

# Multiculturalism in an everyday perspective: Immigration and settlement services in Vancouver, Canada



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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 1971, the popular Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced to the House of Commons that Canada would implement multiculturalism as an official government policy. He stated that no singular culture defined Canada, and he therefore chose to accept Canada as a multicultural country<sup>1</sup>. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1988 The Multiculturalism Act was passed in parliament and provided legislative protection to ethnic, religious and racial diversity in Canada. The act was designed to reduce discrimination of minorities and support and encourage implementation of multicultural activities within organizations and institutions<sup>2</sup>. 44 years after his father acknowledged Canada as a multicultural country, Justin Trudeau was elected Prime Minister in 2015. A promise during his election campaign had been to receive 25.000 Syrian refugees in a matter of months. This promise was met with rejoice as well as criticism and concern related to the practical challenges of such a project<sup>3</sup>. Justin Trudeau kept his word, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015, just weeks after he was sworn in, he made headlines in most international media outlets when he showed up at the international airport in Toronto to personally greet the first plane load of refugees from Syria. He told the refugees that they are home and safe as they stepped off the plane, and he proceeded to give them winter coats<sup>4</sup>. This famous incident has become a symbol of Canada as a multicultural country celebrating immigration.

The events described above greatly influenced my decision to choose Canada as a research field to learn about social relationships and everyday encounters between immigrants and non-immigrants and focus particularly on representatives of organizations working to help immigrants integrate and settle in a multicultural society. My purpose for studying social anthropology begun with a strong engagement for immigration policies. Learning about Canada's legal grounding as a multicultural country and open immigration policy sparked my

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-multiculturalism-policy-1971>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/multiculturalism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-syria-refugees-settlement-groups-1.3291959>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/12/world/americas/syria-refugees-arrive-in-canada.html>

curiosity. What does multiculturalism mean for people who use the word as part of their every day vocabulary? Does living in a multicultural society influence immigrants' sociality in relation to transnational ties, citizenship, community participation and their experiences of discrimination and racism?

In this thesis I will argue that to the people who live and work in a multicultural environment, multiculturalism is something that happens in meetings between people and anchored in an understanding of tolerance between people. In my empirical observations I found that a multicultural society does not necessarily mean that people from different origins come together and engage in creating ties and relationship across cultures and ethnicities, even though many take the opportunity to do so. In fact, in the multicultural society where I did my research, some ethnic communities had become so large that immigrants did not need to socialize outside of these communities. As I will argue in this thesis, based on my ethnographic data, creating multicultural ties is a choice and multiculturalism is about tolerating the choice that people make, even if they choose to remain isolated within their own ethnic community. Multiculturalism is about much more than the utopian idea of people living together in harmony, which I will argue is a false narrative that has led to the conclusion amongst scholars and politicians that multiculturalism has "failed". Into this misconstrued narrative also falls the discussion about race, culture and racism. Race and culture are two words that are closely intertwined. In this thesis I discuss the misunderstandings of race and culture and the worries of some scholars that romanticized multicultural societies may present an idea that racism will or can disappear. I argue that these misunderstandings of race and culture present yet another distorted perception on what culture, multiculturalism and racism are, and therefore help promote the false narrative of multiculturalism as a failed political project. The thesis is about the multicultural society as viewed from my interlocutors' point of view, the average working immigrant, rather than the state, and I discuss multiculturalism as the mundane household-concept it was to them.

This thesis is written based on empirical data that I collected during a fieldwork period from 9 January, 2018 until 1 July, 2018. After I had landed on the decision to conduct fieldwork on the West Coast of Canada, the next logistical puzzle was where to find a place to live. Vancouver, the largest city of British Columbia, has in the last decade been characterised by an ever-growing real-estate market. The prices continue to peak, and the city has become an unaffordable place to live for the average working man and woman. Naturally, I thought, most immigrants are not able to afford to live in such a place, and neither am I. Having never



been to Canada, and not having any contacts in the country either, I turned to google to answer my questions about the surroundings of Vancouver and where immigrants choose to settle. Surrey is a city located just short of 30km South-East of Vancouver. Surrey was, and still is, the subject of heavy urbanization during the last couple of decades. It is marketed as an urban, affordable suburb outside of Vancouver, but still accessible through the Skytrain, an underground and above-ground train that uses about 40 minutes from Surrey to Vancouver. Surrey is home to over 500 000 people, a number that is expected to continue to grow. Over 50% of the population is recognised as “visible minorities”, a phrase I will revisit and further explain in Chapter three<sup>5</sup>. In Surrey, people of Chinese, Korean and Punjabi origin make up the largest ethnic communities. Arabic speaking people is a category that is expected to continue to grow due to the refugee-crisis in the Middle-East, and Prime Minister Trudeau’s promise to take in as many Syrian refugees as possible. This is the city that I chose as my fieldwork location.

### The anthropological method

A distinct feature, and the strength, of anthropological method is that we rely on long-term fieldwork. This is a way of doing research, where anthropologists insert themselves into an environment to study a specific topic, phenomenon or society, and the people who live in it. Anthropologists collect data using primarily the method that is called participant observation, which is, as implied by its name, a mix of participating in the society one studies and observe happenings, phenomena and relationships. In some settings, the anthropologist may be a quiet observer, while in other settings, the anthropologist may be heavily involved and participate in surrounding events. Three elements are key in handling the data that emerges: the fieldwork experience as experienced by the anthropologist herself, the object of study – the lives of the people that you meet and form relationships with and the ethnographic accounts that are produced as a result of the fieldwork (Jenkins 1994:433). An anthropologist’s most important, yet challenging task is to balance these key elements to be able to present the data collected in an ethical and proper way. A characteristic of fieldwork is that the anthropologist insert herself into an unfamiliar environment. The aim is not to judge by any means what the anthropologist finds through interacting with the locals, but to learn to understand the values,

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<sup>5</sup> 2016 Census Profile of Surrey: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915004&Geo2=CD&Code2=5915&Data=Count&SearchText=Surrey&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&TABID=1>

categories and practices of her interlocutors. By learning to understand these, the anthropologist aims to be able to produce insightful ethnography about the environment in which she was situated. The anthropologist in the field can be described as an apprentice (Jenkins 1994). The apprentice, like the anthropologist, is a novice arriving in an unfamiliar environment with the objective to learn and experience how things are done. My research field was an office in an organization. Jenkins's description of the anthropologist as an apprentice, a novice, was something I used to describe my role in the office to the staff working there. An apprentice is a well-known concept, and therefore it was helpful to describe myself as one.

As mentioned above, my research field was an organization. The environment in which one does research, especially when an organizational one, influence the research process and may make methodological adjustments and innovations necessary (Garsten and Nyqvist 2013: 1). A formal organization can make a good research field for anthropologists, as they house a great deal of informal social interaction. This informal social interaction, as well as informal processes and structures of an organization may be even more significant for your research than the formal ones. When doing research within organizations, observing the everyday happenings and conversations is key (Garsten and Nyqvist 2013: 12-14). When I first arrived at the office of the organization, I was given my own office with my own desk. At first, I shared a desk with one employee. When this employee later left the organization, I spent more time using desks in other offices that multiple employees shared. This way, I was able to observe every-day happenings and aspects of the organization, as well as having a "station" where people could approach me if they wanted to. It also simplified writing fieldnotes by memory, as I had the opportunity to participate in, and observe conversations, during for instance lunch, and then go straight back to my desk to write it down. I also attended classes where I mostly observed and were therefore able to make notes immediately as things happened. In a few, specific cases I used a voice-recorder during interviews. These are found in the last part of chapter four, and in chapter five.

Garsten and Nyqvist explain that by studying formal organizations, many anthropologists now study "sideways" (2013: 14, see also Hannerz 2006). Studying sideways enables the anthropologist to study their peers and facilitate studies of professional groups. It also presents other concerns in relations to the anthropologist's informants. The researcher and the informant, or interlocutor, may share some professional background, which can confuse the distinction of vocabulary in relation to emic and etic expressions (2013: 15).

Several of my interlocutors had degrees in social sciences as they were employed in an organization working with people in vulnerable situations. In this thesis, I discuss multiculturalism as the mundane household-concept it was to them, which one could argue is a result of their education and line of work. However, I will argue that multiculturalism was not only employed and discussed in my conversation with employees in the office, but it was a word that seemed to pop up in many contexts, also when speaking to people outside of the office. I learned that multiculturalism was a word and a concept that was present, familiar and actively used in their everyday lives due to the environment and society that they lived in, and not a concept they felt the need to discuss due to my presence. Garsten and Nyqvist discuss the importance of reflexivity, especially when studying “sideways” as one often does when doing fieldwork within formal organizations. It is essential to be able to reflect over one’s position in social space, and in relation to the interlocutor (2013: 15). They write: “To be able to observe critically, to reflect upon and grapple with one’s social position, is a crucial dimension of ethnographic fieldwork” (2013: 15). No person or anthropologist arrive in the field free of all preconceptions and assumptions about what one is about to encounter. Anthropologists, as all people in general, are predisposed with conscious and un-conscious assumptions that shape what we see and how we interpret what we see (Jenkins 1994:442). Therefore, it is crucial for the anthropologist to be mindful of her own biased assumptions, and reflexive about her social position when entering the field, whether she is studying up, down or sideways. Writing ethnography is often about realizing where you were predisposed, misunderstood the situation, or just plain wrong, something that became very important while searching for a place to live in the field, which I will explain further in chapter three.

Doing fieldwork in organizations as a researcher can also prove to be challenging when gaining access and explaining the research methods used, and the purpose of your presence, which I will discuss more in depth below. Later, I will discuss ethics in regard to anonymization, which can also present particular challenges when studying “sideways”.

### Challenges during fieldwork

I reached out to a settlement organization called Options Community Services before I started my journey to Canada. Options Community Services is a non-profit organization that operates out of several offices in Surrey, and offer services for homeless, victims of domestic abuse and other disadvantaged people in society. They also offer services for immigrants and are concerned with helping newcomers acquire necessary language skills, ensuring their access to

information, connecting them to community resources, building their knowledge of life in Canada and enabling labour market participation. Immigrant Services was the division I contacted to ask if I could visit their offices as part of the practical part my research project. The answer I received was very positive, and the manager gave me permission to participate in every class I wished, as long as they had some sort of knowledge or control over where and when I was participating. After my arrival, I was given my own desk in an office and a large amount of information about how the organization worked. They also needed to register me and had me fill out their paperwork as a practicum student, which included providing them with a police report, proving that I had a clean criminal record. This was important due to the presence of vulnerable clients in their offices, such as refugees escaping war-torn countries. They also asked that I did not sit down and interview clients one-on-one. This was not an issue for me, as I wished to interact mostly with staff and volunteers, who I discovered were all immigrants themselves. Many clients also spoke very little English, and communicated with staff in their native language, which would have made possible interviews difficult. However, I had permission to attend every class or service as I wished, and my observations amongst clients come from these situations. When I arrived, it proved difficult to explain exactly what I wanted to do or how I wanted to do it. I could not provide them with a specific list of interview objects and formalized interview questions when they asked, and the research questions in my research proposal that I presented them with, were broad and not clearly defined. I found out that the manager of the department I was with had recently been encouraged to work with researchers and was eager for a bilateral relationship, I could learn from them, but they could also learn from me. The only problem being that I was an anthropology-student and not a certified researcher in any position to provide analyses on the spot. Being a foreign student researcher, without any predefined answers as to which directions I wished to move toward, ethical issues arose for both Options Community Services and myself. How would they know that what I write is anywhere close to, in their eyes, an accurate presentation, and not just plain wrong – fact-wise? Anthropologists working with organizations cannot expect to be given access simply on the basis of blind trust from the outset. I found myself in an ethical dilemma because, as an anthropology student, I am under strict ethical obligations towards my interlocutors, and I could under no circumstances share any of my research notes with the staff or leadership of the organization. However, I understood Options Community Services' concerns as eagerness to help me learn as much as possible and help me to make sure I did not misunderstand, rather than a desire to control the outcome of my research. They wished to use this opportunity to learn about themselves and

become a better organization, to which it felt unhelpful to ask them to wait 18 months until I finish my thesis. After a couple of weeks, where my skills in explaining anthropological methods and ethical obligations were put to the test, we were able to agree on a solution. I gave a presentation for the entire staff a few months in to my fieldwork, about who I was, what I wanted to do, who and what I wanted to observe, and who I wished to talk to. This was a solution that proved extremely helpful to me as well, as I was able to explain to everyone what my research was about and meet potential interlocutors. I also gave a presentation at the end of my stay, to explain what I had been part of, and how I had experienced it.

