the process of inquiry (Kuo, 2011). The actor compares the present means to the ideal end-in-view. This assessment controls present action as a means to future consequences. Garrison (2009) posits that over time, a good builder would incorporate the contextual knowledge of materials, structures and shortcomings of the design to alter the design. Thus, the actor will only cease to functionally coordinate when he/she is satisfied that what he/she has thus far is superior to their original end-in-view.

### 3.6.2.2 A transactional perspective on occupation

Occupational science has drawn heavily on Dewey’s transactionism (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2013), although occupation has also been theorized by drawing on other key ideas in Dewey’s philosophical work (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Despite acknowledging the role of context and environment, occupational scientists have tended to conceive of occupation as an individual experience, a position which insinuates a separation of person and context. Contemporary scholars within occupational science and occupational therapy have criticized this duality, and the concomitant individualism within the discipline. Instead they advocate for the use of Dewey’s theory of transactionism to understand and study conceptions of occupation (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006).

The transactional perspective on occupation emphasizes the connection between the person and their environment, where occupation is understood as being situated and embedded, and relating person and context through action (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Dickie et al., 2006). The person and the environment are integrated and functionally

coordinated through occupation (Dickie et al., 2006). Occupational engagement facilitates social connection of humans with others and engages them in other worlds (Cutchin, 2007; Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Occupation thus emerges from transactions between person and situation.

### 3.6.2.3 Summary

The transactional perspective on occupation used in the discussion chapter facilitates a relational and situational understanding of everyday life of late-life immigrants. This theoretical standpoint illuminates how human action emerges from the inseparable relationships among humans, materials and immaterial aspects (Aldrich, 2008; Dickie et al., 2006). Furthermore, it provides a theoretical position of understanding occupation as contingent upon context and situation, wherein people constantly experiment to seek stabilization of indeterminate situations. Considering their lack of experience and knowledge of the foreign physical, political, cultural, societal, and economic context, late-life immigration is inherently destabilizing. Late-life immigrants are thus required to reconstruct new places and new occupational routines for themselves in the post-migration context.

### 3.6.3 Fit between aim of study and methodology

Interpretivist researchers are encouraged to be open to the field data and prepared to change initial assumptions. Thus, within research situated in an interpretive paradigm, theory ensues the research so that it is grounded on the data produced by the study. In fact, Walsham (1995) warns that the use of theory in earlier stages of research can entrap the researcher to use the theory in an inflexible way, thereby restricting the acknowledgement and pursuance of alternate paths.

While phenomenological researchers are primarily concerned with obtaining embodied, experiential meanings to produce rich descriptions of phenomena as lived, Finlay (2013) recommends drawing external resources when the data or method demand it. The uptake of external resources can “help researchers engage in layered, horizontal analysis, that is, seeing from different horizons and perspectives” (p. 193). Importing outside theory, while maintaining the focus on the descriptions provided by the

participants, can enrich and deepen the analysis of the lived worlds of participants, and/or bring up further questions. This perspective is congruous with the interpretivist paradigm, which aims to understand the subjective world of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The use of Wilcock's OPH (1998, 2006) and the transactional perspective on occupation emerged from interactions with the data. Moreover, they were chosen based on literature suggesting their capacity to contribute to the study of migration from an occupational perspective. Specifically, the displacement and disruption of occupation, and sense of place during the process of migration necessitates the consideration of the nexus of occupation and place. Huot & Laliberte Rudman (2010) posit that researchers must take into consideration the implicit and explicit ways occupations are connected with doing, being, becoming and belonging. The use of the OPH in the discussion elucidated the complex and multidimensional effect of late-life immigration on occupation.

Immigration is a dynamic process that is experienced through everyday occupations. Specifically, immigrants are embedded in an unfamiliar context, thus the transactions that take place between person and environment are discernible. As Dewey suggested, experience is situational and temporally continuous. Therefore, occupational science must consider immigrants' past, what they bring with them, and how that will shape the present and future situations they experience in the post-migration context. The use of the transactional perspective offered a unique opportunity to examine the transactional nature of occupation by bringing the environment into focus. Specifically, a transactional perspective is essential for understanding the ways in which cultural context, self, occupation and connections are connected in the process of immigration (Nayar & Hocking, 2013). By examining the centrality of everyday occupation in immigration and settlement processes, the present study provides a unique and rich occupational perspective to migration research.

### 3.7 Summary

This chapter explicated the researcher's philosophical assumptions and provided rationale for using the interpretive paradigm, and the phenomenological methodology.

Moreover, the validity of these approaches within the discipline of occupational science was elucidated. The philosophical constructs presented in this chapter guided the decisions surrounding study design, to ensure cohesion between methodology, paradigm and study. The details of the study design and processes are presented in the methods chapter that follows. This chapter also prefaced the two theoretical perspectives that were explored in the context of study findings and presented in the discussion chapter of this dissertation.



## Chapter 4

### 4 Methods

*The once barren forests,  
and the milky white snow fields  
Now taken over by sprouting buds and tender leaves,  
the whole country is a canopy of flowers*

This chapter details the methods used for recruitment, sampling, data collection, data management and analysis. Specifically, this chapter first presents the methods employed for sampling and the unfolding of the recruitment process. A summary of the study sample is also presented. The details of the phenomenological interview and photo-elicitation interview are outlined, as well as the management of data. Data analysis details the use of holistic, selective and detailed approaches to uncover and isolate meanings embedded in the text. Deviations of the intended methods that occurred during the study are explained throughout. Continuing on from Chapter 3, which outlined the methodology, the remaining three procedural activities of van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenological approach (i.e., existential investigation, phenomenological reflection, and phenomenological writing) are used to structure the sections on data collection and data analysis. The remainder of the chapter addresses the maintenance of quality criteria using de Witt & Ploeg's (2006) framework, and ethical consideration made during the research process. The chapter concludes with a summary of methods.

#### 4.1 Sampling

##### 4.1.1 Participant sampling methods

This study used criterion-based sampling, defined as purposive recruitment according to a set of predetermined criteria (Patton, 2015), in the hope of recruiting participants who “have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). Specifically, the study set out to select participants on the basis of their knowledge and ability to describe the group in which they held membership. The purposive selection was intended to facilitate in-depth and information-rich “examples” of experiential

descriptions (van Manen, 2014). However, within this homogenous group, diverse demographics (i.e., gender, age, religious affiliation) that adhered to the inclusion criteria were sought. The inclusion criteria included: Sinhalese older adults (65 or over) who immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka in the last 10 years, living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), able to recount and reflect on their experiences; able to communicate and understand either English or Sinhalese; and have no hindrances that would impede their ability to operate a disposable or personally-owned camera.

The decision to include those who were 55 years old at the time of immigration to Canada was based on the pensionable age for public sector employees in Sri Lanka (55 years old). Moreover, issues that pertain to “old age”, such as role definition, are experienced earlier in this generally younger community (Sadavoy et al., 2004). Furthermore, within the literature, a demarcation of what constitutes a late-life immigrant has not been established. Research with late-life immigrants have included various age ranges (varying from 50 – 65 years) and times of immigration (Gautam, Mawn, & Beehler, 2017; Hossen & Westhues, 2013; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Mukherjee & Diwan, 2016; Wright-St Clair et al., 2017). Similar to this study, Wright-St Clair and Nayar (2017) also used a sample of older immigrants who were aged 55 or older on arrival.

Participants from the GTA were sought based on settlement patterns of immigrants in large metropolitan areas (Vézina & Houle, 2017). In fact, the majority of immigrants from Sri Lanka settle in the metropolitan region of Toronto (Nanayakkara, 2011; Reeves, 2013). Moreover, the researcher’s ties to the ethnic community in the GTA was also promising for recruitment.

Similarly, questions related to the exclusion criteria were asked when individuals expressed interest in the study. Potential participants who had lived outside of Sri Lanka prior to immigrating to Canada in their old age were excluded from the study as not to muddy the aging out-of-place experience. Due to the visual component of this study, individuals with self-reported visual difficulties that would compromise their ability to take and speak to photographs were excluded from the study. Additionally, individuals

with moderate to severe cognitive impairment, screened during telephone and in-person recruitment interview, were excluded due to the high-level of cognitive capacity required from participants.

Given the iterative relationship between sampling and data analysis within qualitative research, there is a lack of definitive rules guiding sample size (Tuckett, 2004). Instead, the sample size is guided by the researcher judgements (Sandelowski, 1995) concerning the adequacy of “information-richness” (Patton, 2015, p. 245). An adequate phenomenological sample size can vary, depending on the purpose of the study, from one case to 50 thick descriptions. Thomas and Pollio (2002) have recommended a range of 6-12 participants to be an appropriate sample size for phenomenological inquiry. As such, I set out to recruit 8-12 participants for this study.

#### 4.1.2 Recruitment

As a member of the ethnic community, I was aware that the Sinhalese community in Canada is a geographically dispersed ethnic minority faction. Despite its dispersion, shared cultural and religious values have fostered a sense of intimacy within the community in the GTA, creating a tight-knit and highly connected network of individuals with a strong ethnic solidarity. The unity within the ethnic community proved beneficial during recruitment, although recruitment of distinct and well-differentiated individuals from small, identifiable populations can present ethical concerns, particularly with regard to ensuring confidentiality (Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). The Buddhist temples within the GTA, the nucleus of the ethnoreligious community and a gathering place for religious and lay activities, became recruitment hubs. Recruitment was akin to following a trail of breadcrumbs as I was required to piece together information supplied to me by various community members. I found prominent and well-connected insiders and those who had local authority (e.g., Buddhist monks, community leaders, etc.), acting as gatekeepers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), who veered me towards community gathering places known to attract Sinhalese older adults. Specifically, I was informed of a monthly senior’s program hosted by two Sri Lankan Buddhist temples within the GTA. The seniors group facilitated social interactions, educational opportunities, exercise programs, religious and cultural ceremonies, and annual trips. While the group was said to have a

total membership of approximately 60, I encountered the same 15-20 older adults in attendance during my multiple visits to the seniors' group. This insider information was critical to recruitment as community gatherings became my sole opportunity to interact with Sinhalese older adults, who were for the most part invisible to broader society.

Some scholars have argued that greater ethnic similarity between the researcher and participant is indicative of greater trust and rapport and better access to information (Papadopoulos & Lees, 2002). Indeed, the shared ethnic and religious identities facilitated access to Sinhalese late-life immigrants. Although my literacy and cultural skills allowed effortless access to late-life immigrants as anticipated, issues relating to researcher identity and participant trust and recruitment were far more complex than a simple matching of researcher characteristics. Several participants required the encouragement of prominent members of the community to participate. For instance, I attended the temple on a poya day (full moon day) when Buddhists patronize the temple for religious observance. I spoke and provided recruitment posters to several older attendees, all of whom seemed disinterested. Sensing my frustration, the head monk of the temple introduced the study along with a brief description of me. His calm, yet authoritative, voice and bright saffron robe demanded the attention of the attendees. Buddhist monks are in the highest positions in the religious hierarchy, which have earned them profound respect and reverence from lay Buddhists. During the preamble, the monk referred to me as 'one of our own daughters', explicating insider status, but also alluding to my age, gender and scholarship; three identities that implied vulnerability. This introduction seemed to stimulate the interest of several attendees, including one older adult who had previously demonstrated disinterest. I wonder whether it was the monk's influence, the bestowal of group membership, the accentuation of my vulnerabilities, or a combination of these three forces that roused interest.

Some older adults deferred the decision to participate in the study to their family, specifically their sponsoring child. While this may have been out of passivity, I wondered whether this was also a means of seeking validation from trusted family members about the 'safety' and appropriateness of their participation in the study led by a supposed 'insider'. The involvement of the family during recruitment served as an additional layer

of scrutiny of my positionality. Similar to older adults, family members casually inquired about my research but placed a heavy emphasis on getting to know me. I continue to debate whether family involvement was beneficial or detrimental to older adults' decision to participate. While our shared "we-ness" seemed to offer reassurance, my social proximity to the community may have served to dissuade some families and older adults. Furthermore, I wonder about the degree of candor and honesty of those participants who required the opinion of family members regarding their participation in the study. Would late-life immigrants who sought permission from their children to participate candidly share their experiences? My reflections on this question are presented in Appendix M.

The participants of the study all identified as practicing Buddhists. Buddhism was intimately tied to all aspects of their lives as experiences and worldviews were constantly brought into focus through a religious lens. The decision to participate in the study was also tied to Buddhism, as participants cited altruism and my vulnerability as a student as inciting their desire to 'help'. I was perceived as being in 'need' of information, and their involvement was perceived as pivotal to my academic success, and rightly so.

The unintentional religious homogeneity within the sample provoked me to explore the perceptions of Sinhalese late-life immigrants with a variant religious affiliation. Although the Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhists (90% of the Sinhalese), a small percentage (about 7% of the Sinhalese population) follow branches of Christianity (Freeman, 2001). Sinhalese older adults' inconspicuousness led me to promote my study using Sinhalese and English recruitment posters (Appendix A) at diverse cultural events, cyber communities, and in prominent newspapers circulated to the general Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada. Despite various attempts, I was unable to recruit any older adults who were affiliated with the Christian faith. I questioned whether the lack of religious diversity within the study sample was partly due to my lack of membership within the group (i.e., Sinhalese Christians), as well as my lack of insider knowledge of the events, places and persons of significance within this subgroup.

Recruitment proved difficult given the coterie of the ethnic community, the small number of late-life immigrants, and the even smaller pool of individuals matching the

inclusion criteria. Recruitment began in the winter of 2016 and continued till August of 2017. Once a potential participant was encountered, arrangements were made to review the study and confirm eligibility using the Letter of Information, obtain consent (Appendix B), answer any outstanding questions, and make arrangements for the first interview. I conducted approximately one interview a month, although occasionally there were longer lags in between interviews due to difficulties with recruitment. Lags in recruitment granted time to collect, transcribe, interpret and reflect on each participant's data. Recruitment was ceased when rich insight and sufficient descriptions regarding the experience of aging out-of-place were reached.

### 4.1.3 Participants

The study sample comprised of ten participants (whose names here are pseudonyms). Specifically, this group included four females and six males ranging in age from 72 to 82 years old, living in the GTA, Ontario, Canada (see Table 1). All participants immigrated from Sri Lanka to Canada under the Parent and Grandparent (PGP) Sponsorship Program between 2007 and 2013. Motivations for immigration were to assist sponsoring adult children with household maintenance and childcare, unite with family upon widowhood, and/or seek better quality of life in their old age. All sponsoring children were also immigrants who had entered Canada prior to the participants. Nine of the participants co-resided with their sponsoring child and family, while one participant lived separately with a grandchild. Two female participants were widowers. The sample also included two married couples, Kamal and Sujatha, and Apsara and Saman. All but one participant, who had been a housewife, held white-collar positions in Sri Lanka prior to retirement and immigration. All participants identified themselves as devout Buddhists. They were regular patrons of the Buddhist temples in the GTA and the seniors' program hosted by the temples.

Table 1: *Descriptors of late-life immigrant participants*

Participant pseudonym	Age	Gender	Marital status	Living arrangement
Geetha	82	F	Widowed	Co-residing with sponsoring child
Ravi	81	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Kamal	80	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Sujatha	75	F	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Bandula	78	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Manjula	73	F	Widowed	Residing independently with a grandchild
Vijith	75	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Ranil	75	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Apsara	72	F	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse
Saman	74	M	Married	Co-residing with sponsoring child and spouse

## 4.2 Data collection, management, and analysis

The previous chapter introduced the four procedural activities of van Manen's (1984) hermeneutic phenomenological approach and discussed the first of these four activities, that is, turning to the nature of the lived experience in depth. The following section elaborates on the three remaining procedural activities of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach; existential investigation; phenomenological reflection, and phenomenological writing.

### 4.2.1 Existential Investigation: Data collection

In literature, existential investigation is associated with generation of data. However, this association has an objectivist overtone that is incompatible with phenomenology. Instead from a phenomenological perspective this part of the research process refers to the educational development of the researcher (van Manen, 1984a). Phenomenological

research aims to search in the 'lifeworld' for lived-experience material. The lifeworld is described by van Manen (1990) as "the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations" (p. 101). It refers to everyday experiences as they are, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, and includes what is often taken for granted or as common sense (Husserl, 1970; van Manen, 1990).

van Manen (1990) recommends several data sources to investigate lived experience. van Manen (1984) recommends obtaining experiential descriptions from others. In essence, phenomenologists "borrow" (van Manen, 1997b, p. 62) and reflect on participants experiences to extract the significance of the experience. To explore the phenomenon, and gather data, van Manen recommends conversational interviewing, that stays close to the experience as lived. To investigate the phenomenological question of this study, I gathered experiential descriptions from the late-life immigrant participants through in-depth interviews and photo-elicitation. This was followed by reflection, which attended to the meanings as they were given in the participant's experiences.

#### 4.2.1.1 Phenomenological interviews

Phenomenological interviews were one-on-one conversations using a semi-structured approach, which loosely followed a guideline of concrete and open-ended topics and questions (Wright-St Clair, 2014) (Appendix G). Two frameworks informed the design of the interview guide. The first drew attention to four occupational dimensions: doing (engagement in purposeful activities), being (self-reflective orientation towards oneself and one's existence), becoming (situatedness within a continuing life-process), and belonging (social interactions and relationships) (Hammell, 2004; Rebeiro, Day, Semeniuk, O'Brien, & Wilson, 2001; Wilcock, 2006; 1998). The four phenomenological existential modes that reflect 'felt' or 'lived' experience in the world, namely lived time (a subjective understanding of time), lived space (subjective experience of the space we find ourselves in), lived relations (communications and relationships shared with others through the spaces and interactions we share and create with them), and lived body (our bodily presence in our everyday lives) (van Manen, 1990) further sculpted the interview guide.



Philosophically, the ontology of the hidden human phenomenon can “manifest itself in experience” (Gadamer et al., 2004, p. 57). Thus, the one-on-one conversational interview served to gather pre-reflective lived experience material through stories, anecdotes, recollection of experiences of “specific instances, situations, persons or events” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 67), instead of conceptualizations and interpretations, to stay close to the life worlds of late-life immigrants.

#### 4.2.1.1.1 First interview

Many participants chose to be interviewed at the home they shared with their sponsoring child, while two participants requested to be interviewed in public places. Interviews were conducted in both Sinhalese and English in accordance with the preference of the participant. Those who communicated mostly in English reverted to Sinhalese when expression in the native tongue seemed more appropriate and vice versa. The interviews lasted between 1-2 hours. Each interview was audio recorded. The recording began following review of informed consent at the beginning of each interview and concluded at the end of the participant’s response to the final prompt.

Participants were asked about their experience of aging out-of-place, specifically “What is it like to age in a place where you did not spend your youth or adulthood?” Despite the prepared interview guide, the flow and direction of the interview was steered by the emerging dialogue with the participant. To uncover the everyday experience, I invited participants to “What does a typical day look like for you?”. The answers to such open-ended questions branched into multiple, unexpected conversational pathways. I encouraged such stories with gentle prods by asking “Can you tell me more about that?”. My research alignment with occupational science also prompted me to invite occupational stories; for example, “Tell me about the last time you went out into the community?” or “Tell me what you do around the house?”. I encouraged “phenomenological example[s]”, described as “something knowable or understandable that may not be directly sayable.” (van Manen, 2017, p. 814). For instance, when asked about a time when he experienced a sense of belongingness in Canada, Ranil described his experience of hospitalization. His story described how the equal treatment and compassionate care of healthcare providers had allowed him to experience a sense of

acceptance and belongingness in the post-migration context. These examples were potent and vivid, allowing the listener to unconsciously and inadvertently recognize the experiential possibilities of human life (van Manen, 2014). Rephrasing the participants' anecdotes and experiences elicited profound insights. Furthermore, I sought participants' thoughts on happenings in their lives by asking questions like, "What was your best/worst memory in Canada?". These questions were oriented to gather experiential narrative material about the nature of aging out-of-place. Specifically, I sought to understand: How is this aging out-of-place? What is it like to be a late-life immigrant? Is this what it means to age out-of-place?

As a novice phenomenologist, I experienced trepidation in the first phenomenological interview. Specifically, this interview was overly structured, and the questions had slowly moved away from probing the essence of the phenomenon towards challenges encountered in the post-migration context. This resulted in groundless interpretations that were formulated primarily through speculation. Reflective engagement following the first phenomenological interview prompted me to return to the research question for reorientation. This pause for reflection redirected me to address the phenomenon of interest, or the research question, in subsequent interviews. Over the course the phenomenological interviews, I came to genuinely appreciate the power of silence, as "Patience or silence may be a more tactful way of prompting the other to gather recollections and proceed with a story." (van Manen, 1997b, p. 68).

At the end of the first interview, participants completed a sociodemographic questionnaire (Appendix F) which elicited demographic and contextual data that were expected to be unaddressed in the interview, such as level of education, pre-retirement profession, living arrangement in Sri Lanka. The participants were then given a brief orientation session during which time the photo elicitation method was discussed. Participants were asked to take up to 27 photographs using the disposable camera provided, or personal cameras, to capture their everyday experiences as late-life immigrants. Participants were also encouraged to use old photographs or images from various media. I purposefully did not divulge information about what participants should photograph, as to not place any expectations on them. Participants, all of whom had not

used a disposable camera, were shown its operation. Written instructions were provided, and participants were encouraged to communicate their challenges with the researcher via telephone if needed.

Documented challenges encountered by older adults during visual methods, such as poor finger dexterity and lack of familiarity with the use of cameras (Novek, Morris-Oswald, & Menec, 2012), were addressed during this orientation session. In addition to using personal cameras, participants were encouraged to use old photographs, or images from print materials or the internet if they were deemed a salient representation of their late-life immigration experience, a practice supported by Harper (2002). In previous studies, older adults also have expressed concern about obtaining consent from identifiable people in photographs, citing discomfort of others with the formality of it as a reason, and experience feelings of anxiety with photographing and the fear of social consequences (Novek et al., 2012). Each participant and I engaged in a discussion that emphasized power and ethics and the responsibility and authority conferred on the participants as photographers (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). I engaged participants in dialogue surrounding questions proposed by Wang (1999): “What is an acceptable way to approach someone to take his or her picture?, Should someone take pictures of other people without their knowledge?, To whom might you wish to give photographs and what might be the implication?, When would you not want to have your picture taken?, Do you have any questions or concerns about taking photographs?” (Wang, 1999). If photographing a subject other than themselves, participants were specifically instructed to seek consent, using the Photography Subject Consent Form (Appendix J) prior to photographing. Many participants were puzzled about photographing their experiences without being present in the photograph. I explained that an experience could be captured in creative ways without the presence of the photographer who is also the subject of the photograph. Logbooks (Appendix I) were provided to assist participants to provide data as they occur to them and help prevent the loss of data and perspectives owing to time lag.

#### 4.2.1.2 Interim between first and second interview

Plunkett, Leipert, and Ray (2013) recommend that participants be given appropriate time, often two weeks, to capture their experiences, and to document in logbooks additional information or insights during the picture taking time. A two-week duration seemed to be an appropriate and adequate timeframe for participants to capture their daily lives as it related to their aging out-of-place experience and keep them engaged and active in the study.

Participants were contacted one week following the first interview and orientation session to discuss and encourage progress in picture taking and logbook recording. Five of the 10 participants captured their experiences over the course of the first two weeks following the initial interview, although one of these participants cut out images of wildlife from a magazine that was unrelated to her aging out-of-place experience. These photographs and images were collected from the participants in anticipation of using them in the photo-elicitation interview.

Many of the participants reported difficulties with operating the camera. These participants declined the researcher's in-person technical support, instead preferring to rely on their children or grandchildren. Others reported not having experiences 'worthy' of being photographed. Despite encouraging participants to capture experiences of their everyday, participants stated that the mundanity of their everyday was uninteresting. Others stated that they did not have an opportunity to go out in the community, or simply forgot to take their cameras along with them.

While, phone calls were initially made weekly to monitor participants' progress, the lag between these phone calls extended as time passed. Two participants took several months to produce photographs of their late-life immigration experience and produced these undeveloped photographs to the researcher at the end of the second interview resulting in an inability to discuss these photographs in depth. Two other participants did not complete this component of the study citing technical difficulties. Finally, one participant withdrew from the study as she was no longer available for participation. Ultimately seven participants produced photographs and/or images, however only four

participants produced photographs related to their aging out-of-place experience in a timely manner, allowing them to participate in the photo-elicitation interview.

Once participants had completed capturing their experiences, the photos, along with completed logbooks, were retrieved. The development of the disposable film cameras took approximately 2 weeks. Two sets of photographs were developed with the intention of one set being returned to the participant. My initial thoughts and interpretations of these photos and logbooks were recorded. During this initial look-through, it appeared that perhaps participants had misunderstood the purpose of the activity. Some participants had captured the same event or occasion multiple times, others had included images that appeared irrelevant to the aging out-of-place experience. Moreover, some of the images produced using the disposable cameras were grainy and dark, thus making it difficult to decipher the contents of the photo. Other photos included persons (family members and community members) who were photographed without their consent. Thus, I was unable to complete the photo-elicitation as anticipated, due to its lack of success. However, I found that a few of the photographs captured occasions, events and experiences that were touched on or discussed during the initial interview. I noted that the contextual data within photographs would further the understanding of meanings attributed and the emotion these photographs would arouse.

I discussed the lack of success of photo-elicitation with the research supervisor. Together it was determined that the second interview would be used as another phenomenological interview to broaden my understanding of the everyday experiences of these late-life immigrants. Moreover, it was determined that participants who had produced usable photographs and images would engage in a photo-elicitation interview. Arrangements were made with participants for a second interview at a date, a time and a place that was convenient for them. These interviews typically took place one to two months following the first interview.

#### 4.2.1.3 Photo-elicitation interview

The second interview was intended to be a photo-elicitation interview (PEI). van Manen (1998) discusses the importance of literary and artistic sources for hermeneutic

phenomenological inquiry as a way to provide the phenomenologist access to possible human experiences. Thus, while the meaning of experience in common-life practices can be uncovered through narratives that emerge from interpretive phenomenological inquiry (Lopez & Willis, 2004), alternative methods such as visual methods, can also contribute to understanding the lived experience and its associated meanings by eliciting additional visual and narrative data. Furthermore, with their “own language of expression” (p.74), albeit non-discursive (van Manen, 1990), visuals are able to fill the voids in understanding furnished by limitations of verbalization alone (Harper, 2002; Richard & Lahman, 2015).

Photo elicitation is based on “the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Embedding photographs into interviews make the “invisible visible” (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011, p. 739) through offering a visual dimension to the unobservable feelings, memories, experiences and thoughts. The PEI is an interviewing technique in which the researcher extracts information from participants by using researcher-generated or participant-generated photographs. This study used participant-generated photographs, which require participants to take photographs in response to a question or prompt. Placing the camera in the hands of the participant facilitates insight, reduction in the asymmetry in power between the researcher and participant, and participant empowerment (Harper, 2002).

#### 4.2.1.3.1 Second interview

On the day of the scheduled interview, I brought with me the two sets of photographs and the completed logbooks for the participants who had taken photographs. While many of the photographs were unusable due to picture quality or due to its duplicative nature, a select few photographs served as an elicitation artifact. Specifically, participants were encouraged to select the most meaningful photographs that represented their experience of aging out-of-place. The prepared PEI probing questions (Appendix H), intended to capture the nature of the photograph, the reasons for its capture, as well as its relevance to the phenomenon under investigation (Wang, 1999), were open-ended and general, encouraging in-depth discussion.

I prompted the older adults to discuss the selected pictures by stating “Can you tell me about this photograph?”, which was often met with bewilderment by participants who appeared to believe that the photograph was self-explanatory. After an initial hesitation and gentle prodding, participants focused on detailed description. The implicit personal decisions about the places, objects and motives within the photo were explored through gentle probing, when appropriate, to understand participants’ personal conceptions of, and relations to, the surrounding world. For instance, during the PEI, Vijith carefully described his bedroom where he spent copious amounts of times sleeping, reading, meditating and administering his numerous medications. He detailed how the arrangement of the furniture facilitated his occupational engagement within that space. These descriptions served as points of departure for conversational pathways which resembled the phenomenological interview. As an example, Bandula’s photograph depicting him reading in a chair in the living room led to discussions of how reading was a means to evade the stressors in Canada.

These visual captures served to provide in-depth phenomenological data, that expanded what was learned in the first interview. For instance, Vijith had described how his chronic medical conditions influenced his occupational participation in Canada during the first interview. The visual images that he captured for the PEI offered greater contextual data to that experience. During the second interview, he used images he had captured of his medication storage to delve into the time committed to his medication regimen. Given the interval between the time of photographic capture and time of PEI, the logbooks also proved effective.

The five participants who did not capture their experience of aging out-of-place using the visual method or in a timely manner, engaged in a second phenomenological interview. Prior to the interview, I read and reread their first interview to identify descriptions that lacked depth but seemed pertinent to the aging out-of-place experience. Often the lack of depth was due to researcher-oversight. During these readings, I developed probing questions. I revisited these points during the second interview and prompted participants to provide specific anecdotes to exemplify the narrative.

Considering the overwhelming lack of success of the PEI, the findings of the study were only derived from the data from the interviews.

The second interview was also an opportunity to return to the participants to address the authenticity of my representation of their intended meanings, and how this was being interpreted as the interview evolved. This was essential as van Manen (1990,1997) asserted that only the person concerned can clarify and answer “Is this what the experience is really like?” (p. 99).

#### 4.2.2 Ongoing Reflective Attention

Data collection also involved ongoing reflective attention to closely observe the situation at hand. Field notes and reflective notes also chronicled participants’ settings, research experience and methodological issues, such as the unexpected redirection of the PEI. Close observations during the first and second interview, not only attuned me to participants’ non-verbal communication and emotional responses, but also to the contextuality of participants’ spaces, and their interactions and participation with these contexts. These observations, documented in field notes and reflexive journaling, later facilitated many ‘in hindsight’ moments. For instance, at her request I arrived to interview Geetha in the morning when her sponsoring child’s family had left the home for school or work. Bypassing several vacant rooms, Geetha took me upstairs to her bedroom for the interview. While this appeared out of the ordinary in that moment, in hindsight the importance of her bedroom became evident once I came to grasp an understanding of her late-life immigration experience. Similarly, both Ranil and Bandula looked over their shoulders and lowered their voices when expressing their displeasure with co-residing with the sponsoring child. This body language provided greater contextual information to supplement their descriptive accounts of the intergeneration conflict within the co-residency arrangement in Canada.

Rather than relying solely on the verbal recording, field notes also facilitated the reconstruction of conversations in context. Superimposing these observations with the static textual data, which did not capture the complexity of everyday language, gave



persuasive power to participants' anecdotes. Furthermore, these reflections and insights stimulated discussion with the research supervisor and advisory committee.

Moreover, to reach an understanding of the essential structures of the phenomenon, van Manen (1997b) recommends hermeneutic reduction, through which the researcher becomes critically self-aware and explicates their "subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations or expectations that would prevent one from coming to terms with a phenomenon or experience as it is lived through" (p. 185). Hermeneutic reduction prompted the exploration of my positionality or worldview, which refers to one's social location; personal experience and theoretical stance (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). While our shared ethnicity, religious affiliation, and immigrant identity privileged me with insider status, while the generational gap between participants and myself, and my muddled cultural identity conferred outsider status. These reflections on insider/outsider positionality is documented in Appendix M.

### 4.2.3 Data management

Recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher immediately following the interview. Although the 'ums', 'uhs', 'hmms', stutters and pauses broke the flow of the participants' descriptive account, these speech nuances were included in the transcription as not to alter the essential meaning. Transcriptions were made in the original language of interview. Three full interviews were translated from Sinhalese to English. Copies of these translated interviews as well as transcripts of three interviews conducted in English were provided to the research supervisor for the purpose of discussion. Data analysis was carried out in the language spoken in the interview. Given the lack of Sinhalese translation services in Canada, only quotations deemed relevant and salient to the themes were translated by a professional translator in Sri Lanka.

Transcripts of all interviews, observation field notes, demographic questionnaires were labelled with code numbers only, in order to protect the identities of participants. Participants were initially coded as P1, P2...P10. They were subsequently given pseudonyms. Quotes obtained from the participants were linked to their pseudonym and not to their name. Any identifying information on transcripts (e.g., names of people,

places, distinctive skills and abilities, etc.) were removed prior to sharing transcripts with members of the research team and with the translator.

#### 4.2.4 Phenomenological Reflection and Phenomenological Writing: Data Analysis

As a novice phenomenologist, data analysis was initially daunting. Feeling overwhelmed and not knowing where to begin, I postponed closely looking at my data for the first couple interviews. With the encouragement of my research supervisor and advisory committee, I engrossed myself in data analysis which became highly engaging and rewarding.

Following this initial hiccup, data analysis continued alongside data collection. This parallelism served to inform data collection and vice versa. Data analysis involved a hermeneutic interpretation (Gadamer, 1975/2004) of the interview data guided by van Manen's (1984, 1990, 1997) framework for phenomenological analysis, through phenomenological reflection and phenomenological writing, the last two recommended procedural activities.

The understanding of phenomenon required thoughtful and reflective appreciation of the essence of the aging out-of-place experience. Phenomenological reflection involved asking "What is it that makes this lived experience what it is?" (van Manen, 1984a, p. 4). Uncovering the obscure and elusive nature of the phenomenon of aging out-of-place required reflective analysis of the thematic aspects of the experience.

The final step was hermeneutic phenomenological writing, which both describes and interprets the phenomenon under study. van Manen (1997b) posits that phenomenology is the application of thoughtfulness, through the act of writing, to the lived experience. To describe the phenomenon, I maintained a reflective journal and engaged in writing and explicating the themes throughout the course of the research process. Writing was followed by rewriting, which facilitated "re-thinking, re-reflecting, re-cognizing" (p. 131).

The research process of phenomenology is one of inter-subjectivity in which both the researcher and the participants begin the process with the intention of advancing

individual understanding. To enhance the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts, this interpretive process is achieved through a hermeneutic circle, which moves back and forth between the parts of experience to whole of experience (Allen & Jensen, 1990). Focusing on small chunks of verbal and non-verbal data and listening to the whole recorded interview or re-reading the entirety of the transcript facilitated repetitive encounters with the phenomenon. Moving between the parts and the whole, I continually attempted to “understand the world from the subjects' point of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world” (Kvale, 2006, p. 481). Considering the close connection between writing, research activity and reflection, phenomenological reflection and phenomenological writing were concurrent processes in this dissertation.

#### 4.2.4.1 Conducting thematic analysis

van Manen (1997) defined phenomenological themes as capturing the phenomenon under study through simplification of the experience. These essential themes address the universal quality of the phenomenon, and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is, the phenomenologists asks, “Is this phenomenon still the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon? Does the phenomenon without this theme lose its fundamental meaning?” (p. 107). To describe the phenomenon, I engaged in writing and rewriting, moving between the whole research text and its parts. This resulted in the emergence of insights, and the ‘interpretive leap’ which unmask hidden meanings (Smythe, 2011).

Textual analysis involved the iterative and dialogic interplay between holistic, selective and detailed approaches to uncover and isolate meanings embedded in the text. Drawing on a hermeneutic approach, the holistic reading first attended to the text as a whole to identify overall meanings; the selective reading identified emergent themes that stood out within and across the data, and finally the detailed reading sought words or phrases of significance based on their emphasis and repetition (van Manen, 1997b). To provide interpretive clarity and a deeper understanding, these three approaches were non-sequential and dialectical.

#### 4.2.4.1.1 Holistic Reading Approach

Data analysis involved a deep and engaged immersion with the data, which informed my interpretation of interview texts, logbook data, field notes, and reflective notes. These multiple sources of data offered a variety of perspectives on every day, shared understandings of the phenomenon of aging out-of-place, and avoided an insular perspective (Benner, 1994). Prior to formally engaging with the data, I had a sound overview of the transcripts. Although lackluster, this preparatory analysis served as the foundation for subsequent in-depth analysis.

Wright-St Clair (2014) posits that transcribing is an essential component of analysis. Listening and re-listening to participants' stories while transcribing allowed for complete immersion and an intimate familiarity with the data, which facilitated hearing things that went unnoticed during the interview, uncovering additional questions that needed to be asked, and attending to nuances in participants' voices and non-verbal communications. From the beginning of data analysis, I consciously remained open to and aware of the ways that my preunderstandings may influence my interpretations. These reflections were documented in the reflective journal.

Following transcription of data, individual transcripts were read in their entirety to arrive at a global analysis of an overall sense of meaning of each participant's descriptive account (Benner, 1994). Particular anecdotes, or stories, that "capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole"(van Manen, 1997b, p. 93) were extracted. Reflective engagement captured reflections and responses to the ordinariness, highlights and concealments of these data which were immediately documented. The hermeneutic cycle of reading, reflective writing and interpreting facilitated movement between the textual parts (data) and its interpretive whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), each giving meaning to the other such that understanding was circular and iterative (Gadamer, 1975/2004).

#### 4.2.4.1.2 Selective Approach

In phenomenological inquiry, thematic analysis is immersive, creative and complex. Themes give “shape to the shapeless” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 88) and can be viewed as written interpretations of lived experience that are telling and meaningful.

The thematic analysis began by re-reading each transcript with attention to parts that seemed vital to the lived experience of aging-out-of-place. To elicit patterns of commonality and difference among the various lived experiences of the phenomenon, phrases and statements that are revealing about this experience were highlighted for each participant and across participants.

Each transcript was scrutinized multiple times, and individually examined for potential themes related to participant’s lived experience. Selective analysis began by highlighting and bookmarking quotations that were telling or resonating within each individual transcript for deeper analysis. Reading and re-reading facilitated the summarization of these excerpts for each transcript. Emerging themes were organized according to the research question.

The themes of initial transcripts were compared with that of the research supervisor who was supplied with unmarked transcripts. Dialogue with the research supervisor served as a vehicle for reflection on emerging ideas and their development, consideration of alternative interpretations, as well as the thoroughness in questioning the data (Barbour, 2001). Following reaching a consensus in thematic analysis with the research supervisor, the remainder of the transcripts were analyzed independently. As not to succumb to an insular interpretation, quotations were replicated if found to be relevant to multiple themes. Quotations that were difficult to decipher were marked ‘other’ and revisited during subsequent comb-throughs of the data.

Following selective analysis of each participant, I engaged in comparison of themes across participants. Themes were transferred to a separate word document to search for patterns. Over time, these initial themes were condensed to broader conceptualizations, or major themes, based on their frequency, resonance, and scope. The

depth of these themes was captured and organized through interrelated subthemes. I frequently returned to the original transcripts to cross-check its fit and credibility with the themes and subthemes and to ensure authenticity to participants' constructs and its foundation in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

As a final step, themes and subthemes were discussed and reorganized with the research supervisor using post-it notes (Appendix L). The final organization of themes furnished a refined and coherent synthesis of the data. These discussions facilitated reflection on the emerging interpretations in the process of writing. New reflections that arose during selective analysis solidified, or challenged preliminary interpretation, thus reformulating new meanings.

#### 4.2.4.1.3 Detailed Approach

The transcripts were reread using a line-by-line approach. The majority of the time in data analysis was spent on this stage. van Manen (1997) posited that "Ordinary language is in some sense a huge reservoir in which the incredible variety of richness of human experience is deposited"(p. 61). I was particularly interested in words and phrases, idioms and metaphors that were repeated and emphasized, particularly if symbolic and salient under the research question. For instance, in speaking about concerns related to the westernization of his grandchildren in Canada, Ranil stated "There is an opinion among the Sinhalese that an unstirred curry will become curdled". This idiom implies that a child who lacks adequate and regular supervision and discipline, would become "curdled", an undesirable and unwanted outcome. The analogy of the curdled curry and the context in which it was stated implied his fears of adopting Canadian ways of grandparenting, which in his perception involves grandparenting 'from afar'. Thus, detailed, line-by-line analysis discovered the essential meanings of everyday experiences within the aging -out-of-place phenomenon.

Throughout these analytic steps, I was conscious of my positionality and maintained hermeneutic alertness (van Manen, 1997b), by pausing to reflect on the meanings of situations rather than accepting my preconceptions and interpretations. This was particularly salient during the selective and detailed approaches as I found myself

ascribing personal meanings to certain words, phrases and decisions that were not authentic to the participant experience. This inauthenticity was self-discovered during writing and rewriting, and critical reflection. For instance, writing of this dissertation confirmed that it is sometimes challenging to find the Sinhalese terms or words that have equivalent English expressions, and vice versa. To achieve authentic interpretations, I adopted salient Sinhalese words, which were followed by explanations. While this allowed me to stay close to the data, it also facilitated the movement in and out the data and reflected the possibilities and limitations language created in understanding and interpreting the meanings.

### 4.3 Interpretation

The findings defined the two theoretical constructs, compatible with occupational science, used in the discussion chapter. First, Wilcock's Occupational Perspective of Health (2006, 1998) was used to understand late-life immigrants' doing, being, becoming, and belonging. Second, the transactional perspective was used to explore the transactional nature of occupation in the mediation of late-life immigration. These theoretical constructs were used to further the understanding of the complexity of the aging out-of-place experience.

### 4.4 Optimizing expressions of rigor

#### Ensuring Quality Criteria

To ensure clarity and precision, researcher should be open to scrutiny (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997) as "Without rigour, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility." (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Moreover, Sandelowski (1993) posited that "rigor is less about adherence to the letter of rules and procedures than it is about fidelity to the spirit of qualitative work" (p. 2). Thus, quality criteria that were addressed in this research are standards that are specific to interpretive phenomenology. de Witt & Ploeg (2006) developed a 'framework of expressions' for establishing rigour in interpretive phenomenology. The proposed expressions of rigour are balanced integration, openness, concreteness, resonance, and actualization.

Balanced integration refers to the articulation of philosophical principles with respect to the topic, the method, and participants' voices. This study ensured harmony between the philosophy and the research question and maintained consistency between the paradigmatic and methodological tenets and study methods. All the themes were reflective of the participants' lived experience of aging out-of-place during late-life immigration. The support of themes using verbatim excerpts from transcripts ensured that there is harmony between the voice of the participants and the philosophical explanations used. Openness refers to a systematic accounting for decisions which facilitates scrutiny of the study. To establish openness, an audit trail and a reflexive journal were maintained throughout the study. For instance, this reflexive journal was useful to record instances when my positionality influenced the research interactions, and during the lack of success with the PEI which required development of a contingency plan.

While balanced integration and openness reflect the research process, concreteness, resonance, and actualization address the research outcome. Concreteness is described by van Manen (1997a) as 'lived thoroughness'. The study findings are written in such a way to concretely situate the reader in the context of the phenomenon and connect him/her to personal or plausible experiences in their own lives. The examples and themes of this phenomenological text ensured concreteness as these experiences can be linked to the possible experiences of the reader's life worlds. Resonance refers to the epiphany or "felt effect" (de Witt & Ploeg, 2006, p. 226) of study findings on the reader. Resonance was achieved through evocation of memories or emotions. For instance, excerpts that addressed the participants' exclusion, isolation and loneliness in Canada and those that spoke to the losses experienced due to aging out-of-place are likely to appeal to the reader's empathy for the plight of late-life immigrants by evoking personal memories or emotions of one's own immigration or place transition and its influence on daily occupation and place-making. Finally, actualization refers to the continued interpretation by the readers of the text, in addition to that being offered by the researcher. At present, there is no formal mechanism for recording actualization.



## 4.5 Ethical consideration

Approval of the study proposal by the advisory committee was followed by ethical approval from the university ethics review board on October 12, 2016 (Appendix C). Recruitment of participants soon followed. An addendum was submitted to the ethics board seeking approval of the addition of a demographic questionnaire. At the time of this addendum, two participants had already completed the first phase of data collection. Ethics approval for the amendment was received on March 1, 2017 (Appendix D). Due to the difficulties recruiting participants, approval to extend the study beyond the original end date was received on October 16, 2017 (Appendix E).

Informed written consent was obtained prior to the first interview. It ensured that participants had adequate information regarding the research, including information regarding the aim of the research, the research process, and its benefits and risks. Participants were encouraged to ask questions about the study. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without negative consequences. One participant declined to take part in the second interview, but permission was obtained to retain data from the first interview. Although the study was believed to not have any risks, sensitive and/or culturally tabooed topics (e.g., divorce of children, neglect from sponsoring child, tangible and intangible losses due to late-life immigration) did arise during the interview, requiring me to continually seek permission and thus establish trust to proceed in an ethical manner.

### 4.5.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

As an insider researcher, I was particularly vigilant in ensuring participants' anonymity and confidentiality. However, this ethical consideration proved challenging within insider research. While the use of pseudonyms was a simple means to preserving the anonymity and confidentiality, anonymity itself was not sufficient to protect participants' privacy and prevent disclosure of personal issues. Creative ways were required to retain the richness of data without compromising the identities of participants.

In his work, Tolich (2004) compares confidentiality in insider research to an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg is representative of 'external confidentiality' which

ensures participant anonymity. This refers to easily identifiable ethical issues such as informed consent and anonymity which were attended to adhering to TriCouncil guidelines regarding privacy and confidentiality within the ethics protocol. Recruitment from a small ethnic group within the GTA required additional measures to be taken to protect the identities of participants. In addition to the use of pseudonyms, confidentiality was maintained in the research reporting and by concealing specific contextual details that could reveal the identity of the participant.

In contrast, 'internal confidentiality' refers to deeper level ethical and moral dilemmas that insider researchers are confronted with once 'in the field'. Specifically, internal confidentiality refers to the risk that people involved in the research may be able to recognize each other (Tolich, 2004). For instance, my insider status made me keenly attuned to the discernibility of study participants within the ethnic community, particularly given its intimacy. Participants could be easily identified by innocuous factors such as pre-retirement job titles or the year of immigration, particularly when these factors are combined with other identifiers such as age, gender, number of children/grandchildren. As an example, one participant is the sole custodian of a traditional knowledge in the ethnic community in Canada. If not masked artfully, this knowledge in combination with other contextual factors would expose his identity to the readership. Thus identifiers, such as place of residence and occupation in Sri Lanka, roles and identities within the ethnic community in Canada and details of the time and circumstances surrounding immigration to Canada, are protected in this dissertation. The contextual information shared in this dissertation was ambiguous, yet sufficient, to understand the participant's role within the ethnic community, as well as its saliency to the aging out-of-place experience.

I also recognized that the site of recruitment could only be anonymized to a degree (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). First, the anonymization of the temple was futile considering the scarcity of Buddhist temples in the GTA that cater to the Sinhalese community. Second, only two of these temples host a monthly senior's group that accommodate Sinhalese older adults, thus narrowing down the list of possible temples from which participants of this study were recruited. However, this presented challenges

particularly as an interpretivist researcher as these contextual elements were crucial to the understanding of a research participant's perspective. The futility of anonymizing a place that is salient in the lives of the ethnic community, as well as participants' distinctiveness necessitated considerable efforts to safeguard anonymity and confidentiality.

Furthermore, participants failed to obtain consent of the subjects of their photographs. Photographs without written consent from the photography subject were not used beyond the interview context.

I also encountered differing views of the desirability of anonymization of data across and within participants. This desirability wavered throughout the interview, requiring the ongoing negotiation of informed consent (Hoeyer, Dahlager, & Lynøe, 2005). For instance, participants wanted political views and their creative expressions to be attributable to them. In contrast, others specifically requested stories of intergenerational conflicts and acceptance of financial aid by the government not be associated with them. I was presented with a difficult choice of respecting the preferences of participants who wished to be identified. While participants were given sovereignty over their data, they were explained that information will be kept confidential to protect their individual privacy, the privacy of persons mentioned in their descriptive narratives, and to also maintain ethical standards and the integrity of the research process.

Finally, as an insider researcher, my ethical commitment is not bound to a timeframe. Due to the close-knit nature of the Sinhalese community in the GTA, it is highly likely that I will encounter the participants, and participants will encounter other participants, during and following the research process at events and venues unrelated to the study. Contrastingly, Floyd and Arthur (2012) state that ethical concerns naturally fade into the background once an outsider researcher completes and writes up the research study. Although I had not begun the researcher-participant liaison with a preexisting relationship to the participants, familiarizing ourselves as members of the same ethno-religious community fostered an informal relationship between compatriots. In fact, I have encountered several participants at cultural and religious events following the culmination of data collection where we engaged in informal conversations. During

these conversations, participants inquired about the study and other participants whom they had assumed were participants of the study. I reiterated the importance of maintaining confidentiality during and following the study.

#### 4.5.2 Authenticity of data

Participants' candor made me reflect upon how my ethnic community, represented by the social worlds of my participants and the interpretations of a native researcher, would be viewed by readers. Would readers perceive perspectives of these ethnic participants as immoral or politically incorrect? Would my work be a disservice to my ethnic community? Gaffar-Kutcher (2014) explains that the responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the 'native' researcher, even when his/her knowledge is partial, as "burden of representation". This encumbrance placed upon the native researcher is heightened when the researcher is one of only a few voices in that particular domain. Even if I identify myself as lying just on the periphery of belonging to this community, I felt acutely responsible to the Sinhalese community. I mentally wrestled over whether my interpretations were overly idyllic or overly critical. I felt the need to be cautious in how I represented my community particularly when participants' perspectives were divergent from that of the mainstream, as was the case with corporeal punishment of grandchildren. I am aware that the research will be read differently by different audiences and can therefore have implications for the community in question (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). Nevertheless, I assumed the "burden of representation" that was bestowed upon me by the participants who expected me to represent their voices, the readership who may have expectations of astuteness or doubt given my supposed insiderness, and myself.

### 4.6 Summary

This chapter described how this study maintained consistency between the interpretive paradigm, the phenomenological methodology, and the phenomenological method through both the study design and study processes. To study the lived experience of aging out-of-place, this study adopted an interpretive phenomenological method, informed and guided by van Manen (1984b, 1990, 1997b), which examines everyday phenomena as lived and directly experienced. The phenomenological approach allowed

interpretive understandings about the phenomenon of aging out-of-place to emerge through engagement with the data. These methods addressed the recommended quality criteria for interpretive phenomenology.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Study Results

*Sky-high buildings with magnificent balconies  
Festivals bustling with revelers  
"I give Canada its youth and vigor",  
the Niagara Falls seems to boast*

This chapter includes the key study findings which are presented according to three themes that inform the understanding of aging out-of-place. Using a variety of summarized and verbatim experiences that illuminate the multiple perspectives of the participants, this chapter presents the voices of late-life immigrants. Their multiple realities are compiled to create a shared essence of aging out-of-place.

#### 5.1 Thematic findings

Following data collection and data analysis, three major themes emerged that enriched understanding of the lived experience of aging out-of-place. Late-life immigrants 1.) negotiate new and familiar ways of aging, 2.) mitigate loss through everyday occupation, and 3.) live between two worlds. Under the umbrella of each theme, there were several subthemes that highlighted notable elements of the theme. The themes are presented in Table 2 to provide a framework for the presentation of results and to orient the reader. Subsequently, Table 2 is deconstructed and presented alongside the respective theme as to guide the reader through the various subthemes.

Table 2: *The essence of aging out-of-place*

1.0 Negotiating new and familiar ways of aging	
1.1 Aging in familiar ways	1.2 Aging in new ways
1.1.1 “Growing old is nothing special”: Perceptions of aging	1.2.1 New conceptualizations of aging: New occupational engagements
1.1.2 Acting “age appropriately”	1.2.2 Negotiating security in old age
1.1.3 Planning for Death	1.2.3 Challenging age-related expectations
2.0 Mitigating Loss through Everyday Occupation	
2.1 Letting go	2.2 Moving forward
2.1.1 “the price you have to pay”: Reversing familial roles	2.2.1 Becoming a genuine Buddhist: the quest to spiritual liberation
2.1.2 "Turning a blind eye": Overcoming powerlessness	2.2.2 “It’s more than a responsibility, it’s my obligation”: Contributing to the household
	2.2.3 “It keeps me alive”: Renewing occupational interests
3.0 Living between two worlds	
3.1 Being Sri Lankan	3.2 Becoming Canadian
3.1.1 Engaging in Cultural occupations	3.2.1 “For six months we are housebound. For six months we suffer.”: Monotony of occupational spaces and places in Canada
3.1.2 An ephemeral home: Socialization within the ethnic community	3.2.2 “I have cobwebs in my mouth”: Interactions with mainstream society
3.1.3 “An unstirred curry will become curdled”: Preserving the native culture	3.2.3 “I am nurtured by this country”: Positive interactions with service providers
3.1.4 Fulfilling Transnational attachments and commitments	3.2.4 “When you are in a bat cave, you have to hang like the other bats”: Adapting to life in Canada
	3.2.5 Belongingness within the family

### 5.1.1 Negotiating new and familiar ways of aging

In aging in familiar ways, participants conformed to age “appropriate” behaviours grounded in the familiar Sri Lankan culture and upbringing in the Buddhist faith. Simultaneously, embedded in a dissonant culture, participants were exposed to new and divergent beliefs regarding ageing and the roles of ageing people in the host society. Participants’ reconceptualization of capability and participation in old age facilitated aging in new ways.

Table 3: *Late-life immigrants negotiate new and familiar ways of aging*

Negotiating new and familiar ways of aging	
Aging in familiar ways	Aging in new ways
“Growing old is nothing special”: Perceptions of aging	New conceptualizations of aging: New occupational engagements
Acting age “appropriately”	Negotiating security in old age
Planning for Death	Challenging age-related expectations

#### 5.1.1.1 Aging in familiar ways

In the post-migration context, participants made sense of aging through the entangled web of cultural and religious orientation. Conceptualization of aging was primarily founded on the Buddhist belief of impermanence, a view that encourages acceptance of illness and death. Health promoting occupations were undertaken to maintain vitality, but special emphasis was placed on the cultivation of the mental faculties. Internal and external social forces compelled participants to conform to culturally prescribed beliefs and values surrounding aging, in order to act age “appropriately”. While the inevitability of death eased anxiety, concerns about burdening the sponsoring child, the unavailability of traditional care, and the desire to reunite with the motherland at end-of-life was worrisome. These concerns consumed late-life immigrants’ thoughts, resulting in planning for death.



## “Growing old is nothing special”: Perceptions of aging

Participants interpreted life events primarily through their religious orientation. Insight into impermanence led participants to dispassionately acknowledge and celebrate old age as ordinary and inevitable.

Growing old...I think it just comes automatic-like. I have accepted that it is nothing very special. It's natural sort of...I mean without your intervention or anything. I didn't think that getting old and my youth was different. I thought it is just a part of my life. – Geetha

72, it's so much, which means that I've lived much of my life. I have no regrets in my mind about getting old. Now when we look at our religion, this is something that we have to face. That means we are getting closer and closer to death day by day. – Saman

Belief in impermanence reflected participants' apathy towards physical and functional deterioration. They glossed over the physiological changes associated with old age, such as deteriorating physical strength and mobility, declining appetite, and greying hair. Contrastingly, cognitive changes were spoken about ardently. Cognitive maturation was perceived to be contemporaneous to physical deterioration. Participants espoused old age as an epoch for continued learning, reflection, and maturation. Specifically, participants reflected on their past, and were committed to the betterment of their present and immediate, as well as eventual futures.

You must love ageing in the sense because as you age, you learn a lot. I think I am becoming matured day by day. I am getting to [be] more and more enlightened about things in life. Aging is the best thing that you can come across because you can look at things very, very freely and then you can sort of forgive each and every person who does something wrong. Also, you can look at those things from a higher point as if you were on top of a mountain and you see things happening [down below]. Some incidents you too have passed and now you see how wrong you have been in the past. Now you feel how if you [were to] go back to that age, how correctly you would have done that. – Ravi

Participants attributed their cognitive fortitude to the training inculcated through religious engagement, specifically through meditation. For Saman, maintaining cognitive robustness in aging offered solace by counteracting physical and functional deterioration.

We understand more about life than we did before. When understanding, one has to search about life. It's the Buddha who has preached it correctly. These problems coming from the mind... there's an answer for all that. That's why I think of reaching that place [spiritual high ground]. When one has no physical strength, they try to develop the mind. – Saman

The acceptance of the inevitability of old age, illness, and death did not preclude participants' from maintaining their health and well-being. Health promotive occupations, for the upkeep of the physical body and cultivation of the aging mind, were discussed primarily as ways to ensure the maintenance of independence, particularly in self-care, so as to lessen the undue and avoidable burden placed on the sponsoring child.

To maintain their mental and physical health, participants resorted to familiar health promotive occupations. They went for walks within the home, and in their neighborhoods when weather permitted. Many participants enthusiastically participated in the monthly exercise program facilitated by a seniors' group held at the Buddhist temples. Involvement in household responsibilities within their sponsored child's home was reported to actively engage the mind and body. Others maintained a nutritious diet and abstained from foods, such as meat and alcohol, deemed unhealthy or immoral. Convinced of its potency and effectiveness, participants continued the use of Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of healing, albeit at odd with their dubious westernized children.

Meditation was a popular tool drawn upon for health promotion. While physiological benefits such as the lowering of blood pressure were mentioned, meditation was primarily undertaken for "mental purification", cultivation of patience, tolerance, and detachment, and maintenance of psychological integrity. For instance, Sujatha, who experienced intense guilt in leaving a child and an ailing elderly mother in Sri Lanka, used meditation as a means to grieve her losses and subdue her guilt. Similarly, in cultivating tolerance and patience through meditation, Geetha conquered a negative experience with a peer. Meditation also alleviated Apsara's depression following her functional deterioration which limited her occupational participation. Furthermore, the stressors of late-life immigration, and intergenerational conflicts arising from co-residency were consoled and subdued through religious engagement. For instance, male participants, in particular, used meditation to cope with role reversal, and the concomitant

surrender of ego and self-importance in the post-migration context. According to Bandula, spiritual occupations became opportunities to “heal both mentally and physically”.

### Acting age “appropriately”

Religious philosophy and native culture have instilled a sense of obligation in participants to assume roles that are deemed compatible or “appropriate” given their age. This meant practicing conservatism, modesty, selfless generosity, simplicity and minimalism, and patience in their everyday lives.

There are stages of aging according to what Buddha stated. One of the things to be done when reaching old age is if one has belongings, that property or assets have to be divided up, so he can become detached from those things. We have to let go of these personal desires and attachments and get accustomed to living a simple life. There shouldn't be desires for clothing or food, any more than is necessary. That's what is called being free. We must abandon everything. In the same way we should be constantly bent on good qualities. Now there is a Buddhist philosophy [which states that to make] life blissful, [one] should ponder about what is going to happen in the afterlife. Only if you have lived an exemplary life, and if you have done good deeds then in your next life ... next birth ... you will go to a [be reborn in a] good place. Therefore, you should train yourself in those things and work accordingly. – Bandula

We did a whole lot of things [in our youth]. [Now] we feel that those things are useless. We live with somewhat of an illusion. We buy this, buy that, we like this, like that ... it means that we always have some sort of an attachment. Attachment means if you see a watch, you get attached to it with the desire to possess it, isn't that right? One watch is sufficient. I have five or six watches that I have collected, but I only use one. So, such things could be reduced. Even clothing ... though all kinds of clothing were worn in the past, those desires have ebbed away now. Getting old is I think a matter of making an effort to lead a simple life. – Saman

While practicing these good virtues, old age is also perceived to be an epoch for religious devotion. While participants were religious in Sri Lanka, immigration to Canada catapulted their spiritual devotion.

... we have finished bringing up our children. None of them are ill or have mental challenges that prevent them from living alone. The happiness that we both have now is to accrue merit for the journey of 'samsara'. So, when gathering [at the temple], what happens is one gets rid of cravings. When you have an attachment

to your child, you run after that child. In this country, we don't have to run behind these Canadian children and find out everything. In Sri Lanka of course the grandma, grandpa, father, mother, all keep the children on their shoulders and look after the child till they are thirty or forty. There's no such thing in this country. So, we go to the temple and purify our minds for the remaining journey towards 'samsara'. – Ranil

## Planning for Death

Acceptance of impermanence dispelled resistance to death and eased anxiety surrounding death.

This thing called getting old is not confined only to man. It applies to even plants and trees as well as cars and all vehicles for that matter, [all of which] decay and come to an end. There's nothing that exists forever. So, getting older means that that human being is moving towards its last stages from the time of its conception. This is nothing to be sad about. It's something that takes place as a result of nature. I don't worry about growing old even today. –Bandula

Regardless of the acceptance of deterioration and eventual death, participants resisted the idea of greater dependency on the sponsoring child. Ranil, for example, desired death over bed-ridden senility to avoid being a burden on his family.

Now some people do not like to die. I have no reservations for dying. It's not a nice thing to walk with a cane and for a son or daughter to have the opportunity to say, "What a nuisance [he is] to us!". There's nothing wrong in leaving this world before my energy depletes. Now there's a lot of people who love to live long and keep on saying [they would like to live to be] 80 or 90 years old. It's a nuisance to the whole community, to him or to herself, and to the children as well. Somebody has to attend to the filthy work [caregiving] involved. Others will say that the home is foul-smelling. Before that [happens to me] ...if the age is now 75, my idea is [to stay for] another year or two... that's enough". – Ranil

Nevertheless, participants were solicitous about their place of death. The lure of the homeland and attachments to the host country left participants undecided. For some, dying in Canada was a certainty fueled by the established emotional attachments and amenities perceived as being essential to one's quality of life at the end of life. Simultaneously, the homeland was perceived as an idyllic place at end of life. Specifically, participants desired to experience end of life in a familiar and customary way. They alluded to the social and religious resources of the homeland at end of life,

that were unavailable to them in Canada. In speaking of his desire to return to his homeland towards the end of life, Ranil stated,

In my mother-country, during your last days of existence you get respectful treatment. When you fall sick, relatives and neighbors come running. Those things are not to be seen in this country [Canada]. When a death occurs, when you fall sick, in this country they hastily put you somewhere. The ambulance comes from somewhere, picks you up quickly. The dead body is not even brought home. It's taken away for burial. Relations and comrades don't have an opportunity to mourn. That does not happen in Sri Lanka of course. [In Sri Lanka] an almsgiving is held, a pirith [Buddhist recitation] is conducted, religious activities are carried out. – Ranil

However, the place of death was not as definitive for others. Ravi, for instance, desired to rest his body in his native country to alleviate the sponsoring child of the financial and care burden at end of life, but worried that the children would be financially burdened anyway in having to travel to Sri Lanka for his funeral. Furthermore, the desire to rest his body in the native country was fueled by a greater internal need.

The burden is one factor. I think overpowering that is the desire to rest myself there [in Sri Lanka] is a willingness to be part and parcel of my country where I was born...to continue to be the same person. – Ravi

Planning for death was not merely about contemplating about their funeral arrangements, but more importantly, it was about detaching themselves from their attachments. Namely withdrawing their desires for material possessions, including their homes, belongings such as clothing and jewelry, and personal relationships, which included keeping the spouse, children and grandchildren “at an arms-length”. These detachments were believed to ease the suffering brought on by the inevitable separation at death. Participants reported that they have followed the Buddhist teachings of non-attachment all throughout their lives, however the immediacy of their death at this stage in life had made them become more engrossed in the desire to become detached.

There is an inevitable ending to your life. So, you prepare yourself gleefully to meet that. I try to embrace the last [days] with a happy mind. In my solitude I sort of prepare myself for the ending in a happy note. I don't take too much responsibility, I don't have desires or material things, and I [accept that I] must give up because everything you have you will leave [behind]. That's the reality. – Ravi

I avoid entertaining expectations [of a close relationship with grandchildren]. Before they would come running to give a hug. Now it's not like that. Gradually it [this behavior] has lessened. If we ask a question, they don't give it importance. That's how it is. When I say I prepare for it [death], [I mean] I don't expect [anything from them]. I will only be disappointed if I expect it [a relationship]. Sometimes when I call them, they don't come. Before they used to come. That behavior is because of their age. But, at the back of our mind we think that they should come as soon as we call for them. Now if we forced them [to have a relationship] they will not be happy. But I will expect it. It's difficult to do [satisfy] both [parties]. So, it is best to avoid it [pursuing a relationship with grandchildren]. That is what I mean by being prepared to face suffering. I keep a distance from them. Keeping a distance doesn't mean depriving them of love. But... if I am no more, how will they live. So, I did not become too attached to them. If I kept an attachment and I departed this world, they will think 'I don't have a [grand]father', but they will have to continue living. They do not cling to me. So that is how I live my life. [I] love them more than 200%, even more than that. But I don't show it and I stay away from it. That is comfortable. I will have to detach from them [eventually]. If we don't prepare [for my departure], we will be in trouble. – Saman

Despite striving for the spiritual ideal of detachment, the journey towards spiritual liberation is not without obstacles. Apsara captured this difficulty by stating, "It is said in Buddhism that we must detach ourselves from everything. But, what can't be dismissed is the attachment to my children".

#### 5.1.1.2 Aging in new ways

While the novelty and foreignness of the post-migration context was disruptive to familiar ways of aging, Canadian culture and society exposed participants to new conceptions of aging and facilitated aging in new ways.

There [in Sri Lanka] of course is a very busy life. I had retired in Sri Lanka. However, there were family problems, problems of relatives, issues of that type. Those people live in such chaos. In our twilight years, this chaos is a nuisance. That situation does not exist in Canada. [We] can relax and live our life. The relaxation conducive for this age is difficult to find there. – Saman

#### New conceptualizations of aging: New occupational engagements

In immigrating to Canada in their late-life, participants were confronted with new conceptualizations of aging. For instance, Geetha modified her self-perception following immigration to Canada.

I never thought I'll live so long in the first place. To think that you will be 80 is a mighty great thing as a Sri Lankan. But here of course I find it's a low mark. Because there are so many [people] all plus 90 [over the age of 90]. My friend Nandita told me 'Geetha we are the youngest of the group'. She said that all the others living around there were 90 or closer to 90. At that time, I was about 75 [years old] and she is younger to me. She said but even then, we appear to be very young. Otherwise, I always thought being 80 is a very big age. – Geetha

Recognition of themselves as being relatively young led to new revelations of their occupational capacities. Participants who had previously believed their post-retirement years to consist of rest and relaxation now took over the management of entire households and reengaged in direct, hands-on childcare on a full-time basis. Their sense of capability and self-sufficiency was fortified by western values of individualism and the realization that their children's hectic schedules left them with little or no time to fulfil filial piety duties.

I gradually started taking on new responsibilities because they [the sponsoring child's family] have a very busy life here. They go to work and come back and then have to attend to children's schooling. So, I thought I must give them their independence. I did not take advantage of them. I gradually took on responsibilities that I was not used to doing in Sri Lanka. I gained considerable practical knowledge after age 65 [age at immigration]. – Manjula

Exposure to new ways of aging compelled participants to adopt unfamiliar occupations and even those that were stigmatized and deemed inappropriate for their age or gender by the native culture. This was exemplified by uptake of spousal caregiving by male participants, and blue-collar employment in the Canadian context following retirement in their homeland. Bandula and Saman both became the primary caregivers for their wives in Canada. In the former paternalistic society of the native country, sole caregiving was not the expected role of men. In the post-migration context, Bandula and Saman were suddenly thrust into an unfamiliar role. In Sri Lanka, they would have the support of an extended social network of family and friends. Other than absorbing the financial burden, sponsoring children were unable to actively engage in extensive filial piety obligations. In the absence of this social capital, participants became solely responsible for the care of their spouses. This experience was particularly distressing and anxiety provoking for Bandula who felt lost and isolated navigating a foreign environment and healthcare system.

From March to November...for nine months I had to keep her [wife] company. Basically, attending to her, providing her meals, staying vigilant about her. While she was on the bed, I was sitting beside her looking after her. I had to do that all in that period. I was basically like a prisoner. There is no way to look outside. The only time I get to see outside is when I took her to the hospital for Chemo. During that time, I did not have a world beyond these walls. Because she was facing a very serious thing [illness]. There is nobody at home. They [children/grandchildren] have their own work. They don't care that this has happened. Can you imagine how mentally distressing this was for us to pass that time? – Bandula

The necessity and the lack of perceived cultural stigma surrounding male caregiving in Canada compelled Bandula and Saman to embrace this unfamiliar task in their old age. In fact, Saman spoke of the lack of stigma as being a “psychological convenience” that is permissive of tending to his spouse.

There is a psychological convenience [in Canada]. Now, when a man is helping his wife, they [Sri Lankans] think ‘oh he is scared of his woman’. That’s what people say. There is no such thing here [in Canada]. I do this [caregiving] for my wife. No one has a problem with it. Because there is no such thing [attitude] in Canada, it is easy to do [provide care]. – Saman

Employment was yet another means by which participants defied cultural expectations of old age in the post-migration context. Geetha, Manjula, and Ranil became employees following late-life immigration. As a respectable member of Sri Lankan society with a white-collar work history, Geetha restrained herself from reengaging in the work force in Sri Lanka following retirement as it was financially and socially unnecessary, and culturally stigmatized. However, in seeing the acceptance and normalcy of employment in old age in Canada, but maintaining cognizance of the ethnic community’s stigmatization, Geetha clandestinely gained a blue-collar position in Canada. Exposure to new conceptions of aging and age-appropriate behaviors also led Ranil to pursue employment in Canada. However, aware of the potential backlash from his children and the ethnic community, Ranil also withheld information regarding his employment from his family.

In the winter when the weather was really cold, I went and washed vehicles behind my children's back ... on the sly. I was 73 at the time. My children are proud people. When their father goes to do something like that at a place [Canada] where they make their earnings in a very big way ... it would be a black



mark to them. [Others would say] 'The son is earning so much from his business, but their father is washing vehicles'. When taking into account the status of Sri Lanka, it's [this job] below one's dignity. But in this country of course it's not something below the status. I believe it's an ability of mine. My ability has value in this country. This country accepts a 75-year-old man doing something like this. So, I am doing this happily. – Ranil

Canada also allowed them to transform their beliefs about their capabilities in old age. Working alongside younger employees, both Ranil and Geetha described a sense of pride in their capability despite their old age.

Very first time when I went there [to work] the lady in charge told me 'Why do you work here? Why don't you stay at home?'. I said I was very active in Sri Lanka. I was doing work...not that sort of work, but yet for all I was getting about and everything. So, after that she didn't say anything because I could do everything within a shorter time than the time that the others took. After that I accepted very well the life in Canada. – Geetha

Employment allowed Geetha, Manjula, and Ranil to become empowered in their old age. In addition to regaining a sense of purpose, employment in old age was a means for these participants to regain a sense of purpose, rediscover autonomy, and covertly regain the dignity, status and authority that accompany seniority. This was particularly salient in the post-migration context where their status and authority had been diminished.

Without accepting money from my sons, I try to earn my money by earning on my own. Even if I feel cold, I manage to collect some 60 or 70 dollars. They pay 10 dollars per hour. So, if I work 4 hours, it's 40 dollars. [This] satisfies me, [so] I work tirelessly. I don't take even 10 dollars that my sons give me. I have some seven or eight hundred dollars [saved]. I don't need to ask my son for money for whiskey or other bottles [of alcohol]. I have my own money. – Ranil

Despite coming to new realizations regarding their capabilities within the foreign environment, the lack of resources and opportunities available for occupational participation in Canada led to the inhibition of participants capacities. This unacknowledgement introduced a sense of worthlessness in Canada and heightened their invisibility and anonymity in society.

In Sri Lanka, I was 80% concentrating myself on social work [volunteering]. I was sort of [a] leader there and [a] lot of responsibility was cast on me. The

village priest had a lot of faith in me. [He] entrusted a lot of things to me where I was leading the others. But here it [my service] is not that required. In Canada, I find there are lot of intelligent people who can take that responsibility. My services are not required as much as it was required in that country [in Sri Lanka].  
– Ravi

I didn't understand what old age was during my youth. Actually, I worked when I was 60 or 70 just like I did when I was in my 30s. I realized that I was old when I came to Canada. When I passed my 65th year, there was a Sinhala new year festival. I even won prizes. That was in Sri Lanka 5 years ago. [I] had to sprint at the festival when I was 65 years old. When they said that those above 50 years could take part in running, I also took part. Of course, when you come to Canada you can't do these things. I can't show my abilities in Canada. – Ranil

Aging in new ways, while enticing, was also frightening for participants. For instance, suburban dwelling Bandula, who felt isolated and homebound in the absence of his working children, believed access to a vehicle and driving privileges would allow him to regain his freedom and independence in Canada. However, age served as a barrier to attaining this goal as he and his family-imposed restrictions against the procurement of this ticket to freedom. In speaking about his hesitation to obtain his driving license, Bandula stated,

I've got a fear. Though I have had driver training in Sri Lanka and even if I have a desire to have driver training here, I have a fear whether this would be compatible when considering my age. My son and daughter are both scared about me driving a vehicle. My age now is over 75 years. So, there's a problem whether it would happen. If I get the license I could buy a vehicle at a reasonable price. I look forward to getting the chance to go here and there. If that happens, I have a feeling that my social life would turn out to be quite satisfying." – Bandula

## Negotiating security in old age

Participants grew old in security in the post-migration context due to their residency with the sponsoring child, societal respect for old age, and access to, and availability of amenities, or “material luxuries” as Ravi referred to it, including quality healthcare necessary in old age, but unavailable or inaccessible in Sri Lanka. However, participants also expressed insecurity with respect to financial dependency and their futures when children's sponsorship obligations ended.

The availability, affordability and accessibility of health care in Canada was reassuring and invigorating for these aging late-life immigrants. Participants expressed feeling fortunate to have the opportunity to live out their old age in a place that provided health security. In referring to the healthcare system, participants equated their life in Canada to heaven. Their fortune to age in such a place was credited to meritorious deeds from past lives. Ranil recounted his first experience of hospitalization in Canada,

I kept coming to the [hospital] corridor and observing during the night. I couldn't fall asleep. I was amazed and told myself that I was able to see a hospital [in Canada] because of the merit accrued in my earlier life. The hospital was heaven. It's a place of bliss. [At the hospital] no anger came to mind, no temper welled up. Nothing of that sort. That was why it was important for me. From the moment I entered [the hospital], I didn't need anybody, not even my child. I came out of there hale and hearty. – Ranil

Participants also found solace in knowing the availability and cultural acceptance of residential care facilities that would prevent undue burden on their sponsoring children at the end of life. In addition to these tangible benefits, participants perceived older adults to be valued and cared for by the Canadian government and society. Participants felt that the government took an interest in the welfare of older adults, even when their children were unable to. Vijith stated,

According to the law of the country, the [Canadian] government takes responsibility for those who are weak. They support them financially and provide them shelter. No matter what, the person is not cornered and cast aside. I respect that attitude in this country. Although the country in which I was born is of value to me; there's even a higher value in this country. Simply because a person becomes aged, this country doesn't abandon him. – Vijith

Many participants had lived alone in Sri Lanka following their children's departure to various foreign countries. As late-life immigrants, participants enjoyed a sense of security in Canada. Living under the protective umbrella of the sponsoring child, basic necessities such as food, shelter and healthcare were at participants' disposal.

Instead of living separately in an unfamiliar country, it is better to live here [with sponsoring child] where we do not have problems in our mind. Even though there were responsibilities there [in Sri Lanka], they were not big [problems because I have] lived there since childhood. Instead, living alone here [in Canada] would place greater responsibilities on us. To maintain a house and to manage an illness

would be difficult according to our age if we were to live alone. Living in their home [sponsored child's] gives me strength. In an emergency, we have the feeling that there will be someone here to help us. - Apsara

With these basic needs met by the sponsoring child, participants did not feel obligated to assimilate by conforming to societal expectations of the ethnic community and broader society. These sponsored late-life immigrants therefore had the choice to adapt to, or refuse conceptualization of aging promulgated by the native or adopted cultures. Thus, participants balanced values from the old world and the new world, deciding which values to retain and which to discard. Through this continuous negotiation, participants discovered a sense of harmony in aging in familiar ways and new ways in the post-migration context.

Participants were financially stable in Sri Lanka. However, in immigrating to Canada they left behind the assets they had accrued throughout their lifetime. In Canada, their financial needs were fulfilled by their children. This was necessitated by their ineligibility for social welfare benefits until the culmination of the sponsorship period. The sudden shift from self-sufficiency in the pre-migration context to dependency in the post migration context was a deviation from their expected aging-trajectory and led to feelings of insecurity. Many participants, including those who were employed, eagerly awaited the culmination of their sponsorship period to receive eligibility for certain social welfare benefits, particularly Old Age Security and low-income housing.

Receiving these benefits would allow participants to become untethered from their sponsoring children. While only two participants, Geetha and Ravi, were nearing the end of the 10-year sponsorship period, the financial security following sponsorship was still a recurring thought for many of the other participants. In speaking about Old Age Security, they envisioned acquiring independent housing upon receiving their pensions or monetarily contributing to their children's households or their children and grandchildren's futures. Thus, the promise of these benefits engendered optimism about their futures in Canada. Despite this assurance, participants also had concerns.

We can live with these children all along. [There is] no problem. But when the sponsorship comes to an end, we are alone. We will need money to live.

According to the information I have received, 500 dollars is given as an old age pension. Those days 1250 dollars were given. Now it has been reduced. We cannot live off of 500 dollars. To get \$500, [we] must wait till 2022...till we complete the 10 years. If I was to get \$500 how will I live after 2022 following the sponsorship period? Even then we have to stay with these children. [I will be] 80 years old in 2022. Under those conditions we can obtain our own place until 2025. By that time my age would be around 83 years. So, when I am 83, I will not be strong enough to manage the home independently, buy the groceries, prepare the food. But my wife says, [we should] go to another place and live without being a burden to the children. – Vijith

Moreover, the culmination the child's legal obligation for care at the end of the sponsorship program was worrisome as participants were concerned that without a legal obligation, children may abandon their filial piety responsibilities in Canada.

### Challenging age-related expectations

In the post-migration context participants' conceptions of 'age-appropriate' behaviors were challenged. Participants adopted new occupations, maintained former occupations, and/or disengaged from occupations that were perceived as unbecoming in the post-migration context. Specifically, co-residency and the hierarchical reversal within these living arrangements influenced participants to age in new ways. They described having to become more independent and self-reliant in their old age in some areas, considering the hectic work schedules of their children. The sponsoring children's opinions and perceptions surrounding aging were factored into participants' decision to engage or disengage in occupation. For instance, Ranil, a self-described life-long drinker, grudgingly surrendered the meaningful occupation of drinking, and associated permutations of drunken behaviour, at the request of his sponsoring child. This decision was encouraged by the hierarchical reversal within the co-residency arrangement and a desire to "age appropriately".

What I feel [is] these sons must be allowed to go their own way and for me to live my own way. I am an older adult. I think that it's better to live according to my age. It may be okay if I go and dance at the place where the sons are dancing in order to get some special attention and to sing something at the place they sing. That's alright once in a while, but if it's done too often then its value is lost for the sons. Therefore, I thought that it would be better to become silent. Becoming silent means that I will only go if necessary. I go to seniors' group and participate

in trips. Other than that, I am thinking of staying away from parties and celebrations. – Ranil

Contrastingly, without the cultural and religious pressures for aging behaviours, participants experienced a greater degree of freedom with regard to aging in Canadian society. This sense of freedom was promulgated by broader society.

In Sri Lankan community, when you say [you are] 82, you have to behave very differently. Even when you go to the temple, your clothes cannot be that shade or this shade. You can't wear red or something flashy. But here, nothing like that. I wear any shade. In Sri Lanka, the accepted thing is when you are old you can't wear [certain clothes]. Now if I wore trousers there [in Sri Lanka], they look down upon you and say 'Oh, she wears trousers even in her old age' ...[but] here no one is bothered. – Geetha

However, participants encountered barriers to liberty within the ethnic community in Canada. While younger immigrants' westernization was understood, accepted, and even encouraged by the ethnic community, older immigrants were expected to retain the native culture. Deviation from this expectation was censured. For instance, Geetha's attempts to deviate from age-appropriate behaviours were challenged by members of the ethnic community who held her to a higher standard. Instead, Geetha was expected to retain the former cultural expectations for age-prescribed behaviors. Under the freedom granted during aging in Canada, Geetha defied these cultural expectations.