In sum, working with organizations when doing anthropological fieldwork can prove challenging. As a researcher one is under strict obligation to ensure the independence of one's research. However, researchers who wish to study organizations must be understanding of the fact that organizations may have requests or requirements that needs to be met, and in many cases, they may want to learn something from the experience as well. Anthropologists needs to be mindful of what they can offer, without compromising ethical research guidelines. In this case the solution was to sit down with the organization and discuss why one can or cannot meet these requirements. We were able to meet in the middle and reach a solution that satisfied all parties, to which I am forever grateful, as I could not have written this thesis without Options Community Services' generosity.

As mentioned above, my interlocutors were mostly staff, and a few volunteers. I got to know them while at the office and attending their classes. My key interlocutors I also got to know outside of the office and were invited into their homes. In the beginning, as I demonstrated in the above section about my difficulties conveying the aim of my research to the organization, it was slightly difficult to find my place. Some staff would jokingly refer to me as a spy, and I indeed felt like one in the beginning, which I found uncomfortable. Anthropologists are encouraged to "blend in" with the society and valuable data may be found in situations where your interlocutors stop seeing you as the "anthropologist", and themselves as the "research-subject", and instead become two ordinary people hanging out in a relaxed setting. However, it is crucial that your interlocutors are adequately informed of your intentions of being there, and your ethical obligations towards them and what they tell you. I was at times concerned that my interlocutors had forgotten my reasons for being where I was and doing what I was doing. My concerns proved unfounded. As an eager student gathering her first data and struggling to find the right questions, I would ask a follow-up question during a conversation and was answered in a joking tone: "Are you doing your research-shit

now?” My interlocutors were all informed verbally and gave verbal consent to participate in my research.

### Anonymization and ethics

In recent years, anthropological field research has come closer to home or the familiar. Anthropologists more often do research in urban areas studying societies that are more similar to that of their own, or as mentioned above, study their peers, or “sideways” (Garsten and Nyqvist 2013, Hannerz 2006). MaryCarol Hopkins (1993) sheds light on the ethical issues that arises by doing this kind of fieldwork. Previously, anthropologists of earlier generations have been criticized for studying “down”, studying societies or communities that are not able to defend themselves, nor give proper consent to participate in such a study. The shift towards studying societies that are closer to that of our own, means that our interlocutors are literate and may very well read what we write (Hopkins 1993: 123). This brings about a new set of ethical concerns that may challenge anthropologists’ traditional code of ethics. The rule has been to protect our informants first and foremost, but still, we must provide useful data. To protect confidentiality and ensure anonymity has been a cornerstone in anthropology to the degree that we routinely anonymize all locations, names and individuals. However, anonymization becomes more complex when our interlocutors have the opportunity to read what we write, and also may want their work, or in this case, the name of their organization to be known. Anthropologists can make sure that names and locations are as difficult as possible to trace, but we cannot protect our interlocutors from reading our work and recognizing elements from their own life that they would feel embarrassed about. The difficult and complex challenge is to use data that one sees as important for the study, yet protect our interlocutors and make sure that they are represented with outmost respect. Especially when doing fieldwork in urban societies as anthropologists, we should expect that our work may be read by our own interlocutors and maybe even their friends and family (Hopkins 1993). Hopkins presents a familiar ethical dilemma when producing her ethnography:

(...) none of what I have written about is likely to present them with any serious legal problems; none of it is going to have direct, tangible repercussions such as the loss of a job, house, or political power. But there is a constraint, a moral constraint, because if they were to read it, or if their friends were to read it, I would choose my data, and my words more carefully (Hopkins 1993:126).

This is an ethical dilemma I have battled with throughout the writing of this thesis. It is my main concern to demonstrate outmost respect and gratefulness towards the people who have

made this thesis possible. However, doing fieldwork in a small and diverse environment such as a department in an organization, where the majority also has expressed interest in reading the finished thesis, anonymity becomes a very complex and challenging issue. There are only one or two employees from China, or India for instance, or maybe only one came to Canada on their own and so on. These are all characteristics that would make them recognizable to their colleagues. It is also known amongst my interlocutors where I spent most of my time, and with whom. I have chosen to not name any of my interlocutors' country of origin to help protect their anonymity. I have mentioned the general area that the countries are positioned, such as South-East Asia for instance, to provide clarity and background information to explain empirical data. With the exception of one situation in particular, I have given my interlocutors generic names to avoid leaving clues as to their country of origin. In some cases, empirical observations I use as illustrations are a result of a combinations of events and individuals, but not in any way that is significant for the overall analysis and conclusions. Every person mentioned in this thesis is given characteristics that is not necessarily drawn from only one individual.

Hopkins (1993) explains that some anthropologists have urged others to only write what is acceptable to our informants or only what will benefit them or their community. Others have urged anthropologists to promote rights and welfare to those we study (1993: 123-124). This adds a new dimension to an already complex issue. I am sure that most anthropologists are interested in the wellbeing of our interlocutors that we form caring relationships with. But if we are expected to promote welfare and rights on their behalf, we would need to expose their true identity (Hopkins 1993). Also, to which extent can anthropologists censor their data in the name of protecting our informants and still provide useful in-depth ethnography? Is it anthropologists' job to advocate on behalf of communities they do research in? As anthropologists continue to do fieldwork in "literate" urban communities, where their informants may very well have a degree in social science themselves, the obvious answer is that they do not need advocates. My interlocutors would have no problems publishing their own academic texts countering the arguments made in this one. However, it is important to keep in mind that by publishing an ethnography I am representing my interlocutors in a certain way, although they are perfectly capable of representing themselves. Options Community Services is a real organization in the real city of Surrey, located outside of Vancouver. I was asked to not anonymize the organization or the location of it, a wish I have chosen to respect. Options Community Services is a large

organization with, as mentioned before, several departments and offices. During my stay with the organization I was careful to explain that I cannot guarantee that they would like or agree with everything I say in my thesis or with how they are represented, although I do hope I have made them justice. My admiration for the people working within the organization is heartfelt and I hope it shines through in this text, but I have made no conscious decision to censor data to create an idealistic image of a community.

### Theoretical Framework

Throughout this thesis, I draw on work done by several anthropologists that has published extensively on the topic of multiculturalism and migration. I have also made use of supportive theories by some sociologists that have published work explicitly on Canada, dealing with questions of multiculturalism and immigration. I see theory as a tool to help analyse data and underscore my arguments. The specific theories and analytical concepts I draw on will be further explained in the chapter overview below.

### Chapter overview

In chapter two I discuss how transnationalism has become a concept heavily debated amongst scholars doing research on migration. The Canadian government has recognized Canada as a multicultural country much due to the longstanding traditions with liberal immigration policies. I see it fitting to start off this thesis by discussing my interlocutors ties to their home countries. The majority of my interlocutors were, as mentioned, immigrants who all migrated at different times and situations in their lives. I dedicate this chapter to get to know the stories of some of them more in depth, and especially in relation to their transnational identity. I build on ethnography concerning three different individuals whom I met during fieldwork, who all maintain different kinds of ties to their countries of origin and in some way maintain or strive for a transnational lifestyle. By discussing their ties to their countries of origin, their feelings about life in Canada also become clear, as well as their thoughts on Canadian culture and multiculturalism. I also draw on Ghassan Hage's (1997) definitions of building a sense of homeliness, to better understand where my interlocutors are in the process of making themselves feel 'at home' in Canada.

I make use of Steven Vertovec's (2001) overview of key texts that arose in the 1990's, discussing the ways migrants maintain ties and relationships across borders. I further explain



the approach to the concept of transnationalism by referring to Schiller, Basch & Blanc's (1995) argument that immigrants are no longer seen as "uprooted", people who pick up and leave their entire life behind to start a completely new life in a new country, they are "transmigrants". I introduce Peter Kivisto (2001) who criticize this way of thinking about transnationalism. He argues that Schiller, Basch and Blanc introduce transnationalism as a new concept, and therefore ignore earlier forms of transnational ties amongst migrants, which should be discussed in relation to contemporary transnationalism. In part two of this chapter I bring the discussion on to the topic of integration and assimilation. Are assimilation and transnationalism two contradictory concepts? Peter Kivisto (2001) argues that they are two concepts under the same umbrella, instead of parts of an opposing dichotomy. He argues that assimilation has become a berated word, highly associated with ideas of forced homogenization, and is therefore perceived as something incompatible or inconsistent with transnationalism. Steven Vertovec (2001) discuss transnationalism as a fluid identity, and I make use of Rogers Brubaker's (2001) explanations of assimilation and integration to help answer the question presented above. My argument is that societies are not something static and unchanging, and therefore transnational migrants do not take part in two separate, static worlds at separate times, but are rather part of two evolving and changing societies just as their identity and personality is changing and evolving during the migration process. The sense of being transnational, or which society one "belongs" to more, will vary and differ in intensity and importance over different periods in migrants' lives (Vertovec 2001), but also from day to day, and according to the different situations the person finds him or herself in. To be fully integrated does not mean to have cut off all ties with one's country of origin.

Multiculturalism is a word that has been much contested and debated amongst scholars, but also amongst politicians, journalists and people. In chapter three I make an effort to describe the development of multicultural policies in Canada and the public and academic debates on multiculturalism. Most importantly, I describe how the word multiculturalism was used by my interlocutors and what it meant to them, in theory and practice. For my interlocutors, multiculturalism was of course about immigration and politics, but the underlying essence was about tolerance between people.