As I went to the temple, this lady keeps telling me, 'Geetha why are you wearing trousers to temple? It's better if you wear a skirt don't you think?' She will tell me today; today I will listen. Next month also I listen. She says 'we also wear pants, but we wear it underneath, and wear the skirt on top. So, I, of course, listen. But every day I go wearing pants'. – Geetha

## Summary

Participants' conceptualization of aging was founded on Buddhist beliefs of impermanence, which allowed participants to accept illness, deterioration, and death as ordinary aspects of the aging process. This conscious acknowledgement allowed participants to not dwell on these natural processes. Although the participants acknowledged the deterioration of the aging mind and the aging body, the two were distinguished. While the deteriorating body was spoken about dispassionately, the mind

was perceived to have greater potential for cultivation in old age. Following immigration to Canada, participants made significant efforts to nurture their minds, especially through religious practices. This nurturance had positive influence over their general wellbeing in Canada.

Following late-life immigration, these older adult participants were both empowered and emasculated in the post-migration context. Exposure to new conceptualizations of aging led participants to adopt new ways of aging in the Canadian context. They were faced with various pressures, from themselves, from their families, and from the ethnic and broader communities to adopt or retain behaviors that were deemed ‘appropriate’ and discard behaviors that were unbecoming of old age. Taking these influences into consideration, participants negotiated aging in familiar ways and in new ways.

In Canada, participants felt tended to and cared for, not only by their sponsoring children, but also by the government. These amenities provided participants a sense of solace, both physically and psychologically, in their old age. However, aging in the post migration context was ridden with uncertainty and apprehension. While the acceptance of death eased anxiety surrounding end-of-life, participants were overcome with apprehension regarding their place of death. While some participants were determined to make Canada their final resting place, others had desires to be reunited with their motherland at the end of life. Other participants were anxious as to how they will manage independently following the culmination of sponsorship.

### 5.1.2 Mitigating loss through everyday occupation

Late-life immigration was the source of many losses. Participants spoke of the loss of their homes and other tangible possessions, and familiar and instrumental relationships and establishments that sustained and nurtured them throughout their lives. Moreover, participants described the loss of social status in society, authority and power within the family, loss of responsibilities, and loss of meaningful and stimulating occupations. These losses were not experienced only at the time of immigration, but rather relived over and over through reminiscence and within their daily lives.

However, not all losses were perceived as being a calamity. For instance, participants welcomed the loss of certain responsibilities held in Sri Lanka and loss of certain social obligations that were perceived to be burdensome in old age. These losses led participants to redefine themselves in new ways in the post-migration context.

Table 4: *Late-life immigrants mitigate loss through everyday occupation.*

Mitigating Loss through Everyday Occupation	
Letting go	Moving forward
“the price you have to pay”: Reversing familial roles	Becoming a genuine Buddhist: the quest to spiritual liberation
"Turning a blind eye": Overcoming powerlessness	“It’s more than a responsibility, it’s my obligation”: Contributing to the household
	“It keeps me alive”: Renewing occupational interests

### 5.1.2.1 Letting go

By letting go of former statuses, roles, and responsibilities, participants were able to move forward to mitigate their losses through engaging in meaningful and purposeful occupations.

#### “the price you have to pay”: Reversing familial roles

In Sri Lanka, social roles dictate deference and obedience to acknowledge the status of elders. In their former lives, participants were revered matriarchs and patriarchs of their families. Their wisdom and experience were highly valued by younger members of the family who consulted them for resolution of everyday decisions, family conflicts and other important family decisions, such as marriages, or property purchases.

In Canada, their expertise went unnoticed and unconsidered, which depreciated the seniority, wisdom and experience they had gained in their home country. This depreciation reinforced a sense of incompetence, which was implied by participants as robbing them of their dignity. This loss was particularly salient within the sponsoring



children's home. Participants, most of whom co-resided with their sponsoring child, were no longer the matriarchs and patriarchs of the household. Instead, they became boarders within the household.

When it is not your home, your heart gets easily bruised when there is a conflict in the home. We are two units. My wife and I are one unit and they [children and grandchildren] are a separate family. I cannot infiltrate their family even if I wanted to, because that will create a lot of problems. If I am going to live with them, I have to be on their level. I am only one of six occupants of this house, isn't that right? I don't have a higher authority. – Saman

This diminished agency and influence within the household are implications of sponsorship. Under the sponsorship agreement, which holds the sponsoring children are accountable for sponsored persons' basic necessities for daily life (e.g., food, shelter, healthcare and clothing) for the length of the sponsorship period, these late-life immigrant participants were forced into a state of dependency on their children. This dependency conceived a power differential, wherein late-life immigrants were the passive recipients of their adult children. Thus, the traditional top-down generational order from parent to child is reversed in the post-migration context. Children wield the power and control to facilitate or constrain the choices available to these late-life immigrant participants.

Specifically, in the post-migration context participants serve and consult their children regarding routine decisions, such as community mobility, homeland visits, and healthcare, and comply with the child's demands. Although, they continue to maintain an advisory and honorary role, this responsibility is without the usual requirements or functions. The diminished role and authority is particularly distressing for male participants, who within the patriarchal Sri Lankan culture had wielded much of the power within their households. Against their expectations, old age in Canada had brought about a loss of authority and power. Under the diminished power and authority, participants assumed a subordinate and dependent role and "obeyed" their children's "orders", which resulted in the curtailment of thinking, behavioural patterns and independence. However, participants gradually came to accept these losses, by

surrendering their self-importance and ego and arriving at a state of acquiescence of their current reality.

You know, 99% [of] my independence is curtailed. In the sense, because you have to go by the whims and fancies of the children whom you are depending on, because their interests should be treated in advance. This makes you feel that you can't take independent decisions. It makes me a little upset but that's the price you have to pay. So, I can't find the way out of that because you are caught in the sort of a trap here...to depend on the children. [You are not] taking decision for the housekeeping. You're not taking the initiative. Whereas right throughout the life until I came here I have been taking the initiative in everything myself. So, this is a sudden change. It was a little shock but now I've got used to that. Initially it hurt a lot. [But I have] adapted by not thinking of my importance. There is a point when you have to give up your authority. – Ravi

In addition to co-residing harmoniously with the sponsoring family, subordination and compliance was a form of gratitude to their sponsoring child. Compliance manifested through occupational and behavioural modifications such as withdrawal from taking initiative or decision-making, instead deferring to their sponsored child's wishes and respecting their authority. Participants sought their adult children's permission regarding decisions related to healthcare, community-based occupational engagement and visits to the homeland. They also did not intervene in decisions related to the household, even when matters concerned themselves. Geetha, for instance, who gave the monies from the sale of her Sri Lankan home to her sponsoring child, described deferring financial decisions.

I had a house and things of my own [in Sri Lanka]. But here of course I am without anything. Anyway, [everything] belongs to my daughter. The money after selling that house [in Sri Lanka] also some of which was brought here [belongs to her]. So, one day I asked her, we had about 100 million or something...a big sum [from the sale of the home]. So, I told daughter, 'the savings have declined'. [She responded] 'yes of course, I am spending it.' So, after that I thought 'let her do it the way she wants. [It] doesn't matter.' – Geetha

Participants seldom challenged the sponsoring child's decisions. For instance, Sujatha and Apsara caved to their sponsoring child's wishes to remain in Canada despite an intense yearning to return to Sri Lanka. Both Sujatha and Apsara submitted to the wishes of their children by suppressing the desire for freedom in Sri Lanka. Several other participants' sponsoring children had discouraged them from engaging in outdoor

activities, particularly during the winter, out of concern for their well-being. Their discouragement had negative repercussions on participants' occupational engagement.

Some late-life immigrants also felt that their occupational choices were controlled, subordinated and oppressed by the sponsoring children. To live harmoniously with their sponsoring child, participants disengaged from meaningful occupations. For instance, in submitting to the wishes of his sponsoring child, Ranil, a self-described life-long drinker and political pundit, discontinued drinking. Drinking had been a meaningful occupation that facilitated connections with other people and encouraged self-expression. Specifically, drinking was a social opportunity for Ranil to sing, dance, and express his political opinions with others. His sponsoring child discouraged Ranil from drinking as he was fearful of the negative ramifications of his father's political rants on his personal business within the ethnic community. His child's discouragement of his meaningful occupations was an encumbrance on Ranil's freedom.

I used to go to parties hosted by friends. When they say 'let's drink', I drink. Until now I joined in. I go there to erase the loneliness in my heart and to socialize and enjoy myself. But my sons do not like that. Because of that I have distanced myself [from social events]. In the morning they would tell me 'father you said this, danced, debated about politics last night'. So, I decided to stop even that [socialize with friends]. They object because they are selfish, thinking [that] their business will stop. They think we will develop enemies. I think that is foolish and opportunistic. [I should] be able to express my opinion freely. That is why I want to live separately from them in a senior's home. Then I can [interact with] anyone at any place. [I could have] stayed comfortably and freely in Sri Lanka. Here I do not have the freedom. [I] have surrendered to the children. They dislike my free speech, even though they do not say it out loud. Yes, they [sons] are considerate of me, but that consideration is not valuable to me. I do not have my freedom here. They feed me, but my hands and feet are tied. – Ranil

His disengagement from drinking had a domino effect on concurrent meaningful occupations.

[I have] stopped now. After declining many offers to attend social events, they [sponsoring child's family] have stopped inviting me. [I] used to have a lot of fun at the cottage. Now [I] don't go because I cannot speak [freely]. When I go with them I feel I must sway to their rhythm. I cannot be the way I want to be. I feel that I should no longer be subjugated to them. To go there, be afraid, to [have to]

shut my mouth, to not drink, to not speak causes heartache. So not going is a consolation. – Ranil

Participants' deference to their sponsoring children was also out of gratitude for providing them the opportunity to age in a country that has a higher quality of life than their homeland and for financially supporting their sustenance in Canada. Bandula, for instance, suppressed his anger and disappointment during a family conflict out of gratitude for the sponsoring child.

This was the most depressing situation in my life. Because, we had good careers, we lived independently, we brought up our children, educated them and did all that [in Sri Lanka]. In Sri Lanka, [I would] give her a thundering slap. [I] can't do that [here]. We have respect for her because of the sponsorship. Truthfully speaking, we received this great opportunity to come to a new country because of her. She had tried since 2007 [to sponsor us]. What she did was a great thing. We received an amazing opportunity. So, we have that respect for [our] daughter. – Bandula

Late-life immigrants' subordination to the sponsoring child, as a result of co-residency, was illustrated by Manjula. To assist a grandchild who attended school in a different city, Manjula lived separately from the sponsoring child. Although she entered Canada through sponsorship, she was not bound by the same restrictions as the other late-life immigrants of this study. Her living arrangement facilitated a greater degree of independence and freedom in the post-migration context.

In Sri Lanka, I was very committed to my husband when he was alive. I had to listen to him and get his permission for everything. After his death, my children would not let me go out alone. They would say 'mother do not go out on your own, only go out with us.' Now it is not like that. I can take my own decisions. I have a freedom that I did not have in Sri Lanka. – Manjula

Nevertheless, a majority of participants struggled to accept their demoted status within the household. They negotiated, although rarely, with their child's authority in an effort to cling to their voice and agency. While they assumed a subordinate role a majority of the time, participants were dissatisfied with their passivity and inactivity within the household. To maintain a degree of freedom and independence, participants clung to certain personal choices concerning their health and occupational engagement. Some participants resisted their children's wishes by committing small acts of rebellion.

Even though son tells me not to feed the birds, I secretly feed the birds rice or breadcrumbs. I break up four or five slices of bread into pieces and place it outside. When I place it down, birds come in flocks to eat. [I] gain satisfaction from watching this. At one point, they were taking the food to the baby birds. Even if my son discourages me, I will continue to do this meritorious deed. – Ranil

Others withheld information of meaningful occupations from their sponsoring children fearing their children's discouragement. Geetha for instance provided limited information about her whereabouts to her sponsoring child, Ranil refrained from disclosing information about his employment to his children, and Kamal withheld information about his physical deterioration. These deliberate non-disclosures allowed participants to maintain a sense of control over their personal lives. Furthermore, participants found various ways to reengage in their authoritarian role. Ravi describes how he discreetly negotiated power and authority within the sponsored child's household without overstepping his boundary.

Giving up the authority...initially it hurt a lot, but indirectly there are ways of getting over [it] by indirectly convincing the children. If there is something wrong, [I do] not take any authority, but I show by example or by some indication that it shouldn't be that way. [There have] been instances where I have done that and then successfully implemented that, and they respect that. So that is how I help the children's state. – Ravi

Furthermore, participants circumvented this dependency by lowering their expectations and modifying their occupational needs. For instance, busy work schedules, and household and childcare responsibilities prevented sponsoring children from being a readily accessible and available source of transportation. Consequently, participants' dependency on the sponsoring child's family for transportation curtailed their spontaneity, freedom, and independence. The lack of readily available transportation curtailed these suburbanite late-life immigrants' participation in the community and disconnected them from places and spaces of meaningful occupational engagement. As a result, participants coordinated their community mobility needs with that of their child, or selectively prioritized their needs and solicited the attention and help of their children only for necessary occupations (e.g., medical appointments or religious commitments), thus forgoing occupations that were meaningful, but deemed frivolous (e.g., going to the

mall, socialization with ethnic peers). Attributing the lack of dependability of their children to the fast tempo of life in Canada allowed participants to assuage feelings of dependency.

Participants also withdrew or lowered previously held expectations of filial piety and financial support. Becoming resourceful and self-sufficient was another indirect way for participants to negotiate authority.

We do not expect anything from her. We do not even accept a tube of toothpaste from her. We manage from what we have, or we ask for help from our son. [We] go to medical appointments in our [non-sponsoring] son's vehicle. We do not burden them [sponsoring child's family] in anyway. The only thing is we live in this house and on some days, we eat their food. On the remaining days, we eat at our son's house. We have completely freed her [from care responsibilities]. – Bandula

I don't like to be a burden on anyone. In Sri Lanka, I was self-sufficient. [I had] my own house, my own income...everything. I was not a burden on anyone. Even in my married life I had my own money. So here also, I don't like to be a burden on my daughter. So, I don't tell her in the sense when I'm going. I tell her 'daughter, today is the Katina ceremony. I will be home tomorrow.' Like that I tell. But nothing about the other details, who is taking me or how I am going, nothing. I take the bus. If I am not getting a ride willingly from others, I don't like to beg too much. I am proud in the sense. – Geetha

Co-residency with the sponsoring child simultaneously enabled occupational engagement. Resettling in an unfamiliar nation and cultural environment following a life-long attachment to Sri Lanka required participants to acquire knowledge, skills and values of the Canadian culture. Participants expressed that they perceived themselves, and thought that their children perceived them, as needing the protection and guidance of their seasoned Canadian children. In the absence of exposure to Canadian society and culture, their knowledgeable and experienced children became their primary sources of information. This second-hand knowledge informed participants about Canadian politics, laws, as well as cultural norms and beliefs. Furthermore, children guided and mentored participants to negotiate the foreign environment. This intercultural guidance ranged from taken-for-granted knowledge, such as being instructed by well-intentioned children to not open the door to strangers when home alone, to practical advice for occupational and behavioural modification. For instance, children taught participants to use public

transportation, find their way in the community, to learn to use a bank card, to navigate the healthcare system and even to eat the ‘Canadian way’.

One day I went to Tim [Hortons] with [my] son for a small meal. [My] son bought me a bun to eat. The bun was placed inside of a bag. I started to eat it. When [my] son saw how I was eating, he said to me ‘father the way you are eating is incorrect’. I asked why. I said, ‘I am eating the way that I am used to’. [My son said] ‘no but here you cannot eat like that. When someone comes to a particular place, there is a particular way to eat’. So, I asked him to teach me. He said you should not remove it [the bun] from that [the bag]. You should keep the bun in the bag, break off small pieces and eat slowly. That is the way here. He said ‘people are watching you. They will think that you are uncivilized...people will think that you do not belong here. So, I accepted his teaching with high regard. – Bandula

Participants expressed that their sponsoring children also exercised control to discourage occupations that were thought to not be in their best interests. For example, life-long familiarity and personal conviction, as well as the encouragement of same-aged peers within the ethnic community had led to Apsara’s use of ayurvedic medicine to treat her undiagnosed illness. However, conceding to the wishes of her skeptical daughter, Apsara abandoned the use of the medication.

Many people, even friends who live here, said that Sinhala medicine may offer a cure. There are talented Ayurvedic practitioners who can cure [this illness]. So, I started administering Sinhala medicine, but [my] daughter did not like that. When I started taking that medicine, [my] daughter said ‘if it impacts the liver, you could have much bigger problems’. I only continued to drink it for another 10 days. Although I felt the ayurvedic medication taking effect, I thought I might have to suffer even more if I didn’t listen [to my daughter’s advice]. – Apsara

Participants’ language and communication barriers fostered dependence on the sponsoring child’s family. For instance, Manjula’s lack of English proficiency limited her independence in the community, requiring her granddaughter’s assistance with navigating the community and meeting her community-based needs. Specifically, Manjula depended upon her granddaughter to ease the language barrier, which particularly complicated interactions with healthcare providers.

I was not in a position to go out and do anything by myself. I still have that [problem]. I always go out with my granddaughter. When most doctors speak to me, I experience discomfort. I face a situation where I cannot properly explain my

problem. I can understand what they are saying, but I cannot respond to them. Even today I am waiting to go to the doctor with my granddaughter. – Manjula

Thus, participants depended on their children and grandchildren to lessen the dissonance between the familiar and unfamiliar cultures, assist integration to Canada, and facilitate engagement in adaptive occupations.

### "Turning a blind eye": Overcoming powerlessness

Participants experienced erosion of their traditional power and authority within the family structure. One salient method of coping with this loss was to deliberately ignore it. This neglect was illuminated in several examples in the late-life immigration experience, such as non-interference and passivity in the lives of their adult children and grandchildren.

Within South Asian culture, extended family plays a significant role in child rearing. South Asian grandparents are transmitters of religious, cultural and family values, such as morality, altruism, social identity, competence and affiliation (Sarma & Sarma-Debnath, 2013). Sri Lankan grandparents were heavily invested in the upbringing of grandchildren (B. Perera et al., 2015; Welgama, 2016). In fact, older Sri Lankan perceive the rearing of grandchildren to be their obligation to the wellbeing of the family (Perera et al., 2015). Participants expressed that it was their responsibility to police the behaviours of the younger kin and use verbal and physical discipline to ensure that a child does not deviate from their intended path.

Now in our country if a daughter is brought up, the parents and elderly relatives are expected to protect her. Not to let her live a selfish kind of life. In Sri Lanka, bringing up a daughter means protecting her like she is your own eyes. Until that daughter reaches the age of marriage she is under the care of her parents and relatives. – Ranil

Many of the participants specifically arrived in Canada at the request of their adult children to provide childcare. Upon arrival in Canada, participants resumed their former identities, as parents and grandparents. However, their familiar and accustomed ways of nurturance quickly proved to be incompatible and unwelcomed in their accultured children's homes and in broader Canadian society. Specifically, they



experienced a dissonant culture which discouraged the only way they knew how to parent/grandparent.

I personally witnessed a child and a father in a car having some problem. The people around saw that girl being dragged out of the car by the father and I think there was a big scuffle and then immediately some person in that neighborhood telephoned the police. The police came and handcuffed the father. The father was punished immediately. I was thinking about the difference between our country and this. And that made me think that if I were to be here and if that happened to me in my country I would still be in jail because I have punished my children so much. So, I was thinking of the logic behind punishing the father for a little reprimanding of the child. I can't understand the logic of the law that is prevailing here. – Ravi

Participants cited that the laws of the land prohibited them from fulfilling their traditional grandparental role, particularly corporal punishment. These cultural values were reinforced by their own adult children who had shifted to a westernized and more liberal parenting style. Instead, participants restrained from practicing customary ways of grandparenting, instead adopting a passive, and non-interference role in the lives of grandchildren by grandparenting from afar.

Now several times I have felt anger in my heart when the older grandson hits the younger one. He does not like to stop. So, I go running after them to stop them. I discipline them by being strict. I tell them to 'be quiet'. If they do not listen I threaten to give them some beats and motion with my hand. Even if I have thought to give them a slap, I have not because the law here is strict. He will scream saying 'grandfather has hit me'. Someone will make a call, and the police will come and take the child away. I was told that's what would happen. Apparently, they do not return the children to the parents. Knowing that, when I see them misbehaving I have started to turn a blind eye. We cannot implement the rules we want here, even if it is our own grandchild. – Ranil

Although participants acknowledge the benefits of a Canadian upbringing, they believed certain values of the host culture to be inferior to those of the native culture. For instance, participants overwhelmingly considered the host culture to be "carnal". Instead, the native culture, which places emphasis on academic and professional accomplishment, discourages relationships between males and females at least until the culmination of one's formal education. Considering the grandchildren's embeddedness in the dissonant host culture, participants feared that traditional values would be abandoned in favor of

inferior western values, resulting in cultural discontinuity. Despite these fears, participants felt helpless and powerless in the post-migration context as they were not able to approach grandparenting in a familiar and authentic way.

My heart aches because I do not have any say [in childrearing]. If they continue down this path [of westernization], I do not know what will become of their future. I have a fear. Specially marriage here is one of staying together and separating. I mean it is one thing to divorce or separate if they are incompatible, but here people are now doing it as a trend. Staying together and suddenly breaking up. They [western culture] give a lot of importance to sensuality. That means, you get satisfaction out of an external pleasure. Imagine if [my] granddaughter marries a white man. I ask [myself] ‘if they [grandchildren] continue down that path, will they become lost? What will happen to them?’ On the other hand, I won’t be here to witness this [westernization]. I can’t prevent this [westernization]. – Saman

Their passivity was not limited to grandparenting. In fact, it was used as a coping strategy in Canada to overcome other stressors of late-life immigration, specifically related to co-residency.

Most often problems are created when you interfere. If we encounter a conflict, we [spouse and I] avoid it. Otherwise if we get involved in a conflict it can go on for a while. It’s better to stop it at its root. This [conflict] happens if words are misspoken, or if [there are] differences in mentality. We are two generations. So, the mentality of two generations will be different. When someone enters our comfort zone that is when we feel we are in danger. That is when we feel sad. Now let’s say they [grandchildren] like to listen to loud music. I do not like it. But if they like it, I give them the space and convince myself that this is only a sound. If they [child and child-in-law] are having an argument, we do not go there to tell them who is right and who is wrong. That would be an interference. Let them sort it out. Why should I stick my finger into their business? – Saman

Turning a blind eye was a means for participants to maintain a harmonious relationship with other occupants of the home and cope with the loss of status and authority in the post-migration context. This required participants to surrender their self-importance, ego, as well as familiar and accustomed family roles.

### 5.1.2.2 Moving Forward

#### Becoming a genuine Buddhist: the quest to spiritual liberation

Immigration to Canada in late-life had catapulted the spiritual journey of participants. Overwhelmingly, the time participants seized from the loss of former familial and social responsibilities and commitments and the resources available to them was perceived to expedite their quest for spiritual liberation. While Buddhism was a constant presence in the lives of these participants, religious engagement became their predominant occupation in Canada. Specifically, participants described a strengthened religious orientation and an authentic religious identity, rather than be blind followers of the faith.

I am a Buddhist by birth, by ancestry ...because my mother and father are Buddhists. I am a Buddhist because it's there in the birth certificate. [In Sri Lanka I] recited the Buddhist stanzas and visited the temple. [I was only] a Buddhist by name. That's blind devotion. That's not enough. There's more than that to do. Now I am trying to be a genuine Buddhist, to understand who I am. That means ... [how do I reach] things [that are] beyond my understanding, beyond my sensations and perceptions. – Saman

Death and afterlife were at the forefront of participants' minds. Participants practiced the prescribed Eightfold Path to achieve spiritual liberation in this life or in a future life in order to shorten or cease the cycle of rebirth. Influenced by the law of karma which dictates that one's rebirth is karmically determined, participants cultivated good and moral choices and intentions that led to right actions and thoughts. They perceived themselves to be agents of their own fortunes. Their daily lives were structured around religious occupations undertaken in the pursuit of detachment, and accumulation of merit, perceived as fundamental to the afterlife.

It's only now that we understand that being reborn is a reality. Samsara is a continuing journey. If there is a possibility to put an end to it, that is my greatest expectation. Now we have to look to see if we can access that path to understand the philosophy and whether a foundation could be laid to shorten the journey of samsara. [Engaging in religious practices] is how I will release myself from myself. I am pursuing my emancipation...my freedom. – Apsara

In Canada participants also experienced freedom from responsibilities that previously consumed their time in Sri Lanka. They were no longer consumed with burdensome responsibilities of maintenance and upkeep of their own household, or the various social obligations to their families, friends and community. Instead, immigration to Canada granted participants a coveted retreat from former responsibilities.

I went to the temple a lot [in Sri Lanka], gave alms, and did all that. But in Sri Lanka, we truly did not have that time. If we didn't go somewhere, then relatives and visitors would come to us. There was no time at all for those things [religious devotion] when I was employed. Now of course I have time. The free time and the lack of chaos is good. In our age, we have time to read books. Studying Buddhism in depth started here in Canada. I think that Canada is a suitable place for nurturing my spiritual qualities. More than before, I now have a deeper understanding of the principles of Buddhism. – Apsara

This free time facilitated knowledge development to reach a deep and nuanced understanding of the Buddhist philosophy, which held the key to spiritual liberation. Participants engaged in cultivation of religious scholarship and practice to supplement their existing general knowledge. Advancing knowledge of religion took place through immersion in Buddhist teaching. Specifically, participants engaged in reading Buddhist books, listening to dharma discussions online, writing and rewriting sermons, reminiscing Buddhist lessons from the past, and critically discussing and analyzing the Buddhist doctrine with spouses, peers and the clergy at the temple.

I think I learnt more about my religion here because I have all the time to devote, to learn more, to read books, and [really] to delve into the matter. And to analyze my own mind really. To tell [you] the truth, I didn't know the doctrine so much [before immigration]. – Geetha

While maturation and aging had granted objective knowledge, participants strived to achieve wisdom. For participants, wisdom was defined as the realization of the true nature of reality, or acknowledgement of the tenets of Buddhism, of suffering, impermanence, and without-self.

Even though I have the knowledge to understand it, I do not yet have the wisdom. Wisdom is beyond knowledge. It should be cultivated from the inside. So, it's rather difficult to put into effect. To search for that wisdom is my prerogative. I am now 75 years old. I have taken efforts to reach that stage for 10, 15 years. – Saman

Thus, the post-migration context offered them an opportunity to become inconspicuous and less obligated to others in society and withdraw into a tight circle of restricted daily occupations, thereby providing them with an abundance of time to pursue spiritual engagement, an occupation that was perceived as pivotal to the preparation for one's inevitable death, and the afterlife. Uniformly all participants emphasized the importance of religious engagement in ensuring a better rebirth during their next life.

Religious engagement took place individually and collectively and in both private and public spheres. The Buddhist temples, scattered around the GTA, were a meaningful place of spiritual engagement and togetherness. At the temple, participants collectively engaged in prayer and meditation under the guidance of Buddhist monks. They listened to dharma sermons and engaged in dharma discussions with the monks and other temple patrons. Through these discussions, they learned from one another's experiences and insights from their spiritual practice and explored the joys, difficulties, and questions related to their personal spiritual journey. This collective engagement with the religious community was perceived to enhance their focus, and ultimately benefit the collective goal of spiritual liberation. Moreover, the temple was specifically frequented during celebrations and festivities.

Keeping with tradition, on Poya days [full moon days] I abide by the precepts [Buddhist code of ethics]. I try to abide the precepts for as many poya days as I can. I somehow or other make arrangements [to go to temple] by telling my daughter. Even if it's a day when she is working I ask her to make arrangements to dispatch us to the temple. We are at the temple by eight thirty [in the morning]. From then till six in the evening, we spend the time at the temple engaging in activities such as abiding the precepts and socializing with other patrons. It became a thing which brought much calmness both to my mind as well as to my body. – Bandula

The majority of participants' religious engagement took place at home. This is attributable to the individual reflective principles encouraged in Buddhism, as well as the unavailability of transportation to attend the temple on a regular basis. At home, religious occupations were undertaken in a dedicated space, away from the daily disturbances of the household.

Now the other two rooms are [for the] two granddaughters, they have high volume music and all that. And their friends come and go. But once I close the door no one disturbs me. I devote all my time to my own things, to this [reading] or to listen to the sermons. – Geetha

These spaces were furnished with spiritual reminders. Many participants had created Buddhist shrines, equipped with images or statues of the Buddha, religious artefacts, and various offerings to the Buddha, in a prominent but quiet place in their homes. These religious symbols were “spiritual reminders” of the qualities of the Buddha and his teachings. The lingering presence of reminders permeated their lives, reminded them of the Buddha’s teachings, structured their perceptions and views, and “disciplined” participants to live simply, peacefully, gratuitously, and compassionately.

Devoid of disturbances and interferences, the children and grandchildren’s absence from the home during the day was opportune for participants’ solitary religious engagement. Alone or with the spouse, participants were determined and committed to religious engagement routinely throughout the day. This included engagement in various types of meditations, adherence to precepts, listening to Buddhist sermons, chanting, reading Buddhist philosophy, and discussing religious teachings with a spouse or with acquaintances via the internet or telephone. The prioritization of religious occupations, deterred only by obligations to the household or the children/grandchildren, illuminated participants’ dedication to their spiritual journey. All other occupations were structured around their spiritual engagement.

I get up around 6 in the morning and worship the Buddha and meditate until about 8. The mind is calm and quiet at the time I wake up in the morning. So, I believe this time to be most appropriate [for spiritual engagement]. Only after this will I engage in other activities. My husband and I have gotten to know someone recently. He translates [sermons] every day on a weekly basis. He is someone with a vast knowledge [of the doctrine] that even surpasses that of the chief incumbent. Every morning through skype he engages in a religious discussion with us for about an hour. So, if we are here [at home] we do it without fail. – Apsara

I do not like anybody disturbing me when I’m worshipping. I don't even like it if somebody is trying to contact [call] me from Sri Lanka. Before they call, I attend to my work [spiritual obligations]. That's a big relief to me. – Manjula

Participants commitment to the spiritual journey was evident through their occupational engagement. For instance, Vijith, who suffers from a chronic condition, engages in laborious yard work to ensure he has flowers to offer to the Buddha.

I want to erect three rows of marigolds [in the garden]. I recently found a large picture of the Ruwanwelisaya [referring to a sacred stupa in Sri Lanka] from a friend. A picture about 6 feet in height. I carried it to my room with great difficulty. But there were no flowers in the garden to make an offering. Now of course I will have marigold flowers. I have already planned out mentally how these three rows of marigolds will be planted. – Vijith

Meditation was perceived as the key to unlocking spiritual liberation. Participants expressed working their way up the spiritual ladder towards the final stage of enlightenment, Arahant.

Even if you give mountains of alms, there is no use. Even if I adhered to the eight precepts or ten precepts from morning till evening there is no point. There is no point in refraining from telling lies, from killing animals, from stealing, from committing adultery and not indulging in intoxicants. If one does not develop one's mind and does not at least advance along the path to 'Sovahan' [referring to a lower level of enlightenment] ... we can't get over it [escape samsara]. We can become enlightened, but it would not be possible to achieve the status of 'Arahant' [becoming fully awakened]. It's for that purpose it [meditation] is done. – Vijith

It's through meditation that relief is brought to my mind. Then, through that relief, I reach that vast depth. It is in that 'Vipassana' meditation that the mind is developed and at one particular stage one reaches the stage of 'Nirvana'. It's a mental phenomenon. When one moves on to that level, it means that you will not be reborn. Buddha said that it is only when you reach that stage you will cease to suffer. If not, birth is suffering. That's why I maintain this [meditation]. - Sujatha

Meditation was undertaken to discipline the mind. The daily and routine practice of meditation allowed participants to heighten their concentration and cultivate a sense of tranquility and inner stillness. Vijith explained the concentration he gained from meditation,

[I] meditate to develop the mind. There is a lot [to be gained] in meditation. In 'Anapanasathi' meditation, I close my eyes, I inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale. At first, I am conscious of my breath. With time it comes naturally. After that, I begin to see something like a blue light in front. Then when I concentrate on that light ... my mind doesn't go here or there. Sometimes when I engage in

‘Anapanasathi’ meditation, my mind still flutters. But when my mind is focused and trapped by that light, I notice that I am enveloped by that light. – Vijith

Additionally, meditation facilitated the nurturance of positive virtues of patience, tolerance, acceptance, and love. In avoiding unnecessary mental suffering, participants improved the quality of their life. For instance, meditation was used to address the frustration and disappointment over the losses experienced in the post-migration context. For example, living in a house that was not her own was deeply distressing and frustrating for Sujatha. The practice of meditation served to achieve mental fortitude, allowing her to make sense of the reality of life in Canada.

Whatever problem crops up, I can tolerate it. Sometimes losing the temper is not a good thing. Getting angry is not good. I don't lose my temper now as I did before. At times I feel sad. Sometimes there are problems that happen within any household. When the home is not yours, the slightest thing can bruise your heart regardless of what you do [to overcome this feeling]. During those instances, I don't get angry. At that moment, I tell myself ‘this is how it is’. Sometimes I feel that I should be tired [from the work at home]. Then I wonder why I should consider this as tiring. I never let myself feel that this [the work I do] causes me to be tired. Because I do this for my children. From meditation I understand this [doing for children] is a form of happiness. – Sujatha

The daily and routine religious engagement had positive effects on the lives of participants.

When I say [I experience] an altered mental state, it is a sort of lightness that I begin to feel. I don't take various things into my head. [I] don't take unnecessary ideas in to my mind. In meditation specially, what I do is to forget the past, not keep any expectations about the future, and live in the present moment. – Vijith

Conversely, disengagement from meditation created a sense of emptiness and guilt. Participants culpability reflected their incumbency to their spiritual journey.

It gives me a big consolation to my mind when it's over. The day I am not able to attend to it, it affects my mind negatively in a big way. I think, it [negative happenings in the day] is because I could not do that activity [religious engagement]. – Manjula

Religious engagement through giving, virtuous conduct, and purification of the mind through meditation was believed to accrue merit, a form of spiritual energy. Participants gathered merit through the act of giving. Specifically, they engaged in



supporting the clergy through almsgiving, donating food and other necessities, listening to sermons and attending other religious services, and donating towards the upkeep of the temple both physically and monetarily. For instance, Geetha the savings from her employment to make financial contributions to a monastery being built to train monks. Kamal used the vegetables from his garden to prepare food for the Buddhist clergy. Manjula, who was unable to contribute financially, engaged in giving by cleaning the temple and assisting with various festivities.

In addition to giving to the Buddhist clergy, participants engaged in various other acts of benevolence. For instance, Geetha donated gently used clothing to peers at the temple and various charitable organizations, and knitted baby blankets to be donated to hospitals. Moreover, giving was not limited to tangible items, rather participants referred to giving knowledge, experience, or a helping hand. Sharing his knowledge and experience in the task of lantern building for Vesak with the ethnic community was perceived by Vijith as an act of giving. Sujatha's way of giving was through transferring merit or directing one's own good karma to benefit other persons. Specifically, she undertook good deeds and transferred her merit to her ailing mother and child and grandchildren in Sri Lanka. Merit transfers served to soften Sujatha's sense of guilt and powerlessness in not being able to provide filial piety for her ailing mother and fulfil her parental obligations to her adult son and grandchildren who remain in Sri Lanka. Participants were even committed to giving at the end of life. Kamal and Geetha spoke of donating their bodies to medical research as a final act of generosity.

These meritorious deeds in this life were believed to secure good karma and lead to nirvana or a 'better' rebirth, while demeritorious deeds were believed to result in further suffering. Thus, the actions and thoughts of their present lives were thought to bear fruit in this life or in a future lifetime. Engagement in these meritorious deeds reduced participants anxiety and fear surrounding death.

Aware of the inevitability of death, participants did not delay opportunities to gain merit during their lifetime. For instance, Geetha was insistent on participating in the Katina ceremony, a significant annual religious observance which involves offering a

hand-sewn robe to monks who have completed a period of retreat. Katina is the most significant merit making ceremony performed by Buddhist communities. The offering of the Katina robe is considered immensely and potently meritorious since it involves three months of preparation and dedication. The merit, or the positive karma, gained by the offerings at the Katina ceremony is also believed to reduce the negative effects of other minor bad karma one may have committed (Wickremeratne, 2006). Despite her failing vision which made the task of hand sewing both inefficient and unsafe, Geetha was determined to participate in this once-a-year opportunity. Geetha held the view that these merit-making religious activities should be fulfilled prior to physical debilitation and her demise.

Now that day, I was at the Katina festival. I was helping them to dish out and this and that. So a young lady she told me ‘Aunty, why are you tiring yourself? It’s not good for you is it? Go sit for a while.’ Then I told [her] ‘what if I die [soon]?’ So, after that she didn’t ask me. Because one never knows if next year’s Katina festival if I’ll be there. I want to do as much as possible while I can. I have never stitched [the robe before]. But after coming here [to Canada] only I stitched. I cannot see well. So [I was] scared. I told [them to] do it and to give me the last three inches [of the robe to complete]. So then [even if I make a mistake] they can remove it. – Geetha

The prioritization of this merit-making occupation, which superseded her functional difficulties, demonstrate its significance. Moreover, the awareness of functional deterioration accompanying aging, which may reduce their capacity to adhere to certain religious precepts and practices, encouraged participants to remain spiritually engaged.

### “It’s more than a responsibility, it’s my obligation”: Contribution to the household

Most participants arrived in Canada at the request of their adult children to respond to the exigencies of the adult children. Participants were intent on fulfilling their perceived parental obligation to their adult children by supporting their settlement and professional establishment in Canada. Their industrious children were perceived to not have the time to maintain the home or provide the necessary care to their children.

I had just retired. It was then [our] daughter said ‘father and mother should come here. I am pregnant with my second child. I cannot manage all the work by myself’. It was at that point that we were motivated to immigrate to Canada. - Vijith

It is difficult [to live] in a new land. They [sponsoring child and spouse] had to study here. They had to leave our [grand]children and go [study]. Therefore, we came here to help. We did not have any problems living there [in Sri Lanka], but [we came] for them because they were studying, and we wanted to take care of the grandchildren. – Saman

However, late-life immigration was mutually beneficial to the sponsored older adult and sponsoring child. While participants contributed to the welfare of their children’s homes and their grandchildren’s care, life in Canada as well as its social and healthcare resources refined their quality of life, particularly given their old age. Furthermore, under the sponsorship agreement sponsoring children were financially responsible for the care of participants for the duration of the sponsorship period. Thus, participants felt indebted to their sponsoring children for their care and the opportunity to age comfortably in the Canadian context. Participants acted on their sense of obligation and duty by maintaining the sponsoring child’s home and providing childcare.

Now I have a duty to carry out. We now live with our daughter. So, we must provide some sort of service to her. We have to look after the home and do the cooking. I help out that way. – Bandula

Actually, we have not been able to show our affection to our children properly [in Sri Lanka]. We were occupied with our careers. The children were left in the care of nannies. Then they were sent off to school. So, the time we had to look after them was limited. Now that we are older and have retired, the things we were not able to do for our children, we can do for our grandchildren. That love can be properly channeled now. – Saman

Some participants understood their contributory efforts to have far reaching consequences beyond that of their family. Participants expressed that their presence would allow their adult children to be wholly committed to their careers.

I feel that they lead a difficult life. Now, it is easy for them with us around. If not, they will have to come from their [work], drop them [grandchildren] off, and then return to work. That’s what happens when we [wife and I] go back to Sri Lanka. Somebody must come on time. They cannot do their job properly. That is a headache. [They are always thinking] ‘What are my children doing? In case of an

emergency how will I get there? Now if I need to go to their school suddenly, will I have time to get back?' If they are attending to a client there, they will have to stop what they are doing to come [and attend to the children's matters]. It is helpful that I am here. Now they can do their job easily. It is a convenience for them. – Saman

Vijith perceived his contribution to the household as being a service to Canada. By supporting his sponsoring child to engage in the Canadian workforce, he was indirectly contributing to Canada.