To explain the scholarly contributions to the academic debate on multiculturalism, I start with discussing the meaning the word culture has had for anthropologists in the debate. Giualiana Prato (2009), Terence Turner (1993) and Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1997) all discuss the definition of culture, when talking about multiculturalism, as a reason that

anthropologists did not jump at the first chance to join a debate about the topic in the 90's. Anthropologists did not want to present, or contribute to presenting, culture as something static and un-changing, almost as an object that could be owned by a certain group of people. Terence Turner (1993) points out that the same reason is exactly why anthropologists should contribute, and why they would have important and significant contributions that needs to be made. In recent years, anthropologists, such as Steven Vertovec (1998, 2010), for instance, have published further on the topic of multiculturalism. However, in this chapter I choose to lean heavily on Will Kymlicka's work (2010). Will Kymlicka is a Canadian philosopher who has published extensively on the topic of multiculturalism, and in his 2010 article he describes what he calls a master-narrative that has been created by several parties believing that multiculturalism was a failed project, and we are now, in fact, in an era of post-multiculturalism. He argues that this master-narrative is false and based on a misunderstanding of what multiculturalism truly is about. I argue that multiculturalism is not a synonym for a harmonic society where people of different ethnicities live happily ever after side by side. Multiculturalism also does not mean lack of immigrant struggles, integration or discrimination among people. It is a set of policies and attitudes that aspire to make minorities visible before the state and create better, and more equal relationships in this sense (see Prato 2009, Kymlicka 2010). Amongst my interlocutors, multiculturalism was a common word in their vocabulary, and used almost daily when talking about their society. They recognize that living and working so closely with people of many different cultural backgrounds present different challenges, but they also recognize and valued the benefits. I came to understand that when they used the word multiculturalism, it often referred to tolerance as an important characteristic of a multicultural society. Tolerate and learn from meeting and interacting with new people of different cultural backgrounds, but also tolerate that people may choose not to do so and live mostly within their own community. The second part of this argument will be further emphasized in chapter four. Multiculturalism is certainly about politics, but for my interlocutors it is also a way of living and a corner stone of their society.

Chapter four move on to discuss citizenship amongst immigrants. Immigrants often become long-time residents in the countries they migrate to, and by doing so they contribute to the society by paying taxes, participating in the labour market, educating their children, and in general participating in the social and economic life of the society. However, they are not able to gain access to public and political platforms where decisions are made on topics that can affect them greatly, due to the fact that one must be a legal Canadian citizen to vote in

political elections or run for office. Many immigrants choose not to become a legal citizen for varying reasons, such as laws of inheritance or restrictions regarding double citizenship in their home country, for instance. Are immigrants excluded from speaking their minds and being able to influence decisions and services that affect them directly? I draw on Steven Vertovec's (1998) explanations about citizenship and participation to help answer this question. In this chapter one also gets to know the organization I was studying more closely, as I use empirical observations to demonstrate the level of participation immigrants were able to obtain through such organizations. I argue that citizenship can be about more than fitting the legal requirements, and obtaining a passport, through local settlements organizations like Options Community Services, immigrants are heard, and able to affect decisions related to the services they are offered by the organization and how the organization carry out these services. I connect this level of participation to ideas of local citizenship and social citizenship that Vertovec (1998) discusses. In this chapter we also learn more explicitly how the staff of the organization explain multiculturalism to their clients, and so the argument from chapter three about tolerance as an important characteristic in a multicultural society is underscored. In the second part of chapter four, I focus on the staff who works in what they referred to as the "settlement industry", and what outside factors the "settlement industry" competes with in terms of integrating and settling clients. These factors in turn affect the employees who work in these sectors. I ask questions about their motivations for staying in such a job, while drawing on Lisa Malkki's (2015) work on "The need to help" amongst humanitarian workers, to help explain their seemingly altruistic motives.

In chapter five, I deal with culture and race. My interlocutors' way of speaking about race surprised me, to the extent that it deserved its own chapter. They displayed what seemed like a relaxed attitude towards race, and different vocabulary was considered as offensive when speaking about another person's origin, than what I was used to. In this chapter, I make an effort to demonstrate this attitude through the empirical observations made during fieldwork. In Chapter three we go through the "rise and fall" of multiculturalism (see Kymlicka 2010, Vertovec 2010), which Kymlicka ties to the master narrative created about multiculturalism as a failed project. In this chapter, I explore the meanings of race and culture, and argue how misunderstandings of these concepts can lead to further confusion and help promote the false narrative of multiculturalism as a failed utopian idea. Kamala Visweswaran (1998) argues that culture has become a word used to describe differences between people in society, and in many cases the differences help describe "us" and "them". The word culture has become confused

and is now often used as a replacement, to avoid using the word “race” that has become too closely tied to the word “racism”. Visweswaran’s arguments are also supported by those of sociologists Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley (2011). They argue that this shift away from the, now seemingly politically incorrect word, “race”, has led to a profound misunderstanding of the word or concept of “culture” as something one can use to disguise racism. This shift can create an understanding that we are in a “post-race” era, and Lentin and Titley are concerned that this may give the impression that we are indeed in a “post-racism” era, and that racism is something that cannot survive, or does not exist in what is perceived as a multicultural society. I argue that these misunderstandings about race and culture present a distorted perception on what culture, multiculturalism and racism are. There is no such thing as an “object” called culture, and “it” does not belong to certain groups of people. Racism is present in all societies, and the presumption that racism cannot exist in a multicultural society further accentuates the deep cracks in the incorrect and simplistic narrative of multiculturalism, as further explained in chapter three, as a harmonic society where cultural interaction happens through endless cultural festivals, music and food. I also ask whether race and culture could be discussed so freely and relaxed by my interlocutors because they are on some sort of neutral ground, whether that neutral ground is Canada in general, or the offices of Options Community Services.

The common factor for these chapters is that they say something about the multicultural everyday life of my interlocutors, and if the multicultural society they live in influence their sociality in relation to transnational ties, citizenship and participation, and race and discrimination. Transnationalism speaks about their identity and sense of belonging, citizenship speaks about participation and becoming part of a society, and race and culture say something about the way they talk about ethnicity. In this thesis, I discuss multiculturalism historically in Canada, politically and scholarly, but most importantly I discuss multiculturalism as the mundane household-concept it was for my interlocutors.

# CHAPTER TWO

## **Transnationality and sense of belonging**

Migration has, for many decades, been a topic that is heavily researched by scholars, especially within social sciences. Steven Vertovec (2001) explains that since the early sociology of migration in the 1920's and 1930's migration research has tended to focus on the ways migrants adapt to, or are socially excluded from their host society. A part of migration research has also paid attention to the various ways migrants maintain contact with people and institutions in their home countries, for example in the form of letters and remittances. In the 1990's several key texts displayed an approach to migration that focused on and discussed the relationships that migrants maintain across borders. Transnationality was not a completely new concept that was introduced in the academic discussion that arose in the 1990's, but the approach to the concept of transnationality represented a new way of thinking about modern migrants, identity, transnationalism and integration. Vertovec described the reasons for this shift as the result of rapid development of travel and communication technologies, as well as shifting political and economic circumstances in both sending and receiving countries. Sending countries has developed a more positive view on their emigrants, and migrant remittances has shown impact on local economies and labour markets (2001:574).

Transnationality is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “extending or going beyond national boundaries”<sup>6</sup> Schiller, Basch & Blanc (1995) described modern transnationalism as a way of viewing contemporary migration in their article called “From Immigrant to Transmigrant”. They argue that immigrants are no longer seen as “uprooted”, people who pick up and leave their entire life behind to start a completely new life in a new country. They refer to contemporary migrants as “transmigrants”, which they describe as: “Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (1995:48) The migration process does not necessarily put an end to their life in their home country, and start a new, independent life in

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transnationalism>

the new country, as separate bulks on a linear line. Peter Kivisto (2001) criticized Schiller, Basch & Blanc and accused them of introducing transnationalism as something brand new, when in reality, transnationalism has existed for a very long time, and contemporary and previous migration needs to be compared and seen in light of each other, instead of viewed as a dichotomy. Steven Vertovec (2001) agrees that connections across borders is not something new, but recognizes that contemporary migration displays different, and more intense transnational ties than before. Vertovec also points out that transnationalism has become an over-used term and is being used to describe too wide a phenomenon, such as tourism for instance.

This chapter will discuss scholarly perspectives on transnationalism and contemporary migration and in the first section, I will describe three persons I encountered during my field research, and the ties they maintain to their home countries. I will draw on Ghassan Hage's (1997) definition of building a feeling of 'home' to help understand the transnational ties they maintain. The second section of this chapter will discuss the relationship between transnationalism, integration and assimilation.

### Jim

Jim is a man in his 30's who grew up in South Asia. Two years ago, he migrated to Canada to start a life with his Canadian wife, whom he met in his home country. Upon arriving his wife left him and is no longer present in his life. He is therefore struggling financially and personally to try to create a life by himself on the other side of the world from family and friends in his country of origin. One thing he learned when he migrated is to always plan how long you are going to be out and about. He always brings food and water in case he gets hungry, so he doesn't have to spend money. One day, when we were walking through Stanley Park in Vancouver, he told me how he made money when he first arrived in Canada. It was mid-March and the sun was a pleasant surprise. Jim is very open about his financial problems, and that he struggles to find sufficient and appropriate work in Canada. He tells me that he is very happy that even though he struggles to make ends meet, at least he "does not have to sleep outside". It becomes obvious that this is a situation he deems plausible. Before moving to Surrey, Jim lived in a small town close to the US border. Coming from a big city, the small town felt claustrophobic, but he tried to get to know his new life the best way he knew how. He engaged in English classes and treasured the network of his wife's family. In English class he met a guy who told him that you can make money off picking berries on a farm and that anyone could get this kind of job. With

no other job opportunities in sight, he picked berries for a month. They paid per bucket you pick, and eventually he had scraped together enough money to buy a cheap car. While working on the farm, all the pickers lived in tents. Jim had never camped before and learned from the other pickers how to live and cook while living in a tent. They picked for twelve hours a day, from midnight until noon the next morning. They had to pick in the night, as the cold temperature makes the berries hard and easier to pick. Jim shrivels from the thought of picking berries at night in the winter with bare hands. In his home country Jim was a professional musician and played in several bands in clubs and pubs around the capital. He has a degree in musicology and has no experience working other jobs. He now works a few hours every week in a fast food diner, and sometimes teaches kids how to play guitar. The teaching job pays well, but the hours are insufficient.

We walked into a gift shop located in the middle of the park and he chuckled when I ended up buying the same souvenir in the gift store as he did when his wife took him there two years ago. I said that the souvenir made me think of my mother, and the conversation shifted to the topic of loneliness. Jim lost his only network in Canada when his wife left him. He often goes to Vancouver, not to buy anything, but to kill time; walking around makes time pass. He sometimes rides the train to work instead of taking the car, because then he gets to see other people. He tells me: "I have the car so there is no problem going anywhere, the problem is that I don't know where to go"

While walking, it slowly begins to drizzle with rain. He asks me if I am excited to go back to my country. I tell him that I think I will miss some things about Canada, and I don't feel as homesick now as I have done the last couple of months, but that I have a lot of good things to go home to, so I am excited for that day to come.

Jim: "Do you still feel like you belong in your country?"

Sigrid: "Yes"

Jim: "You're lucky"

Sigrid: "Don't you?"

Jim: "I don't feel like I belong anywhere. I am just in between."

He tells me that he does not feel like he belongs in his home country anymore, and he does not miss it. But he does not belong in Canada either. He is always in between statuses. He no longer lives in the country where he was born and raised, but he is also not a permanent resident of

Canada. It is obvious that the status that comes with the permanent resident papers have great meaning to him. Still, he is not sure that he will stay in Canada forever. Maybe he will move to another country after staying in Canada for some years. He wishes to eventually become a Canadian citizen and then be able to travel with the freedom that the Canadian passport provides. I ask him if he misses home, and all his family. His answer is that this is his life now. If he were to give up and go home, he would have to tell everyone he failed. He came to Canada for two reasons: To start a life with his wife, and to try to expand his career. The latter is the only reason he has left.

As it turns out, his career possibilities are entangled with his immigration status in Canada. He and his band has been invited to go to Los Angeles and work with a great producer to record music. Jim is depressed by this, because since he is on a working Visa in Canada, there is a limit to how many times he can cross the border. He has been applying for permanent residency in Canada for almost a year but struggles to navigate the bureaucracy surrounding such a process. Receiving permanent resident status would not make him a Canadian citizen but would allow him to cross the border more frequently. To record music in Los Angeles would be a great opportunity to expand his career, which is one of the reasons he chose to leave his home country. He migrated in part because he wanted to experience more mobility and become transnational but has in all reality become trapped by his immigration status. He is a person who talks a lot about his dreams for the future but has become physically stuck in the present because of the bureaucracy of immigration.

### Sofia

Sofia is one of two ladies from outside the coast of Africa, that I shared an apartment with for a month. She came to Canada on a student visa and have been in the country for four months. Her native language is Creole French, and her English is not perfect, which makes her studies difficult sometimes. She is 22 years old, and one of seven kids, who all live in her home country. She wishes to stay in Canada permanently, as there are no opportunities for her back home, she tells me. Even if she were to get a good education, her country is so corrupt that careers are awarded those who knows the right people, and not those who work hard. Sofia is always facetimeing, texting or calling her family, friends and boyfriend in her home country. Even though the time difference is 12 hours, they always find time to talk. She gets in the shower while raising her voice so whoever is on the other end of the line can hear her over the water running. One of the first nights we lived together Sofia talked to me about what it was like being



so far away from her family and home country. She works at a fast food diner and was working the daytime shift on New Years Eve. When it was noon in Canada, it was midnight in her home country and her dad, who was of poor health, gave her a call to tell her about the progression of his illness and wish her a happy New Year. Her boss refused her to take a break and did not allow her to answer the call from her family. Eventually Sofia started crying and her employer gave in. Sofia says she hates her boss, who has no empathy and lacks the ability to put herself in another person's shoes. She works eight hour shifts three times a week, and is constantly asked to work extra, as she says, "They don't want to hire, and they don't want to pay". The evening she celebrated the New Year with the other roommate and her friend. Sofia tells me she doesn't have any friends, and she doesn't respond when I ask her why. Her roommate had been upset on New Years eve as well, to which Sofia had put on music and made her dance with her. "Whenever we feel sad we just put on some music and dance". "We don't have a life of our own here".

Sofia physically resides in Surrey, Canada, but is very much socially embedded in her community in her home country. In Canada she has a job she dislikes, a school to go to and a roof over her head. In her home country she has what she calls the "life of her own". She is a perfect example of a "transmigrant", who has decided that the best opportunities for her future is in a different country, but that does not mean she has to emotionally and mentally leave her social community. Jim however, doesn't talk much about his life back home, and never tells me about his own family. His future is not connected to only one place and one nation. He wants to become a citizen of Canada and live a mobile life across international borders and his home country is his back up plan if everything else fails.

### Peter

Peter is a man in his early 30's who came to Canada with his family when he was a teenager. His family had searched to create a life outside their home country, which is in East-Asia, for a while and lived as illegal immigrants in another country when he was younger. They realized they would never be able to become permanent residents and moved back to their home country. Eventually, they learned of the opportunities in Canada and decided to move to the west coast. This journey has greatly shaped Peter's childhood. When he moved back to his home country the other kids in his school considered him a foreigner, because he had been away for a couple of years. He was also taller than the other kids and struggled to fit in. When they later decided to move to Canada, he was extremely upset about changing his entire life around yet again and

he even ran away from home to show his dismay with his parents' decision. He cried the entire flight. When they landed in Vancouver and started driving, he remembers all he could see was East Asian people. He thought to himself: this is not so bad! As they kept driving he saw all these Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese restaurants and he thought: "This is just like home! Maybe this is a city I can call home". Then they kept driving and buildings turned in to houses, and houses turned in to trees, and the trees finally met the mountains. He got out of the car and all he could see was white people. "Fuck". On the second day of school he brought home a friend. He was the only one that was willing to befriend a non-English speaking kid because he had no friends himself.

Peter was eager to learn the language and fit in with the rest of the kids. In college he decided to venture out and make friends outside of the Eastern Asian community. During his 20's he travelled a lot and now has a big network of friends both in Canada, and in different parts of the world. He once described the first phase of moving to another country as being under water. "You just need oxygen and you are struggling to get to land. Every second of every hour hurts. But when you finally make it out of the water, it's a beach".

He claims he has developed insight and tolerance by immigrating into a multicultural society. Coming to Canada opened his eyes to multiculturalism and homosexuality. He has repeatedly asserted that he used to have homophobic and racist tendencies because that's what his home country taught him. He gave up his citizenship to obtain a Canadian one and internalized Canadian cultural values, such as tolerance for people who were different from himself, during high school and college. He is adamant that people who migrate to Canada will learn, because the presence of multiple cultures and ethnicities are so profound that you have no other choice than to get to know other people and religions. When asked if racism is present in Canada he said that it is, but people who are racist or homophobes are only like that because they don't know these people. They will not last in a society like Canada.

His sense of Canada as home is expressed when he explains that the only times he visits his home country is if someone in his family dies. He has grown to love the country that he was so apprehensive about when he first arrived and this seems to be very much due to the diversity that he enjoys so much.

Peter: "Diversity is so interesting though. Why would you ever go back to a place where everyone's the same?"

Peter: "Canada is the only place in the world where multiculturalism works!"

Sigrid: “Does it though?”

Peter: “Yes!”

Peter: “Who doesn’t like Canadian culture?!”

Sigrid: “What is Canadian culture though?”

Peter: “That is still in the making”

Peter says he feels more attached to Canadian culture, but there will always be a part of him that is Asian at core, and he still follows news and politics in his home country and feels sentimental as his home country progresses. Still, he feels more in touch with Canadian values and inclusiveness. He is excited for the future of Canada. “Canadian youth will have multiculturalism imprinted in them”. Peter sees himself as a well integrated immigrant, which I understand is someone who has understood and embraced Canadian values, become proficient in the language and is well embedded in Canadian society. His social life is mainly situated in Canada.

Jim, Sofia and Peter all have different relationships and connections to their lives in their home country. Jim seems to be thinking more ahead, and looking towards the future, which he hopes will give him a Canadian passport. Sofia is very attached to her home country and most of her daily socializing is through communication with family and friends that still reside in her home country. Peter has embraced life in Canada, but still considers himself to be of double nationality even though his life mostly takes place in Canada. One can argue that they are all in the process of building oneself a “home” or a “homely space”. Ghassan Hage (1997) suggests a definition of home-building as “*the building of the feeling of being ‘at home’*” (1997: 2, italics in original). Peter, Sofia and Jim were not actually in the process of building houses to create a homely space for themselves but migrating to a new country involve a process of making oneself feel at home in one’s new environment. Ghassan Hage argues that to successfully build the feeling of being at home, there are four key elements: security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope (1997: 2). Peter, having been in Canada since he was a child has already achieved these feelings. His surroundings are very familiar to him, and he lives in close proximity to a lot of his family and friends. This also provides security, as well as a sense of belonging to his community. Sofia, on the other hand, still feels “home” in her home-country, as she has yet to build any of the key feelings mentioned above. She feels alone in Canada and due to her difficult experiences during her first weeks in Canada (see chapter three), she has not

developed a sense of security, community or familiarity. She does, however, feel that there is more hope for her in Canada than in her home country. Jim lost his feelings of security, community and familiarity when his wife left him. Whatever sense of homeliness he had built was tore down, and now he has to start from scratch. Even though, as he said himself, he does not have to “sleep outside”, he is in Ghassan Hage’s definition of home, homeless. While Peter’s home is in Canada, and Sofia’s home is in her country of origin, Jim does not feel at home anywhere. This is also a result of his hope to live a mobile life, being able to travel and play music in different locations around the world. It is important to emphasize that the major difference between Peter, Sofia and Jim is that they have resided in Canada for a different amount of time. Peter, who is in his thirties, have been in Canada since he was a child, Sofia has been in Canada for four months, while Jim has been in Canada for about two years. This is important to where they are in the process of building a sense of homeliness, which takes time.

Peter, Sofia and Jim still maintain ties to their home countries, and are in no way ‘uprooted’ migrants, who have completely abandoned their former lives. According to Schiller, Basch & Blanc (1995), one could argue that they are still all “transmigrants”, meaning that they at one point in their life migrated to a new country, without completely abandoning their home country. Immigrants in Canada do not identify themselves as solely Canadian or solely Chinese, for example. This is recognized in the Canadian society, where people are regularly referred to as Chinese-Canadian, Korean-Canadian, French-Canadian etc. which clearly emphasizes that one does not expect people to be constrained by the borders of one society. A person’s origin plays a part in their identity, no matter where in the world they physically dwell in the moment.

Sociologist Peter Kivisto (2001), however, argues that transnationalism is in no way a new phenomenon. Scholars have confused the meaning of the concept and struggled to define it separately from other concepts such as assimilation and cultural pluralism (2001:549). Kivisto criticizes Schiller, Basch and Blanc for simply creating new concepts instead of evolving concepts that are already known and perfectly up to the task of analyzing contemporary immigrants. Contemporary migrants in the 90’s was largely characterized as labour migrants migrating to more economically developed countries. Kivisto argues for a more historical and long-term temporal approach to migration studies, and stresses the fact that waves of migration in the 1800’s and early 1900’s were also labour migrants, who indeed sent money home and worked as a source of information at the very least, for people in their home countries who wanted to make such a journey. Therefore, circulatory, seasonal and return migration should not be considered a new phenomenon. He argues that Schiller, Basch and Blanc fail to see the

connection between migrants in the past and transmigrants of the present, and instead creates an unfortunate dichotomy between these categories (Kivisto 2001:555-556). However, Kivisto fails to stress the importance of new accessible technology such as affordable airplane tickets, cost-free calls over the internet, express freight shipping by airplanes etc. that have radically changed and deeply impacted the ways people maintain ties across national borders. One cannot argue that migrants who travelled for two weeks on a ship and arrived in North America in the 1900's were able to extend beyond national borders the way contemporary migrants are able to. As the ethnographic data in the beginning of this chapter demonstrate, Sofia, were able to maintain a feeling of 'homeliness' (Hage 1997) in her country of origin with the help of accessible technology allowing her to always communicate with her social network at home, and easily access information about what is happening in her home country to stay updated and involved. I would argue that without being able to do so, she would have felt more isolated and 'homeless'.