Their various responsibilities, undertaken to maintain the household or to provide childcare, ensured occupational engagement and productivity.

After holding big [employment] positions, attending various meetings I cannot just stay idle. [I] have to do something. After being [occupied] like that, and now being [unoccupied]...that is problematic. [It is] better to be occupied. If someone [grandchild] is around, I will read her a book. I will teach her something. Then it doesn't bother me. If not, I will find something to do alone. – Sujatha

Out of obligation, participants awoke before the rest of the household to begin their daily household chores, and retreated to bed only after serving the family's needs.

I wake up before everyone else early in the morning by 4:30 or 5:00 o'clock because my son leaves the house by 6:30. So I have to cook his food. They are all still sleeping. I make the tea, cook the food, I prepare their lunch boxes, and even the small children's meals all by myself. I don't mind that. I like it because I have to do it. Otherwise they can't do it. With the small children, they can't do everything. – Sujatha

Participants undertook a majority of the household chores and maintenance in their sponsoring child's home. For instance, participants, individually or with a spouse, routinely prepared meals for the family, laundered clothing for all members of the family, discarded the garbage, shoveled snow during the winters, and performed yard work and beautified the exterior of the home during the summers. These chores were often time consuming and laborious, particularly considering their old age. Over the years, participants solidified their responsibilities within the household. Garbage and recycling disposal and snow removal had become the sole responsibility of Bandula, it was understood that Sujatha would prepare the daily meals for the family, Vijith assumed the responsibility of washing, ironing and folding the clothing and completing the yard work,

Saman would transport the grandchildren to their extracurricular activities, etc. These assumed roles also served as a sense of pride.

If you were to walk down the road you realize that the beautiful flowers in our yard are not to be seen in any other garden. There is one strip [of land]. It is entirely filled with roses. I arrange them nicely. I use fertilizer and clean up everything and attend to them. In the middle there is a big rose plant. On either side there are two trees that is landscaped artistically. Between those two are those roses. Everyone who passes by looks at them and smiles. Others comment on how beautiful they are. – Vijith

While household contributions were natural and familiar extension of their former lives, some participants felt compelled to adopt new occupations within the household in the Canadian context.

Truly when we were in Sri Lanka, because there was a maid at home, there were limited household chores. After immigrating here, we have to do our own work by ourselves. To be frank, when we lived in our home there [in Sri Lanka], I didn't cook or even go to the kitchen often. Usually I was not keen on doing housework. After coming here...my sisters there [in Sri Lanka] tease me saying 'she couldn't even make a lentil curry in Sri Lanka, but now she does everything'. Truly, I took the effort to do a lot of things that I had not done in Sri Lanka. Now, I make hoppers [Sri Lankan crepes]. These are things I did not even consider making in Sri Lanka. I learned to do new things after coming here. I still wonder where I got that strength from. – Apsara

Considering the detachment from their previous responsibilities, household chores and childcare granted participants a sense of normalcy and purpose in Canada. These occupations kept participants engaged, and even overworked, allowing them to utilize their skills productively. For instance, duty-bound Sujatha felt overworked which she identified as being detrimental to her health. Dismissing her physical and emotional exhaustion, Sujatha's maternal instinct and overpowering sense of obligation committed her to household chores day in and day out.

I am not going [to the temple] because there are various things to do here. [If I go] it's a whole day [wasted]. Instead I prepare the meals for them and stay here [at home]. Even my son tells me to go [to the temple], but it is not possible because I have to do this. If not me, then who will? I have to do it. Actually, I do not even have enough time to think this [overworking] may not be good for me. – Sujatha

Participants willingly took on responsibilities around the house, sometimes opposing the discouragement of their adult children. Vijith, for instance, shovelled the snow against the advice of his sponsoring child who held concerns about his health. Relinquishing these responsibilities were seen as yet another loss. Instead, insistence on shouldering responsibility in the child's home was out of a desire to gain a degree of control, to maintain a sense of purpose and worth, and retain their dignity. Participants did not want to be 'freeloaders', instead they were intent of working for their sustenance.

Without their assistance, the adult children were believed to struggle to juggle the parental, domestic, professional, and social spheres of life in Canada. Their indispensability to the sustenance of the home further reinstated their sense of purpose and worth. In a sense, the household became an important locus of expression and identity development. Redemption of identity was particularly salient given the threatened and forfeited state of their former identities.

A gendered division of responsibilities was reported by participants. Male participants reported engaging in laborious outdoor household chores, such as yard work and snow shoveling, while female participants were primarily involved with indoor chores, such as meal preparation and childcare. Furthermore, participants indicated an unequal distribution of responsibilities between the genders. Married women's involvement was on a daily and routinely basis, while men engaged in household chores infrequently and sporadically. Men played a supportive role to their wives. Sujatha's experience with domestic work emphasized the gendered division of labor. While Sujatha assumed these responsibilities willingly and happily, the responsibilities within the household kept her from attending to personal needs and leisure pursuits. Her limited occupational participation beyond the household stood in stark contrast to her spouse.

He has enough time to read and go outside, but I do everything in the house. So, I don't have so much time to go outside...to the library even. Most of the time I will be here in the house. – Sujatha

Participants also took on a wide range of responsibilities in caring for their young grandchildren in Canada. They regularly took the grandchildren to and from schools and various social and extracurricular activities, supervised and monitored their safety,

prepared their daily meals and maintained their hygiene. Participants also helped with homework and taught grandchildren social mores, as well as the culture, religion, and language of the native country.

In the absence of their working adult children, participants were involved grandparents, or even surrogate parents, who provided love, stability, and a safety net for their growing grandchildren. Sponsoring children were able to rely on participants for childcare, particularly during unforeseeable circumstances, such as the illness of a grandchild, overtime shifts, and work trips, and during holidays and vacations. This allowed their adult children to continue employment with minimal distractions.

[Without me,] they will manage their everyday duties somehow. They won't avoid it. There are many households without helpers. But when I am here, there is a convenience. Now look, they left the sick grandchild without a problem. If her [granddaughter's] fever rises, they [the adult children] will know that their mother will do something about it. It gives them peace of mind. – Sujatha

However, contributions to the household and provision of childcare was primarily limited to the confines of the home due to limited access to the community. For instance, Sujatha, who does not drive and has a limited understanding of her geographical surroundings, spoke of her inability to assist her grandchild in the event of a medical emergency.

Without someone else present, it is difficult to care for these children in an emergency. If suddenly the child develops an illness, it would be problematic. Someone has to be present at home. She [granddaughter] was vomiting. Thankfully the daughter-in-law was here. It would be scary if I had to urgently take her to the doctor. – Sujatha

For most participants the link between the home and the community was their sponsoring child who supplied the necessities required for domestic work.

Participants' deep sense of obligation to the sponsoring child tethered them to Canada. To appease their sense of duty, participants made selfless sacrifices, often surrendering meaningful desires. Self-centered decisions were thought to compromise the smooth operation of the household. For instance, Sujatha for instance felt trapped and helpless between her perceived sense of parental and grandparental obligations to her

sponsoring child and grandchildren, and her sense of moral and filial obligation to tend to her ailing mother, elderly siblings, adult child, and grandchildren in Sri Lanka. Her perceived parental obligation and sense of duty to her sponsoring child anchored her to Canada.

I'll be more comfortable and more happy there [in Sri Lanka]. But now I have lived [here] for three years and I think if I go there [to Sri Lanka] I will feel very sorry to leave this place because [of] the [sponsoring] son and the small kids. Because they are very, very attached to me. On top of that problem, my mother is in ill health. Many times, they [siblings] have said 'big sister, you should be with us.' Even more than that, [I should be there for] my older son. I was the one who took care of the two little ones [grandchildren], when they [adult children] would go to work. So, they [grandchildren] are sad. This is my predicament. I cannot abandon him [referring to sponsoring child], because there are problems in this household. If I go there [to Sri Lanka], I will feel that the problems he [sponsoring child] has is greater than the problems there [in Sri Lanka]. – Sujatha

Comparably, Saman reported not being able to take extended vacations to Sri Lanka as his absence would disrupt the innerworkings of the sponsored child's family.

We have to first consider their [referring to the adult children] needs before we go [to Sri Lanka]. If not, if we go all of a sudden, even for 4 or 5 days, the grandchildren's schedules become disarrayed. That was the main purpose [of immigration]. We came especially for [to take care of] the two small children. – Saman

Ravi had expected to live with his daughter in his old age under the belief that old age would be more comfortably spent with a daughter than with a son. However, his son's demanding career had necessitated Ravi's immigration to Canada for childcare, requiring him to forfeit his desire.

Actually, I have openly declared that I will be living with my eldest daughter [in my old age]. I have been very frank with the others also. Because at that time I thought that I must make the point clear and told her 'I am going to live with you'. I don't know why but maybe something inner compel[led] me that I would like to live with that my daughter, because in the last analysis, living with a daughter [in old age] looks more comfortable. I don't know why that is and I have experience that is a universal truth. The need to give priority to the much required helping hand in bringing up three very small children my son is blessed with has compelled us during last 10 years to be with him rather than catering to our selfish interests of enjoying the company of our daughter. This explains why we are not living with daughter. If I were to live long enough until these babies



[grandchildren] are able [to] look after themselves independently, then I may go back to the warmth of my daughter. – Ravi

This sentiment of de-prioritizing personal needs for selflessness echoed throughout participants late-life immigration experience.

If I stop giving myself importance, then I can devote myself to others. If I think ‘I want this. I want that’, [considering only] my comfort, then that [devoting to someone else] becomes difficult. Now we tend to think to a large extent that when we reach our old age the children will care for us and bring our meals to us. What I say is that until I can independently manage my own work, I will attend to it alone. – Saman

Upon arrival in Canada, participants had the vigor and capability to engage in household and childcare responsibilities within the home. They experienced functional deterioration over time, which resulted in dwindling capability to perform tasks which required physical strength in particular. However, their deterioration paralleled their children’s establishment in Canada and their grandchildren’s self-sufficiency. Thus, these late-life immigrants devoted the healthy part of their old age in Canada to the wellbeing of their children and grandchildren, and retreated from these responsibilities as they aged. However, as these responsibilities faded with age and consequent functional deterioration, participants experienced feelings of purposelessness and worthlessness.

Those days I did a lot of work in the home. When the children were small, I looked after them, fed them, bathed them, read them stories, and did everything for them. [We] had a big attachment. They would stay very close to me. Now of course the children are grown so those things are not needed from me. They are bigger now. When I go speak with them, they have a liking for me, but the attachment from their childhood has now weakened. [I] don’t do anything special for them now. They also don’t depend on me, because they know that I cannot help. Instead, they refer to my husband to get things done. If they really need something [from me] they ask, but otherwise, there is not a deep attachment. I am not of service to them anymore. – Apsara

### “It keeps me alive”: Renewing occupational interests

The loss of former social and familial responsibilities had provided participants ample time to cultivate meaningful occupations in Canada. These included continuation of former occupations, renewed interest in formerly dormant occupations, and adoption

of new occupations. Engagement in their passions in Canada allowed participants to satiate their hunger for engagement and productivity.

Participants maintained their passions for home-country politics, gardening, reading, teaching, and writing in Canada.

The favorite part of my daily routine is reading. I read as much as I can. I read the newspapers I receive. I read these grandchildren's books. Now, my granddaughter reads interesting novels when she is here. [She] reads love stories. I even read those. It does not matter to me. I read it the best way I can. I accumulate something new. I try to collect as much [knowledge] as possible. I value reading because I am physically bound to one place, I am able to keep my mind in one place, calm and collected. For more than 60 years, I have continued the habit of reading. – Bandula

Ranil, a political activist in Sri Lanka, maintained his political engagement in Canada.

I want to inculcate knowledge in others. I took some of my published writings to Sri Lanka and gave it to them to read. [They] looked at it and were very happy that despite leaving Sri Lanka, I still had an understanding [of national issues]. I write about the wrong-doings of both [political] parties. [I] wrote that these politicians are unsuitable. I shed insight into the future. Others don't speak up out of fear. [Instead] I speak in public gathering places where there are Sinhalese and Tamils. I say that there is no need for division between ethnic groups. I share that we should get together to govern the country free of corruption. – Ranil

Ravi became an avid writer upon immigrating to Canada. He spent the majority of his day in front of the computer, interrupted only by obligations to the family. He submitted his writings on divergent topics to multiple ethnic publications in Canada and in Sri Lanka.

[During the] weekday I will be in the internet most of that time. Seventy five percent of the time, I am in the internet. I contribute articles to my Sri Lankan magazines. My old employer has a[n] organization where the pensioners get together and they make a publication. I have contributed certain articles about my experiences. Then [at] the temple there [is] also a magazine where I have contributed certain articles about my experience here and also about things in Sri Lanka. I have also written about my young days, contributed about my school days to my school magazine. – Ravi

Some participants carved out niches in Canada using skills and talents they had refined over their lifetime. Considering the lack of traditional resources within the small

ethnic community in Canada, their skills and talents were in demand. Finding out about the distinctiveness of their abilities encouraged participants to share their skills and knowledge. For instance, two participants read horoscopes and provided astrological advice regarding auspicious life events, such as marriage, new job, etc. to the ethnic community. Manjula ran a small home-business sewing traditional garments for various cultural shows and traditional events within the ethnic community. Pursuing familiar occupations imbued with meaning buffered the losses experienced during late-life immigration.

While these leisure pursuits were personally meaningful and self-serving, they were also a form of social service that facilitated connectivity in a non-traditional way. For instance, Manjula received “orders” by ethnic brides for their bridal sarees, and the ethnic community to make costumes for various ethnic events. Geetha was contacted by persons within and outside the ethnic community requesting horoscope readings. Their contributions within the ethnic community allowed them to gain recognition, which engendered a sense of pride and served as a motivator for continued engagement.

My flair for writing is improving. It keeps me alive and that also helps me to get feedback on my writing which is also interesting. Keeping me alive in the sense, if you think those things [writings] are accepted by the reading audience that makes you happy because they also enjoy it. They give you feedback that this is correct, or this is something that you have done which we are very happy about, those feedback also keep you going. – Ravi

This social connection is particularly salient given the isolation and loneliness participants experience following late-life immigration. In speaking about connecting with others through his writing, Ravi noted,

Of course, it plays a very important role in life in the sense, you feel that you are living. You feel that you are a person who is still going in life and then that you are not an isolated person in the society. And maybe trying to get respect or some recognition from others. – Ravi

Participants also adopted new leisure pursuits in the post-migration context. For instance, Geetha learned to knit through the community center.

Now see, I learned this wool knitting only after coming here. In the community centre [a] Chinese lady taught me. So now I know. This [is] a baby blanket. They give the wool, they give the pattern. So, I do it. Only my labor [is required] and I give it back and they send it to nurseries. – Geetha

## Summary

Participants left behind their tangible and intangible worldly possessions to immigrate to Canada. Late-life immigration led to the loss of certain habitual and meaningful occupations, thus challenging and changing their former identities, statuses and authorities within the family and the society. Participants relinquished these former identities and statuses and hesitantly accepted their new roles as dependants in the post-migration context. Feeling helpless and powerless, late-life immigrants also surrendered traditional practices that were dissonant to Canadian culture.

While these losses were grieved, they were simultaneously celebrated. The losses were believed to have paved the way for meaningful and purposeful occupations. Participants engaged in spiritual and religious occupations, immersed themselves in household maintenance and childcare, and renewed their occupational interests, allowing them to mitigate their losses and feelings of displacement in the post-migration context.

### 5.1.3 Living between Two Worlds

Participants experiences of belonging were riddled with contradictions. Their attachment was a mixture of views that is not uncommon of people navigating the emotional terrain that encompasses two nations. Although their physical being is rooted in the host country, their hearts, minds, and loyalties are entrenched and anchored to their homeland. Participants straddled two worlds as they existed in Canada to serve the needs of their children and grandchildren and to access the material benefits, while desiring to reconnect with the familiar persons and places, and frolic in the comforts of the home country.

In Being Sri Lankan, participants cultivated ethnic ties and incorporated cultural practices into their daily lives, to transcend their current social, cultural and physical dislocation, to construct a sense of continuity following late-life immigration, and to

temporarily satisfy their yearning for the homeland. Becoming Canadian was not about developing a national identity, rather, it involved, amid experiences of exclusion and displacement, developing a sense of home fostered by safety and security.

Table 5: *Late-life immigrants live between two worlds.*

Living between two worlds	
Being Sri Lankan	Becoming Canadian
Engaging in Cultural occupations	“For six months we are housebound. For six months we suffer.”: Monotony of occupational spaces and places in Canada
An ephemeral home: Socialization within the ethnic community	“I have cobwebs in my mouth”: Interactions with mainstream society
“An unstirred curry will become curdled”: Preserving the native culture	“I am nurtured by this country”: Positive interactions with service providers
Fulfilling Transnational attachments and commitments	“When you are in a bat cave, you have to hang like the other bats”: Adapting to life in Canada
	Belongingness within the family

### 5.1.3.1 Being Sri Lankan

While many of their former identities had diluted in the post-migration context, their ethnic identity did not waver following immigration. Participants’ positive sentiments about Canada, particularly regarding amenities (cleanliness, high-quality healthcare, etc.) were tempered by their reservations and sentimental longings for home.

Instead, they yearned for those former personal connections and caring relationships, and familiar customs. They clung on to their ethnic identity through retaining cultural practices, socializing within the ethnic community, transmitting cultural knowledge, and fulfilling transnational commitments. This connection to the homeland was an essential bond that reinforced their perception of continuing to exist as a part of the forsaken context.

## Engaging in Cultural occupations

Participants strategically recreated a sense of home, or a pseudo-Sri Lanka, through consuming familiar sights, sounds, and practices. For example, the familiar sound of traditional drum beats and Buddhist prayers on her first day in Canada eased Geetha into her new life in Canada.

[The] very first morning...early [in the] morning, I heard the sound of the drums. So, I was very happy. I thought a temple was close-by. Then I saw daughter had put Buddhist chants [on the stereo]. That was my very first day. After that I settled [into Canada]. I was feeling sad because I had missed everything [about Sri Lanka]. So, when I heard Buddhist chants as I was on the bed I felt so happy.  
– Geetha

Specifically, participants spoke of the consumption of ethnic foods, adornment of ethnic clothing, attunement to ethnic news and participation in various cultural celebrations. Engagement in these cultural occupations allowed participants to solidify a positive sense of ethnic identity, alongside their emerging Canadian national identity, and provided them with a symbolic sense of continuity.

Participants maintained their dietary habits following immigration, even when their children and grandchildren preferred to consume ‘Canadian’ foods.

At that end and this end there are Indian stores where you get all types of Sinhala vegetables, okra, ridge-gourd, that sort of thing. So, when I go there, I buy something and I prepare that for myself because the others don’t eat them. That way I get the curries that I like. Inside my room I keep a bottle of lunu miris (Sri Lankan chili sambal paste). My daughter prepares butter chicken, this and that. I don’t like [those]. I want something spicy. So, I have a separate one for my palate. Over here, my grandchildren can’t eat spicy [food]. – Geetha

Ethnic food was also a vehicle for connection with other members of the ethnic community and engagement in cultural and religious occupations. These ethnic foods marked special occasions. For instance, participants prepared food for almsgiving, an event where monks and lay attendees of a religious ceremony are offered the best food one could offer. The food is thoughtfully prepared to follow the monastic dietary rules, which dictate the time and type of food. Similarly, the time-consuming traditional sweets prepared to celebrate Sinhalese New Year is shared with the ethnic community.

On [Sinhalese] new year, everyone comes to the temple with prepared delicacies. They are eaten at the temple. The monk distributes them [food]. You would be surprised. It is a joyous moment. Everyone who comes brings something to share. It [the food] is spread all down a long table. [There are] various types of food. We all fill our stomachs before we take sit down for sil. – Sujatha

Participants also consumed Sri Lankan media such as teledramas and televised musical shows. Their curiosity for current affairs that had the potential to influence their assets, investments, and relationships in Sri Lanka, kept them glued to the Sri Lankan news. In speaking of this keen interest, Ravi admitted that he was often the one to break the news to his relatives in Sri Lanka. The gathering of information about ongoing life in their country of birth connected them to their pre-migration lives.

We still have an attachment to Sri Lanka. [I watch the news to] learn about the situation there, the conditions that affect all our relatives. Now the Dengue menace has spread all over Sri Lanka. One of my elder sister's daughters has been admitted to hospital having contracted Dengue. During those types of instances, we call and inquire about their wellbeing. So, our attachment to Sri Lanka has not diminished. – Apsara

Despite their permanent residency in Canada, participants were active in home country politics. Ravi stated, “I still feel the politics in my country affects me directly. I don't know why, but I still can't get over that I am not a Sri Lankan. I feel that I am still Sri Lankan”. This interest was supported through the consumption of ethnic news.

Like all participants, Ranil closely followed the political climate of Sri Lanka by reading the Sri Lankan newspapers religiously. He was a political activist in Sri Lanka and had a more vested interest than some of the other participants. Despite their hefty cost, Ranil purchased a paper copy of the Sri Lankan newspaper to maintain engagement in a deeply familiar and meaningful occupation. He used the knowledge gathered from these sources to engage in political activism through exchanging his viewpoints with other members of the ethnic community both in Canada and Sri Lanka.

As soon as I get it in the morning, I read it [the newspaper]. Until I live, I need the news in my life. I cannot watch the news here. It takes about 10 dollars to buy the [Sri Lankan] newspaper. For many years, I have been purchasing the Lankadeepa paper. It takes you 1000 Sri Lankan rupees to buy the paper. The sons tell me ‘people who pay 10 [Canadian] dollars to read a newspaper like you does not

exist'. But even if it cost me 10 dollars, I want to read the newspaper. I read each article unabated. – Ranil

Participants used these sources of information as a means of social connection with other members of the ethnic community. Topical news items from Sri Lanka, such as politics, crime and sport, served as common points of discussion among ethnic peers during social gatherings. Moreover, the habitual consumption of ethnic news facilitated participants' symbolic participation in Sri Lanka and fortified their citizenship.

Participants engaged in familiar cultural events both in the private and public spheres. Ravi participated in his grandchildren's letter reading ceremonies, a ceremony which celebrates the beginning of a child's education. Participants also celebrated Vesak, the commemoration of the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha, by handmaking colorful and intricate traditional lanterns. These lanterns, a religious and cultural artefact unique to Sri Lankan Buddhists, were displayed outside the home. For Ravi the annual display of these lanterns served as a visible badge of ethnic and religious identity.

When I display this in front of the house so many others who are passing through are admiring it. A lot of non-Sri Lankans wait and stare and see the beauty of it. So that sort of gives a little pride...like you are representing. Some Sri Lankans who were passing the road noticed them and they said I saw you put some decoration in your house. They were very happy about it. They don't see this usually. It makes me happy. Also, when I display [it] in the Facebook a lot of my friends also took a liking and said, 'you are over there [in Canada] and still you are doing that'. That sort of feedback [is] also encouraging." – Ravi

Participants also celebrated these ethnic and religious events in the public domain. Along with the ethnic community, participants created cultural and religious celebrations to reflect the authentic practices of the home country. This provided participants with opportunities to re-immense themselves in their native culture. Collectively, they wore cultural clothing, consumed cultural foods, and engaged in various forms of art through song and dance.

### **An ephemeral home: Socialization within the ethnic community**

In the absence of social connections in their neighbourhoods and communities, participants looked to strengthen relationships with people from the same cultural



background. Their social networks in the post-migration context were smaller, and exclusively composed of Sri Lankans. Engagement within the ethnic community provided a sense of continuity of their former lives with supportive familiar networks and practices, opportunities, and acceptance among participants.

Given the dispersion of the sparse ethnic community, socialization took place at ethnic spaces such as Buddhist temples scattered throughout the GTA that are primarily patronized by Sinhalese Buddhists. The temples not only served the intended purpose as a place of worship and religious congregation, but they were also intermediary places between Sri Lanka and Canada that allowed participants to immerse in the soothing presence of their mother tongue and familiar cultural practices. Moreover, the temple was a protective refuge and escape from the stressors induced by their late-life immigration contexts. Thus, visits to the temple offered respite from the isolative, and sometimes stressful home environment.

When I go to the temple, I really forget everything else...nothing about my children or anything. All the worries and all the feelings you have at that time, it goes away. One hundred percent I forget everything. I just listen to how to be a better person. That is it. – Geetha

Amidst their compatriots, and familiar sights, sounds and practices, the safety and security of the temple facilitated the emergence of participants' authentic selves.

The temple is a place that I am accustomed to. It has become a habit to attend the temple on poya [full moon] days. Because a lot of people whom I know...a lot of [Sinhala] people that live in this country can be found there [at the temple]. We have similar likes and dislikes. We behave in a similar way. I felt an amazing sense of relief. I think that the disposition that I had in that country [in Sri Lanka] came to the surface here [at the temple]. – Bandula

The warmth and acceptance they experienced at the temple fostered a sense of inclusion and reinforced their belongingness to the ethnic community in Canada. Despite the monastic silence, congregation at the temple was opportune for socialization with other members of the ethnic community. This socialization allowed participants to make small-talk, discuss their personal lives, unload their stresses, particularly related to their immigration experience, make intercommunity links, and engage in stimulating conversations of common interest. This socialization forged social relationships,

extended their web of friendships that linked together their homeland and their country of settlement.

When we meet our own community, the peers are all from Sri Lanka. We are very happy and when we meet once in a way. I think that is a very enjoyable time. Where we discuss about our day-to-day things and discuss about our experiences in this country and then joke, laugh and make life [a] little more interesting. It's a break in life. – Ravi

The emergence of an authentic self was further evident through participants' engagement in the monthly seniors' group organized by the Buddhist temples. All participants at one point or another held membership in this group, although levels of attendance varied from participant to participant. These monthly meetings allowed them to socialize freely with same-aged ethnic peers, learn information pertinent to older adults, immigrants, and to life in Canada, and share their talents, opinions and experiences. Participants expressed that the group granted them a voice and a receptive audience. Furthermore, the seniors' group was a space to revive their former lives and identities by rehashing each other's' personal histories.

Once a month there is something called a Senior's Day that is at the temple itself ... an elders' day. I make sure to attend it monthly. Everyone who comes there is over 60 or 65 years old. When I associate with those elders I discover details about them, such as what parts of Sri Lanka they are from, their personal details, the social work [referring to volunteer work in the community] they were involved in their communities, their religious and political involvements. So, I got to know them well. It starts at nine in the morning and runs till about two in the afternoon. During that period of time we get the opportunity to get involved in very entertaining moments like certain games, some discussions, and singing. At the same time [we engage in] reciting poems [and] also describe our own experiences we have encountered during our lives. [We also engage in] heated debates there. That part of the day is spent in an agreeable and enjoyable manner. The elders' day has also been used to commemorate Sri Lankan Independence Day and Sinhala New Year Day. Not only that, especially in the summer, the elders are taken on enjoyable far-away trips. So, this has become a very sociable opportunity. – Bandula

Moreover, the senior's group fostered a sense of solidarity based on unities of history, interests and objectives. Their shared status as Sinhalese older adult immigrants living in Canada created a sense of equality, at homeness, and camaraderie which brought out their authentic nature. The socialization that took place within the temple, including

at the senior's day, was an integrating medium that fortified participants' sense of belonging.

The most enjoyable and satisfying thing here [in Canada] has been when all of us went on a trip on Elders' Day. [We] ate, drank, and danced and came back. We were not elders [on that day]. Even in old age, we caroused just as much as the young people. There was a lady there who put her hand on my shoulder and danced and sang with me. We went on several trips. The best thing about it was that there is no class distinction. We all go on the trip together, sit and eat together, drink [alcohol] together, dance together, and come back together. We were all on the same footing. – Ranil

Outside of the temple, participants' socialization with ethnic peers was limited. Friendships forged at ethnic spaces were maintained primarily via telephone due to geographical dispersion and lack of independent and accessible transportation. Apart from the temple, participants infrequently met their ethnic peers at family dinners, private almsgiving events, and cultural shows. Although infrequent, these meetings were reminiscent of their lives in Sri Lanka.

Now when we go to the homes of the Sri Lankan families that live here, we all get together and sing Sinhala songs. I enjoy that very much. I am overcome with the feeling that I am back in Sri Lanka when I sing those songs and speak to them [in Sinhala]. There we are all the same. There we act in our [Sinhala] way. – Apsara

### “An unstirred curry will become curdled”: Preserving the native culture

Participants positioned themselves as playing a crucial role in the identity development of their grandchildren and the ethnic youth in Canada. Having spent the majority of their lives in Sri Lanka, participants possessed a lifetime of skills and knowledge unique to the native culture. In Canada, they acted as conduits of the native culture, language, and religion. The transmission of cultural knowledge to younger descendants was an effort to preserve the ethnic identity, cultural heritage and their personal legacy.

Within their families, participants identified certain aspects of the native culture as being important to be passed down to younger generations. They recognized that their

children, and specially their grandchildren, most of whom were born in Canada or spent the majority of their lives in Canada, were heavily influenced by the Western culture. Children and grandchildren's abandonment of the native culture in favor of the adopted culture led to fears of the extinction of heritage and legacy in the post-migration context.

One day they will stop to think they are Sri Lankans and will adapt to the Canadian way. They will become purely Canadian. Even though we have a feeling of being part of our mother country, granddaughter and grandson who were born here will not retain that. We will teach them how to speak Sinhala for a short while, but they are taught English in school and speak English [at home] out of habit. When we speak to them, they do not respond. [Their] mother and father have not placed any restrictions [to not speak English at home]. They speak to us in Sinhalese. I don't know how long that will last. We have heard that at age 10 or 11 they will completely forget the native language. One day they will not know what Sinhala is. When this generation gets married, the word Sri Lanka would have been erased from their minds. The thought that we are Sri Lankans, we are Buddhists of course would remain only in temples. That also will end. When the older generation will expire, the younger generations will stop protecting the temples. It pricks my heart that this thing called civility and good morals does not exist in this country. You can embrace someone in any park, bus or train. You cannot do that in Sri Lanka. If you were to do that in Sri Lanka that person is branded as having committed an indecent act. In this country, there is no such thing. Now that weighs heavy on the heart. How do I say this... there is no decent upbringing in this country. When the child matures, there are no elders to teach and advise [the children] in this country. – Ranil

Given the fear and anxiety of the erosion of their culture and heritage, participants championed for the nurturance of core aspects of the native culture. Participants took on mentorship roles to younger members of their families and ethnic community to ensure the continuity of their heritage and legacy in Canada.

Some of the Sinhalese people believe that this [westernization] is the only way. But its not good to think that way. I will raise the grandchildren to sway to the Sinhala rhythm. They will learn about this [Canadian] culture at school, but at home they will be Sinhala. - Sujatha

While some of their efforts were futile given the overwhelming influence of westernization, certain aspects of the native culture were emphasised over others. Some participants encouraged their grandchildren to preserve markers of their ethnic identity, such as their native language, social mores, and cultural knowledge. For instance, Ravi involved his grandchildren in making lanterns to celebrate Vesak. Other participants

primarily communicated with their grandchildren in Sinhalese. Under the influence of participants, grandchildren slowly grasped their native tongue. Bandula stated, "... if their mother or father speaks to them they respond in English, [but] when grandmother and grandfather speak to them they speak in Sinhalese. Because of us they are learning Sinhalese". In contrast, Apsara prioritized the transmission of religious, moral and cultural values and beliefs, over the native language, acknowledging its beneficence and utilitarianism in one's life.

In any case it [complete adherence to native culture] can't be expected from these children. They have diverted drastically from the Sri Lankan culture now, so we cannot have great expectations of them. If they adopt basic things from the native culture, that is sufficient. I teach them how to be good people. Sometimes when they call Sri Lanka, I listen in when they speak to their uncles and cousins. I tell my grandson don't just say 'happy birthday', say 'happy birthday sister'. So, I teach them small things like that. I can only guide them in these small things now. Sometimes I tell them that according to our [Sri Lankan] way you do not lay on the ground with your feet spread out among other people. [I tell them to] 'sit properly'. I give that kind of advice. I mostly encourage [them to pursue] religion, and respect for elders. Those are the things that should be cultivated. [I encourage] Buddhist teachings about generosity, protecting the precepts, going to the temple. [I] believe those things are important to one's life. – Apsara

Participants feared that under western influences their grandchildren, particularly their granddaughters, would go astray. Participants experienced dissonance between the values and beliefs of the adopted culture and that of the native culture. They were particularly concerned about the cultural incongruity of the notion of sexuality, where Western culture was perceived to host a liberal view which would negatively influence their developing grandchildren. Participants feared that under the influence of these pervasive norms, their grandchildren would abandon the set of beliefs and values of the ethnic culture, perceived to be superior, in favor of those of the adopted culture. Without their supervision, interference and discipline, their grandchildren were thought to go off course.

Now in our country when a daughter is raised, the parents or an elderly relative is expected to protect her, to not to let her live a selfish kind of life. They are taught civility and good morals. There is no civility of any nature or a proper culture in this country. Anybody could be invited or brought home whenever you so desire. In Sri Lanka, bringing up a daughter means to protect her as if she were your own

eyes. It is the greatest responsibility of a mother. Until that daughter reaches adolescence and till she reaches the age of marriage, she is under the care of her mother ... of both parents. There is no such thing in this country. Although everything is better here [in Canada] than our country, the future of the children... There is an opinion among the Sinhalese that an unstirred curry will become curdled. – Ranil

These anxieties propelled participants to instill Sri Lankan values through storytelling, mentoring and role-modeling. Sujatha for instance disapproved of the children's story books available to her grandchild in Canada, which she found to prematurely instill notions of romantic love and fantasy. Instead, she used traditional religious and folk stories to instill good morals in her young grandchildren. The inculcation of cultural and religious values and norms allowed participants to align their grandchildren's behaviours with the expectations of the native culture.

Participants transferred culture and preserved the ethnic heritage and personal legacy in Canada. Geetha wanted to pass down her cultural knowledge, as well as her personal legacy, to the younger generation. Propelled by this desire, Geetha requested her granddaughter to learn the science and art of astrology.

I always tell them after I die no one will be there to carry this [knowledge] forward, or to even read these books. I told my youngest granddaughter, 'dear child, why don't you make use of my knowledge?'. Come and study this whenever you are free. So far, she hasn't. I really want to hand it over to someone in Canada. At least a touch of it, then after that they will develop a liking, so that it will not die along with me. Otherwise all these books will go for nothing. I don't know what they will do with these books when I'm gone. – Geetha

However, imparting traditional knowledge in the post-migration context was not without its barriers. First, Geetha encountered resistance from her granddaughter who seemed disinterested. Second, transmitting traditional knowledge, documented primarily in the native tongue, to the westernized younger generation who did not speak the language proved difficult.

Transference of culture was not limited to their family. Participants used various platforms to disseminate their cultural knowledge to the ethnic community. For instance, Vijith's expertise designing intricate Vesak lanterns had earned him an honorary title that acknowledged his expertise and seniority. Each year Vijith was called upon by the

religious community at his local Buddhist temple to spearhead the preparation for the Vesak celebration. In this role, Vijith guides a group of young Sinhalese Buddhists in building these cultural and religious artefacts. His involvement allowed him to personally remain connected to his ethnic and religious identity and transmit cultural knowledge to future generations. Similarly, Ravi published articles about the history of Sri Lanka and the significance of cultural events in an effort to educate the ethnic youth. Similarly, Ranil was invited to educate the ethnic community about the history and corruption of home country politics at public forums. Thus, despite their anonymity and obscurity in Canadian society, participants knowledge and skills had earned them visibility and recognition within the ethnic community. This visibility allowed them to reclaim, reassert, and relive former identities as respected elders and knowledge bearers.

### Fulfilling Transnational attachments and commitments

Participants were overcome with feelings of nostalgia for the things, places and people left behind. They yearned for the independence and freedom they once exercised, the roles and statuses they once held, the sense of citizenship and belonging they once experienced, and even the daily pleasantries with their neighbours. Moreover, transnational commitments kept participants' hearts and minds in Sri Lanka.

Attachment to Canada is on the material benefits. Attachment to my main [home] country, I might say is based on spiritual needs because all my emotional attachments are originating from that country. So, although I am here [in Canada] I feel I am an alien here. I feel like an imposter. – Ravi

I prefer to live in Sri Lanka. [I] can even live alone in Sri Lanka because I have lived in that environment since the day I was born. There are always familiar faces on the roadside. There is no fear there [in Sri Lanka]. Although by god's grace I do not experience any fear here [in Canada], [in Sri Lanka] I have the feeling that the environment is my own. I do not have that feeling here. – Sujatha

[My] mind is always there. I also have brothers and sisters, but the thought of my son [in Sri Lanka] weigh on my mind. I also have a house there. Having a house is also a big responsibility. So, I still have an attachment to Sri Lanka. Whether it is a dump or whatever inconveniences there maybe, I always have the feeling that, that is my country after all. – Apsara

Despite permanent residency in Canada, most participants wanted and were required to live their lives in two places. They maintained their residence in Canada to serve the needs of their children and grandchildren and to access material benefits, particularly in their old age, but desired to remain connected to their past, and enjoy the comforts and familiarity of their homeland. They moved back and forth between Sri Lanka and the homes of their children in Canada as often as they could, which became difficult with the passage of time as participants aged.

Although immigration to Canada had allowed participants to unite with at least one of their children, it had simultaneously caused the geographical separation from their remaining children, elderly and ailing parents, and siblings who remained in Sri Lanka. They had arrived in Canada when their children and other relatives in Sri Lanka were stable and established. However, with the passage of time, participants' absence was felt as family members residing in Sri Lanka as they experienced various life changes and transitions, such as illnesses, the addition of grandchildren, or changes in their professional and personal lives. The geographic separation terminated participants' ability to provide direct care to their loved ones, proving to be a major source of distress in their late-life immigration experience. Discussion of their inability to provide a comparable level of parental and grandparental care to their adult children and grandchildren in Sri Lanka as they did to their sponsoring child and grandchildren in Canada evoked a sense of guilt and mental anguish. Participants expressed despair over not being able to engage in mundane activities, such as preparing their child's favourite dishes, to being absent during their children and grandchildren's milestones and critical periods of development. These sentiments were particularly evident among female participants who expressed a deep desire for continuity of nurturance and maternity within these relationships. For instance, Apsara spoke about not being present for her granddaughter's coming-of-age celebration, a puberty ritual indigenous to Sri Lanka that recognizes rites of passage.

When our older granddaughter attended [came of age], we were here [in Canada]. We cannot travel constantly [to attend these events]. So, [I] don't overly worry over not being able to participate in them [the celebrations], but I think it would have been nice to have the opportunity. – Apsara



Moreover, a few participants also felt a filial obligation to their elderly parents and siblings who remained in Sri Lanka. Separation from these attachments challenged their “fit” in Canada and questioned their decision to immigrate. This absence from the lives of their adult children, grandchildren, and elderly parents and siblings was perceived as a mutual loss.

I have my mother there [in Sri Lanka]. She’s now ninety-four or five. My mother can’t walk now. She’s all in the bed now. My sister fends for her 24 hours [a day]. When I think of her [mother], I feel I am not a fit here. I want to go there and help my sister. Because I am the eldest in my family, my absence is a loss for them. No matter how much [support] they have, I know that if I was there it would be better for them. – Sujatha

To mitigate their absence and feelings of guilt, participants engaged in transnational caregiving that allowed them to remain connected and fulfil their perceived obligations. They overcame the geographical distance between themselves and their kin using technology (telephone or Skype) regularly, if not daily. For instance, Sujatha and Apsara used Skype to help their Sri Lankan grandchildren with their homework. This regular communication also provided both parties an opportunity to engage in chatter about their day-to-day lives. This also served as a source of catharsis as participants expressed their worries and concerns that they did not share with their sponsoring child. For instance, Sujatha spoke with her child in Sri Lanka about her being overworked, as well as her sense of guilt about her inability to fulfil her filial piety obligations in Sri Lanka. However, participants were careful about the amount and nature of information they revealed to their family members as not to excessively worry them. These regular communications however, were insufficient replacements to capture the same feelings and experience/emotions of those direct connections they once had.