Steven Vertovec (2001) points out that researchers for a long time has recognized the various forms of contact immigrants maintain with people and the society in general in their home country. In the early 1900's this could be seen in correspondence and remittances sent back and forth between migrants and their places of origin. He stresses the fact that while there have always been long-standing forms of connections between migrants and their home countries there are several reasons why today's form of connection is different and more intense than earlier forms. He states that it is obvious that this includes the development of travel and communication technology. However, he is careful to point out that technological determinism is not a very strong argument within itself and that the developments in travel and communication technologies is best understood as something that has maybe facilitated or enhanced, and not solely caused contemporary transnational relationships. (2001:574-577). Vertovec also argues that transnationality has become such a popular concept that it has been used to describe too wide a range of phenomenon. It was a concept used to describe migrant communities that maintained specific ties to their home country but has now become something that has been used to describe all migrants and even travellers and tourists. Transnational patterns among immigrants can take many shapes and forms and may vary in intensity over time. He argues that in much of the recent literature it is unclear how new the transnational networks that are studied actually are. Research needs to provide detailed analysis of the extent to which migrants are connected across national borders and include a historical perspective, as well as the migrants' own desires and practices (2001:578).

Migrants belong to both the sending and receiving countries they reside in and are transnational in the full sense of the word as they navigate both worlds at once. Transnationalism is a useful concept as it captures the fluidity in migrants' identity and sense of belonging (see also Bradatan, Popan and Melton 2010). This concept stands between the concepts of assimilation and diaspora. While diaspora focuses our attention on the exclusive interaction between members of a certain immigrant community and their country of origin, this is not a concept I will discuss in this thesis. My focus is the interaction between immigrants of diverse backgrounds and their relationships with the receiving country, as well as each other, as this thesis is dedicated to discussing terms they frequently used themselves, such as multiculturalism, citizenship and race. Assimilation is a concept that is often brought up when scholars discuss migration and integration, which is why I choose to discuss this concept more in depth and in relation to transnationalism for the remainder of this chapter.

### Assimilation and integration

During my time spent at Options Community Services, I regularly attended a class called Discover Canada. This class was designed to help clients who wish to become Canadian Citizens study for the test one must pass after applying for citizenship. During one of these lectures a citizenship judge came to visit to answer any questions students or staff may have. He was close to retirement age and devoted the last time of his active employment to do community outreach at organizations like Options to talk about what it means to become a Canadian Citizen, and the practical requirements that is necessary to meet. He starts by talking about the First Nations<sup>7</sup> people and pointed out that they were the first ones to call this land home and lived in Canada for several decades before the first Europeans came. Still, he explained, they did not receive Canadian Citizenship until 1956. No country is perfect, he explained further. Every country has its flaws, especially when it comes to indigenous matters, but Canada as a nation is, at the very least, trying to address the issue and correct what can be corrected.<sup>8</sup> The judge went on to talk about Canadas multi-ethnic demographic which he

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<sup>7</sup> First Nations: A general term used to describe Aboriginals in Canada who are not Métis or Inuit.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/first-nations>

<sup>8</sup> In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued a nationwide apology to its Aboriginal people. On April 9<sup>th</sup> 2018, just three weeks before meeting with this citizenship judge, the President of UBC issued a public apology to the Aboriginal people for the University's involvement in operating the residential schools that forced Aboriginal children away from their families to learn to become "civilized". This apology was issued while opening the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Center at UBC (<https://president.ubc.ca/letter-to-the-community/2018/04/09/statement-of-apology/>).

claimed to consist of more than 200 different ethnic groups, and enthusiastically explained that most immigrants who come to Canada go on to obtain Canadian Citizenship. The judge emphasized that when you get Canadian citizenship you become Canadian first and foremost. It does not matter what gender, skin colour, sexuality or religion you practice, because Canada accepts every variation of these. To obtain a Canadian Citizenship you have demonstrate that you are able to master a certain degree of English or French<sup>9</sup>. This led the Judge to tell a story about a woman who was struggling to learn English and to make progress with what she had learned. He had asked her if she “lived in English”. The Judge stressed this term as an important one. He told the woman, and the group he was speaking to this day, to embrace the Canadian parts of the community and go out and meet people and practice your English skills instead of isolating within your own community or staying at home and only speaking your native language at home. The lady had explained to him that her husband would not let her speak English at home, to which the Judge had replied that that is plain wrong, and those attitudes does not comply with Canadian values, because Canada is serious about gender equality.

The call to “live in English” is a remark that stuck with me. To live an English<sup>10</sup> life is a suggestion that one could argue hint to the process of assimilation. To become similar or the same as the majority that lives in the country in question. As he was a representative of the legal system in Canada, I was surprised to hear him make this kind of argument. It may have been meant as a good tip to improve ones English, but it also suggests that one should live in a certain way that differs from one’s present ‘ethnic immigrant’ and ‘non-Canadian’ way, to be able to become “Canadian”.

Canada is known for its multicultural policies, which were often discussed by my interlocutors in opposition to the US and the melting pot model, which is a well-known model used to describe assimilation, where every member of the society melts together and becomes one whole (Burnet & Driedger 2014). One discussion that outlined this happened at a Current Events discussion class for immigrants to practice English, while discussing big and small news from across the world. A short week had passed since the Valentine’s Day shooting, where a teenager walked in to his high school and shot and killed seventeen people<sup>11</sup>. The topic of the day was gun control laws, but the conversation quickly turned to a discussion about political

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<sup>9</sup> Canada is a bilingual country. However, the language requirement does not apply if you are under 18 or 55 or older.

<sup>10</sup> Or French life, for that matter, but English since we were located in the English-speaking part of Canada at the time of this statement.

<sup>11</sup> For more information visit <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-shooting.html>

differences between The United States and Canada. The volunteer teacher wrote two different sayings on the board. One read: Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The other one read: Peace, order and good government. The students were quick to distinguish the difference between the two, which they explained as the individualist thinking that described the USA and the multicultural policies and attitudes that described Canada. The volunteer teacher wrote melting pot vs multiculturalism on the board. She claimed it was important to explain this to newcomers. The students had trouble explaining what the melting pot meant, but together with the teacher, they came to the conclusion of thinking of it like a soup. You add different ingredients, but then you boil it long enough for the ingredients to melt together and become as one. One student explained multiculturalism as a sign of mutual respect; “You respect other cultures, I can keep my culture and you can keep yours”. Canada has often been referred to as a mosaic. A mosaic also come together as a coherent whole, but each piece in a mosaic stand out more and can be completely different from one another. The edges are side by side without floating into one another and mixing together, but they do not exist as parallel communities, or entities, as the edges do touch each other. In this sense, my interlocutors often talked about Canadian culture and policies as something in distinct contrast of its southern neighbour (see also chapter 5). It was important to them to highlight the dichotomy between Canada and the United States, a dichotomy that could be said to revolve around several perceived dichotomies such as melting pot versus mosaic or assimilation versus multiculturalism.

Peter Kivisto (2001) argues that assimilation is not a concept that has been abandoned, but rather that during later years it has made a comeback. He argues that assimilation theory is not incompatible with transnationalism and that we need to distinguish assimilation theory from the melting-pot model and the idea that immigrants need to become one with this society in order to become properly integrated. This idea has given assimilation theory a misunderstood, negative reputation. Kivisto also points out another aspect that he considers to be a correction of previous thoughts on assimilation theory. “Immigrants do not assimilate into a society that is fixed and given, but rather one that is fluid and subject to changes brought about by the presence of immigrants” (Kivisto 2001:571). He argues that scholars have spent much time focusing on the impact that societies in host countries have on the immigrants instead of being aware of the impact immigrants have on the society in question. He therefore argues that transnationality should be seen as a variant of assimilation, rather than a contradicting concept. “This is because at the moment that transnational immigrants are working to maintain homeland connections, they are also engaged in the process of acculturating to the host society” (Kivisto



2001:571). Just as society is fluid and evolving and shaped by the people who live in it, transnationality is also something fluid, and evolving and shaped by life-situation and the society one lives in at the time (see also Bradatan, Popan and Melton 2010). Therefore, immigrants' identities and host-societies<sup>12</sup> both need to be seen as fluid and changing and evolving together and are each shaped by the impact of the other. Kivisto argues that assimilation is a more dynamic process, and that it is misleading to only discuss the impact the host-society have on its immigrants. Kivisto claims that assimilation theory has made a comeback. The question is how does it fit in with transnationalism? Are they opposing dichotomies or two concepts under the same umbrella as Kivisto argues?

Rogers Brubaker in his 2001 article "The return of assimilation?" discusses changing perspectives on the concept of assimilation in anthropology. He also stresses the fact that assimilation as a concept has earned negative connotations, often being related to brutally homogenizing state projects. He explains that this is a misunderstood use of the concept as he describes assimilation in to different meanings:

One is general and abstract; the other is specific and organic. The two meanings are related, but they differ sharply in their affective overtones, moral and political connotations, and intellectual respectability. In the general and abstract sense, the core meaning is increasing similarity or likeness. Not identity, but similarity. To assimilate means to *become* similar (when the word is used *intransitively*) or to *make* similar or *treat* as similar (when it is used *transitively*) (Brubaker 2001: 533-534, italics and brackets in original).

Here, he describes assimilation to be a process, focusing on the process itself, and not necessarily making the journey from A to B. His point is further emphasized by explaining the other meaning of the word assimilation, which he calls the specific and organic meaning:

In the specific and organic sense, the root meaning is transitive. To assimilate something is to "convert (it) into a substance of its own nature, as the bodily organs convert food into blood, and thence into animal tissue... to absorb into the system, (to) incorporate" (Oxford English Dictionary) Assimilation in this sense implies complete absorption. In the general, abstract sense, the accent is on the process, not on some final state, and

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<sup>12</sup> In much of the literature I refer to, the country migrants have immigrated to are often referred to as host-countries. In lack of a better word, I have in some cases used this myself, although I would like to point out that "host-country" may implicate that one is hosting someone temporarily, which is not the case when people immigrate to a new country. In most cases, immigration is a permanent move.

assimilation is a matter of degree (...) In the specific, organic sense, by contrast, the accent is on the end state, and assimilation is a matter of either/or, not of degree (Brubaker 2001: 534).

Brubaker argues that it is the organic and specific sense that has given assimilation such negative connotations, because it overlooks the diversity that exists within societies in general, and especially societies that are heavily impacted by immigration, such as for instance Canada. In the organic and specific sense of the word one would expect immigrants to completely absorb into one society that is the host-society after completing the assimilation and integration process, leaving no room for transnationality. This definition of assimilation theory has led to other analytical concepts, such as for instance “multiculturalism”, being favored because they better describe the complexity and diversity within modern societies<sup>13</sup>, rather than implying forced homogenization as a strategy.

In the general and abstract sense of the word assimilation, Brubaker (2001) and Kivisto (2001) have a lot in common. They both emphasize the importance of understanding assimilation as a *process of similarity*, instead of an end goal of becoming exactly the same. If scholars discuss assimilation solely in the specific and organic sense, they would fail to acknowledge the complexity, diversity and fluidity within society itself, and assume society to be a static environment with a homogenic group of members into which one can completely absorb. I argue that transnational migrants do not take part in two separate, static worlds, but are rather part of two evolving and changing societies just as their identity and personality is changing and evolving during the migration process. Indeed, as suggested by Vertovec (2001) the sense of being transnational will vary and differ in intensity and importance over different periods in migrants’ lives, but also from day to day, and in different situations the person finds themselves in. The age and life situation one were in when one migrated will also play a significant part in the way one integrates and one’s transnational identity.

My interlocutors who attended school and experienced the majority of their youth in Canada often ended up viewing their transnational identity as highly connected to traditions, holidays and festivals of their home country. They also often spoke English better than their first language, and most of their friends in their home countries were through family connections. There were also immigrants who had spent many years as permanent residents in

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Multiculturalism’ has also decreased in popularity and been viewed as a failed project, which I will discuss more in depth in chapter three.

Canada that chose not to obtain Canadian citizenship if their home country did not allow dual citizenship. This would be for reasons such as political involvement in the home country and having the ability to vote during elections, or due to laws of inheritance, to name some. One of my interlocutors described integration as a matter of either/or. He was clear on the fact that integration is a process one needs to go through when arriving in a new country, but it does not matter where you are in that process, in practice, people will see you as either integrated or not integrated. He stated several times that he is against open borders and mass immigration. This is because he thinks there needs to be a proper integration system in place, that works. That is the best for both people living in the country prior, and the immigrants themselves. He says that there are two types of integrated immigrants. “The well integrated, and the badly integrated, who are not integrated at all. There is no in between”.

Brubakers (2001) argument that the specific and organic sense of the word assimilation has led to the negative connotations of the word, linking it to forced homogenization, still holds water. Integration is a process. However, as my interlocutor points out, others may view integration as a finished product or not. Therefore, integration somehow becomes about the end-goal instead of the process of becoming similar. Still, as I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, that an immigrant is well integrated or, if you will, assimilated, does not mean that he or she has cut off all transnational ties, and identify solely as Canadian. Therefore, I will argue that assimilation and transnationalism are not two contradictory concepts. Instead, they should be discussed in light of each other. Jim, Sofia and Peter demonstrate different intensities and variation of ties to their country of origin, and different thoughts about their “home” in Canada. Even though they are at very different stages in their immigration process, they all have social relationships that transcend international borders, and are connected in various ways to two different, ever-changing societies at once.



# CHAPTER THREE

## **Multiculturalism in a political, historical and Canadian context**

The main thing I set out to do during my fieldwork, was to learn more about what multiculturalism means for the people I met and for Canadian society in general. Through conversations, sitting in on classes with Options Community Services, and following the public debate, I learned that multiculturalism is about immigration, politics, “visible minorities” and hopes for a better, future society, and that it can mean different things in different contexts. Multiculturalism is a word that has had quite a journey in the last decades, so in this chapter I will make an effort to describe the political journey it has had in Canada and the journey it has had in public and academic debates. Most importantly, I will describe how the word multiculturalism was used by my interlocutors and what it meant to them.

The referenced literature in this chapter sometimes refer to people supporting and writing in defence of multiculturalism or post-multiculturalism as multiculturalists, or post-multiculturalist. I have used these words simply to help explain the referenced author’s position or perspective, although this chapter is dedicated to discussing multiculturalism’s political history in Canada, multiculturalism as studied by scholars, and multiculturalism as discussed by my interlocutors, which is about more than solely a political position. My interlocutors did not refer to themselves as multiculturalists, although they were supportive of multiculturalism as a policy. For my interlocutors, multiculturalism was of course about immigration and politics, but the underlying essence was about tolerance. I will start this chapter with a description of my first experience in Canada, to illustrate the complexity of multicultural societies and my experience of becoming aware of my own preconceptions. Further I will discuss multiculturalism in a historical perspective and move on to discuss the concepts of culture and multiculturalism in an academic context and scholarly debate. Later, I will explore multiculturalism in a Canadian context, and discuss what it means in practice for immigrants settling in Canada, before I move on to discuss what Will Kymlicka (2010) refers to as the “rise and fall” of multiculturalism.

The apartment I first lived in I shared with two girls, Sarah and Sofia, who is from an island in the Indian ocean. They had posted an ad on the internet searching for a third roommate which I responded to. The apartment we shared had two bedrooms, one bath, a kitchen and a living room. The apartment had few lamps, and the ones that worked gave out a dimmed and cold light. The living room had a small leather sofa with a blanket over it to cover the holes and cracks. They had found it on the street and picked it up to make the house seem more furnished since I was coming. No one ever sat in it. There was also a small table with a cloth, and fake flowers in a pot filled with cotton. On a shelf they had small figurines and images showing their Hindi Gods and a bell they used when praying. The kitchen had an uneven table covered with four layers of table cloths and around it was three outdoor chairs that the landlady had lent them. Most of the cabinets in the kitchen were empty, and we had three plastic cups and only one knife that was not made from plastic. Sarah is 37 and came to Canada two years ago on a working visa. Her husband has been banned from applying to immigrate to Canada for five years, because she had forgotten to mention that he had applied in the US previously when filing the papers. Her husband and her two children still live in her home country. She never has the time or the money to go visit them. She works two jobs, both paying her below the minimum wage. She leaves the apartment in the morning and comes home around 1AM, six days a week. Sofia is 22 and came to Canada four months ago on a student visa. In addition to her studies, she works 20 hours a week in a fast-food diner that is 90 minutes away by transit. Because they work so much, they are never home to clean, cook or use the apartment for very much other than sleeping. They shared a bed while I slept in the other room. The bedroom doors in the apartment wouldn't close and if you accidentally closed it, the door could only be opened from the outside. No one knew why. All the windows were facing the garden and were shut with blinds which no one opened, because they didn't want to see the Punjabi lady, our landlady, who often worked in the garden outside. When I first arrived, Sofia complimented Sarah on the furniture she had gotten off the street: "It almost looks like a real home now".

Three days after my arrival the Punjabi lady told Sarah that I would have to move as soon as possible. The landlady barely spoke English and had apparently not understood Sarah's previous attempts to explain that they needed one more person to share the rent to be able to afford it. At first the landlady had mumbled something about it being more than two people living in the apartment, but later Sarah was able to speak to the son who was fluent in English and explain the situation to him. Sarah told me that he had said they only wanted Punjabi people to live there. The basement of the house had two apartments. The boys living in the other

apartment was not Punjabi and had also been kicked out. Sarah repeatedly asked our landlady to give me some time to find a new place to stay, and eventually she agreed to give me one month, and Sarah and Sofia two months to leave. Sarah told me several times that they were kicking me out because they did not like white people and that we could have reported them, although she never considered to actually do so.

The day after I had been told that I had to move, I sat around the kitchen table with Sofia who had just come home from work. She told me about her first experience renting a room in Surrey. Her father travelled with her to Canada and stayed for ten days to make sure she was settled in and safe. The school had assigned her a rental room with a Filipino family. When they arrived, it was late and they both decided to take a shower and go straight to bed. They had to share one single bed for the ten nights. Sofia's father is known to be a respected and strict man in their home country. Lately, he had experienced declined health and heart problems. Sofia explains that the woman in the family she was living with at the time was not nice to them and every day there was a new issue. One day she had been cooking, when the lady came in to tell her that she had been cooking for too long, and she would now start charging her 10 dollars every time she cooked to pay for the gas and electricity. This was not a price they were willing to pay, or even could afford. For ten days, all they ate was bread and water. Sofia worried a lot about her father's health and explained to me that she had also lost a lot of weight since she came to Canada due to the stressful life she is living. The family she was living with had also installed cameras in the house, so they could monitor the tenants every move. When the ten days had passed, and it was time for Sofia's father to go back home he did not want to leave as he could not be certain that his daughter was safe and in good hands. Sofia convinced him to go anyways. She explains that it was sometimes a burden to have him there, because she never wanted to see her father in the situations they were put in. She felt embarrassed when they were disrespected by the landlord and felt they could not defend themselves, as they were helpless, new to the country and to the city. She convinced him to go so she did not have to worry about his health and his pride on top of all the other problems.

One day, Sofia had posted a quote about morality and judgement on social media. The quote said that you're not necessarily a bad person if you have tattoos and you're not necessarily a good person if you go to church. Sofia says she thinks the Filipino lady, who was a devoted church member, took it personally and was offended by it. She called Sofia, who was on the train to meet Sarah, and told her she had to move out of her room right away. Sofia got off the train immediately and returned to the house. The lady had thrown all of her clothes and things

out on the street, unpacked. The first month in Canada Sofia failed all her assignments in school, lost a lot of weight, and cried all the time. While telling this story, she feels sad and explains that it is upsetting to think of the way she felt at the time. I ask her why she didn't report the incident to the school, to which she replies that she didn't want any trouble. She recognizes that the Filipino lady could have gotten into trouble because of the way she treated her, and that she is protected as a tenant by Canadian law, but still Sofia never considered reporting her. Though, she did consider going home many times, but there are no opportunities for Sofia in her home country. She came here with a purpose, which was to get an education and a good job. Her home country is very corrupt she claims, so it doesn't matter if you get a good education. Still, she explains that when she came here she really understood how amazing her home country is. The country she comes from is also known to be multicultural and has an ethnically and religiously diverse population. There is no racism and several religions live side by side. I sense she is implying that she does not think the same of Canada.

When searching for a place to rent in Surrey, I also noted the large number of people requesting tenants of a specific ethnic background. Especially when listing available rooms on the internet, people were quick to categorize what kind of tenants they would like to apply for the room. Indian immigrants tended to ask for Indian girls and so on. Girls seemed to be preferred by people renting out a room in their own house. Later, I was explained by some interlocutors that immigrants whose families have been in Canada for several generations were the ones who were in a position to rent out apartments or rooms, and often did so to optimise their income. My experience was that white Canadians were not dominant on the rental market, especially in Central Surrey.

After telling me the story about her previous landlady, I tell Sofia how I am surprised of the situation with our landlady, and that I came here with an idea of Canada as a country that takes pride in being multicultural. She smiles and wrinkles her nose and tell me that Canadians only tell the world about the advantages about their multicultural society. They don't tell the whole truth.

Sigrid: Sarah tells me that the Punjabi people don't like white people.

Sofia (makes her eyes big): No! They are very racist.

Sofia: Is your country like that? A lot of racism?

Sigrid: No. At least I like to believe it's not.



Sofia: Not my country either. I believe that a human is a human, no matter where you're from in the world.

Sigrid: Yes, I believe that too. You can always find something in common.

Sofia: We all have the human feeling. I believe in fairness. I really believe in fairness.

For weeks, Sofia and Sarah struggled to find a new place to live. Sarah said she would never rent from a Punjabi family again, as she was concerned with how such a family would treat her daughter if she ever came to visit. After a few weeks, Sarah came home and told me that she had found a place for her and Sofia to live. The owners were Punjabi, but she insisted that these ones seemed nice. They had been horrified to hear the story about our landlady and had assured her that they would come to an agreement that suited both parties. Sarah's faith in Punjabi people were restored, and I think she realized the diversity and heterogeneity that exist within all ethnic groups.

This first encounter with what seemed to be a culturally and ethnically divided rental market in Surrey proved to be more than just a coincidence. While I was searching for other rooms to rent in the same area, I met a man named Youssef. Youssef also experienced challenges when he was searching for an apartment in Surrey. He had been hired for a great job in the area but struggled to find an apartment. Youssef is of African heritage and explained that he would message people renting out rooms on the internet, but when he would show up to see the apartment and they saw him, they would suddenly change their mind and say that the place was no longer for rent. Most people, he explained, was not interested in renting out to a single black man, and they assumed there would be a lot of partying. Youssef is Muslim and does not drink alcohol. When asked why he didn't tell them this, he answered that telling landlords you are a Muslim would surely make things worse. He confirmed some of my frustration with the rental market and explained that many people only want to rent out rooms to people that are of the same ethnicity as themselves in this area.