Galvanized by undying attachment and ‘unfinished business’, many participants visited Sri Lanka annually. Some spent up to six months, but for many, these visits were expeditious in order to resume their domestic and childcare duties in Canada. Some participants maintained their former family homes in Sri Lanka, financed by their pensions, life savings, and the financial support of their children, to accommodate them

during their temporary visits, or for an eventual return that was contingent upon the course of their life and aging in Canada.

The decision to visit Sri Lanka was multifaceted. Participants were driven by intrinsic motivations and extrinsic pressures. Unable to tolerate the physical discomfort, and isolation and confinement associated with winter, many participants opted to “escape” to Sri Lanka. Participants also reported returning to Sri Lanka to cope with the intergenerational conflicts with the sponsoring children. For instance, Bandula returned to Sri Lanka following a dispute with the sponsoring child “to let go of the negative feelings”. Ravi, Sujatha, Vijith, Saman, Apsara returned to Sri Lanka periodically to fulfil transnational commitments and perceived obligations, such as planning and organizing children’s weddings and attending children and grandchildren’s milestones, and maintaining financial assets, such as properties and pensions.

Finally, participants also return to Sri Lanka to take advantage of certain resources that were unavailable in Canada. For instance, Apsara returned to Sri Lanka to undergo ayurvedic treatment for an undiagnosed functional impairment for which western medicine was unavailable. Aware of the hectic schedule of her sponsoring child, Manjula returned to Sri Lanka during the winter, when it became difficult to manage the symptoms of arthritis, to be cared for by her children who resided in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, revisiting the homeland was an opportunity to reunite, “renew” and “refresh” bonds with friends and family, immerse themselves in the familiar culture and rituals such as religious pilgrimages, and to revisit their personal histories. Thus, returning to Sri Lanka was a way for participants to return to a familiar environment to resume their former roles and identities, and temporarily reclaim losses of late-life immigration.

[When we] go [to Sri Lanka] we stay in our home. A lot of our relatives come and visit us. So, when we are in our own home, I have freedom. My relatives...they all come to our house and we can entertain them better. When I say freedom what I mean is, I can be more hospitable to them. Here I cannot entertain my friends according to my wishes because it will be a nuisance to them [sponsoring child’s family]. – Saman

Homeland visits allowed participants to reinstate their former identities, as family matriarchs and patriarchs, and social statuses. They regained control of personal, financial and family decisions, and exercised freedom and autonomy in their everyday occupations. Participants expressed that these visits to Sri Lanka were refreshing and rejuvenating and allowed them to ease back into the reality of life in Canada upon their return.

These visits served to build and maintain transnational bridges between their geographically distant homes. Apsara described how visiting Sri Lanka decreased her sense of displacement in Canada.

We went to Sri Lanka almost every year [since immigrating]. When we go to Sri Lanka for 3 or 4 months and come back, we don't have the feeling that life here is very different. [We] got used to both [places]. – Apsara

### 5.1.3.2 Becoming Canadian

Participants' sense of belongingness to Canada was on the basis of their legal permanent residency status conferred through sponsorship. In addition to this bureaucratic acceptance as a resident, participants overwhelmingly synonymized belongingness in Canada to their connection to the family and ethnic community, and the care, attention and acknowledgement they received from service providers. These aspects assured participants of protection and comfort in aging in the new, unfamiliar land. However, their ability to fortify a sense of belongingness was challenged by the isolative and exclusionary experiences they encountered in the post-migration context.

**“For six months we are housebound. For six months we suffer.”:  
Monotony of life in Canada**

Loneliness, isolation and sense of confinement reached its zenith during the winter. The winter, perceived as barren and unwelcoming, curtailed participants' outdoor mobility.

From our house to the bus stop, you have to walk over ice. [I] have to wear three or four layers, wear gloves. This clothing is very heavy. [You] have to exert

yourself. If the ice is frozen, then you could slip and fall. If I slip and fall, I will have to suffer. I will become a headache to my children. – Ranil

Moreover, features of the physical environment, including the desolation of neighbourhoods, particularly during the day time when people are at work and school, intensified participants' isolation and outsidership in Canada. Furthermore, in an automobile dependent culture, these suburbanite non-driving participants felt confined and excluded from broader society.

...now when you enter your home, all the doors and windows are closed due to the cold. Once you enter the home, you are isolated. You cannot see your surroundings. If you look at the road, you rarely see any people walking. Now in Sri Lanka if I happened to step out from the yard, go out to the road and walk along the road, I see people. There are people everywhere, crowds everywhere. [I see] people talking, making jokes, screaming and shouting and engaging in various types of discussions. I would see familiar people, [they] will ask 'where are you going?', 'how are you doing?'. Worries and concerns within my mind would vanish. So, I did not feel lonely or isolated there. That is what I felt after coming here [to Canada] after spending 75 years [in Sri Lanka]. I couldn't bear it in the least. I initially wondered whether I could tolerate it. – Bandula

Within Canada, the diversity of participants' occupational spaces was scarce. They spent a majority of their time, especially in the winter, within the confines of their children's homes. Acquiescing to their life in Canada, participants created spaces that were imbued with meaning. Their bedrooms provided the tranquility, privacy and comfort necessary for the engagement of meaningful and familiar occupations. For instance, Geetha spent her day in her bedroom that was fully equipped to serve her occupational needs. A Buddha statue and several images of renowned Buddhist monks were placed on a shelf above all else. Medication, light snacks and beverages, and chili paste to flavor the bland foods cooked by her westernized daughter cluttered a table. Several CD players, and scattered CDs preaching the Buddhist doctrine, were strategically placed around the room for a surround-sound effect, and papers and books about astrology and Buddhism took over the remainder of the space. With these necessities located within reach, Geetha had created a niche within her child's home. She spoke of her room as a sanctuary that allowed her to engage in meaningful occupations, such as religious engagement and horoscope 'reading', without external disturbances.

Outside of their child's home, participants rarely engaged in their neighborhoods and communities. Sponsoring children shouldered the financial care and fulfilled community occupations on participants' behalf. Thus, outside of healthcare facilities, the Buddhist temple, and infrequent trips to a mall, post-office, or library, participants rarely engaged in their community. The lack of diversity of occupational spaces meant that participants social encounters were limited to their families, members of the ethnic community, healthcare providers, service providers (e.g., cashiers, pharmacists) and the occasional telemarketer. The limited interactions with the non-ethnic community did not meet the socialization needs of some participants, particularly males, who had previously enjoyed an extensive social life in Sri Lanka.

I lived as a very sociable person there [in Sri Lanka]. [I had] a lot of connections. I would go to gathering places to engage in convivial socialization. I do not have the opportunity to continue that level of socialization here. I grieve that. It is during the winter that I feel very restricted, alone and isolated. I cannot stay in one place like this. – Bandula

#### **“I have cobwebs in my mouth”: Interactions with mainstream society**

In leaving Sri Lanka, participants abandoned their social networks that were constructed over a lifetime. In Canadian society, they found themselves without a history and without an identity. They perceived themselves as strangers, outsiders, aliens, and temporary residents.

In Canada, participants were deprived of the informal daily social interactions and pleasantries that took place between neighbors in their home country. In describing this lack of regular interactions, which did not provide sufficient opportunities to ‘use’ his mouth, Saman stated “I have cobwebs in my mouth from not talking”. Specifically, Canadian culture was perceived to promote privacy and social distance between persons in society. Visual markers such as closed doors of neighbours' homes, in contrast to the open-door policy of Sri Lanka, led to participants' perceptions of their Canadian neighbours as uncongenial, unconcerned, and unwelcoming. These perceptions reinforced participants' sense of exclusion in their neighbourhoods and communities.

In Sri Lanka, we spoke to all our neighbours. They come over [to our house], we go over [to their house]. That does not exist here. A neighbor does not know whether there is an ill person next door, whether there is an argument, or whether there is an assault. What happens in this house is not known by the neighbor next door. That is the nature of this country. As I said before, the culture of Sri Lanka operates according to a certain method. You are encouraged to give a helping hand to anyone in your vicinity. There is no such thing in this country. If there is a person on the street, they do not even look you in the eye. At least in Sri Lanka, if you speak to someone they would say ‘ok bye’. There is no concern for your neighbor, whether it is genuine or insincere. Because of that we do not have a relationship [with the neighbours]. – Ranil

The social distance and privacy of Canadian culture engendered a feeling of anonymity and invisibility within their neighborhoods. In speaking about their inconspicuousness, Kamal expressed “Halloween...during that time only we are moving with the neighbors. During that time, they smile and are happy about us. That is when they get to know we are from this place [this neighbourhood]”.

Participants also attributed their lack of social relationships with members of broader society to a lack of common interests required for the basis of a meaningful relationship. Instead, their interactions with the non-ethnic community was limited to greetings, and superficial conversation that lacked the intellectual stimulation they sought. Ravi explained, “...but when we go into a mall, [I engage in] little petty talks, things like about the weather. Other than that, no serious subjects of common interests. The main topic [of conversation] here is weather”.

When social relationships were developed outside the ethnic community, they were often with culturally similar others in their communities, particularly those from Asian or Buddhist backgrounds. Ravi interacted with Indian passengers on the bus, Vijith made friends with Tamil Sri Lankans at the mall, and Kamal acquainted a man from Thailand during his walks. Interactions with persons with comparable values, beliefs and interests, who akin to themselves were ‘outsiders’, bred a sense of familiarity in the host country.

Noting the cultural dissonance, participants abandoned familiar ways of connecting with people, and strived to adopt the perceived Canadian values of

maintaining a social distance between themselves and their neighbors. For example, Geetha spoke of her hesitation to share her homegrown vegetation with neighbors.

Even if I have a tree bearing fruit, even [if they are] vegetables that we grow in our backyard, we can't share [with the neighbours]. We are scared to give it to anyone. There's a grape vine. But I don't give anyone because they may not accept [it]. – Geetha

Similarly, Saman was careful to avoid questions that may seem 'intrusive' in Canadian culture.

Now don't we ask questions from A to Z there [in Sri Lanka]? 'Are you married? How old are you?' Now, here [in Canada we] don't asked these [questions]. Sometimes they don't ask what country you are from, what type [race] you are, what your religion is. They don't ask about any family problems. There [in Sri Lanka] we assume those to be our problems. Here they think that would interfere with privacy. I think that is why there are no close relationships. [They] say 'Hi', that's all. Usually the attachment is superficial. – Saman

Their sense of outsidership was further accentuated by experiences of perceived discrimination in mainstream society.

We are outsiders. Outsiders mean we are those who came from another [country] and the other thing is we are brown. In some places when we go near people they do not even take any notice of us. This would not happen if I remained in my own country. – Saman

Participants primarily ventured out into the community during the warmer seasons. These trips allowed participants to explore their neighbourhoods, seek socialization opportunities, and engage in health promotive occupations. It was often during community mobility that participants were exposed to aspects of the new culture that allowed them to learn about Canadian norms and customs. Simply being amongst others at places of congregation, such as mall food courts and bus terminals, alleviated and distracted from the feelings of loneliness and isolation.

For years now, I ride the bus to purify my mind and to see the country. To erase that [loneliness and isolation] I spend time at crowded [bus] stations. [I observe] the patterns of behaviours of different people, listen into the various conversation that happen on the bus and, even in my age, I watch the romantic worlds of young people – a freedom that you do not find in Sri Lanka. So, I go to those [places] to lighten my inside. – Ranil

## “I am nurtured by this country”: Positive interactions with service providers

All participants decidedly identified health security as fostering a sense of belonging to Canada. The availability of quality, universal healthcare left participants with a feeling of being taken care of. Participants reported that although they had access to free healthcare in Sri Lanka, the public delivery system had excessively long waiting lists for specialized care and advanced procedures, forcing many of these retired, fixed-income participants to seek private health care. Financial difficulties prevented access to appropriate and timely care in Sri Lanka. Comparatively, participants felt fortunate to have access to universal healthcare in Canada in their old age, when it was needed the most.

In Sri Lanka it is very expensive to get these treatments. Now [for a] heart check this and that we have to make a special appointment, [and] pay separately. There is no general healthcare sort of in Sri Lanka. Here, [it is] not because you want [it], but the government wants to check on you. – Geetha

When I go to a doctor, they give me a date, examine me. I am not harassed in anyway. In Sri Lanka, I have never been treated like this by a doctor or another service provider. I saw the difference in treatment between the Sri Lankan hospitals and hospitals here [in Canada] when I went to have an operation done. I didn't have to pay 5 cents. I got the treatment by using my health card. This country is like heaven. When I went to Sri Lanka, I would question 'What is better, Sri Lanka or Canada? Even though Canada is not my birth country, I am able to now live in a more heavenly place than Sri Lanka. I am not trying to disrespect my motherland, but I am now in a position to compare and say that, that is hell, and this is heaven. – Ranil

Participants recounted positive interactions with healthcare providers, who were described as kind, caring and compassionate, as inciting feelings of acceptance and belongingness in Canada. In describing his first hospitalization in Canada, Ranil described how having accessibility to healthcare assisted him to assimilate, and to consider himself as a part of the Canadian community, rather than an outsider.

They did not ask me anything. Even my name and address were asked later on. They were concerned with getting me out of my predicament. In a matter of minutes, they checked everything, gave an injection. The numbness was relieved. After that, I received care that even my children would not provide for me at



home. The doctor gave a lot of support. They healed my mind [mental distress]. They inquired how I felt. They would bring me my meals on time. They would bring me my medication and water at the scheduled time. I stayed there for about 5 days...maybe even more. During that period, they gave assistance that I have never received by a relative, or a child. I would come out [into the corridor] at night and look out because I couldn't fall asleep. I was amazed. [I thought] maybe because of some previous good merit that I had the good fortune of seeing a hospital like this. [During that time], I had no anger or indignation in my heart. That was what was important. From the moment I entered [the hospital], I didn't need anyone. I didn't need my children. I was only discharged when I was well. That is when I felt I belonged to this country. Everything they did for me, they would do for another [person]. When that thought struck me, I developed a liking for this country. These people [service providers] render their services with sincerity. They of course do so because there is a law in this country, but more than the law itself, they have a thing called compassion. They will never say 'if you are going to die, just die already', instead they try to somehow revive you quickly. – Ranil

Positive interactions that reinforced their inclusion were not limited to healthcare providers. Public servants (e.g., bus drivers, postal workers, librarians, pharmacy employees, store cashiers, etc.), with whom they had occasional contact, and the kindness of strangers allowed participants to feel accepted and welcomed.

When I visit my post office which is very familiar, the receptionist recognize[s] who I am. At the moment we [were] in the state of going to another home and she had come to know. And she was very sort of concerned and [she] asked about my new place, 'how [do] you like [it]? So that type of familiarity I appreciated. I felt like I was a part of the community. – Ravi

One day I went to the post office to send a letter. When I was posting the letter, I had the money that was given to me by the daughter. I gave her [service provider] all the money I had. She counted it and said I am missing 10 cents. She said she could not accept the letter. I said, 'this is all I have.' Then she pushed the letter and my money back towards me. A gentleman behind me who saw everything said, 'no no, you register [your letter], here is 10 cents.' and patted my back. He said, 'don't worry'. There are also people like that. – Vijith

These positive experiences emerged a sense of belongingness that counteracted their negative perceptions and experiences in Canada.

## “When you are in a bat cave, you have to hang like the other bats”: Adapting to life in Canada

Participants described themselves as stray older adults who had gone off course to wander away from the place and the way they were ‘meant’ to age. Immigration in late-life and their lack of exposure to Canadian culture and society had stranded them in an unfamiliar land with an unknown universe of meanings. Participants spoke about being unfamiliar with topics of everyday conversation, such as politics or sports. Even the mundane and taken for granted tasks, such as driving and answering the phone, was layered with unfamiliarity and difficulty in the post-migration context.

At the beginning I was scared. [Here you] drive on the left-hand side. That is not familiar to us at all. The rules and regulations are different. Regardless of how many times you read the driving manual, even having passed the driving test, if there is no practical experience, it is difficult. Sometimes I don't know when it is appropriate to turn, sometimes [I] don't know what to do at the stop sign, or when you can turn right at the red light. There are small things that I do not know. After coming here, I had to learn by experience or by asking around. I am not afraid now. But I still wonder whether there are things that I do not know. I wonder if I am making mistakes on the road. – Saman

My people are cricketers you see. We enjoy that. Here we don't know. We can't understand hockey, we can't understand golf. We rarely find people having cricket matches. My son and grandson enjoy hockey. Their mother takes the child [grandson] to hockey practice. So, I also go there and watch. But I don't understand. – Kamal

English non-fluency was another salient contributor to participants feeling adrift and disoriented, reinforcing their outsidership and exclusion in Canadian society.

The issue of language affected me deeply. I have an average understanding, but not a considerable knowledge. I didn't have this feeling in Sri Lanka. I was born in a Sinhalese country, lived and comported myself around those [Sinhalese] people. I did not stand out in that environment. – Bandula

Overwhelmingly, the lack of fluency hindered social connectedness to members of mainstream society, inhibited independence, and encumbered engagement in mundane activities, such as communicating with a physician, a bank teller, or a telemarketer.

We get telephone messages. There is no one at home. We [spouse and I] are the only ones here [at home]. When I answer the telephone, I respond in my familiar way by saying 'hello'. I cannot understand the nature of what is said by the voice on the other end. I am unclear about what they are asking me. So, from what I understand, I would say 'sorry' and again she would repeat it and I would not understand. After listening for a while, I resort to asking, 'any message there?'. When I say that some of them hang up, some ask 'is there [a] house owner?'. So, I tell them 'he is gone out'. When I say that they become silent. I understand those two or three words. But I do not understand anything they had said earlier. – Bandula

In order to develop and integrate to Canadian society, participants emphasized the importance of adopting the 'Canadian' way.

We cannot live here without adjusting. It is a foreign country. For them [Canadian society] to accept us, we must live like them [Canadians]. A tailor makes the suit to the measurements of the man. He doesn't cut the man to fit the suit. Just like how you cannot cut the person to fit the suit, we have to abandon our Sri Lankan ways after immigrating here. We have to adapt to here [Canada], Canada will not adapt to us. – Ranil

To become 'Canadian', participants modified their existing practices and occupations, and adopted new ways of being. These occupational and behavioural modifications lessened their sense of dislocation. Their children, grandchildren and same-aged peers within the ethnic community served as tools of integration and as second-hand sources of information to facilitate their assimilation. Participants' also became self-reliant in their effort to integrate through observation and the consumption of media.

These behavioural adaptations ranged from enhancing their language skills to overturning culturally engrained behaviors to resemble behaviours that were perceived to be 'Canadian'. Bandula describes the internal struggle involved with behavioural adaptation to Canada.

I happened to live in Sri Lanka for a period of over 70 years. I had a life of routines and habits. That lifestyle changed when I came here [to Canada]. I have certain cultural characteristics. One of my cultural characteristics is that when I encounter someone I greet them by putting my hands together to say 'Hello'. That is the traditional way in that country [Sri Lanka]. That changed in Canada. Canadians greet by hugging. That was difficult to adapt to. It took some time. Because according to that country [Sri Lanka], I would never hug a girl or a woman my age or my wife's age. I first rejected that idea. I didn't feel like it. I

thought it was inappropriate because this was not something I was used to. So, I distanced myself from those practices. This may have been problematic for a person who expected it [a hug]. They might have thought ‘this is a strange man’. Others would ask me ‘why did you not do it [hug]?’. But I cannot explain my reasons to them. Later I thought to myself ‘this is not good’. If I don’t adapt I will lose face, because this is the way here [in Canada]. That was a moment when I felt a conflict within myself. So, because of that I began to follow that practice. Even in Sri Lanka, we shake hands with people we meet. I started doing that at first. Even now when I encounter someone of the female gender, I shake hands. If it is a male around my age then I hug them, that is fine with me. So, I tailored it to me. – Bandula

## Belongingness within the family

The degree of belonging within the intergenerational household also shaped participants’ sense of belonging in Canada. Participants expressed that their sense of belongingness within the home stemmed from a desire to feel indispensable. Participants’ assumption of household chores and childcare provided respite to the working children, while the support and care of the sponsoring child granted them a sense of security, a sense of acceptance, and an overall sense of belongingness.

After that [procedure] I had to gradually rehabilitate. My room was upstairs. I would come downstairs slowly. All those times, my grandson, who was about 5 or 6 years old at that time, would come and say ‘grandfather come downstairs’. I would hold on to the railing and with my wife’s assistance, I would go [downstairs]. I would hold on to my chest and walk gradually around the kitchen. On days when there was no snow, he [grandson] would hold me and take me outdoors for a walk. Truly he was the one who taught me to walk again, even though he was a small child. During that time, the thought ‘this is my home’ kept streaming into my mind constantly. He provided so much care. [My] daughter also provided support. [My] son-in-law went to all my medical appointments. They did that in between their jobs. They would put their baby on a stroller and come to the hospital. There is no other word to describe that other than ‘this is my home’. My daughter, son-in-law, my wife, my granddaughter and grandson were all there [for me]. That feeling [of belongingness] became very strong at that time. – Vijith

The family interdependence and exchange of goods and services granted participants an identity within the household and strengthened their feelings of belongingness. For many participants, their belongingness and attachment to their

sponsoring child and grandchildren was the reason they decided to remain in Canada, despite a longing for their homeland.

I love my daughter's daughter very much. She was cradled on my lap. [She] was born after [my] immigration. I am the one who sang her lullabies to soothe her. I am the one who takes her to school and to karate lessons. I am the reason she always goes to karate. When I did not take her one day, she started crying. Her father, my son-in-law, told her that she should go alone now. She started crying saying 'I cannot go without my grandfather. I will only go with him.' So, I always hold her hand and take her [to classes]. Even today, when we have to cross the street she will not cross without holding my hand. She will be turning 9 or 10 years old soon. So [I] love her that much. That love keeps me bound to this country. That's why I want to stay with that family. They do not want us to go back to Sri Lanka. A few days ago, she told me while she was hugging me 'Don't go to Sri Lanka. You have to be here with us'. She says that the older she gets, the more we should stick around. – Vijith

Nevertheless, participants also expressed a sense of outsidership within the homes of their sponsoring children stemming from intergenerational cultural dissonance. Participants children and grandchildren had deviated from Sri Lankan norms and values, in favor of westernization, at a pace that was faster than their own assimilation. The intergenerational difference in assimilation engendered a sense of loneliness and isolation within the home. For example, Bandula, who was unable to communicate with his English-speaking grandchildren, felt linguistically isolated within the home, Ravi reported an inability to relate to the "different tastes" of his younger family members that leaned towards western entertainment, and Apsara's sense of cultural incompetence left her feeling unreliable and helpless to her grandchildren. Furthermore, their westernized grandchildren embraced their independence and self-sufficiency. This intergenerational gap resulted in distant relationships between participants and their younger kin. Moreover, the sponsoring children and grandchildren's hectic schedules cultivated feelings of neglect and abandonment.

We do not have a relationship with them [grandchildren]. The only time we connect with them is when they come to the kitchen and look for things to eat. Most of the time they prepare something for themselves. They have gotten used to the way people here [in Canada] act. If they need to know something, they will usually ask their grandmother more than me. If they ask me something it is usually about a machine, or if they lost something they will ask me 'where can I find it grandfather?'. There is a small connection there. They do not have time to

have a relationship with us. All day they are at school, in the afternoons they go to classes. The rest of the time, they are on their computers and telephones and other types of work. After school they ring the doorbell and we open the door. They tell me to lock the door when they leave. That is the extent of our relationship. –  
Bandula

Many participants understood and accepted the hectic lifestyles of their children and grandchildren. After all, many of them had immigrated to Canada to help their children manage this very exact chaos. However, when navigating the foreign environment became difficult, the family's absence led to feelings of abandonment and neglect. This was further intensified by the lack of the traditional support network, that would have been available to them in Sri Lanka, and the unmet filial piety expectation.

### Summary

The first subtheme addressed participants' creation of a sense of home by Being Sri Lankan. This involved practicing cultural occupations, socializing with compatriots, transmitting cultural knowledge to preserve cultural heritage and personal legacy, and fulfilling transnational commitments. Late-life immigrants recreated spaces, places and interactions that allowed them to transcend their present social, physical and cultural location, and transform it to one that was reminiscent of their home, and thus maintain a symbolic sense of continuity of the forsaken context. This acted as a protective factor that buffered the stressors of late-life immigration and lessened their sense of displacement in Canada.

Becoming Canadian referred to participants' emerging sense of belongingness in Canada and the various factors that contributed to this feeling. The loneliness, isolation and exclusion participants experienced in the post-migration context was attributed to the cold weather, desolate environment, feeling of being lost, and the social distance between members of the mainstream society and themselves. However, positive interactions with service providers and the kindness of strangers counteracted these negative feelings. Participants engaged in assimilative behaviours by adopting 'Canadian' ways of being to diminish their outsidership in Canada. The relationships with their children and grandchildren supported, and simultaneously challenged their sense of belongingness.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Discussion

*Our children look after us well  
Preeni and I carry on in good health  
Yet, my heart continues to ache for the son I left behind  
Early next year, I will come home*

This chapter includes a summary of key findings and insights gained, as well as a theoretical interpretation of findings. Specifically, I discuss the core concepts of occupation (doing, being, becoming, belonging) as conceptualized by Wilcock (1998, 2006) and transactionalism, and use them as a lens to understand the insights gained from this study, as well as augment the construct of aging out-of-place. Specifically, this discussion addressed the lived experience of aging out-of-place, exploring how late-life immigrants relate to, and connect and engage with places as they experience aging processes, highlighting the centrality of daily occupations within such engagement and processes. Furthermore, I attend to the strengths and limitations of the study, its implications for practice and policy, and the directions for future research. I discuss reflexive insights on the research process, including both theoretical and methodological insights gained, as well as my journey as a researcher. I end this chapter with concluding remarks.

#### 6.1 The lived experience of aging out-of-place

The objective of the present research was to understand the lived experience of aging out-of-place. Specifically, the study examined the experience of late-life immigration. Ten Sinhalese, Buddhist late-life immigrants participated in two in-depth interviews. Experiences of aging out-of-place presented in chapter Five provided insight into the interwoven mosaic of the late-life immigration experience encompassing its highs and lows, challenges, opportunities, recompenses, and adaptive strategies. Specifically, the findings of this study revealed that the experience of aging out-of-place for late-life immigrants includes three elements: 1.) negotiate aging through new and familiar ways, 2.) mitigate loss through everyday occupation, and 3.) live between two worlds.

Late-life immigrants conformed to cultural and religious constructions of aging. Simultaneously, exposure to divergent beliefs in the post-migration context facilitated these older adults' reevaluation and reconceptualization of taken-for-granted aging roles, particularly with respect to occupational capability and participation. Thus, in negotiating aging through new and familiar ways, both the pre-migration and the post-migration context is understood to be implicated in late-life immigrants' perceptions of, and participation in old age.

Late-life immigration meddled in the predictability of these older adults' everyday lives. Environmental transition, prompted by immigration, led to the abandonment of many occupations and roles that contributed to daily structure and routine, and meaning and purpose to life, concomitantly leading to a perceived loss of competence, self-worth and identity. Aging in Canada was shaped significantly by the political, social and economic forces, which restricted meaningful control over occupations and possible futures. In mitigating loss through everyday occupation, late-life immigrants used occupation to overcome their losses, reconfigure their daily occupational lives, reaffirm their competence, self-worth and identity, and thus lessen their sense of displacement. Spirituality and engagement in religious practices became a predominant and salient occupation in Canada, as it allowed late-life immigrants to adhere to cultural and religious prescriptions of occupation in old age, as well as to pacify the mental and emotional strain over the losses experienced in the post-migration context.

In living between two worlds, late-life immigrants' affective bond to their homeland was present in daily life. They sentimentally yearned for those former personal connections and caring relationships, familiar ways of being and doing and a sense of home. Preservation of cultural practices and transnational commitments recreated their familiar everyday worlds in Canada and solidified their ethnic identity and belongingness to Sri Lanka. However, the attachment and obligation to the sponsoring family and the availability of amenities, towards the enhancement of quality of life in old age, in Canada tempered the yearning for the homeland. Nevertheless, the isolation, loneliness and devaluation of existing abilities in the post-migration context instilled a sense of uncertainty and reinforced their outsidership. Their steadfast ethnic identity, nurtured



through the maintenance of day-to-day occupations, religion, views and attitudes, cultural norms, and their close-knit ethnic network, dissuaded late-life immigrants from seeking a Canadian national identity. Instead, belongingness in Canada was synonymous with family, security, comfort and integration—that is, a sense of home.

## 6.2 Doing, Being, Becoming, Belonging

Within the occupational science literature, there is a paucity of research addressing the everyday experiences of late-life immigrants, particularly with regard to their engagement in everyday occupations to create and negotiate place (Johansson et al., 2013). This gap in knowledge stimulated the analysis of study findings through an occupational science lens. Employing an occupational lens proved to be a compelling means to understand the everyday experiences of late-life immigrants in Canada. Specifically, this work addressed the experience of occupation as a part of aging out-of-place. These older adults' accounts of their daily experiences provided valuable insight into the significance of occupations during international immigration, a drastic environmental and life transition.

Wilcock's Occupational Perspective of Health (1998, 2006) emerged as useful as I engaged with the data. Study findings resonated with the core dimensions of occupation: doing, being, becoming and belonging identified by Wilcock (1998, 2006) and Rebeiro et al. (2001). Humans are occupational species who are biologically driven to do in order to survive and maintain health. Positive health is experienced by doing occupations from which one can derive "meaning, choice, satisfaction, a sense of belonging, purpose and achievement" (Wilcock, 2006, p. 107). This discussion will closely attend to the inter-related nature, and the consequent arbitrary divisions between the four dimensions as it relates to the experience of aging out-of-place. The following section is organized by examining what late-life immigrants do, how they feel about what they do, what they have become or what they intend to become through their doing, as well as how they achieved a sense of belongingness from doing.

Occupations are carried out in a context. Context, or place, is conceptualized as a particular location that has acquired a set of meanings and attachments (Tim Cresswell, 2009). Through their experience of place over time, people develop meanings, establish

daily routines, form emotional attachments, and develop a sense of 'insiderness' (Cresswell, 2014) or a 'sense of place' (Beidler & Morrison, 2016). Place also shapes occupational choices, influences health and well-being, and structures options for social inclusion or exclusion (Law et al., 1996). Conceivably, a contextual change has implications on one's doing, and consequently on one's being, becoming and belonging. Specifically, migration has been shown to change engagement in and performance of meaningful occupations (Gupta & Sullivan, 2013; Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Krishnagiri et al., 2013). These occupational changes and disruptions have implications on one's identity (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010) and health (Kristiansen et al., 2007).

### 6.2.1 Doing

Late-life immigration had far-reaching consequences for doing. Doing, synonymous with occupation (Wilcock, 1998a), involves the engagement in purposeful, goal-oriented activities. Specifically, spatial, temporal and socio-cultural elements of the post-migration context presented both opportunities and constraints for late-life immigrants' occupational participation. Existing in the shadow of their sponsoring children and living amid an unfamiliar context that triggered a sense of incompetence and inadequacy encumbered agency, choice and control, thus circumscribing the occupations that were within the late-life immigrants' realm of possibilities. Ranil's disengagement from drinking, a meaningful life-long occupation that facilitated social connection and authentic self-expression, exemplified late-life immigrants' loss of choice and control over valued occupations due to deference to the sponsoring child. Simultaneously, late-life immigrants were empowered in the post-migration context as new conceptualizations of aging led them to adopt new occupational roles, such as employees, and male caregivers.

Late-life immigrants deflected the occupational disruptions and harnessed strengths to reengage in meaningful and purposeful doing. Specifically, they attended to the demands of the career-focused sponsoring child's household, through its maintenance and provision of childcare to grandchildren. Their contributions to the exigencies of the immigrant adult children were perceived to assist them in their establishment, situatedness and pursuit of success in North America. The beneficence of late-life

immigrants' domestic contributions, particularly towards the survival and success of their immigrant children, has been increasingly acknowledged within the literature (Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Treas, 2008b; Wright-St Clair & Nayar, 2017a; Zhou, 2012, 2017).

Encouraged by their religious orientation and obliged by practical possibilities, occupations perceived as self-indulgent or self-serving were put on the back burner, while contributory occupations within reciprocal relationships, that fostered connecting and belonging, were nourished. For instance, driven by her perceived sense of parental/grandparental and sponsorship obligation, Sujatha prioritized contributions to the household above self-care, socialization, leisure, and even spiritual engagement, which is considered by Sinhalese Buddhists' to be the predominant preoccupation and concern in old age (Welgama, 2016). Correspondingly, Zhou (2012) described that late-life immigrants' "unreciprocated sacrifice[s]" (p. 240) demoted and de-prioritized aging.

These contributions provided a daily routine and structure, satisfied the need for purpose and fulfilment, reinforced their competence, and rebuilt a sense of identity. Moreover, the sponsoring family's dependence on the late-life immigrant affirmed their worth, value and indispensability, and bolstered their sense of belongingness within the home. When functional impairments jeopardized domestic contributions, late-life immigrants' sense of purpose, worth and belongingness were compromised, thus exemplifying the intrinsic need for doing.

Furthermore, doing in the post-migration context mitigated and remedied the disjuncture of place experienced by aging out-of-place. This is in agreement with Zemke's (2004) argument of meaning of place as being constructed by our daily occupations, referred to as "occupatio-spaciality" (p. 612). Specifically, place and experience within place develop from the occupational interactions that occur within that place, and their meaning to the doer. In fact, a physical space is transformed into a place when it gains meaning through 'doing' that occurs in that place (Relph, 1976; Zemke, 2004). The quality and intensity of their engagement in cultural occupations and interaction transcended national boundaries and connected Sri Lanka to Canada. For instance, late-life immigrants consumed ethnic foods, watched ethnic television, engaged

in home country politics, socialized with compatriots at ethnic spaces, fulfilled transnational commitments, and participated in ethnic and religious organizations in Canada. These ethnic ties and cultural practices provided a sense of continuity, transformed the unfamiliar post-migration context to a place imbued with personal and cultural meaning, and fostered a connection between the late-life immigrant and place. Becker's (2003) 10-year long qualitative study with older immigrants living in an American inner city similarly illustrated the power of occupational participation that linked their past and present as a medium to ameliorate their sense of displacement.

### 6.2.2 Doing and being

Doing is implicated in the formation of identity and sense of self (Heigl, Kinébanian, & Josephsson, 2011). Accordingly, late-life immigrants' occupational engagement was connected to their understanding of who they were as occupational beings. As occupational entities, these late-life immigrants distinguished themselves as being Sri Lankans, Buddhists, older adults, parents and grandparents, immigrants, local and transnational caretakers, knowledge bearers, dependents and subordinates, amongst many others. Some of these occupational identities were continuations of their past. Late-life immigration resulted in geographical separation from children, elderly and ailing parents, and elderly siblings who remained in the homeland. This geographic separation ceased late-life immigrants' abilities to fulfil filial piety and parental/grandparental obligations to their loved ones, causing distress and guilt among these duty-bound older adults. However, late-life immigrants reconstructed ways of doing and being to preserve former occupational identities. For instance, Apsara and Sujatha continued engagement in transnational caregiving using technology. On the other hand, in defying cultural expectations and personal understandings of gendered work to become the sole caregivers to their ailing wives, Bandula and Saman adopted new occupational identities in the post-migration context.

Limited social obligations and invisibility and anonymity in Canada catalyzed late-life immigrants' religious devotion. This preoccupation led late-life immigrants to identify themselves first and foremost as Buddhists. Following the completion of domestic responsibilities, the remainder of the day was dedicated to religious practice in a

serene place in their home. Regular and ritualized meditation was an opportunity to engage in reflection and self-discovery of personal desires and attachments. For instance, amidst their losses, late-life immigrants meditated on their circumstances, and reconfigured their outlook to one that was more pragmatic and optimistic. Loss was conceptualized as a form of suffering and accepted as a part of the human condition that is brought on by greed for materiality, control, power, status and authority. Similarly, among the elderly Indian immigrant women in Acharya and Northcott's (2007) study, daily religious rituals became a source of power to cope with everyday reality. Furthermore, the law of karma, a concept also prevalent in Hindu discourse, was used to accept their life circumstances and develop deliberate responses, enabling these elderly immigrant women to live comfortably devoid of mental stresses in the host country. For the participants of this study, this facilitated the rationalization of surrender of 'craving' for authority, status and role. Reconceptualization of loss as a form of suffering brought on by greed and the mitigation of this loss through mindfulness eased the adaptation to the constraints imposed upon them by the limitations of their circumstances, and served as a medium of healing and a tool of resiliency. These findings are supported by a Sri Lankan study which found that adherence to Buddhism assisted older adults to cope with psychosocial problems and to psychologically adapt to physical and environmental stressors of aging (Perera et al., 2015). Moreover, Welgama (2016) elucidates that Sinhalese Buddhist older adults' use religion, a power that is larger than themselves, to subdue their socially constructed powerless status.

In the post-migration context, late-life immigrants experienced the erosion of traditional power and authority within the family structure. To adapt to intergenerational co-residency in the post-migration context, Saman, who had been the head of the household in Sri Lanka, dismissed the need for "high authority" within the household and came to see himself as being just one of the occupants of the home. Moreover, this was facilitated by disengaging from occupations that were undertaken routinely and habitually. For instance, despite entering Canada to resume their former identities as parents and grandparents, Ranil encountered a dissonant culture that discouraged his familiar and accustomed ways of parenting and grandparenting. Feeling helpless and powerless, Ranil "turn[ed] a blind eye" by surrendering customary ways of doing and

being. This allowed him to cope with the loss of status and authority and to maintain harmonious relationships within the intergenerational household. Instead, occupational and mental energies were diverted to occupations within the realm of possibilities, which included selfless contributions to the family and ethnic community, and to self-development. This conceptual transformation fostered a self-perception of themselves as competent and capable in the post-migration context. Thus, the modification of the meaning ascribed to their reality served to change their experience (Hammell, 2004).

The doing of meditation also became a medium for being. Meditation and the study of the Buddhist doctrine through reading and listening to sermons, led late-life immigrants to become deeply immersed and consciously mindful, with some even losing the perception of time. Their in-depth engagement, and the sense of self-efficacy, particularly in controlling their desires and attachments which align with their spiritual aspirations, gave rise to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Flow is described as a mental “state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). In their meditation, late-life immigrant participants focused their attention on a clear goal, to achieve spiritual liberation or to be reborn in a higher realm. Their prioritization and dedication to achieving their spiritual goal drove late-life immigrants to become fully involved in the act of meditation. These findings can also be seen through van Manen’s (1997) conceptualization of the subjective lived time. Specifically, spiritual engagement influenced the perception of time. Participants spoke of how meditation and even their presence in spiritual places, such as the temple, washed away their worries and purified their minds. While participants did not immediately achieve their intended goal, they found that engagement in meditation provided immediate feedback through cultivation of virtues, such as patience, tolerance, detachment, and acceptance, that were compatible to their spiritual journey and that also served as buffers to their mental suffering in the post-migration context.

### 6.2.3 Doing, being and becoming

A person’s occupational being lays the groundwork for their envisioned future selves (Craik et al., 2010), by reflecting on values, setting priorities, making choices and

engaging in occupations (Nagel, 1986). The pursuit of new opportunities and harbouring of ideas about who or what they wish to become over the course of their life and how their lives might be experienced as worthy is referred to as becoming (Hammell, 2003). Thus, becoming refers to the transformative potential of occupation (Wilcock, 1998). The relationship between being and becoming is between a person's sense of themselves as an occupational and human being and their hopes and aspirations for the future (Hitch et al., 2014b).