In spite of his experiences with a racist and ethnically exclusive rental market, Youssef has great expectations for the future. He was always excited to find himself in social groups where several ethnicities were represented. He explained that we (contemporary Canada) are taking the first steps towards a truly harmonic and multicultural society. Our children will all be connected, and they will have no problem meeting and making relations with people of other cultures, something that they will learn while growing up in Canada. They will all get along, he claimed. He was not ignorant of the many challenges that can form when people of different

cultures meet, but he explained that if you're going to live in a multicultural society you need to look at the big picture, and rather let the little things slide. He said there could always be little things that would happen in social situations that could be considered rude or unpolite within your own culture, but he was learning to not care about those little things while living in a multicultural society.

My first meeting with what appeared to be an ethnically and culturally divided rental market as described above was confusing to me. I saw the value of living with people of other cultural backgrounds for my research but did not expect to experience such challenges in the rental market. This experience seemed at odds with the multiculturalism that both official Canadian rhetoric and my interlocutors connect with Canadian society. Amongst my interlocutors it was a common word used daily to describe their surroundings, identity or society they lived in. Sofia used multiculturalism to describe her perspective on her home country as harmonic and tolerant, but in the same breath used it to describe what she saw as a counterfeit act in Canada. Youssef used multiculturalism to describe hopes for a peaceful future for our children. Peter, who we met in chapter two, would tell me he was the face of Canada, and he could even be "more" Canadian than any other white person. The way my interlocutors talked about multiculturalism implied that it is all about creating a society based on tolerance. It is not solely about mixing people of different cultural backgrounds, but about tolerating that people may choose not to. As we saw in chapter two, Peter explained to me that living in Canada have taught him to tolerate people who are in various ways different from himself, because the diversity of the society he lives in have led him to expand his social network and learn more about other people. My argument that multiculturalism is also about tolerating that people may choose not to expand their social network, as Peter have done, is something I will explain more in depth in chapter four.

The experiences in the rental market recounted above were my first impression of a multicultural society, and I quickly became aware that I may had naïvely assumed a thing or two about what a multicultural society is, and how complex it can be. To understand the situation, one must understand what a multicultural society actually means. For the remainder of this chapter, I will try to do so, by discussing the implications and different meanings multiculturalism have in a Canadian context, as well as scholarly contributions to the academic debate on multiculturalism.

### The history of multiculturalism

In 2016 the city of Surrey had a total population of 517,887<sup>14</sup>. 299,245 of these were registered as “visible minorities”, with the largest category being South East Asian with 168,040 people. Visible minorities are defined by the Canadian government as “persons, other than Aboriginal people, that are non-Caucasian in race, or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada 2016, see footnote 14). The population that is defined as “visible minorities” are mainly South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

In Canada, multiculturalism is a word that is used in both official and social situations. Canada has for a long time been a sought-out destination for migrants, and by the early 1970’s Canada, for the first time, found themselves with a majority of new immigrants who were non-European (Burnet & Driedger 2014). In 1971, the federal government led by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced that they would introduce official multicultural policies. Multiculturalism was a word that came into fashion in Canada during the 1960’s and 70’s and to a large degree replaced words such as biculturalism and cultural pluralism (Burnet & Driedger 2014). Multiculturalism was in this sense meant to preserve cultural freedom for all individuals and to recognize the contributions of diverse ethnic groups to the Canadian society. Trudeau’s government announced they would support multiculturalism, and by doing so they committed to providing “assistance to members of cultural groups to overcome barriers to full participation in society; promotion of creative exchanges between cultural groups; and assistance to immigrants in learning English or French”(Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21<sup>15</sup>). In this statement, Canada is recognized as a society with multiple cultural minorities that are promised assistance to help maintain cultural ties to their countries of origin as well as receive assistance to be able to participate well in Canadian society. Since these events, multiculturalism has become a household concept amongst my interlocutors, often used to describe countries with a large number of immigrants, such as Australia, Germany or England among others.

Will Kymlicka, a Canadian philosopher who has published extensively on the topic of multiculturalism, explains that to understand the effects of multicultural projects one must see

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<sup>14</sup> 2016 Census Profile of Surrey <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915004&Geo2=CD&Code2=5915&Data=Count&SearchText=Surrey&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Visible%20minority&TABID=1>

<sup>15</sup> <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-multiculturalism-policy-1971>

it in a historical context (2010). The rise and fall of modern multiculturalism, which will be explored in depth later in this chapter, are a special historical phenomenon. Kymlicka explains multiculturalism as it arose in the 1960's as part of a greater individual human rights revolution. Before the Second World War western societies were characterized by a range of undemocratic relations towards other social categories. The coloniser and the colonized for instance, or the settler and the indigenous. These hierarchical relationships show the assumed superiority of some peoples, races and cultures, and the right to rule over others. This was supported by immigration and citizenship policies. After the Second World War, the world protested against these kinds of hierarchical ideologies and sparked a human rights revolution championing racial and ethnic equality. Kymlicka names the political movement of multiculturalism and minority rights that emerged in the 1960's as part of the protest against the effects of older and undemocratic racial hierarchies. In western countries, there was a decline in state-sponsored racial and ethnic discrimination. Still, ethnic and racial hierarchies cannot be said to have disappeared. The traditions of suppression are still visible in many societies (2010: 100-101). It can be seen in economic inequality, social exclusion and stigmatisation and residential segregation for instance

#### Culture and multiculturalism in the scholarly debate

Multiculturalism has, as mentioned earlier, replaced concepts, especially in Canada, such as cultural pluralism, multi-ethnic, poly-ethnic and bi-culturalism to name some. These words have in common that they all describe something related to diversity within a society. The Oxford online dictionary defines multiculturalism as “The presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society”<sup>16</sup> This means that a multicultural society is one where several distinct cultures or ethnic groups are present and visible, or that multiculturalism is something you can support, for instance politically, which was what Prime Minister Trudeau was announcing in 1971. He announced that he recognized the presence of ethnic diversity in Canadian society and that his policies would support multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is a debated concept amongst scholars. The scholarly debate has been dominated by sociologists and political scientists and the contributions from anthropologists have been few (Prato 2009). Giuliana Prato argues that this may be because of the different

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<sup>16</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/multiculturalism>

approaches anthropologists have to the word culture. Multiculturalism can be associated with a set of closed cultures, belonging to specific groups, that makes them different from other groups. Anthropologists have criticized this view of culture as a “thing” that can be owned by certain types of people. Prato argues that the different approaches to the word culture, both by other scholars and anthropologists, cause them to ignore the multiculturalist debate. Terence Turner agrees that anthropologists have not inserted themselves into the discussion about multiculturalism. He accuses anthropologists for sitting around as “disconsolate intellectual wallflowers” (1993: 411) waiting for invitations to such a debate. Turner explains multiculturalism as a code word for minority demands for separate recognition, and a concept where culture merges with ethnic identity. This understanding of multiculturalism may put anthropologists off, since, as Turner explains, this understanding risks essentializing culture as a property of an ethnic group, it also risks presenting cultures as separate entities by overemphasizing their distinctiveness and can also lead to assumptions of homogeneity of cultures. Turner claims that “by treating cultures as badges of group identity, it tends to fetishize them in ways that put them beyond the reach of critical analysis-and thus of anthropology” (1993: 412). These are all reasons that anthropologists may be vary of entering an academic and public discussion about multiculturalism as recognized by Giuliana Prato (2009) as well. However, anthropologists could contribute to a debate about multiculturalism in both a constructive and critical way. Turner claims anthropologists may expand their own theoretical and practical horizons by doing so. First, anthropologists need to be aware of the different ways the word culture is used, both in academic disciplines and by people who support multiculturalism, or multiculturalists, who Turner repeatedly refers to. He explains multiculturalism as primarily a movement for change and a “conceptual framework for challenging the cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group” (1993: 412). Therefore, Turner claims that for multiculturalists, culture refers to collective social identities engaged in a fight for social equality. He argues that the disagreement about how to perceive culture is much of the reason why anthropologists have remained silent but is in turn also the reason why anthropologists should, and can, make valuable contributions to such a discussion. Turner’s suggestion proved to be fruitful, and it is important to mention that in the decades since, anthropologists have been more present in debates about multiculturalism.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1997) argues that the former idea of cultures as something stable, unchanging, homogenic, and sharply distinct from other groups or cultures have become problematic due to the massive globalisation of culture happening after the second world war.

The globalisation of capitalism, the modern state, political discourse and technological advancement have forced us to rethink the concept of culture as something inconsistent that “unfolds through social process and therefore also inherently changes” (Hylland Eriksen 1997: 175). The assumption of culture as stable and unchanging is something anthropologists have moved away from and had difficulties with, when discussing multiculturalism. Culture is not a set of static rules that can be applied to certain people of certain cultures. Eriksen argues that within a society there are more variables than ethnicity, like different religions, political orientation, class, gender, age etc. All of these aspects of society and identity contribute to the complex and diverse whole of the society which should be viewed holistically but accepted as something fluid and ever-changing.

These anthropological texts from the 1990’s display an early discussion of whether anthropologists should or should not contribute to a discussion about multiculturalism. In recent years, the anthropological contributions have become multiple and valuable: multiculturalism is not only seen as an activist movement by minorities but also a political choice, a policy, a character of a society, and as described by my interlocutors, an ideology for the future and a way of life.

#### Multiculturalism in a Canadian context

When one has defined the word culture, we can with more ease discuss multiculturalism. In Canada, due to its large immigrant population, people are likely to find a community with people of the same cultural origin as their own. There are religious buildings that represent all present religions, there are schools that are religious or culturally specific, and there are diverse grocery stores to make sure you can always cook meals from your home country. Still, all immigrants are expected to follow a national set of laws that apply to everyone within Canada. Multiculturalism is seen as a political choice to preserve and enhance cultural contributions to the Canadian society and see them as just that – contributions, instead of inconveniences or disadvantages. Hylland Eriksen (1997) brings the topic of national laws up to discussion. He argues that in countries where specific laws applied to specific groups of people based on their cultural background have been tried out, one stood in danger of compromising universal individual human rights. In Canada for instance, everyone is equal to the law, and if one were to make cultural exceptions this may harm for instance the agency of women of cultures where gender equality is not valued to the same degree (Eriksen 1997). Prato stresses the argument that differential treatment of social groups will create associations such as problem groups or

pampered minorities. When such characteristics are tied to specific groups of people it can cause resentment and distrust between groups within a society (Prato 2009: 9). In western societies, the belief in universal human rights have a strong foundation and are rights that should apply to all, in spite of race, cultural origin or religion, and no one should be awarded or stripped of rights solely because of their religion or cultural background. Human rights are also stressed by politicians who are critical of multicultural policies, as they argue that not all aspects of cultural diversity should be celebrated, for instance traditions such as forced marriage or child marriages. In such cases, human rights should be prioritized over cultural recognition (Kymlicka 2010).

Still, the concept of multicultural policies still creates some expectations of equality between the minorities and the majority and the state, as Prato suggests:

We should ask, therefore, whether multiculturalism (not only as a theory but, more crucially, as a political practice) does promote equality of opportunity. In other words, we should ask whether the protection of minorities or, more generally, of cultural diversity alone eliminate discrimination (2009: 7).