The distress of loss of resources and personal accomplishments of late-life immigration was reconceptualized as an opportunity complementary to the spiritual journey, which emboldens seeking the path to enlightenment. As believers of the endless cyclical nature of birth, death and rebirth, late-life immigrants' envisioned futures were not limited to the immediate, rather extending beyond this lifetime to probable future lives. To achieve liberation from the rounds of birth and death, or if unattainable to aim for rebirth in a higher realm, late-life immigrants strived to nourish their devoutness and religious authenticity by delving into the Buddhist doctrine, immersing in the belief system, and practicing its precepts, instead of dabbling in superficial spirituality. While securing a sense of control over the direction of their future lives, active religious engagement towards the fulfilment of spiritual liberation exemplified how doing and being result in becoming.

These late-life immigrants held hopes and aspirations for their futures in Canada. Dependency stemming from the sponsorship stipulations and immigration status infringed upon late-life immigrants' independence. Similar to elderly Indian women who immigrated to Canada in Choudhry's (2001) and Acharya and Northcott (2007) studies, the late-life immigrants of this study eagerly awaited the cessation of the sponsorship period to become eligible to receive greater access to government benefits and financial aid, thus terminating their state of dependency and obligatory subordination to their sponsoring children. Untethered from the sponsoring children, late-life immigrants envision a future consisting of greater choice, control, freedom and independence over their occupational lives. While awaiting the culmination of the sponsorship period, late-life immigrants, who perceive themselves as boarders within the sponsoring child's

household, pay their dues through beneficence to the household to lessen the burden on the sponsoring child and to contribute to the economic outcomes of the family, which in turn was believed to support the national economy. Furthermore, late-life immigrants exercised independence within their limits, with some late-life immigrants becoming employees despite formal retirement in Sri Lanka, and others exercising independence in more clandestine ways (i.e., withholding information from children). The envisioning of an autonomous future in Canada allowed late-life immigrants to view their losses as transient. In spite of this perceived ephemerality, these older adults held reservations about the security of their future. Despite anticipation of financial untethering from the sponsoring child, late-life immigrants expressed concern about their ability to live independently in a foreign country, particularly as they experience functional deterioration with the passage of time.

Although immigration is often associated with new beginnings, death was at the forefront of the minds of these aging late-life immigrants. Specifically, late-life immigrants pondered what would become of them as they functionally deteriorated, and neared death in a foreign country. While the amenities and health security anchored late-life immigrants to the post-migration context, their attachments and desire for continuity beckoned them to the homeland. Specifically, perturbed by the lack of traditional and extensive support systems in Canada and the desire to be “part and parcel” of the homeland, late-life immigrants wondered whether to remain in Canada or succumb to the lure of their motherland towards the end of life. Similarly, Becker (2002) found that in pursuit of continuity, older immigrants were drawn to their homelands towards the end of life.

#### 6.2.4 Doing, being, and belonging

Late-life immigrants’ sense of belonging vacillated in Canadian society. In occupational science, belonging refers to the contribution of socialization, reciprocal support and companionship, and sense of inclusion, to occupational performance and life satisfaction (Rebeiro et al., 2001). The foreign dialect and dissonant cultural practices reinforced late-life immigrants’ loss of status within society and the concomitant sense of difference, exclusion, and inadequacy in Canada. The perceived impersonality and social



distance between neighbours and community members augmented late-life immigrants' alienation and compromised these once social persons' sense of belonging, a finding replicated in other studies of Asian elderly immigrants (Choudhry, 2001; Hossen & Westhues, 2013; Li, Xu, & Chi, 2017). These findings allude to their sentiments concerning the lived relations (van Manen, 1997) that these late-life immigrants maintained with others in shared interpersonal spaces. Amidst feelings of difference and exclusion in the post-migration context, late-life immigrants simultaneously experienced a sense of acceptance and belongingness, particularly in places where they felt they were part of an accepting and nurturing community. This was exemplified by participant's experiences with service providers. The compassionate care of healthcare providers and the feeling of being cared for bolstered Ranil's sense of belongingness to Canada. Similarly, the sincerity and genuine concern of the postal worker at Ravi's local post office affirmed his fit in the neighbourhood.

Without sacrificing their Sinhalese ethnic identity for a Canadian national identity, late-life immigrants strived to become Canadian through selective acculturation. They chose some elements of the host culture, while rejecting others (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Specifically, participants sought integration by maintaining their original culture, and simultaneously interacting with the host culture (Berry, 1997; Choi & Thomas, 2009). Specifically, late-life immigrants adopted new ways of doing and being, while safeguarding culturally entrenched values, to bridge the disparity between being an outsider and an insider in Canadian society. For instance, Saman found his culturally engrained way of being, particularly his way of conversing with others, to be in conflict with being "Canadian". During conversation Saman was used to asking personal questions, an ordinary, if not customary, behaviour among Sri Lankans. As Saman described, these questions were well-intentioned and driven by empathy. However, through socialization with his accultured children and accultured members of the ethnic community, he came to realize that his conversational style may appear intrusive through a Western lens. He actively worked to align his behaviours with the expectations of the host society. However, he was unwilling to completely renounce his former ways of being. Instead, Saman achieved a sense of belongingness by adapting his style of conversation to his audience. He pursued "intrusive" questions with same-aged ethnic

peers, but maintained a conversational distance with younger, acculturated members of the ethnic community and members of mainstream society. The adoption of new ways of doing and being led to feelings of self-efficacy, maintenance of dignity, and a sense of belonging with their respective families, neighbourhoods and communities.

Late-life immigrants' contributions within the household were yet another way for them to belong, through deriving a sense of affirmation that their life has value for themselves and others (Hillebrand-Duggan & Dijkers, 1999). Thus, doing facilitated late-life immigrants' maintenance or establishment of connection to various groups in which they held membership. Furthermore, late-life immigrants' sense of belongingness was also shaped by the dynamics of the intergenerational household. Specifically, the support and care of the sponsoring family validated their acceptance and belongingness. For instance, Vijith developed the feeling of 'at-homeness' when his young grandson nursed him back to health following a medical procedure.

Following a lifetime of patterns and routines of everyday behaviour, immigration was highly disorienting for late-life immigrants. Specifically, the lack of informal daily social interactions, fueled by cultural and linguistic unpreparedness and hectic lifestyles of children and grandchildren, obstructed and delayed integration and contributed to intense feelings of loneliness and isolation in Canada. Other scholars have also recognized the psychological impact of late-life immigration (Choudhry, 2001; Gautam et al., 2018; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Li et al., 2017). To ameliorate the emotional distress induced by the loss of their social capital, late-life immigrants situated themselves in communal spaces, such as mall food courts and bus terminals. By "exist[ing] in the same space as others" (Donovan et al., 2005), late-life immigrants asserted their connectedness to Canadian society. Counterintuitively, immersion in a crowd was an opportunity to simply be. Being has been defined as the time taken to reflect, be introspective or meditative, discover one's self, savour the moment and enjoy being with special people (Hammell, 1998). Specifically, these late-life immigrants used these opportunities to reflect on their past, present and future, in order to place their experiences of late-life immigration within the broader context of their lives.

Familiar ethnic spaces, as well as the practices and the persons that occupy these spaces facilitated direct interaction and socialization. In this study, the Buddhist temple was not solely a place of worship, rather it was the nucleus of the ethnic community. The shared language, cultural practices and values systems encountered at the temple created inclusive situations for late-life immigrants that enabled innate and tacit behaviours. The feeling of inclusivity, acceptance and safety they felt at the temple can be related to van Manen's (1997) conceptualization of lived space, which refers to how space is implicated in one's feelings. Wright-St Clair and Nayar (2017) similarly found that co-ethnic groups facilitated a sense of home and provided the Asian late-life immigrant participants a platform for participation and empowerment. This allowed the older adults to escape their isolative situations in the host country.

Despite maintaining monastic silence, the temple became an instrument of power and inclusion where late-life immigrants intrepidly embraced their authentic selves. The temple space allowed late-life immigrants to simultaneously be here (in Canada) and there (in Sri Lanka). Their sense of who they were as occupational and human beings emerged from interaction with fellow compatriots. Furthermore, gatherings at the temple for religious and cultural events facilitated the expansion of social and support networks. Similarly, Choudhry (2001) recognized how the development of ethnic social networks helped to maintain late-life immigrants' ethnic identity, sense of belonging, cultural continuity, and serve as a tool of integration in Canada. Thus, the social interactions, collective meanings, shared values and beliefs transformed the physical space of the temple to a place imbued with meanings.

### 6.2.5 Summary

This discussion used Wilcock's Occupational Perspective of Health (2006; 1998a) to understand the process of aging out-of-place. Specifically, this section examined the changes in late-life immigrants' occupational participation, the way they managed these occupational changes, and the centrality of occupation in relating to, and connecting and engaging with the post-migration context. The unfamiliar physical, social and cultural context of Canada disrupted meaningful and deeply personal occupational roles, and challenged accustomed ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging. In the post-

migration context, late-life immigrants developed occupational identities, established social connectedness, and recreated a sense of home by renegotiated ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging.

### 6.3 A “transactional perspective” on occupations of late-life immigration

The writings of philosopher John Dewey have been most influential for transactional thinking in occupational science (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013). Central in Dewey’s thinking is the conception of the ‘indeterminate situation’ or problematic situation, defined as disruption in the human-environment continuity. These problematic situations are generative of human thought and action (Margolis, 2009). Distinctiveness of situations necessitate creative inquiry and dramatic rehearsal, in which people review the possible courses of action to functionally coordinate (Fesmire, 2003) and achieve the aim, or the end-in-view, of the transaction. To improve the experience in an uncertain, risky world (Cutchin, 2007; Cutchin et al., 2008; Garrison, 2002), existing stocks of habits facilitate or restrain the continuation of past and present experiences (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). As people negotiate different environments, they take on different habit configurations to functionally coordinate with the environments (Kestenbaum, 1977). Fundamentally, the transactional perspective as applied in occupational science describe occupation as being situated, connecting person and situation through action in an ongoing and emergent manner (Dickie et al., 2006).

Late-life immigration involves a contextual transition to an unfamiliar history, culture and environment (Nayar & Hocking, 2013). From a Deweyan perspective it could be said that immigration is motivated by meaningful action in response to a ‘conflict’, which “represent ruptures in the human-environment continuity” (Cutchin, 2001). Push and pull factors motivate immigration in search for a new, and perhaps an improved life for themselves and their families (Nayar & Hocking, 2013). These meaningful actions have prospective benefits to the individual or to the conflict itself. In accordance, late-life immigration was a response to the “exigencies” of immigrant children (Treas, 2008b, p. 469), as well as a perceived necessity to access the superior amenities, such as greater

access to quality healthcare, in North America. This finding has been replicated in other studies (Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005; Treas, 2008b).

The following section discusses the function of late-life immigrants' occupational past on their present and future, as well as problematic situations and habits that exemplify the role of occupation. These illustrations aid in the elucidation, reconnection and subsequent conception of place in the aging out-of-place experience. Specifically, these examples discuss late-life immigrants' behavioural responses to habitual and novel situations, as well as how these situations support and detract from such negotiations.

### 6.3.1 Problematic situations and inquiry

From a Deweyan perspective, late-life immigration created multiple problematic situations. The unforeseen changes in physical, social, cultural and institutional contexts disrupted late-life immigrants' habitual and customary ways of participation in occupation and required them to reconfigure interactions with the novel, unfamiliar environment. Similarly, a long-term ethnographic study (Lewis, 2009) revealed that elderly Cambodian refugees in a rural community in the United States experienced a sense of displacement resulting from issues such as unfamiliar customs, limited language skills, restricted mobility, limited financial resources, restricted access to health care, and the changing living arrangements of younger generations. Furthermore, these refugees faced challenges to meeting their culturally-shaped expectations for what they thought they should be doing. From a transactional perspective, immigrating to Canada in their old age led the participants of the present study to abandon tangible and intangible assets, including social capital and personal accomplishments of status and role, held in the native society, thereby abruptly disrupting routine engagement. However, the accumulation of habits over the course of their lives allowed them to functionally coordinate and achieve a sense of harmony when faced with the challenges posed by the novel, unfamiliar and unforeseen situations of the post-migration context. Moreover, late-life immigrants were compelled adopt different habits to harmoniously transact with problematic situations.

Sinhalese-Buddhist culture characterizes old age as a phase for disengaging from social roles, to dedicate one's self for spiritual commitments (Welgama, 2016). This cultural ideal of reclusiveness is complimentary to and informed by the Buddhist doctrine which preaches detachment from things, people or concepts of the world that obstruct the realization of the true nature of things (Keown, 2013c, 2013d). The absence of the traditional extended social network, and conflicting cultural values, in particular, encountered following immigration challenged the adherence to culturally and religiously prescribed aging roles of withdrawing and disengaging from society. Although the older adults retained aspects of their prior conceptualization of aging, they recognized the need for adoption of Western values of individualism and active engagement in old age, particularly upon realization of their children's inability to meet the traditional expectations of filial piety in the host country. This illuminates the distinctiveness of situations and how behaviours that may be functional in one situation may be dysfunctional in another.

For late-life immigrants, even mundane and taken for granted tasks, such as greeting, driving and answering the phone, were layered with unfamiliarity and difficulty in the post-migration context. These problematic situations encouraged late-life immigrants to engage in active and ongoing inquiry and produced action to bring the situation into a determinate state (Cutchin, 2013; Shalin, 1986). Bandula, who understood his instinctual way of greeting the opposite gender to be incompatible with the 'Canadian way', sensed the qualities of the situation to determine the problem. He questioned whether the discrepancy between his way and the 'Canadian way' could emphasize his difference and exclusion, particularly when those around him were participating in a way that was congruous with the 'Canadian way'. Once he understood the general parameters of the problem, he considered the possible solutions. Bandula contemplated whether to continue his former way of greeting by placing the hands together and bowing, or to conform to the 'Canadian way' by hugging. These possible actions were rehearsed within situations. Ultimately Bandula decided neither to surrender his former way or adopt the new way and instead settled on a happy medium, a handshake, between his old habits, which were informed by his upbringing, and new habits, which were shaped by

expectations of the host society. Electing to shake hands allowed him to transact with the present cultural context and accomplish his end goal of diminishing his outsidersness.

In the post-migration context, older immigrants integrated and accultured by transforming themselves, while simultaneously holding on to core values based on their upbringing. Maintenance of old ways of aging, adopting new ways of aging and being amenable to integration exemplifies how values from the past and present are transitionally mediated through situation and habit as late-life immigrants constructed their aging experience in Canada. Specifically, people generate and trial occupation-based responses that enhance the problematic situation. Thus, inquiry combines knowledge and experience, fine-tunes performance, and modifies the context to support habits (Boisvert, 1998; Fritz, 2015). Aging in ‘new ways’ was one such example of the late-life immigrants’ necessity to reassess norms and values, and appraise life priorities, time use and occupational choices to address the precariousness of the post-migration context.

Immigration status as sponsored parents and grandparents (PGP) created further problematic situations for late-life immigrants. Policies, particularly those surrounding the conditions of sponsorship, detracted from late-life immigrants' negotiation of place, thus hindering placemaking. For instance, Late-life immigrants were ineligible to receive certain government benefits until the culmination of the ‘length of undertaking’ during which time sponsoring children were financially obligated for their sustenance in Canada. Having left behind their worldly possessions in Sri Lanka and immigrating to Canada at an ‘unemployable’ age, at least on a full-time, stable basis, late-life immigrants became dependent on their children. Their dependency ranged from financial support to meet basic necessities, to deciphering the foreign culture in which they were now embedded. The conditions of their immigration resulted in a role reversal, a finding that has been well-established within the late-life immigration literature (Choudhry, 2001a; Hossen & Westhues, 2013; Kalavar & Van Willigen, 2005), disrupting and rearranging the traditional and familiar hierarchical relationship between parent and child. The adult child, financially equipped and knowledgeable in the Canadian context, is promoted to a seniority status which accompanied power, control and authority. In fact, in a study of

Asian Indian elderly immigrants in the United States, Kalavar and Van Willigen (2005) found that against expectation "age brings authority loss" (p. 228).

Actions in situations are influenced by perceptions of possibilities (Joas, 1996). Under the awareness of limited possibilities in their predicament, late-life immigrants felt a sense of obligation to 'obey' the sponsoring child. Role reversal and the resultant dependency and subordination in exchange for support and security had significant implication on occupational engagement on late-life immigrants, including the abandonment of purposeful and meaningful occupations. However, bowing to the whim and fancies of the children achieved harmony within the reversed power dynamic. Late-life immigrants' conceptual transformation, and subsequent surrender of the craving for statuses, roles and occupations exemplified how late-life immigrants and the sociopolitical environment continually co-defined and co-constituted each other. Specifically, social relations of power influenced how late-life immigrants relate to place within the on-going process of integration (Johansson et al., 2013).

### 6.3.2 Continuity and change

Experience for Dewey is defined by continuity of the relations of an "organism-in-the- environment-as-a-whole" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Experience is also temporally continuous considering its integration with the past, present, and future. According to Dewey, "the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 35). In essence, present experiences are the function of accumulated past experiences, and interaction with the present situational dynamics. Thus, consideration must be paid to the person's past, what they bring with them, and how this will influence the present and future situations they experience (Nayar & Hocking, 2013). "Conflicts" disturb the human-environment continuity (Cutchin, 2001) resulting in a situational change.

Late-life immigrants expressed a sense of attachment to places that fostered the continuity of habitual occupations. They also actively recreated their familiar everyday occupational worlds through engaging in past routines and transnational engagements.



Altman and Low (1992) posited that connection to place is based on one's occupational past and perception of occupational potential within the place. Routine sights, sounds, and practices that connected their past and present experiences of home and community lessened late-life immigrants' sense of displacement and served as an intermediary place between Sri Lanka and Canada. For example, the familiar sound of traditional drum beats and Buddhist prayers on the day of her arrival eased Geetha's transition to Canada. Similarly, creating spiritual spaces, such as makeshift shrines and Buddhist chants in the background, within the home allowed late-life immigrants to be surrounded by familiarity and align their actions and thoughts with the Buddhist doctrine.

Similar to late-life immigrants in Diwan (2008) and Wright-St Clair and Nayar's (2017) studies, ethnic spaces and cultural environments facilitated cohesiveness, enabled participation in culturally familiar and meaningful occupations, and visibly and subtly reassured the continuity of their past. The Buddhist temple and the seniors' group which took place within the temple grounds facilitated late-life immigrants' re-immersion in their occupational past. The concept of habitus, a term coined by Bourdieu, from an occupational perspective can be used to enhance understandings of late-life immigrants "doing" and "being" in the rebuilding of a sense of place and occupational identity in the post-migration context (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010). Lynam, Browne, Kirkham, & Anderson (2007) equated habitus to a refuge, or "the physical places and social spaces in which we do not need to 'look for clues' to know how to participate" (p. 29). Specifically, the familiar social and cultural world of the temple facilitated engagement in entrenched and instinctual ways of knowing and doing everyday life. Beyond these ethnic spaces, late-life immigrants found themselves outside their comfort zone. Specifically, the late-life immigrants' routines were destabilized within dissonant socio-cultural contexts which diverged from the ones in which they were socialized, and where they developed habits. Within these contexts, late-life immigrants were required to "search for cues regarding how to do" (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010, p. 75) and re-negotiate their habits to perform according to the group's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984).

While the sponsoring child's home was a context for continuity, it was also one of conflict. The confines of the home was a sanctuary for religious and cultural

participation. However, the tenuous, sporadic, and unstable dynamics of co-residency challenged participants' belongingness. Particularly, generational rifts and varying degrees of acculturation of family members led late-life immigrants to perceive themselves as 'separate units' within this arrangement, buttressing their sense of outsidership. Integration and inclusion required the adoption of Western ideals, such as individualism, espoused by their acculturated children and grandchildren. Similarly, Kauh (1997) found that older Korean immigrants in the United States had modest expectations of filial obligations, and the espousal of these modified beliefs on filial piety contributed to positive intergenerational relations within the family. However, the uptake of these ideals did not compromise late-life immigrants' core values instilled by cultural and religious upbringing. The steadfast beliefs and values substantiated their Sri Lankaness. These changing self-identities illustrate the process of continual transaction between the space and the aging person that undergoes a mutual transformation.

Moreover, the transmission of cultural knowledge to younger generations within the family and within the ethnic community facilitated a sense of continuity, a link between the past and present, with the intention for ethnic and religious heritage and personal legacy to be carried on to the future. By transmitting and imprinting the native culture and heritage to the grandchildren, late-life immigrants shaped the environment of the intergenerational household to meet their needs and ensured the preservation of their own ethnic, religious and personal identity in their current situation. Promoting others to embody similar behaviours and belief systems allowed late-life immigrants to be at 'home', in an imaginative Sri Lanka, and relive elements of their cultural and ethnic identity.

Late-life immigrants' occupations fluctuated correspondingly to the seasonal changes of Canada. Prior to immigration, these late-life immigrants had not been exposed to the spectrum of weather in their tropical homeland. The unaccustomedly frigid temperatures and slippery and snowy conditions of winter and the accompanying physical discomforts, particularly considering their old age, encouraged a state of dormancy with regard to outdoor occupations. Alone during the day, when adult children and grandchildren were away at work or school, and without ready transportation, these

suburbanite older adults' geographic isolation intensified. The deterrence from community participation aggravated the concomitant feelings of isolation and loneliness. Thus, while the home was a refuge from the elements and uncertainties of the foreign environment, it also became a place of confinement.

Nevertheless, these weather-induced place problems provoked occupational responses to achieve a new sense of stability and equilibrium. For instance, late-life immigrants redressed the absence of socialization opportunities in Canada. Virtual socialization, using telephone and social media, replaced conventional in-person communication allowing retention of social connectedness traversing long geographical distances. Furthermore, immersion in ethnic television and home country politics was also functionally oriented to continue and extend their relationship to home. Other late-life immigrants escaped winter and temporarily returned to Sri Lanka where they were able to revert to habitual occupations. Furthermore, late-life immigrants refocused energies on occupations within the realm of possibilities in the unfamiliar context. They assumed substitutive occupations, namely domestic work, childcare and spiritual engagement, within the confines of the home. These habitual ways of doing and being in the face of problematic situations served as an initial framework for how they began to approach problems. This transaction became an important source of identity, self-worth, purpose, and mastery. The decision to 'escape' winter through these means brought the problematic situation into harmony.

Contrastingly, the raging heat of the summer, redolent of Sri Lanka, encouraged the resumption of habitual outdoor occupations. These occupational responses exemplify the formation of habit configurations that were specifically assembled to overcome their sense of isolation, loneliness and confinement during Canadian winters. Thus, occupations provided a link between what has been in the persons past, what is now, and what might be in the future (Heuchemer & Josephsson, 2006; Schultz-Krohn, 2004).

### 6.3.3 Habits

Habits are defined as "an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response" (Dewey, 1922/1957, p.46). Habits arise and transform from individuals participation in

their localized socio-cultural worlds (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Thus, habits are both socially constructed and individualized phenomena (Fritz & Cutchin, 2017). As such, they are integrally involved in functionally coordinating person and environment (Garrison, 2002). Habits function subconsciously in much of daily behavior but serve as a necessary ingredient for reflection and thinking (Cutchin, 2008). While reflective processes are implicated in building better habits, specifically, making decisions about what to change and how, these processes also require doing in and of itself.

Immigration to Canada resulted in late-life immigrants' abandonment of the taken for granted predictability that they had enjoyed in Sri Lanka. Specifically, immigration to a culturally novel context endangered older adults' ability to maintain meaningful connections between social roles, occupations and circumstances, engendering feelings of incompetence and worthlessness. Late-life immigrants utilized habits from the past that were appropriately responsive to the context. To achieve integration and a simultaneous continuity, life-long habits and routines that proved ineffective and futile within the novel context necessitated behavioural changes. As an example, in response to changes in the situation and out of necessity, Apsara, who had the assistance of maids and did not perform domestic duties in Sri Lanka, gradually assume this responsibility in the post-migration context. Thus, in aging out-of-place, Apsara was required to adopt different habit configurations to harmoniously interact with the novel, unfamiliar environment.

Specifically, former habits were drawn upon to adapt to new situations and provide impetus for initiating new occupations that are recognized as beneficial for themselves and others, particularly the sponsoring child's family. Late-life immigrants dispassionately compared aging out-of-place to a rerouting of their intended life trajectory. Given the co-occurrence of embodied changes related to the aging process and the precarity of resettlement, Asian late-life immigrants residing in New Zealand also understood ageing as an immigrant to be an altered life trajectory (Wright-St Clair et al., 2018). This perspective of rerouted life trajectory compelled late-life immigrants to assemble unique habit configurations. The coordination of occupations instilled a sense of control, continuity, and restored a sense of value, purpose, competence, and capacity.

Dewey posits that social events and interactions are commonly the basis of the problematic situation, and thus the root of human action (Cutchin, 2001). Habit reconfiguration ensured harmony within their co-residence arrangement. As a new habit, their daily religious rituals became a source of power to cope with the reality of their lives in Canada. Specifically, late-life immigrants used religious practice of detachment, and the normalization and inevitability of 'impermanence' to accept their life circumstances and develop deliberate responses to deal with these circumstances. In order to downplay and accept their losses, late-life immigrants also focused on their abilities and capacities to meet novel challenges encountered in the post-migration context. This finding resonates with the moral dimension of occupation, in which people are able to foresee possibilities and construct situations in more positive ways (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013).

The social and cultural dimensions of the Canadian context, informed by infrequent interactions with mainstream society and second-hand information from their close-knit social circle, structured late-life immigrants' choices regarding what was practically appropriate in the foreign cultural environment. Thus, accustomed ways of doing deemed inappropriate or unbecoming in the Canadian context were modified, and new ways of doing were adopted to facilitate integration and belongingness in Canada. Becker (1997) stated "disruption can be a catalyst for change" (p.19), prompting the inquiry of accepted cultural ideas and values, and discovery and reassignment of those that contradict accepted values. Even the most mundane of ways of doing and being were brought into consciousness as a consequence of late-life immigrants embeddedness in a foreign context. For instance, having driven on the left in his native country and following a slightly dissimilar set of driving rules for most of his life, Saman continually questioned his driving habits in the post-migration context. Bandula's uncertainty of his way of eating in public and its behavioural modification to bring it more in line with the "Canadian way" of being demonstrate the quandaries faced by late-life immigrants even with regard to the most implicit ways of doing and being, and the negotiation of the practically appropriate action within these situations. These unanticipated life barriers and opportunities, within the unfamiliar social and cultural context, in which late-life immigrants are embedded, necessitated "thinking outside the box" (Wright-St Clair et al.,

2018, p. 10). Habit formation thus facilitated engaging with the post-migration context in new ways.

Late-life immigrants' social encounters with mainstream society were limited to infrequent superficial conversations with neighbours or service providers. In contrast, their working-aged children, who had entered Canada "mid-stream" (Nayar & Hocking, 2013, p. 85), and school-aged grandchildren had ample socialization opportunities that facilitated their accelerated acculturation to Canada. Moreover, late-life immigrants had scarce interactions with the material, geographical and cultural environments, thus restricting "dramatic rehearsal" of habits, and limiting possibilities for exercising different habit configurations in relation to the situation, and in response to changes in the situation. The lack of exposure to these landscapes and the lack of repeated engagement in occupation within these contexts (Fritz & Cutchin, 2017) curtailed rehearsal, formation and refinement of habits necessary to tackle the contextual challenges, thereby reinforcing their sense of difference, exclusion, and inadequacy. For instance, the lack of participation in the community, particularly during the winter, left Bandula with limited opportunities to familiarize himself with his neighbourhood and community. This unfamiliarity left Bandula lost and stranded in his community at times. During these occasions, he sought assistance from his son, who despite having arrived in Canada alongside him had greater opportunities for acculturation. This demonstrates how the limited opportunities to develop, rehearse, and practice habits restrict late-life immigrants ability to modify their situation.

The interplay of the sense of inadequacy and limited socialization created a vicious cycle: inadequacy led late-life immigrants to limit their interactions, and limited interactions heightened the perceived inadequacy. The inadequacy of opportunities for habit formation inhibited late-life immigrants' growth, through which Dewey implied 'the continuing flowering and actualization of possibilities ... the actual enhancement of an individual's life... and the development of new powers of action' (Boisvert, 1998, p. 59). Late-life immigrants desired a degree of acculturation in order to integrate to their sponsoring child's households and to broader society, in fact this was a desired end-in-view. However, limited opportunities for restructuring their situation slowed or ceased

acculturation, necessitating greater dependency and reliance on their adult children to manage day-to-day tasks. Instead, this end-in-view was continually evaluated and adjusted through a process of inquiry. For instance, Ravi aimed to reunite with his motherland and the warm embrace of his daughter as he approached the end of life. However, he was required to continually readjust this end-in-view due to the tension between his personal desire and its practicality. Despite his desire to rest his soul in his motherland, he held concerns that returning to the homeland would place a greater financial burden on the sponsoring child. These realizations led Ravi to continually evaluate and adjust his end-in-view. Instead of succumbing to his personal desires, Ravi opted to remain in Canada to fulfil his perceived parental/grandparental obligations.

### 6.3.4 Summary

Considering their lack of experience and knowledge of the foreign physical, political, cultural, societal, and economic context, late-life immigration is inherently destabilizing. These older immigrants negotiated new identities, and reconstructed new places and new occupational routines for themselves in the post-migration context. Specifically, late-life immigrants engage in continual transactions, through integrating elements from their past and present, within everyday occupations and places.

The transactional perspective on occupation presented in this section facilitated a relational and situational understanding of everyday life of late-life immigrants. This theoretical standpoint illuminated how human action emerges from the inseparable relationships among humans, materials and immaterial aspects (Aldrich, 2008; Dickie et al., 2006). Examples used in this section described the function of occupational past on the present and future. Moreover, examples of problematic situations and habits are presented to demonstrate the role of occupation on place in the aging out-of-place experience. This discussion provided a theoretical position to understand occupation as being contingent upon context and situation, wherein late-life immigrants constantly experiment with behavioural responses to habitual and novel situation to seek stabilization.

## 6.4 Strengths of the study

### 6.4.1 Contribution to literature

The unique experiences of late-life immigrants uncovered in this study add to the lack of literature within occupational science. Specifically, this study addressed acknowledged gaps in the literature concerning aging out-of-place from an occupational perspective, and the scarcity of literature examining the experiences of late-life immigrants from such a perspective (Johansson et al., 2013), particularly in light of globalization and changing Canadian demographics (Torres-Gil & Treas, 2008). This study offers a perspective of place to understand the transformation of the place following relocation, and the concomitant disconnection of familiar way of life, through the development and establishment of new occupational routines. This study also introduces late-life immigrants as a subset of the Canadian older adult population and sheds light on their distinct experiences and vulnerabilities to inform the gerontological and immigration literature, which have largely failed to conceptualize the unique resettlement experiences of immigrants entering North America in their old age (Sadarangani & Jun, 2015).

In addition to addressing research gaps, this work offers novel perspectives of aging out-of-place. While research has looked at the role of place in the aging process through examining retirement migration (Haas, Bradley, Jr, Stoller, & Serow, 2006; Innes, 2008; Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaheer, & Torres, 2004), this study is among a gradually expanding literature base (Curtin et al., 2017; Da & Garcia, 2015; Hossen & Westhues, 2013; Zhou, 2012, 2017) that contributes to the understanding of the nexus of ageing and immigration by examining both intrinsic (amenity-seeking desires) and extrinsic (responding to immigrant adult children's "exigencies", Treas, 2008, p. 469) motivations for late-life immigration. The study differentiates late-life immigrants as a distinctive and invisible subset within Canadian society. Furthermore, the focus on the length of undertaking, which entailed the sponsoring child taking an unconditional promise to financially support the older immigrant for a period of ten years, captured a vulnerable epoch of the late-life immigration experience. The capture of these vulnerabilities of aging out-of-place allowed for the exploration of occupational



implications. Finally, the understanding of aging out-of-place through a cultural and religious lens diversified existing perspectives.

#### 6.4.2 Phenomenological Nod

The phenomenological nod refers to an affirmation or a validation (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). The phenomenological nod can be from participants of the study, as it is critical for the researcher to return to participants to inquire whether their experiences and meaning of these experiences have been captured. Moreover, the reader's validation can also acknowledge the possibility that the participant's experiences could also be the experience of the reader (van Manen, 1997b). To achieve the phenomenological nod, the researcher is required to provide good phenomenological descriptions that convey the interpretive findings in a way that "resonates with our sense of lived life" (p. 27).

The phenomenological nod was attended to in this research in two ways. First, I took a thoughtful approach to interviewing. In order to elicit first-person descriptive responses of their experiential worlds, interview questions asked 'what' rather than 'why' (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Moreover, paraphrasing of participants statements were used to achieve greater clarity. By stating phrases such as "From what I understand...", I was able to confirm the participants' descriptive accounts and ensure that the findings were grounded in their authentic interpretations. Secondly, to ensure that the findings of the study is true to participants' lived accounts, I used participants' verbatim excerpts from transcripts during data analysis to support the themes. I represented my understandings of participants' intentions in the contexts in which they were shared. When details of accounts needed to be compromised (i.e., verbose and tangential accounts), I attempted to keep the integrity of participants' accounts intact. Furthermore, by staying close to the language used by participants, I desisted compulsions to exaggerate or embellish participants' descriptions, or muddy these descriptions with academic jargon.

Positive feedback and reviews by the research supervisor and advisory committee suggested that the findings concretely situate the reader in the context of the phenomenon and connect them to personal or plausible experiences in their own lives. While it is likely that some readers of this work have not directly experienced immigration, much

less late-life immigration, it is hoped that readers will recognize the plausibility of the descriptive accounts presented in the findings. Participant descriptions of displacement and its mitigation could evoke memories or emotions of place disruptions (e.g., moving to a new neighbourhood, immersing in a new culture while on vacation, starting at a new placement employment).

#### 6.4.2.1 Comprehensiveness

Another strength of the research is the depth of stories and the richness of data shared by late-life immigrants. Shared ethnicity, religious affiliation, and immigrant identity bestowed insider status to the researcher, encouraging considerable access, acceptance, and rapport. My linguistic competency in Sinhalese allowed me to capture voices of unilingual late-life immigrants whose voices would otherwise remain silent in Canadian society. Furthermore, my youth, gender, student status and cultural attrition appeared to confirm a harmless and vulnerable identity, and promoted a view of naïveté, which facilitated access to the social worlds of late-life immigrants to evoke richer experiential data.

Phenomenology aims to collect rich data, or ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of life experiences through capturing anecdotes or stories (van Manen, 1997b). According to van Manen (1997) “A rich and thick description is concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications” (p. 152). These descriptions describe the participants’ behaviours, as well as the context in which they occur, and attempts to get at the meaning behind the experience. Thick descriptions obtained in this study facilitate enriched understanding – or *verstehen* - of the lived experience of aging out-of-place. In terms of phenomenological inquiry, van Manen (1997) suggests that:

Interview material that is skimpy and that lacks sufficient concreteness in the form of stories, anecdotes, examples of experiences, etc., may be quite useless, tempting the researcher to indulge in over-interpretations, speculations, or an over-reliance on personal opinions and personal experiences (p. 67)

To obtain comprehensive, in-depth understandings of data requires creating conditions that facilitate rich, in-depth data collection. In this study, although I adhered to the guidance of phenomenological scholars (i.e., Thomas & Pollio, 2002) in their

recommendations for sample size, I also used my judgement to adjust the sample size as the study unfolded to ensure “information-richness” (Patton, 2015, p. 245) and thick descriptions. Interviews were used to gather experiential narrative data to develop a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon of aging out-of-place. The different lived accounts offered by the ten participants of this study assisted the identification of the key structures of their aging out-of-place experiences. Moreover, the lag between interviews and between participants (due to rolling recruitment) provided ample time to orient to my research question to avoid getting carried away with an aimless interview. This time gap also facilitated reflection on understandings, allowing me to come back to these understandings in subsequent interviews. For instance, the second interview facilitated elaboration and more comprehensive understandings of experiences shared during the first interview. I returned to participants and asked them to “tell me more about” a particular instance that was broached during the first interview. Thus, the lag between interviews facilitated the gathering of rich and thick phenomenological descriptions that provided comprehensiveness of the data. Moreover, I discovered silence to “be a tactful way of prompting the other to gather recollections and proceed with a story” (van Manen, 1997b, p. 68). While silence between myself and the participant was initially awkward and uncomfortable, I gradually learned that by resisting my urge to intervene during a moment of silence served as a gentle cue for the participant to continue with their descriptions, even adding greater detail.

### 6.4.3 Reflexivity

van Manen (1997) states that the difficulty in conducting phenomenological research is that we are overly knowledgeable about the phenomenon. This knowledge is implicit and taken-for-granted. By informing our interpretations, this knowledge alters our appreciation of the experience. While engaging in experiential data, Finlay (2008) encourages researchers to practice hermeneutic reflexivity, defined as “process of continually reflecting upon our interpretations of both our experience and the phenomena being studied so as to move beyond the partiality of our previous understandings and our investment in particular research outcomes” (Finlay, 2003, p. 108). van Manen (1990, 1997) rejected Husserl’s proposition for bracketing. He stated “If we simply try to forget

or ignore what we already “know,” we may find that the presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections” (p. 47). Instead, van Manen encourages reflection as a means to awaken researchers to their “understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories” (p. 47). Thus, hermeneutic reflexivity encourages proactive self-reflection, to facilitate awareness of the dynamic relationships between the researcher and the participant’s data, and also the ways in which these research encounters influence the researcher’s fore-understandings. This awareness produces new understandings of the phenomenon under study (Shaw, 2010).

From the beginning and throughout the research process I maintained a reflexive journal in which I interrogated my previous understandings and taken for granted views on aging, late-life immigration, and aging out-of-place. I also questioned how these understandings and assumptions influenced the research process.

Entering this study, I found myself located within both Western and Eastern cultures. Having immigrated to Canada as a child, I was very much a Canadian. However, having spent my childhood in Sri Lanka and having been brought up in a Sri Lankan household which adhered to cultural and religious values, I locate myself within multiple cultural worlds. During this study, I experienced multiple roles as a researcher, an immigrant, a Buddhist, and a ‘දුටු’ (daughter) of the Sinhalese community. Situating myself within these multiple contexts and remaining clear about my position throughout the research process was a demanding task. For instance, the stories of the late-life immigrant participants of this study resonated with me particularly because this is the story of my grandparents who were faced with a similar conundrum. They too desired to reunite with their child and grandchildren in Canada in their old age, but also longed for the comforts of home. While my own grandparents’ story diverged from the stories of these late-life immigrants slightly, I gathered a deeper understanding of their experiences through my interactions and my interpretations of participant data. Prior to the beginning of this study and throughout the course of the study, I would often spend time reflecting on my own grandparents’ experiences in Canada. Understanding the loneliness and isolation of the late-life immigration experience instilled a deep sense of guilt over my own actions during my grandparents’ brief immigration. Setting aside time to explore my

own emotions regarding my grandparents' immigration experience and acknowledging these feelings prevented this psychological baggage from becoming part of the research process.

Moreover, in my reflexive journal, I maintained awareness of my positionality, as well as values, beliefs, and interest that may have shaped the research interest and its focus (Cousins, 2009) in order to remain aware of my situatedness as an interpreter of the stories I gathered. I also discussed my findings in multiple meetings with my research supervisor and advisory committee, who have challenged me to articulate my reasoning. This has helped distinguish my assumptions based on my experience and the experiences of the late-life immigrants. It is my belief that the maintenance of reflexivity helped elicit new insights and interpretive possibilities.

#### 6.4.4 Impact on participant

Finally, another strength is the impact this study has had on those involved. Some participants explicitly expressed that their participation in the study was purposeful and meaningful as it allowed them to spend their time in a productive manner and simultaneously be a part of my academic journey. Ranil, for instance, insisted on taking a photograph with me to show his family and friends that he had contributed to my higher education. Others expressed that they been active in "social work" in Sri Lanka that had allowed them to maintain a visible and respected position within their communities. Instead, late-life immigrants expressed that their skills and knowledge was devalued in Canada. They had sought similar activities in Canada, but, to their dismay, they had been unsuccessful. Their engagement in the interviews was a means for these late-life immigrants to feel revalued and visible within Canadian society. In a sense, reinstatement of, at least a dash of, dignity lost in the immigration process became evident when participants expressed their appreciation for my inquisition of their experience. The casual nature of the interview was liberating and cathartic for late-life immigrants, who withheld their worries and concerns from friends and family for fear of being perceived as ungrateful to the sponsoring children. Participants stated that I was one of the few persons with whom they shared their late-life immigration experiences. The study compelled late-life immigrants to reach for pre-reflective experiences regarding their

immigration. They revisited experiences in Canada and verbalized their thoughts during particular situations and events. For some, this reflection motivated personal changes towards betterment— for instance, two late-life immigrants became motivated to obtain their Canadian driver’s license, and another was motivated to seek English language training at a nearby community center.

## 6.5 Limitations of the Study

The limited demographic variability, particularly the religious homogeneity, of this sample may have been a potential limitation of this study considering the influence of religion over the late-life immigration experience among this sample. Late-life immigrants, all of whom identified as devout Buddhists, used a religious lens to interpret the nature of reality. Participants’ declaration of the similar level of religiosity is also noteworthy. Efforts were made to recruit a religiously and geographically diverse sample by using various recruitment methods. However, the small pool of late-life immigrants from Sri Lanka residing in the GTA, and their obscurity made recruitment challenging. Participants of this study attended the same ethnic and religious spaces and events, furthering the exposure to, and nurturance of similar beliefs and ideals. The seniors’ group in particular was a healing place where experiences, ideas and concerns related to the late-life immigration experience were exchanged. The findings of this study point to a culturally and religiously defined perspective of aging out-of-place. Thus, it is conceivable that religious diversity may have introduced alternative experiences of aging out-of-place following late-life immigration.

The unsuccessful attempt at conducting photo-elicitation interviews, intended to elicit deeper elements of human experiences by evoking feelings, memories and thoughts, than verbalization alone, can be attributed to 1.) divergent understandings of ‘occupation’ and ‘experience’, 2.) desire to protect the privacy of their family, and 3.) technical issues. Divergent understanding of occupation between researcher and participants led some participants to capture photographs or collect images unrelated to their everyday experience. Furthermore, the mundanity of their lives was overlooked in exchange for momentous occasions, usually of a social nature, which were believed to be worthy of academic interest. The scarcity of such occasions or occupations delayed data collection.

Moreover, many of the photographs were often taken by someone other than the participant. Their presence in the photograph was related to the late-life immigrants' definition of "experience", and their struggle to capture this experience. Their insistent situatedness within the experiences necessitated the involvement of family members, usually adult children or grandchildren, as photographers. The hectic schedules of children and grandchildren and their unavailability further obstructed timeliness and feasibility of the Photo-Elicitation Interview. One participant explained his reason for not capturing his everyday life was due to the intricately intertwined nature of his life with that of his children due to co-residence. Thus, disclosing visual information about his personal life could unintentionally infringe upon the privacy of his children and grandchildren. Hence, greater attention must be paid to the life circumstances of participants when considering photo-elicitation as a method of data collection. Finally, camera illiteracy as well as poor camera quality produced grainy images that were difficult to make out.

## 6.6 Research Implications

### 6.6.1 Social implications

This study provided insight into the resettlement experience following late-life immigration. Loneliness and isolation were identified within the context of changing family relationships, loss of former social networks and absence of social access in the post-migration context. These experiential narratives provide a segue for conversations surrounding the necessity for interventions and environments that support late-life immigrants needs.

This work emphasizes the need for educating the intergenerational family about the complexity of the life transition involved in late-lie immigration. Canadian immigration and ministries of health should collaboratively offer awareness programs that are informative of late-life immigrants' physical, social, spiritual, psychological needs following relocation. Along with the stipulations of parent and grandparent sponsorship program, which is available primarily online, interested sponsors must be given access to resources regarding the sponsorship experience. These programs and

resources would ensure that sponsors are made aware of, and equipped to manage the difficulties that accompany late-life immigration, and how best to support these late-life immigrants during this complex transnational process and radical life transition. In fact, this responsible and compassionate approach by the government would be a means to attend to the welfare of the Canadian citizen sponsors.

The ethnic community and family have an important role in addressing the unique needs of these late-life immigrants, particularly in the absence of government supports during the period of undertaking. They must provide resources to late-life immigrants to attend social and cultural organizations that will allow them to broaden their social networks. Small ethnic communities, such as the Sinhalese community in the GTA, must consider pooling resources to assist community members in need. Lack of transportation was a key contributor to late-life immigrants' sense of isolation and exclusion. The temple, which often links individuals to resources within the ethnic community can pool resources that may serve the physical, social, and spiritual needs of older adults. A volunteer-run transportation service to the temple, for instance, may facilitate socialization and pursuance of spirituality, which emerged not only as being purposeful and meaningful to one's spiritual journey but also as being a medium of coping and tool of resiliency in the post-migration context. Moreover, the ethnic community could also identify community members who reside geographically proximally, or pair older members of the ethnic community with younger members in an effort to enhance the socialization experience of these older immigrants. Finally, the seniors' program, which currently meets on a monthly basis, could meet more frequently to facilitate greater socialization opportunities for these older adults.

Moreover, the saliency of spirituality in the lives of these late-life immigrants emphasize the need for its inclusion in social and medical models, which currently employ a reductionist view of persons as being a material body (World Health Organization, 1998). For instance, the late-life immigrants of this study acknowledged their age-related physical deterioration dispassionately, while emphasizing the nurturance of their cognitive faculties which was believed to facilitate the pursuance of the meaningful occupation of continued spiritual engagement in old age. However, these



understandings contradict the biomedical model that is currently in use within clinical settings (Wade & Halligan, 2004). Instead, the World Health Organization (1998), which recognizes the value of spiritual elements in the health and quality of life of persons, advocates for a more holistic view of health. This work reinforces the importance of acknowledging the heterogeneity of the older adult population and identifies the aging experience as having a multiplicity of interpretations. Thus, care models must accommodate to individuals' cultural differences, values and preferences, including those that are unaligned with the service provider. It is important to note however that this study presents a Buddhist perspective. Advancements are needed in order to fully appreciate the impact of religiosity and spirituality of diverse older adults' well-being within the context of global aging.

The intergenerational family and ethnic community must also value the seniority and wisdom of these older adults and engage them in cultural occupations within the community, particularly with regard to transmission of cultural values to younger generations. The ethnic community can implement intergenerational programs in ethnic spaces (i.e., Buddhist temple) that facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge. As cultural educators, these older adults can teach and reinforced the native language, promote ethnic socialization and negotiate ethnic identity. This cultural education has been shown to influence individual outcomes including self-esteem, academic drive and success, and behavioral outcomes (Neborak, 2013). For the late-life immigrant, transmission of cultural knowledge would simultaneously serve as a source of engagement, productivity, and purpose. Interactions outside the intergenerational family may also assist with integration and combat feelings of loneliness, isolation and exclusion. Moreover, acknowledgement of their value within the ethnic community and the family may facilitate a positive self-perception and serve as a source of empowerment in the post-migration context.

### 6.6.2 Policy implications

The late-life immigrants of this study were the backbones of their immigrant families. This study also demonstrated late-life immigrants' capability to contribute beyond their families. In addition to their own contributions to the national economy

through their employment, late-life immigrants' 'behind-the-scenes' contributions enhance the economic outcomes, quality of life and the overall success of the immigrant family (Tigar, 2006).

Encouraged by the neoliberal policies and practices of the right-wing Conservative Party, Canadian immigration policies have moved towards a market model. Parent and grandparents arriving via sponsorship are perceived as less than ideal immigrants who are non-contributing drains on Canada's social welfare system (Bragg & Wong, 2016). Specifically, Fitzpatrick (2013) reported that opponents of parent and grandparent sponsorship have disparagingly described older immigrants' as burdens on Canadian taxpayers and their use of social welfare systems as "an abuse of Canada's generosity" (para. 8). Instead, this work contributes to a pool of knowledge (Treas, 2008b, 2008a; Treas & Mazumdar, 2002; Zhou, 2012, 2017) that acknowledges late-life immigrants as contributing members of society, and in doing so challenges the disempowering, negative rhetoric surrounding late-life immigration.

Despite Canada's preferential entrance of economic immigrants (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017), immigration policies that currently focus on economic outcomes must not be at the cost of social values. Specifically, the place of the family unit must not be undermined. Family reunification benefits the economic, social and psychosocial well-being of the immigrant family as well as the health and well-being of the nation (Neborak, 2013). Perhaps, the implementation of policies that take into consideration the quality of life of its citizens will enhance the allure of Canada and attract more skilled workers from abroad.

## 6.7 Possibilities for Future Research

Firstly, given the centrality of religion in the construction of participants' lives and occupations, future studies could explore the lived experiences of late-life immigrants across various cultural and religious groups, while taking into consideration the various degrees of religiosity. Secondly, future research should consider the experiences of late-life immigrants following the period of undertaking stipulated in the parent and grandparent sponsorship agreement to gain a deeper understanding of the

transition of their occupational lives. Thirdly, aging out-of-place is as much an experience for the community as it is for the individual. Thus, future research should consider the perspectives of sponsoring families and ethnic communities that act as tools of integration and mediums of continuity for late-life immigrants, particularly during the period of undertaking, to understand the role of community in the process of aging out-of-place. Specifically, it would be valuable to understand how the occupational lives of these groups are altered through parent and grandparent sponsorship.

Future consideration must also be made from a methodological standpoint. Despite the lack of success of the photo-elicitation interview in this study, future research should consider the use of alternative methods to supplement the voids in understanding due to limitations of verbalization alone. Consideration must be given to the lifestyle and life circumstances of the researched prior to its implementation. For instance, in this particular study greater consideration should have been given to the family dynamics of the late-life immigrant participants, to their hierarchical position within the intergenerational household, and to the opportunities available to capture images of their experiences.

Finally, greater research, clinical and policy attention must be directed towards addressing the unique experiences of loneliness and isolation experienced by late-life immigrants. By bringing greater awareness to their plight in aging out-of-place, these older adults' care circle, namely the family and ethnic community, may be able to provide more supportive environments that are attuned to their unique needs as they navigate the post-migration context. Furthermore, while community services are available for immigrant integration, participants identified the lack of transportation and fear and uncertainty of community mobility in a foreign environment as barriers to accessing these services. Participants of this study reported that these resources were geographically distant, restricting access and participation to suburbanites. To ensure that these publicly funded resources are put-to-use, there must be better understanding of the demographics of immigrants, and greater awareness and dispersion of resources that will facilitate access.

## 6.8 Reflections of the research process

Inexperience and the lack of expertise I possessed as a novice researcher was a constant nagging thought. I entered the doctoral program from a clinical Master's degree with limited research experience. Thus, this dissertation process was one of ongoing learning. As a novice researcher, I was overwhelmed with the plethora of knowledge surrounding phenomenology, although I found comfort in discovering the van Manen's methodological guidance for conducting phenomenological research. Throughout the research process, I found myself questioning my every step. During data collection, I wondered whether a more seasoned phenomenological scholar could evoke richer, descriptive life-worlds from participants. During data analysis, I felt conscious of my inexperience and questioned the astuteness of my interpretive findings. Nevertheless, my inexperience was a cause of celebration at times, particularly during recruitment and data collection. Specifically, my inexperience carried with it a vulnerable and harmless disposition, facilitating rapport building and a degree of candour that may not be made available to a veteran researcher.

I felt privileged that these late-life immigrants who did not know me were willing to share their stories of immigration with me, even if that meant disclosing unflattering personal accounts of feelings of inadequacy and incompetence in Canada, and personal information about their families. Given the intimacy of the Sinhalese community in the GTA, this level of candour was unexpected. Furthermore, I feel honored to be the vehicle through which these late-life immigrants voices and stories are disseminated.

Giving a voice to late-life immigrants necessitated the use of my native tongue, Sinhalese. While a few participants interacted with me in English, most communicated solely in Sinhalese. The Sinhalese interviews contained richness and depth that was absent from the English interviews. While I was grateful to have access to these experiences, I was overwhelmed by the lack of resources available for transcription and translation. The scantiness of the Sinhalese ethnic community in Canada meant that resources were scarce. The lack of resources available for transcription and translation of data presented an immense obstruction to efficiency and timeliness of this study. Nevertheless, the difficulties I encountered in conducting a dual-language study served as

a driving force for this research. Even more so than before, I wanted these unique perspectives to be heard and represented in the literature.

Over the course of this study, my thought process has undergone a considerable transformation. At the onset of this study, I used my own experiences as a child immigrant and my parents experiences as working-age immigrants to understand the late-life immigration experience. Despite a few striking similarities between our stories, I came to understand the distinctiveness of the late-life immigration experience over the course of this study. I gained a deeper understanding of how with each passing day, these late-life immigrants became more distanced from the host cultures due to lack of opportunities to integrate. While their younger family members and the world around them appeared to coalesce and amalgamate, these older adults are left stranded. Moreover, I did not expect the centrality of religion to be of significance to their immigration experience. However, while aspiring to achieve spiritual liberation, religion also served as a tool of resiliency in the post-migration context. Finally, I was struck by participants' conceptual transformation of culturally and religiously prescribed aging roles. However, understanding late-life immigrants' rationalization of their reconceptualization of aging made me appreciate the impact of the immigration experience on even the most inherent and ingrained processes.

## 6.9 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experience of aging out-of-place. Specifically, the study examined the experience of late-life immigration. The findings of this study revealed that late-life immigrants' age out-of-place by negotiating aging through new and familiar ways, mitigating loss through everyday occupation, and living in two worlds. These themes explore the interwoven mosaic of the late-life immigration experience. In this discussion, two theoretical constructs were used to further the understanding of study findings. First, the findings were explored using the core dimensions of occupation (doing, being, becoming, belonging). Second, Dewey's transactionism was used to understand the complex and transactional nature of aging out-of-place and the role of occupation within these transactions.

The parent and grandparent sponsorship through which late-life immigrants enter Canada had significant implications on their autonomy and control in Canada. Systems and structures supported and hindered late-life immigrants abilities to actively negotiate place. Furthermore, former skills, roles and identities, that had earned them recognition and visibility within their families and communities in the home country, were no longer valid or validated in Canadian society. Thus, late-life immigration resulted in disruption to the routines and habitual patterns of occupational performance that people develop in their daily lives. I posit that late-life immigrants renegotiate ways of doing, being, becoming and belonging in the post-migration context.

Given the dissonance of culture, language, and beliefs and values, particularly relating to aging and aging roles, late-life immigrants were required to continuously decipher, and reconnect with both the familiar and unfamiliar places in everyday life. To lessen their sense of displacement, late-life immigrants become agents of placemaking, wherein they continually attempt to create and re-create a sense of place through integrating elements from their past and present within everyday activities and places. Late-life immigrants drew on occupation to engage in continual transactions with the place.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Recruitment poster



#### **What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants**

We are interested in older immigrants' experiences of aging in a place other than your place of origin. We want to understand/explore how the things you do in your daily life influence your relationship with and attachment to your new environment.

Sachindri Wijekoon, a doctoral candidate, will conduct this study under the supervision of Dr. Jan Polgar from Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Western University.

#### **Who?**

Volunteers who: speak English or Sinhalese  
are 65 years or older  
immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka within the last 10 years  
do not have difficulties operating a disposable camera

#### **For?**

participation in two in-depth interviews; photographing your experiences

#### **How Long?**

Approximately 1-2 hours per interview

#### **Where?**

In your home or at another place of your choosing

#### **Why?**

Your experiences may bring a unique and rich perspective to areas that might affect immigrants' experience of settling and aging in a foreign environment.

#### **Interested?**

For more information, please contact:  
Sachindri Wijekoon  
[swijekoo@uwo.ca](mailto:swijekoo@uwo.ca)  
(647) 865 2306



## උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටකදී වියපත් වීම පිළිබඳව ඔබගේ අත්දැකීම් මොනවාද?

මේක තමයි මගේ පශ්චාත් උපාධිය සඳහා මම තෝරාගත් පර්යේෂණයේ මාතෘකාව. මෙම පර්යේෂණය සඳහා අධීක්ෂණ දායකත්වය ලබාදෙන්නේ ලන්ඩන් නුවර වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ මහාචාර්ය Jan Polgar මහත්මියයි.

මෙම පර්යේෂණයේදී අපි බලන්නේ වෙනත් රටකදී වියපත් වීමේදී ඔබේ අත්දැකීම් මොනවාද කියලා.

### පර්යේෂණය සඳහා බඳවා ගැනීමට සුදුසුකම් ලබන්නේ පහත අවශ්‍යතා සපුරන අයටයි.

1. ඉංග්‍රීසි හෝ සිංහල කතාකරන,
2. වයස අවුරුදු 65 හෝ ඊට වැඩි,
3. පසුගිය වසර 10 තුළ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සිට කැනඩාවට සංක්රමණය වී දැනට එහි ජීවත්වන,
4. ශාරීරික අපහසුතාවයකින් තොරව කැමරාවක් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීමට හැකියාවක් ඇති වැඩිහිටි අයයි.

### කළයුතු කුමක්ද?

1. සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ දෙකකට සහභාගී වීම (පැය 1-2)
2. ඡායාරූප ගැනීම (විස්තර පසුව ලබාදෙමි.)

### පර්යේෂණය පවත්වන ස්ථානය :

ඔබගේ නිවසේ හෝ ඔබගේ කැමැත්ත පරිදි වෙනත් ස්ථානයකදී

### පර්යේෂණයේ අරමුණ :

මෙම පර්යේෂණයෙන් අපිට විවිධ රටවල සිට මෙරටට පැමිණ ජීවත්වන වැඩිහිටි අය, උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වියපත් වීමේදී ලබන අත්දැකීම් ගැන අළුත් දැනුමක් ලබා ගත හැක.

ඔබ මේ පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගී වීමට කැමති නම් හෝ ඒ පිළිබඳ වැඩිපුර තොරතුරු අවශ්‍යනම් කරුණාකර අමතන්න :

සවිත්දි විජේකෝන්  
swijekoo@uwo.ca  
(647) 865 2306

මේ සඳහා ඔබගේ සහයෝගය කාරුණිකව ඉතා අගය කරමි. ස්තූතියි.

## Appendix B: Letter of Information



### Letter of Information and Consent

**Project Title:** What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Jan Polgar,  
Professor,  
Health and Rehabilitation Science,  
Western University

**Additional Research Staff:** Sachindri Wijekoon,  
PhD Candidate,  
Health and Rehabilitation Science,  
Western University,

You are being invited to participate in this research study about older adults' "lived experience" with regards to "aging out of place" (aging in a place other than your place of origin). The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

The purpose of this study is to uncover the experiences of older immigrants who are aging in a foreign environment. We want to understand/explore how the things you do in your daily life influence your relationship with and attachment to your new environment. This work will bring a unique and rich perspective to areas that might affect immigrants' experience of settling and aging in a foreign environment.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

English or Sinhala speaking Sinhalese older adults (65 or over) who immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka in the last 10 years, who live in the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa or London, Ontario, and those who do not have difficulties operating a disposal camera are eligible to participate in this study.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

Individuals with visual difficulties that would impede the ability to take and speak to photographs and those who have difficulties recounting experiences are not eligible to participate in this study.

## **Study Procedures**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two individual interviews over the period of approximately one month. The first interview will ask you questions about your experiences of settling and aging in a new place as an older immigrant. You will then be given a disposable camera and asked to photograph or collect images that capture your experiences as an aging immigrant living in a foreign environment. We will collect the cameras, develop the photos, and discuss the photos during the final interview.

The interviews will each last about 1-2 hours and will be audio-taped. Taping the interview will allow us to spend more time listening to your answers and responding to your questions during the interview instead of taking notes, since we will be able to review your responses after the interview. The recorder can be turned off at any time if you would like to share information that you do not want to be audio-taped. If you agree to participate, the interviews will take place in your home or another place of your choosing and at a time that is convenient for you.

You will also be asked to complete a demographic survey, which will take about five minutes to complete. This survey will ask questions about you such as your age, gender, year of immigration to Canada, etc. These details will assist the researchers to further understand your current circumstances as an older adult who is aging in a country where you did not spend their youth or adulthood. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group.

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. Your data will be securely discarded. You will not suffer any penalty and will not experience any consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study. You will also have an opportunity to review your transcripts for accuracy and withdraw any particular comments that you do not want to be included in the study.

## **Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Some people, however, may experience emotional stress that may occur from recalling specific memories. You are free to choose what you will and will not discuss. Some people may also experience fatigue during the interview. Breaks will be offered at any sign of fatigue.

## **Possible Benefits**

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but we hope that the information gathered in this study will be used to better understand what happens among older adults who resettle in an unfamiliar nation and cultural environment, after they have developed a life-long attachment to their homeland. This work will also inform us how everyday activities influence older immigrants' relationship with and attachment to their new environment.

**Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

**Confidentiality**

Data collected in this study will be kept confidential. The information that we collect from you will only be for the use of the researchers. The results of this study may be presented or published; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used so as to maintain your anonymity. Rather, patterns observed among all participants will be used in publications. Your consent will be obtained prior to using the photographs you capture for different purposes (e.g., for presentations, publications, etc). All information will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked research office of Dr. Jan Polgar at the University of Western Ontario.

Representatives from the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

**Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

**Publication**

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.

**Consent**

Please note the consent form attached to this document. If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form and return it to Sachindri Wijekoon, at the University of Western Ontario.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference. If you are interested in the results of this study, we are happy to provide you with our general findings once the study has been completed.

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**



**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants

**Study Investigator’s Name:** Dr. Jan Polgar and Sachindri Wijekoon

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant’s Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



තොරතුරු ප්‍රතිකාව හා කැමැත්ත ලබා දෙන ආකෘති පත්‍රය

**පර්යේෂණයේ නාමය:** උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටකදී වියපත් වීම පිළිබඳව  
ඔබේ අත්දැකීම් මොනවාද?

**ප්‍රධාන විමර්ශක:** ආචාර්ය ජැන් පොල්ගර්,  
මහාචාර්ය,  
සෞඛ්‍ය හා පුනරුත්ථාපන විද්‍යා,  
වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලය

**අතිරේක පර්යේෂණ කාර්ය මණ්ඩලය:** සවින්ද්‍රි විජේකෝන්,  
ආචාර්ය උපාධිය අපේක්ෂක,  
සෞඛ්‍ය හා පුනරුත්ථාපන විද්‍යා,  
වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලය,

උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටකදී වියපත් වීමේදී ඔබ ලබන අත්දැකීම් පිළිබඳව කරන මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගී වීමට ඔබට කරන ආරාධනයයි මේ. ඔබ මෙම පර්යේෂණය සඳහා සහභාගී වීමට ගනු ලබන තීරණය පර්යේෂණය ගැන යම් දැනුවත්බවක් ඇතිව ගැනීමට රුකුලක් ලබාදීම

මේ පර්යේෂණයේ අරමුණුවන්නේ විදේශයකදී වියපත් වන (අවුරුදු 65ට වැඩි) වැඩිහිටියන්ගේ අත්දැකීම් ගැන අවබෝධයක් ලබා ගැනීමයි.

උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව මෙම අළුත් විදේශික පරිසරය හා බැඳුණු ඵදිනෙදා ජීවිතයේ ඔබේ අත්දැකීම් හා ක්‍රියාකාරකම් ගැන දැනුමක් ලබා ගැනීම මෙම පර්යේෂණයේ හරහා සිදුකරනු ලැබේ. විදේශයකදී වියපත් වන ඔබ වැනි අය ගැන ලබා ගන්නා තව දැනුම අනාගත සේවා සැලසුම් සඳහා ප්‍රයෝජනවත් වනු ඇත.

**පර්යේෂණය සඳහා සහභාගී වීමට අවශ්‍ය සුදුසුකම්**

පසුගිය වසර 10ක් තුළ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවෙන් කැනඩාවට සංක්‍රමණය වූ, සිංහල හෝ ඉංග්‍රීසි කථා කරන, ලන්ඩන්, ඕටාවා, ටොරොන්ටෝ හෝ එ අවට ජීවත්වන වැඩිහිටි (අවුරුදු 65 හෝ ඊට වැඩි) අය මේ පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගී වීමට සුදුසුමක් ලබයි.



පර්යේෂණය සඳහා දුග්‍රා, ශ්රවණ ආබාධ සහිත අය සහ මතක ශක්තිය අඩු අය සහභාගී කරවා ගත නොහැක.

**පර්යේෂණ ක්‍රියා පිලිවෙත**

මෙම පර්යේෂණය සඳහා ඔබ කැමති නම් සහ සුදුසුකම් ලබන්නේ නම් මසක කාලයක් තුළ සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡා දෙකකට සහභාගී වීමට ඔබට ඇරයුම් ලැබෙනු ඇත. මින් පළමු සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණයේදී ඔබ වියපත් වන වැඩිහිටියෙක් ලෙස කැනඩාව තුළ ලැබූ අත්දැකීම් හා ඔබ තව පරිසර තුළ ඇති වෙනස් කම් වලට මුහුණදුන් ආකාරය ගැන තොරතුරු ලබා ගැනීමට බලාපොරොත්තු වෙමි.

මෙම පළමු සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණයේදී, අපි ජන විකාස සමීක්ෂණයක් සම්පූර්ණ කිරීමට ඔබෙන් ඉල්ලා සිටිනවා. ඒ සඳහා විනාඩි පහක් පමණ ගත වේ. මෙම සමීක්ෂණයේදී ඔබගේ තොරතුරු පිළිබඳව ප්‍රශ්න ඇසීමක් සිදුවේ.

මෙම සමීක්ෂණයෙන්, පර්යේෂකයාට විදේශයකදී වියපත් වන, අවුරුදු 65ට වැඩි වැඩිහිටියන්ගේ අත්දැකීම් ගැන තව දුරට අවබෝධයක් ලබා ගැනීමට හැක. ඔබේ ප්‍රතිචාරය ස්වේච්ඡාවෙන් ලබා දිය යුතු අතර, ඔබ ලබා දෙන සියලු තොරතුරු රහස්‍යව තබා ගනු ලැබේ. ඔබ ලබා දෙන තොරතුරු වලින් ඔබව හඳුනාගත නොහැකි වනු ඇත.

දෙවන සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණයේදී, මා ඔබට ලබා දෙන කැමරාවෙන් ඔබගේ අත්දැකීම්, ක්‍රියාකාරකම් හා ඔබ මුහුණ දෙන සිදුවීම් ඡායාරූප ගත කරන ලෙස ඉල්ලා සිටිනු ලබනවා. මෙම ඡායාරූප වලින් ලබා ගත්තා පිටපත් තුලින් එම ගැන වැඩිපුර විස්තර සාකච්ඡා කිරීමට බලාපොරොත්තු වෙනවා.

සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ සඳහා ගතවන්නේ පැය 1-2 කට ආසන්න කාලයකි. මා ඔබ සමග සිදුකරන සාකච්ඡා තැටිගත කිරීම මගින් ඔබ මා වෙත ලබාදෙන තොරතුරු වලට නැවත නැවත සවන් දීමට මා හට හැකිවනු ඇත. යම් කෙනෙක් තමන්ගේ සාකච්ඡාවෙන් යම් කොටසක් මෙසේ පටිගත කිරීමට අකමැති නම් ඔබේ ඉල්ලීම අනුව එම කොටස පටිගත කිරීමෙන් වැළකී සිටීමට මා වගබලා ගන්නවා. මෙම සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ සිදුකිරීමට පහසු හා කැමති ස්ථානයක් හා වෙලාවක් ඔබට තීරණය කල හැකි.

පර්යේෂණය සිදුකරන අතරමඟදී ඔබට එයින් ඉවත්වීමට හෝ ඕනෑම වෙලාවක සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ තැටිගත කිරීම වලක්වා ලීමේ අයිතිය ඔබ සතිය. ඔබට මෙයින් කිසි ප්‍රතිවිපාකයක් නොලැබෙන බව මෙයින් දක්වා සිටිනවා.

**අවදානම් හා පීඩාකාරී තත්වයන්**

මෙම සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ වලට සහභාගි වන ඔබට කිසිම අවදානම් තත්වයක් ඇති නොවුනත් සමහර අමිහිරි අත්දැකීම් මතක් කිරීමේ අවශ්‍යතාවයක් ඇතිවූනොත් සමහරෙකුට එය සුළු වශයෙන් පීඩාකාරී විය හැක.

සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ වලදී ඔබට කැමති අසහස් පමණක් ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමේ පූර්ණ අයිතිය ඔබ සතුය සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණය අතරතුර ඔබට විවේකයක් ලබා ගැනීමට අවශ්‍යනම් ඒ සඳහා ඔබට ඉඩකඩ ලබා දීමට මා වග බලා ගන්නවා.

**ප්‍රතිලාභ**

මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගි වීම තුළින් ඔබට ප්‍රතිලාභ නොලැබුනත්, ඔබ ලබා දෙන තොරතුරු හරහා ඔබ වැනි වැඩිහිටි සංක්‍රමණකයන් සමාජයීය, සංස්කෘතික වෙනස් කම් සහිත මෙවන් විදේශික රටක ජීවත් වීමට හුරුවීමේදී මුහුණ දෙන අවස්ථා ගැන පුළුල් අවබෝධයක් හා තව දැනුම් සම්භාරයක් ලබා දීමට උපකාරයක් වෙනවා.

**වන්දි**

මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගි වන අයට වන් දි මුදලක් නොගෙවන බව කාරුණිකව සලකන්න.

**ස්වේච්ඡාවෙන් සහභාගී වීම**

මෙම පර්යේෂණ හරහා ඔබ ලබා දෙන සියළු තොරතුරු වල රහස්‍යභාවය සුරැකින බව මා වග බලා ගන්න බව සලකන්න. ඔබ ලබා දෙන තොරතුරු භාවිතා කරන්නේ පර්යේෂණය සිදුකරන මා විසින් පමණයි. ඔබ ලබා දෙන ජායාරූප හා තොරතුරු ඇතුළත් ලියකියවිලි ඉබ් යතුරු දැමූ වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ යකඩ අල්මාරියක ගබඩා කිරීමට මම වග බලා ගනිමි.

මෙම පර්යේෂණය සිදු කරන ආකාරය ගැන සොයා බලන වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ ජනවාර්ගික මන්ඩලයේ සාමාජිකයන් සමහර විටක ඔබගෙන් මෙම පර්යේෂණය ගැන විමසීමක් කරනු ඇත.

පර්යේෂණය ගැන ඔබට වැඩිදුර තොරතුරු විමසීමට අවශ්‍ය නම් පහත සඳහන් තොරතුරු භාවිතයෙන් අදාල අය අමතන්න.

මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගි වීමේ අයිතිය ගැන ඔබට යම් විමසීමක් සිදුකිරීමට අවශ්‍ය නම් පහත තොරතුරු භාවිතා කර අදාල අය අමතන්න.

ජනවාර්ගික මන්ඩලය - වෙස්ටන් විශ්ව විද්‍යාලය  
දුරකථන අංකය - 519 661 3036  
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**පර්යේෂණයේ ප්‍රතිඵල ප්‍රකාශනයට පත් කිරීම**

පර්යේෂණයේ ප්‍රතිඵල ප්‍රකාශනයට පත් කිරීමේදී කිසිම විටක ඔබගේ නම් ගම් භාවිතා නොකෙරේ. මෙම පර්යේෂණයේ අධ්‍යයන ප්‍රකාශනයක් ඔබට ලබා ගැනීමට කැමති නම් ඔබගේ නම සහ දුරකථන අංකය මා වෙත ලබා දෙන්න.

**සහභාගි වීමට කැමැත්ත ප්‍රකාශ කිරීම**

පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගි වීමට ඔබගේ කැමැත්ත ප්‍රකාශ කල හැකි ආකෘති පත්‍රය මේ සමඟ අමුණා ඇත. ඔබ මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගි වීමට කැමති නම් එම ආකෘති පත්‍රය පුරවා ඔබගේ අත්සන සහිතව මා වෙත (සවින්ද්‍ර විජේකෝන්) එය ලබා දෙන මෙන් ඉල්ලා සිටිමි.

මෙම තොරතුරු පත්‍රිකාව ඔබ ළඟ තබා ගත හැක. පර්යේෂණයේ ප්‍රතිඵල පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේදී ඔබට දැනගැනීමට සැලැස් වීමට මා කැමතියි.

**මෙම තොරතුරු ප්‍රතිකාව ඔබ ළඟ තබා ගත හැකිය.**



කැමැත්ත ලබා දෙන ආකෘති පත්‍රය

පර්යේෂණයේ නම: ඔබගේ උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටක වියපත් වීම පිළිබඳ ඔබේ අත්දැකීම් මොනවාද ?

අධ්‍යයන විමර්ශකගේ නම: ආචාර්ය ජැන් පොල්ගර් හා සවිත්දි විජේකෝන්

මම මෙම පර්යේෂණයට අදාළ සියලුම තොරතුරු කියවා බලා අවබෝධ කර ගත්තෙමි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය ගැන මා විසින් අසන ලද සියලුම ප්‍රශ්නවලට සවිත්දි විජේකෝන් විසින් පිළිතුරු ලබා දී ඇත. මම මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගී වීමට කැමැත්ත ලබා දෙමි.

සහභාගිවන පුද්ගලයාගේ නම: \_\_\_\_\_

සහභාගිවන පුද්ගලයාගේ අත්සන: \_\_\_\_\_

දිනය: \_\_\_\_\_

කැමැත්ත ලබා ගත් විමර්ශකගේ නම: \_\_\_\_\_

අත්සන: \_\_\_\_\_

දිනය: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Western ethics approval



**Western  
Research**

Research Ethics

### Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Jan Polgar

**Department & Institution:** Health Sciences\Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108411

**Study Title:** What is the Experience of aging-out-of-place?: A Phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants.

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** October 12, 2016

**NMREB Expiry Date:** October 12, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2016/09/21
Recruitment Items	Verbal Recruitment Script	2016/09/21
Advertisement	Recruitment Poster	2016/09/21
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/09/21
Other	Photo Elicitation Consent	2016/09/21
Other	Photo Release Form	2016/09/21
Instruments	In-Depth Interview Guide	2016/07/18
Instruments	Photo Log	2016/07/18
Instruments	Photo Elicitation Interview Guide	2016/07/20

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_\_ Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Vikki Tran  Karen Gopaul \_\_\_

Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Rm. 5150  
London, ON, Canada N6G 1G9 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

## Appendix D: Western ethics approval to include socio-demographic questionnaire



**Western  
Research**

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Amendment Approval Notice

Research Ethics

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Jan Polgar

**Department & Institution:** Health Sciences\Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108411

**Study Title:** What is the Experience of aging-out-of-place?: A Phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants.

**NMREB Revision Approval Date:** March 01, 2017

**NMREB Expiry Date:** October 12, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Addendum	2017/02/15
Revised Western University Protocol	Received February 3, 2017.	
Instruments	Demographic Questionnaire	2017/01/25
Instruments	Phenomenological interview guide.	2017/01/31
Other	Confidentiality Agreement	2017/02/15
Revised Letter of Information & Consent		2017/02/15

The Western University Non-Medical Science Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the amendment to the above named study, as of the NMREB Amendment Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

EO: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_ Grace Kelly  Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Nicola Morphet \_\_\_ Karen Gopaul \_\_\_

## Appendix E: Continuing ethics review



Western  
Research

**Date:** 16 October 2017

**To:** Dr. Jan Polgar

**Project ID:** 108411

**Study Title:** What is the Experience of aging-out-of-place?: A Phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants.

**Application Type:** Continuing Ethics Review (CER) Form

**Review Type:** Delegated

**FB Reporting Date:** November 3, 2017

**Date Approval Issued:** 16/Oct/2017 15:44

**REB Approval Expiry Date:** 12/Oct/2018

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Dear Dr. Jan Polgar ,

The Western University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the application. This study, including all currently approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson

## Appendix F: Demographic questionnaire



Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

### What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

We would appreciate you taking the time to complete the following demographic survey. It should take about five minutes to complete.

This survey will ask questions regarding your characteristics (your age, gender, year of immigration to Canada, etc.) . Your responses may assist the researcher to further understand your current circumstances as an older adult who is aging in a country where you did not spend their youth or adulthood.

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sachindri Wijekoon at (647) 865 2306 or swijekoo@uwo.ca.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Gender<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Female    <input type="checkbox"/> Male</p>  | <p>6. What is the highest degree or level or schooling you have completed? (please check all that apply)<br/>_____</p>   |
| <p>2. Year of birth: _____</p>   | <p>7. Job title(s) prior to retirement?<br/>_____</p>  |
| <p>3. Marital Status<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Single/Never Married<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Married or living with partner<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Separated/Divorced<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Widowed<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> | <p>8. Who did you live with in Sri Lanka? (please check all that apply)<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Living alone in own house<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Living with spouse in own house<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Living with child in their home<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Living with relatives in their home<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Living with non-relatives (e.g., retirement home)<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain): _____</p> |
| <p>4. How many children do you have? ____</p>  | <p>9. Which year did you immigrate to Canada?<br/>_____</p>  |
| <p>5. Where do your children live? (please check all that apply)<br/><input type="checkbox"/> In Sri Lanka<br/><input type="checkbox"/> In Canada<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Other countries: _____</p>  |  |



Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did you visit Canada prior to moving to Canada?

- Yes  No

11. Why did you immigrate to Canada? (please check all that apply)

- reunite with children
- to help children and grandchildren
- for better health services
- for economic reasons
- for safety reasons (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

12. Which best describes your current employment status

- Employed for pay, full-time
- Employed for pay, part-time
- Volunteer, full or part-time
- Retired
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please choose the one that best describes your current household composition. (please check all that apply)

- Living alone
- Living with spouse/partner
- Living with child
- Living with relatives
- Living with non-relatives (e.g., friends, roommate)
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is your current financial situation?

(please check all that apply)

- I receive government aid
- I receive a Canadian pension
- My children assist me
- I earn from my employment
- I brought money from Sri Lanka/Sri Lankan pension
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

15. What kind of community resources have you used in the last year?

(please check all that apply)

- Health services
- Community centers
- Senior's programs in the community
- Legal services (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

educational courses (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

16. Have you visited Sri Lanka, after immigrating to Canada?

- Yes  No

**Thank you for completing the demographic survey!**



Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටකදී වියපත් වීම පිළිබඳව ඔබේ අත්දැකීම් මොනවාද?**  
ජන විකාස සමීක්ෂණය

මෙම ජන විකාස සමීක්ෂණය සම්පූර්ණ කිරීමට කාලය ගැනීම ගැන ස්තූති වන්න වෙනවා.  
මෙම සමීක්ෂණය සඳහා ගතවන්නේ විනාඩි පහක් කට ආසන්න කාලයකි.

මෙම සමීක්ෂණයේදී ඔබගේ තොරතුරු පිළිබඳව ප්‍රශ්න ඇසීමක් සිදුවේ.  
මෙම සමීක්ෂණයෙන්, පර්යේෂකයාට විදේශයකදී වියපත් වන, අවුරුදු 65ට වැඩි වැඩිහිටියන්ගේ අත්දැකීම් ගැන තව දුරට අවබෝධයක් ලබා ගැනීමට හැක.

ඔබේ ප්‍රතිචාරය ස්වේච්ඡාවෙන් දිය යුතු අතර, ඔබ ලබා දෙන සියලු තොරතුරු රහස්‍යව තබා ගනු ලැබේ. ඔබ ලබා දෙන තොරතුරු වලින් ඔබව හඳුනාගත නොහැකි වනු ඇත. මේ සමීක්ෂණය සඳහා වැදගත් වන්නේ, ඔබ ලබා දෙන තොරතුරු පමණක් වන අතර, ඔබේ අනන්‍යතාවය නොවේ. මෙම සමීක්ෂණයට සහභාගී වන පුද්ගලයන් ගේ සියලු තොරතුරු ගොනු කොට යොදා ගන්නා බැවින්, එක එක පුද්ගලයන් හඳුනා ගත නොහැකි වනු ඇත.

ඔබට මේ සමීක්ෂණය ගැන තව දුරටත් දැන ගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය නම්, කරුණාකර සවින්ද්‍රි විජේකෝන්ට අමතන්න(647)865 2306 හෝ swijekoo@uwo.ca

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

1. ස්ත්‍රී පුරුෂ භාවය  
 කාන්තා  පිරිමි

2. උපන් වර්ෂය: \_\_\_\_\_

3. විවාහක අවිවාහක බව  
 අවිවාහක / කිසිදා විවාහ නොවූ  
 විවාහක  
 වෙන්වූ / දික්කසාදවූ  
 වැන්දඹු  
 අනිකුත්

4. ඔබට දරුවන් කීදෙනෙක් සිටිනවාද?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. ඔබේ දරුවන් ජීවත් වන්නේ කොහේද? (අදාළ සියල්ල තෝරන්න)  
 ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ  
 කැනඩාවේ  
 වෙනත් රටවල්වල (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. ඔබ ලැබූ ඉහලම අධ්‍යාපනය කුමක්ද?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. ඔබ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ කල රැකියාව කුමක්ද?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දී තුළ ඔබ ජීවත් වූතේ කා සමගද? (අදාළ සියල්ල තෝරන්න)

මගේ නිවසේ තනිවම  
 සහකරු/සහකාරිය සමඟ  
 දරුවන් සමඟ  
 ඥාතීන් සමඟ  
 ඥාතීන් නොවන අය සමඟ (වැඩිහිටි නිවසක, මිතුරන් සමඟ)  
 වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. ඔබ කැනඩාවට සංක්‍රමණය වූයේ කුමන වසරේද?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. ඔබ කැනඩාවට පදිංචියට ඒමට පෙර, ඔබ කැනඩාව සංචාරය කර තිබුණාද?  
 ඔව්  නැත

11. ඔබ කැනඩාවට සංක්‍රමණය වූයේ ඇයි? (අදාළ සියල්ල තෝරන්න)  
 දරුවන් සමඟ යලි එකමුතු වීමට  
 දරුවන් හා මුණුබුරන්ට උදව් කිරීමට  
 සෞඛ්‍ය සේවාවක් සඳහා  
 ආර්ථික හේතු නිසා  
 ආරක්ෂක හේතු සඳහා (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
 වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

12. වත්මන් රැකියා තත්වය?

- රැකියා වැනි, (පූර්ණ-කාලීන)
- රැකියා වැනි,(අර්ධ කාලීන)
- ස්වේච්ඡා
- විශ්‍රාමික
- වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

\_\_\_\_\_

නීතිමය සේවාවන්(පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

\_\_\_\_\_

අධ්‍යාපන පාඨමාලා (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

\_\_\_\_\_

වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

13. වත්මන් ගෘහ සංයුතිය (අදාළ සියල්ල තෝරන්න)

- තනිව
- සහකරු හෝ සහකාරිය / සහකරු සමග
- දරුවා සමග
- ඥාතීන් සමග
- ඥාතීන් නොවන අය සමග (වැඩිහිටි නිවසක, මිතුරන් සමග)
- වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. ඕනෑම ආදායම් තත්වය කුමක්ද?

- රජයේ ආධාර
- කැනේඩියානු විශ්‍රාම වැටුප
- දරුවන් මූල්‍ය පහසුකම් සපයනවා
- මම මගේ රැකියා වලින් උපයන්න
- මුදල් ලංකාවෙන් රැගෙන ආවා
- වෙනත් (පැහැදිලි කරන්න):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. ඔබ මොන වගේ ප්‍රජා සම්පත් පසුගිය වසර තුළ භාවිතා කර ඇත? (අදාළ සියල්ල තෝරන්න).

- සෞඛ්‍ය සේවා
- ප්‍රජා මධ්‍යස්ථාන
- ප්‍රජාව තුළ වියපත්වූ අය සඳහා ඇති වැඩසටහන්

16. ඔබ කැනඩාවට සංක්‍රමණය වීමට පසු, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සංචාරය කර තිබෙනවාද?

- ඔව්
- නැත

\*\*\*

**ජන විකාශ සමීක්ෂණය**  
**සම්පූර්ණ කිරීම සඳහා**  
**ඔබට ස්තූතියි!**

## Appendix G: Phenomenological Interview guide

Tell me what it is like to age in a place where you did not spend your youth or your adulthood?

1. Can you tell me about being (the person's age)?
2. Can you tell me about your family here in Canada?
3. Can you tell me about your room/home and your community here in Canada?
4. What does a typical weekday/weekend look like for you?
  - a. What is the best part of your day?
  - b. Is there a part of the day that you dislike?
4. Tell me what you do around the house.
  - a. How do you feel about (name of activity)?
5. Can you tell me about the last time you went out into the community?
  - a. What did you do?
  - b. How do you feel about (name of activity)?
6. What do you see as your role here in Canada?
  - a. What does this role mean to you?
7. Are there things that you don't do right now, but that you would like to do?
8. Can you tell me about a time that you participated in an activity in Canada that never dreamt/thought you would do?
9. What has been your fondest memory of growing older in Canada?
10. Can you tell me about a difficult time you've had in Canada? How did you cope with this?
11. Can you give me an example of something that has helped you to adjust to life in Canada?
12. Can you give me an example of something that has made it difficult to adjust to life in Canada?
13. When did it feel like things were getting easier for you in Canada? Can you tell me why?
14. Can you tell me about the first time when you felt you belonged here?
15. Can you tell me about your most recent experience of feeling a sense of belonging in Canada?

16. Can you tell me about a time recently when you felt you didn't belong here? Why do you think that was so?
17. What do you miss most about your life in Sri Lanka?
18. Do you have any regrets about immigrating to Canada in your old age?
19. What are your thoughts about the future? Do you have any worries or concerns?
20. What other things would you like to mention about aging in Canada?

**Probes:** In what way? Can you give an example? How did you become aware of it? Who said what? Describe that in more detail. Describe what you were feeling at that moment (i.e. smell, sight, touch, taste, see). Tell me more about that. What was your experience of that?

**Appendix H: Photo-Elicitation Interview guide**

Can you tell me about this photograph?

1. When/Where was this photograph taken?
2. What were you thinking/feeling when you took this photograph?
3. How/why did you select/take this photo?
4. Does this happen a lot? (If relevant)
5. What does this photograph mean to you?
6. Does photograph capture everything you wanted it to show?
7. Which of these photographs is the most meaningful to you or relevant to your immigration experiences?
8. Was there anything you wanted to photograph, but could not or just did not have the time to?

## Appendix I: Photo logbook



### **What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants**

#### **Photo Logbook**

While you have the camera, please use the log below to caption each photo you take or collect. These captions should speak to the essence of the photograph and the experience. The captions can answer the general questions “**What does it mean to age-out-of-place?**” and/or “**What is aging-out-of-place?**” as it relates to the photograph or image in question. Although each disposable camera offers 27 pictures you do not need to take all 27 pictures, take as many as you feel comfortable taking and tell your story.

In addition to taking pictures using the provided cameras, you can use existing photographs (e.g., old family photos), search engines or publications, if you feel these images capture your experience of aging in a new place.

This photo log can also serve to help you share the story behind taking the photo. These answers will serve to assist you to provide information as they occur to you, and help prevent any loss of information and perspective owing to time issues.



**1. PHOTO NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tell me about this photo.**

**Why did you take the photo?**

**What importance does it have for you?**

**Other thoughts about this photo?**

**2. PHOTO NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tell me about this photo.**

**Why did you take the photo?**

**What importance does it have for you?**

**Other thoughts about this photo?**



උපන් රටෙන් බැහැරව වෙනත් රටකදී  
විශපත් වීම පිළිබඳව ඔබේ අත්දැකීම්  
මොනවාද?

ජායාරූප ලඟු-සටහන

ඔබ ගන්නා ජායාරූපයට මාතෘකාවක් දෙන්න. ඊළඟට ඒ  
 ජායාරූපය ගැන කෙටි විස්තරයක් ලියන්න.

1. ඡායාරූපයේ නම: \_\_\_\_\_

i. මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගැන විස්තර කරන්න.

ii. ඔබ මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගත්තේ ඇයි?

iii. මෙම ඡායාරූපය වැදගත් වූනේ ඇයි?

iv. මේ ඡායාරූපයෙන් ඔබ කැනඩාවේ ගත කරන ජීවිතය ගැන කියවෙන දේ ගැන කෙටි විස්තරයක් කරන්න.

v. ඔබට මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගැන කීමට ඇති වෙනත් විස්තර මොනවාද?

2. ඡායාරූපයේ නම: \_\_\_\_\_

i. මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගැන විස්තර කරන්න.

ii. ඔබ මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගත්තේ ඇයි?

iii. මෙම ඡායාරූපය වැදගත් වූනේ ඇයි?

iv. මේ ඡායාරූපයෙන් ඔබ කැනඩාවේ ගත කරන ජීවිතය ගැන කියවෙන දේ ගැන කෙටි විස්තරයක් කරන්න.

v. ඔබට මෙම ඡායාරූපය ගැන කීමට ඇති වෙනත් විස්තර මොනවාද?

**Appendix J: Photo consent form**



**What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants**

**Photo-elicitation Photography Subject Consent Form**

You are invited to have your picture taken by one of the photographers involved in a study conducted by a PhD student at Western University. This study hopes to understand how older immigrants experience aging in a new place.

This photographer has decided that a picture of you will help explain their experience of aging in a new place. The researchers and the photographer will discuss the meaning of the picture in an interview. You can request that any aspect of the photo that would give away your identity be blurred for the purpose of the discussion. These pictures taken may be shown to others, in the community at large, in order to create awareness about the experiences of older immigrants who are aging in a new place. This may include presentations to university students and staff, or to the public and for publication. During these public presentations, any identifying features will be obscured (e.g., blurred face, etc.) These photographs will not be used to make money.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can also choose to withdraw photos of yourself at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any penalty and will not experience any consequences if you choose to withdraw from the study. Should you decide to withdraw photos of yourself, please contact Sachi Wijekoon.

By signing this form, I give permission to have my picture taken by a participant of the above mentioned study and for the photographs to be used in presentations and publications about this project.

Thank you,

Subject Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Photographer: \_\_\_\_\_

DD/MM/YYYY: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix K: Photo release form**



**What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants**

**Photography Release Form**

As part of this project, you took photographs that we discussed during an individual interview. These photographs will be seen by Dr. Jan Polgar and Sachindri Wijekoon in order to analyze the research data. This form will document what happens to the photos next. You have the option to keep all of your photos and negatives and/or electronic copies of the photographs and not share them with anyone outside of the research project. You also have the right to request that your photographs and negatives be returned to you at the end of your participation in the project.

You may also give permission for Dr. Jan Polgar, the principle investigator, and Sachindri Wijekoon, to share your photos in presentations or publications about this project. If you chose to share any of your photos, signing this form indicates your consent to use the photos for any of the following specific purposes.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for Dr. Jan Polgar and Ms. Sachindri Wijekoon to use and publish my photographs developed during the “What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants” study. They are free to use the photographs for presentations and publications relevant to this project. I understand that the de-identified photographic images may be used for (check all that you agree to):

- Defense and publication of dissertation manuscript
- Research presentations locally, nationally, and internationally
- Publication of research findings in scholarly peer reviewed journals

I would like my photographs, negatives and/or electronic copies of pictures returned at the end of my participation in the project:

- Yes  No

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Jan Polgar. You may also contact Sachindri Wijekoon.



**What is the experience of aging-out-of-place?: A phenomenological Study with Sinhalese Late-life Immigrants**

**Photography Release Form**

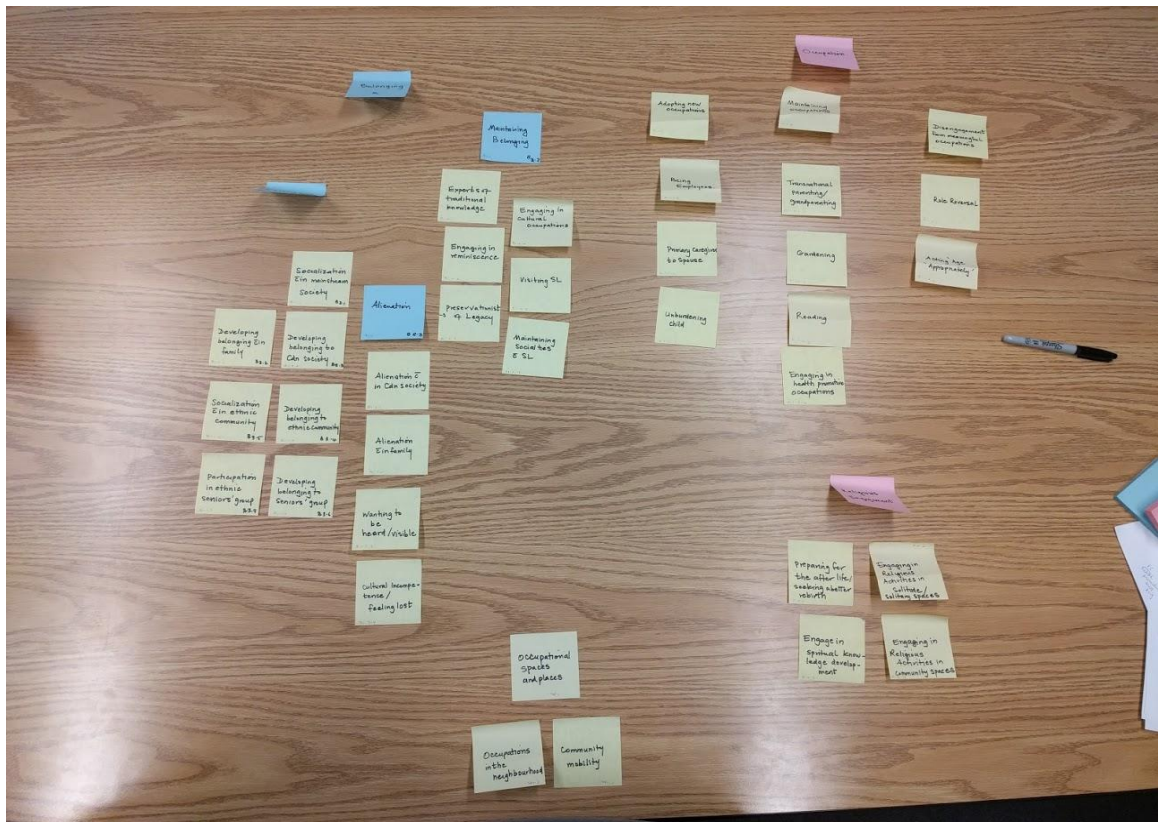
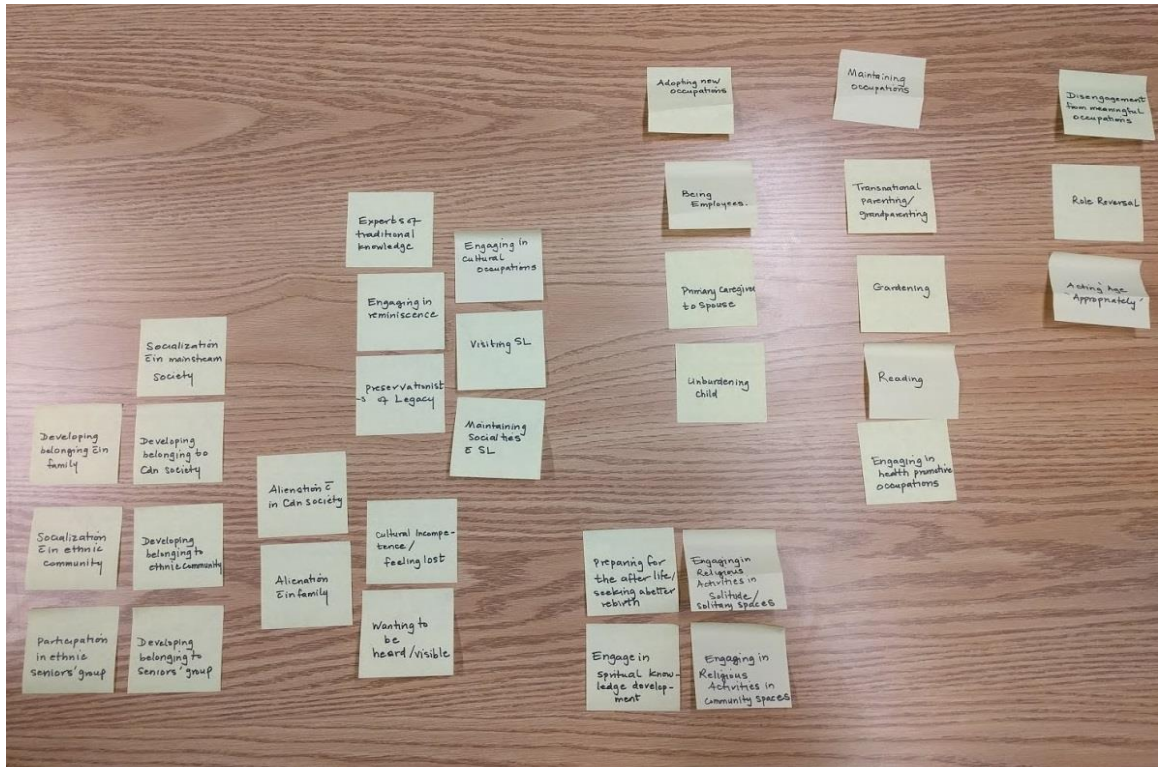
By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read the above description, have had any questions answered, and provide consent for the use of specific photos as indicated above.

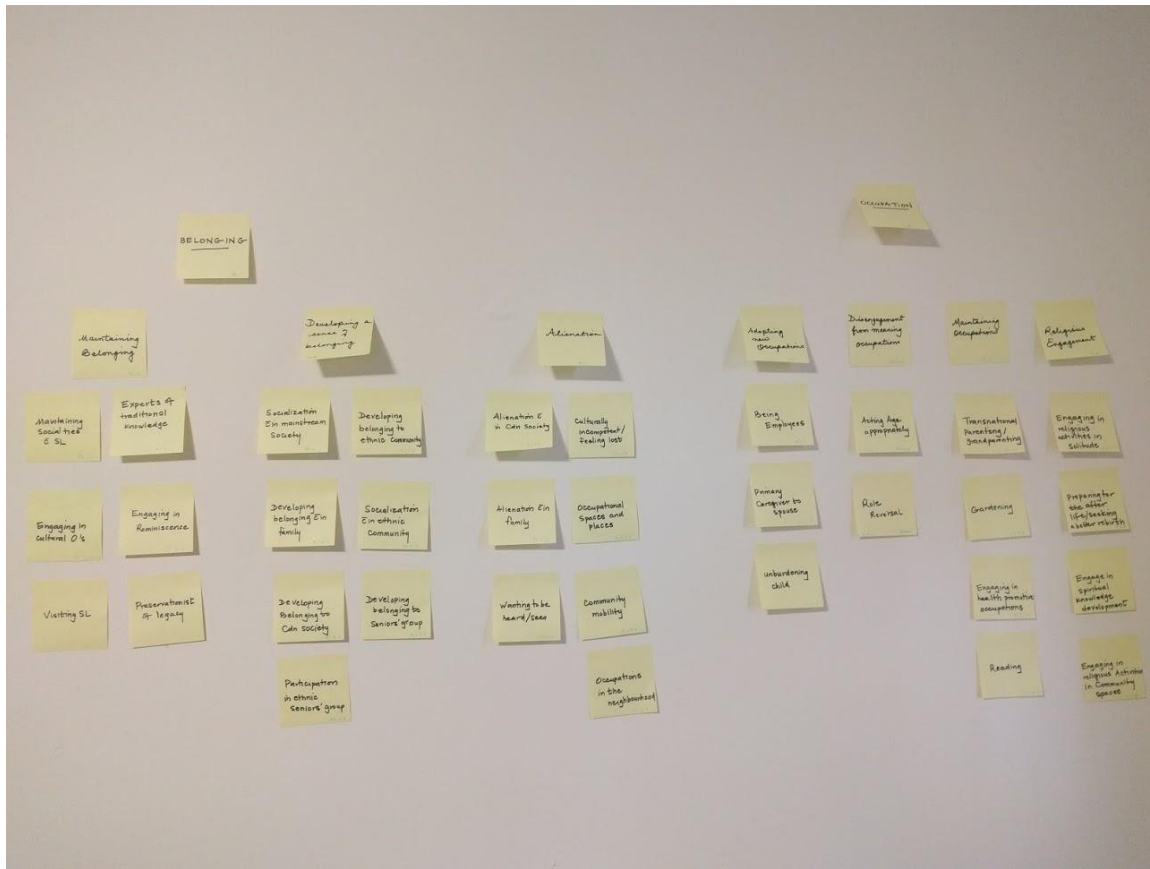
Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix L: The process of organizing subthemes







**Appendix M: "Don't take this the wrong way...but are you a Buddhist?":  
Methodological Reflections on insider/outsider positionality**

Explanations, opinions, and the researcher's prior experiences and beliefs must be temporarily suspended to probe the phenomenon, specifically how it is experienced by participants in their ordinary way of being in the world. Within phenomenology, it is imperative to be open and accepting to participants' account of their 'truth'. This requires the researcher to display empathy, genuine curiosity, and simultaneous critical self-awareness of their position given his/her situatedness in personal, cultural and historical location (Finlay, 2008). Specifically, van Manen (2011) proposes 'hermeneutic reduction':

"One needs to reflect on one's own preunderstandings, frameworks, and biases regarding the (psychological, political, and ideological) motivation and the nature of the question, in search for genuine openness in one's conversational relation with the phenomenon. In the reduction one needs to overcome one's subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations that may seduce or tempt one to come to premature, wishful, or one-sided understandings of an experience and that would prevent one from coming to terms with a phenomenon as it is lived through." (para.1)

Thus, this following critical reflection interrogates my own situatedness in the research process, and explores the ways in which the fluidity of my identity has influenced the co-construction of knowledge and the maintenance of research rigor. The concept of power permeates this discussion.

While shared ethnicity, religious affiliation, and immigrant identity privileged me with insider status, our shared value systems and my social proximity to the community were also seeming deterrents, which had significant implications for recruitment and data collection. The generational gap between participants and myself and my muddled cultural identity conferred outsider status. My youth, gender, student status and cultural attrition appeared to confirm a harmless and vulnerable identity and promoted a view of naivete and trust. This perception was advantageous to data collection as participants recounted their experiences with fine detail. However, within the dynamism and multi-faceted dimensions of research relationships, "a researcher can experience various

degrees of insiderness and outsidership given how she/he is socially situated to (and by) participants during the research process, which affects various stages and aspects of the study" (Chavez, 2008, p. 477).

#### Creating trust, openness and acceptance

At the request of the participant, many of the interviews were paused for a 'tea break'. Participants, and family members, used this intermission to familiarize themselves through personal questions that concerned my present and my past (e.g., Where did you and your family reside in Sri Lanka and in Canada?, Is your sibling married? What do your parent's do? etc.). While these questions may appear intrusive through a western lens, such questions are ordinary, if not customary, among Sri Lankans. Not wanting to take a positivist approach, which may consider these questions to be irrelevant or unwanted intrusions (Griffin, 1985), I faced these questions believing them to be part of the reciprocal nature of the research process, to minimize power differences, and to build rapport. The information gathered by participants and their families also measured my credibility, gauged my 'insiderness', and ensured the 'safety' of their participation in the study.

Participants, who were devout Buddhists, inquired about my religious affiliation, while clarifying that their intention was not to be ill-mannered. The interviews were brimming with details of participants' religious involvement and its prioritization. It became apparent that this questioning was used to establish my membership within the group (i.e., Buddhists) to gauge the depth of information necessary to provide in order to facilitate my understanding. However, the confirmation of my Buddhist identity resulted in participants' assuming and expecting a shared level of religiosity, shared meaning of Buddhist practices, and expectations of full literacy of a complex philosophy which, to my regret, I did not possess. Participants refrained from articulating norms and beliefs that were expected to be in common with the researcher, simultaneously my familiarity with the religion prevented me from asking the "obvious" questions, consequently thinning the data.

My linguistic competency in Sinhalese allowed me to capture voices of unilingual participants that would otherwise remain silent and facilitated natural conversation with participants who craved social interactions with those who were linguistically and ethnically similar to themselves. While I am fluent and conversant in Sinhalese, sufficient to maintain conversation and build rapport, I am far from proficient. Given my retention and literacy in Sinhalese culture and language, participants and family members were startled to learn that I had immigrated to Canada in my childhood. By the same token, participants were forgiving when I stumbled over a Sinhalese word. They would come to my aid, ‘dumb down’ or oversimplify language and ideas, or expatiate on their experiences. Although interviewees who share experiences with informants are thought to minimize the ‘bracketing’ that is essential to construct the meaning of participants in phenomenology (Creswell, 2013), my openness seemed to be recompensed with greater levels of trust and rapport by participants and their families.

English fluency among my participants was highly commoditized. Three participants engaged with me mainly in English, however their description lacked richness and depth in comparison to the dynamic Sinhalese interviews which were enriched with idioms and metaphors. Aware of their bilingualism, I retrospectively inquired whether the decision to communicate with me in English was due to the pride in their English fluency and acculturation to Canadian society, or a means to relate to a westernized member of their ethnic community, or an attempt to equalize the power differential between the participant and the researcher. When interviewed by an educated and accultured young woman from the native culture, participant’s emphasis on English fluency may have equalized the power differential.

Furthermore, participants’ perception of our assumed shared value systems appeared to overshadow their awareness and acknowledgement of their controversial views in Canada, engendering a greater level of candor than would otherwise be the case. At times, I was taken aback by participant’s disinhibition in articulating unsavory and politically-incorrect views. While these topics incited feelings of discomfort, I was simultaneously satisfied with the credibility and rapport within our relationship. At various points during the interview, I responded to the expectations of affirmation despite

feeling uncomfortable being drawn into their assertions. Floyd and Arthur (2012) state that insider researchers are likely coerced to show verbal or visual agreeance with the participants' viewpoints for fear of participants abbreviating or curtailing responses. Thus, while the assurance created by the similarities between myself and the participants resulted in trust and candor, my positioning had also allowed participants to draw me into their assertions of shared beliefs, values and norms.

#### Modifying behavior to develop rapport

During recruitment and interviewing, my tacit cultural and religious knowledge conferred epistemological privilege allowing me to meet the indiscernible social behavioral expectations of the Sinhalese and Buddhist community nuanced by dress, speech, demeanor, and other normative codes. Thus, this instinctual knowledge allowed me to conform to “culturally desirable ways” (Lim, 2012, p. 6) of representing myself to be more admissible and accepted as an insider, while de-emphasizing aspects of my outsider identity. For instance, given my participants' generation and their strong adherence to cultural and religious norms, my dress and behavior became important conscious markers of my identity ‘in the field’. Furthermore, participants also indirectly guided my social behavior by bringing it in line with their own cultural norms. These positionalities heavily influenced access to participants and the co-construction of knowledge.

During interviews, I struggled internally with my dual roles. I was a researcher in search of information regarding participants experiences. However, as a younger member of the ethnic community I was expected to adhere to traditional norms and not overstep my boundary. Among Asian cultures there is a social distance and inequality between generations, whereby elderly individuals command a powerful and respected role (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 1999), that extends beyond familial elders (Park & Kim, 1992). Traditionally, detailed, open communication or negotiation with Sri Lankan older adults are not expected (Chapin, 2014). This intergenerational social distance and inequality can change the dynamics of intergenerational communication (Harwood, 2007). Cognizant of my place in the social hierarchy and my awareness of culturally

stigmatization of tabooed or sensitive topics (such as divorce or low-status employment) compelled me to maintain conversational distance to maintain rapport and diminish my outsider identity. Despite my researcher role, I feared that asking for more than what was offered to me by the participant would be viewed as not knowing my 'place' within the hierarchy. Thus, at times restrained probing was a way of showing deference to participants, who were hierarchically superior within my ethnic community. In doing so, did I impede access to richer data?

#### Distrust of insider researcher

While researcher's membership within the group creates trust, openness and acceptance (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), gaining access to participants' social worlds proved to be problematic in the study. While my position as a member of the community appeared to be an asset, I contend that it was also a liability as it led to researcher distrust. By virtue of my social proximity to the ethnoreligious community, I may have been perceived as an interested party who could potentially abuse the trust to use the information against the participant (Greene, 2014), mistrusted to protect their privacy and anonymity, and thereby cautioning potential participants from participating, and actual participants from full disclosure. Thus, as an insider I was "wielding a double-edged sword" (Mercer, 2007).

Shah (2004) identified that participants may wish to withhold information from another insider with a shared knowledge of value systems, for fear of being judged. Thus, participants may have felt a sense of vulnerability when sharing information that was considered sensitive within the Sri Lankan culture. Nevertheless, my repetitive assurances of confidentiality, participants perception of my westernization and our generational gap may have sufficiently dissociated and distanced me from my ethno-cultural origin thereby putting participants at ease to divulge sensitive information, albeit ambiguously and selectively. For instance, Geetha spoke about her employment in a factory in Canada after retiring from a white-color position in Sri Lanka, Ravi discussed the divorce of his sponsoring child, a taboo within Sri Lankan culture, and Bandula opened up about the turbulent co-residency with his sponsoring child and family.

Retrospectively, I wondered whether a detached outsider, rather than a socially-placed insider researcher with pre-existing links to the setting, could elicit deeper and richer accounts of sensitive experiences, particularly within an ethnic minority faction. However, I struggled to understand why an outsider researcher might have more leverage because I too was a 'social stranger' (Aguilar, 1981) to participants, regardless of my membership within the cultural and religious group.

#### Outsider positionality

Data collection was heavily influenced by my outsider positionalities, namely my gender, age, and rank in the social hierarchy, which created power disparities between participants and I. Specifically, my role in the research encounters was largely characterized by subordinate identities (e.g., younger, student, and female) that were constructed for me.

#### Duality of outsidersness

Given our shared ethno-religious identities, participants expected me to share frames of reference, consensual meanings and cultural norms. When their expectations were unmet, participants were disappointed. For instance, discovery that I was married to a non-Sri Lankan appeared to alter the dynamic of the interview, at least momentarily, with two participants. Although I attempted to maintain neutrality with my expressions and tone during these instances, I felt vulnerable and exposed within the research relationships for not molding to the traditionally prescribed cultural norms. When the next participant broached the topic of marriage, I quickly diverted the participant's attention back to himself. Perhaps deceitful, I feared being perceived as a sellout, being disloyal to my culture or being corrupted by foreign influences. More importantly, I worried that their disapproval of my personal life may influence the direction and depth of the interview.

My acculturation to Canada was not always perceived negatively. Although our shared immigrant status allowed participants and I to relate to one another's experiences in a foreign land, my longer length of residency in Canada placed expectations of

expertise about Canada, which seemed to further our researcher-participant relationship. For instance, participants inquired about my knowledge of funeral expenses in Canada and the procurement of a driver's license. In contrast, their late-life acculturation was perceived as deficient in contrast to my acculturation. These supposed expectations for me to maintain one foot in Sri Lanka (being a 'good' Sinhalese, Buddhist) and the other in Canada (possessing knowledge of Canada and Canadian culture) was at times burdensome, particularly because I did not know their exact expectations.

#### The influence of subordinate identities on data collection

In interviewing Sinhalese late-life immigrants, I came to realize the cultural construction of the power relationships embedded in the interview context. The interviews were influenced by gender, age, and rank in the social hierarchy, the same elements that structure Sri Lankan society. Thus, the research context was imbued by the prevailing cultural values which reproduced power relations. The following section discusses my positionality and the power dynamics of the interview process negotiated by the researcher and the researched, as well as the culturally embedded interview context constructed by both.

#### “A daughter”

Many participants referred to me as ‘දුව’, meaning daughter, or ‘පුතා’ meaning son (but used in this situation as a gender neutral and affectionate way meaning child). Being addressed as දුව or පුතා connote being one of their own based on our shared heritage. This serves as an example of how participants perceived and positioned me differently from how he/she had chosen to position him/herself (Razon & Ross, 2012). Given the power hierarchy within Asian culture, addressing me as ‘දුව’ or ‘පුතා’ highlight their perception of me being outside their age bracket and therefore inferior in the hierarchy.

Furthermore, I was likened, literally and figuratively, to participants' children and grandchildren. Unlike their assimilated and westernized children and grandchildren however, I was perceived to be culturally adept and coetaneous. I wondered whether

research interactions were opportunities to reinstate their elder status within a social hierarchical relationship, particularly considering the tangible and intangible losses they experienced in immigrating in late-life, and in co-residing with their children in Canada. Furthermore, participants may have felt the need to retain their status and reputation through projecting an image of stability and security given age-based hierarchy within Sri Lankan culture. Participants were proud of the established lives they led and the statuses they held in Sri Lanka. The gathered data contained extended reminiscence of participants' academic, professional and personal achievements. However, immigration to Canada stripped them of the stability, security, visibility, and establishment they once maintained. The loss of status in Canada came up in multiple ways throughout the interviews, placing these once well-established participants in a vulnerable position, particularly when the research study was perceived as problematizing their current lives. Participants' reminiscence may have served to nullify their losses, add more weight to their side of the power equation, and stabilize their current lives. Alternatively, I query whether participants disclosed the full reality of their current lives in Canada to a younger community member, as this may have compromised their age-based hierarchical status.

The shifting nature of my positionality became evident during data collection. One participant, who had referred to me as 'දුටු' suddenly shifted to calling me 'miss', a less intimate yet respectable way of addressing a young woman, midway through the interview. What began as a light-hearted intergenerational conversation gradually became a cathartic experience for this participant. I was no longer defined by the subordinate positions that were constructed for me (i.e., young, female). Rather, I was ascribed power and position akin to a researcher-participant relationship.

My gender too seemed to also privilege me to participant's openness of their social worlds. Specifically, my 'unthreatening' position as a young female alleviated the pressures of the interview context, offered solace and security to concerned participants and their families, and invited participants, both male and female, to see me as a confidante or listener.

A student



My academic standing at a western institution placed me in a position of power. During recruitment, a well-respected elder sought advice and/or assistance regarding another community member who was allegedly the victim of elder abuse. It was clear that I was perceived as an advocate for community issues, a rescuer, or a problem-solver given my ties outside the ethnic community. This perception of researcher as powerful also manifested during data collection. For instance, one participant requested that I withhold shared information that may compromise the financial aid she received from the government. Thus, the participant believed that the researcher and this research had far reaching consequences beyond simply a sharing of individual experiences.

However, my role as a student seemed to assume greater importance and simultaneously overshadow my status as a researcher. I was perceived as gathering data for academic, rather than self, interest. Almost all participants cited altruism, motivated by religious beliefs, and my vulnerability as inciting their desire to ‘help’. I was perceived as being in ‘need’ of information, and their involvement was perceived as pivotal to my academic success, and rightly so. The downplaying of my researcher role and emphasizing my student identity was a means for participants to negotiate power. I contend that situating me as a student rather than a researcher, while bestowing me with a level of inferiority and immaturity, was also advantageous to the research process. Rather than expecting an agent of knowledge and expertise, participants perceived me as uninformed, naïve, and unknowledgeable, making for more detailed responses to questions.

My positioning outside the age bracket and outside the late-life immigration experience en masse facilitated richer descriptions of the aging experience in a foreign environment. Even when I had an appreciation for an older adults’ experience based on common knowledge or relevant subjective experiences, in hindsight I consciously emphasized my outsider positionality. Occupying such a position allowed me to actively negotiate aspects of my identity and elicit fuller explanations of taken-for-granted aspects of their aging and late-life immigration experience. More importantly, this naive conceptualization of myself minimized the power differential between myself and the participants. Retrospectively, I question to what extent the collected data were shared

with me because of the aspects of my identities I deliberately accentuated or minimized. Thus, while my deliberate self-representation, as a student and a researcher, may have been instrumental in underscoring my insider identity, this position on the periphery also served as a tool for acceptance by late-life immigrant participants. Conversely, adopting a naive outsider positionality seemed to jeopardize participants' respect towards me. For instance, my probing was at times misinterpreted as ignorance. I worried that spotlighting or illuminating my ignorance, particularly on topics where knowledge was expected (e.g., language, religion, culture, etc.) would be met with disapproval, and therefore have implications on our researcher-interviewee relationship and the gathering of data.

### Summary

Occupying insider status was comparable to “wielding a double-edged sword” (Mercer, 2007). My apparent insider-ness encouraged access, acceptance, and rapport to an extent. Specifically, my youth, gender, student status and cultural attrition appeared to confirm a harmless and vulnerable identity and promoted a view of naivete. These vulnerable identities weakened my power within the researcher-researched relationship but furnished altruistic participation and rich descriptions. However, participants' fear of judgement created by our shared value systems and my social proximity to the community were seeming deterrents to recruitment and data collection.

Throughout this research journey, I discovered that my similarities with participants did not imply sameness. Likewise, our differences did not imply disparity. My initial expectations of a dichotomous split between the insider and outsider was a misleading reification. Instead, my and my participants' subjectivities were complex, fluid and not easily disentangled. This web of complexities had significant implications for the recruitment and co-construction of data.

Appendix N: Vijith's poem and translation

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From Canada,  
29.07.2007

May you be protected by the noble power of Lord Buddha!  
Beloved mother;

My heart beaming with love and affection for my children,  
Hailing from a heroic family from the upcountry  
I bear sorrow and happiness with indifference,  
I write this letter to you, my sacred mother

So, tell me, do you still rise early  
Do you care for yourself appropriately  
Do you patronize the temple on poya  
Tell me mother, what else is new

To see my son, and the little one  
I came to Canada with eyes wide open  
I cannot put into words how I feel right now  
The body is here, but my heart, my mind was left behind

We felt the frigid cold when we came  
Muscles, nerves and bones numbed  
Everywhere, the sight of barren, leafless trees  
Like fleshless skeletons, all around

The summer has made its grand entrance  
no perspiration, just sweltering heat  
Trees and vines, full of foliage,  
have made their delightful return

The once barren forests,  
and the milky white snow fields  
Now taken over by sprouting buds and tender leaves,  
The whole country is a canopy of flowers

Roads meander in different directions  
like the organized chaos of the nervous system  
Food and shelter, and for spending my life  
the comforts of this country are abound

Sky-high buildings with magnificent balconies  
Festivals bustling with revelers  
The Niagara Falls boasts,  
"I give Canada its vigor, and its youthful look"

Brimming with food and clothing,  
around-the-clock markets entice the eyes

Wearing the latest trends,  
youth gallivant the parks

Our beautiful daughter  
gave birth to a baby girl  
She was precious, her name was \_\_\_\_\_  
The house was once again filled with laughter

Our children look after us well  
\_\_\_\_\_ and I carry on in good health  
Yet, my heart continues to ache for the son I left behind  
Early next year, I will come home

We love you, virtuous mother  
Please give my regards to the others,  
Upon the blessings of the Lord Buddha,  
I ask for permission to end this letter

your loving son,

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Sachindri R. Wijekoon

**Post-secondary  
Education and  
Degrees:** University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2006-2010 HBSc

University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2011-2013 MScOT

Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2013-2018 Ph.D.

**Related Work  
Experience** Research Assistant  
Western University  
2014-2018

Teaching Assistant  
Western University  
2013-2017

Occupational Therapist  
Bayshore Rehab  
2014

Care Coordinator  
South West Community Care Access Centre  
2014-2016

**Publications:**

Wijekoon, S., Tran-Nguyen, K. M., Ismail, F., Boulias, C., & Phadke, C. P. (2015). Seasonal variations in outdoor activities in adults with spasticity. *International Journal of Neurology Research*, 1(3), 163-168

Hand, C., Huot, S., Laliberte Rudman, D., & Wijekoon, S. (2017). Qualitative–Geospatial Methods of Exploring Person–Place Transactions in Aging Adults: A Scoping Review. *The Gerontologist*, 57(3), e47-e61.