Canada is officially bilingual, although many of Canada's inhabitants speak languages that are not English or French at home. If you are between 18 and 55, and a resident, non-citizen who wishes to become a citizen, you must prove a certain degree of language skills within either English or French to pass the test one must take to obtain legal citizenship. Therefore, one can say that Canada does not directly protect language minorities as everyone is expected to learn and be able to converse in one of two languages. However, in the society I was situated in during my fieldwork there were so many cultures represented that formed communities, which in turn meant that there were many opportunities and arenas where one could find people who spoke one's mother tongue, and therefore be able to practice and maintain the language. I more often heard languages such as Punjabi, Korean, Chinese and Filipino spoken amongst people on the bus or train. There are also several services that are available in more than the two official languages, for example the 911 alarm central, which make use of translators in over 100 languages.

When it comes to equal opportunities within employment, there is in general a request that job searchers have experience from a Canadian working environment on their resumé. Also, education completed in foreign countries is not always considered valid competence in Canada. This was two of the main struggles my interlocutors experienced when encountering

the Canadian job market. This led many immigrants to accept jobs they are overqualified for, to be able to make ends meet. It is a complex issue and a thin line between facilitating equal opportunities for minorities without crossing the boundary of awarding specific rights to people based on their ethnicity or cultural background. Employers are obviously not allowed to discriminate against people based on gender, religion, cultural background or race, but there were discourses around companies that were considered to be more “open minded” in employing immigrants. Prato (2009) asks if multiculturalism can eliminate discrimination. A positive answer to this question is likely overly optimistic. Policies or attitudes that support multiculturalism may aspire to reduce some effects of discrimination, especially within governmental structures, as we learned was the goal when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced Canada as a multicultural country. However, my interlocutors were clear about the fact that people are still discriminated in their multicultural society, an issue they hoped would be solved in the future. I argue that instead, one should ask how multicultural policies impact the lives of immigrants, to be able to have an informed debate on multiculturalism in general. In Canada, immigrants struggle to find jobs, and in some cases, they will also meet a culturally segregated rental market as described in the beginning of this chapter, to demonstrate that a multicultural society does not mean a society free of immigrant struggles. However, immigrants in Canada also meet several volunteer organisations that are prepared to help them overcome any of these obstacles and the organisations are in no way ignorant of the existence of these issues. This is a topic I will discuss more in depth in chapter four.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the rental market in Surrey is reflected in what has been happening in the Vancouver real estate market in the last decade. My interlocutors often explained to me that the real estate prices in Vancouver keeps going up and Vancouver has now become a place where only the business elite can afford to live and buy properties. None of my interlocutors in their twenties and thirties owned their own property and were in no position to do so anytime soon. Surrey is located a 40-minute train ride away from Vancouver and has become a desired suburb that markets themselves on being close to Vancouver, but still a more affordable option for people seeking housing opportunities. This is in part the reason many immigrants choose to settle in the Surrey area. Canadian Sociologist Eric Fong (2006) writes about residential segregation of visible minority groups in Toronto, another major city in Canada. He explains that racial and ethnic residential segregation can be a barrier that minority groups may face in the Canadian real estate market. It can be explained as a reflection of group desirability. Everyone has neighbourhood preferences and in a



residentially segregated community that can be a reflection of social distance between groups, but also stereotypes against other cultures and ethnicities (Fong 2006). The Punjabi landlady I wrote about in the beginning of this chapter did not speak very much English, so it is understandable that she would prefer Punjabi speaking tenants. However, the Punjabi landlady's treatment of me led my fellow roommates to create negative opinions about Punjabi people as a social group and they therefore decided to look for apartments in a different area of Surrey that they expected to be less dominated by Punjabi people. The real estate market in Vancouver also contributes to a residential segregation between Vancouver city and the surrounding metropolitan area, which can also be seen as a hierarchical division of class. When I asked my interlocutors about the rental and real estate situation they explained that the ones who do well are immigrants that have been in Canada for several years, and especially the ones who have been here for more than one generation. Sofia and Sarah explained their struggles to find affordable housing as a result of immigrants who have built their lives here and have achieved an economic position where they are able to rent out apartments and forget that they were once new arrivals themselves encountering discrimination and hardships and struggling to get a foot in the rental market as tenants. They promised they would never forget it themselves. Fong (2006) explains overcoming ethnic residential segregation as a process of integration. He argues that once immigrants are "fully integrated", they will eventually improve their socio-economic status and then seek neighbourhoods that they perceive as having better qualities. During such a process one's preferred neighbourhood will also change. The rental market I experienced in Surrey was not, however, a matter of vertical discrimination – a large majority discriminating against new immigrants, but rather what I consider to be a matter of individuals forming communities and a desire to belong in a collective that is familiar. The Punjabi landlady may have lived in Canada for a long time, but still didn't speak many English words. Could she then be considered to be well integrated? When my interlocutors spoke about immigrants being integrated or not, they often referred to language skills and participation in the society. To find employment was an important part of integrating into a society as it allows one to stand on your own feet and, in many cases, not be dependent on settlement services any longer. In this sense, the Punjabi landlady could be considered to be poorly integrated. However, if the situation was different, I question if she would choose to move to a different area or decide to rent her apartments out to whomever applied for it. The Punjabi community is fairly large in Surrey, and this can also be seen as an advantage. Immigrants who come to Canada can find people who speak the same language as them, practice the same religion as them and keep alive the traditions they are accustomed to. Communities like this become a safe

place for immigrants to reside in an unfamiliar environment. In such a community they can also receive help settling in their area and learning about how to navigate their migration and integration process.

### The retreat of multiculturalism?

In Will Kymlicka's article titled: "The rise and fall of multiculturalism" (2010), he describes what he calls a master narrative about the rise and fall of multiculturalism, largely created by scholars, journalists and policy-makers (see also Steven Vertovec 2010). Kymlicka writes; "Although people disagree about what comes after multiculturalism, there is a surprising consensus that we are indeed in a post-multicultural era" (2010: 97). He explains that from the 1970's to the mid-1990's multiculturalism was in its prime, as there was a clear trend to recognize and accommodate diversity, and multicultural policies were popular in western democracies. However, he notes, since the mid-1990's there has been several accounts of what could be called the decline or crisis of multiculturalism, especially in countries that have been known for multicultural policies such as Canada, for instance. He describes the narrative of the retreat of multiculturalism and the rise of nationalist values such as unitary citizenship, nation building and the return of the concept of assimilation. The retreat displays a common concern amongst members of the majority that diversity can threaten their way of life and their national identity. This concern expresses itself most vocally in populist right-wing political movements. However, the centre-left political movements who used to be enthusiastic about multiculturalism have also moved away from it politically, as it is perceived to have failed in helping those it was intended to help, which is minorities, and has unintentionally contributed to social isolation and poverty as it failed to recognize the sources of minorities' social and economic exclusion. The discourse has instead shifted to revolve around integration and common national values (Kymlicka 2010: 97-98). This master narrative is what Kymlicka criticizes as unprecise and inaccurate. He argues that the centre-left political movements, as opposed to the populist right wing, argues for the need to develop an inclusive national identity and fight discrimination and racism, but because of the narrative of the rise and fall of multiculturalism, they have taken to the word of post-multiculturalism to explain this. Giuliana Prato also notes that multiculturalism has been criticized as a disguise for politicians and government to oppress and neglect minorities and create cultural ghettos in the name of cultural preservation and tolerance. The critiques claim that multicultural policies enables the

government to disclaim responsibility of integration (2009: 6). Why has multiculturalism's reputation deteriorated to this level?

Kymlicka explains that it is a misconception and a confusion about what the trend of multiculturalism really meant. He argues that what he calls the master narrative of multiculturalism "mischaracterises the nature of the experiments in multiculturalism that have been undertaken over the past 40 years" and that it "exaggerates the extent to which they have been abandoned" and also "misidentifies the genuine difficulties and limitations they have encountered" (2010: 98). Much of the problem is related to the way that multiculturalism is represented in post-multiculturalism literature. It paints a picture of multiculturalism as a naïve and romanticized ideology that celebrates familial cultural markers such as food, festivals, music and clothing. There are several problems with this presentation of multiculturalism. It can give the impression that social groups are static and sealed and that each group has its own distinctive customs that are not subject to cultural adaptation. This would for instance make the topic of transnational identities very difficult to explain, and further exoticize minorities as the "others". It also completely ignores issues of economic and political inequality, such as unemployment and residential segregation. These critiques in part explain what post-multicultural scholars and politicians see as the reason for the retreat from multiculturalism, and some of the reasons why for instance anthropologists have been hesitant about discussing multiculturalism.

Kymlicka perfectly sums it up; "In my view, therefore, multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion" (2010: 101). This displays a fairly different explanation of multiculturalism than solely festivals, food, dancing and music which completely ignores the importance of redefining relationships between ethnic and cultural minorities and the majority, or the state. Therefore, the view that multiculturalism is in danger of romanticising or trivialising other cultures should be seen as a misconceived version with multiple shortcomings. Anthropologists should continue to contribute to a multicultural discussion to better understand, and clarify, the meaning of culture and multiculturalism based on ethnographic data, instead of remaining silent based on fear of being caught in an essentialist or exoticizing trap (Turner 1993)

The empirical observations described in the beginning of this chapter help demonstrate what multiculturalism means for immigrants in a multicultural society and how ethnicity can be a factor in a rental market that is dominated by people of different cultural backgrounds. It

also helps demonstrate that multiculturalism is not a synonym for a harmonic society where people of different ethnicities live happily side by side. It is more complex, which I have tried to explain in this chapter. Multiculturalism also does not mean lack of immigrant struggles, integration or discrimination among people. It is a set of policies and attitudes that aspire to make minorities visible before the state and create better, and more equal relationships in this sense. My interlocutors were all immigrants themselves, who did not come as refugees, but still came with a hope to create a better future for themselves or their children. Multiculturalism is a common word in their vocabulary, used almost daily when talking about the society they live in. Multiculturalism is certainly about politics, but for my interlocutors it is also a way of living and a corner stone of their society. I came to the understanding that when they used the word multiculturalism, it often referred to tolerance as an important characteristic of a multicultural society, but they were also clear on the fact that this is a characteristic that needs to be learned, and that people will learn from living in a multicultural society. They did not express expectations that discrimination and immigrant struggles would disappear, but they did express positive expectations for the future Canadian society, one that would be created by their children, who would have learned about tolerance from their birth. An important part of living in a multicultural society is to tolerate and learn from meeting and interacting with new people of different cultures, but also to tolerate that people may choose not to do so and live mostly within their own community. The second part of this argument I will explore further in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Options Community Services

Canada has, for many years, seen a constant flow of immigrants from different countries and for different reasons, settling in Canada. Many of them have, along with their children, become long time permanent residents. They participate in the social and economic life of the society, and contribute through labour, taxes, social interactions in schools and neighbourhoods and enrich urban cultural landscapes (Vertovec 1998:187). However, they are not able to gain access to public and political platforms where decisions are made on topics that can affect them greatly. In Canada, you must be a legal Canadian citizen to be able to vote in political elections, run for political office, or obtain a job in sectors that require a level of security clearance such as in the police or military. This means that you are either born in Canada, or a naturalized citizen, in the latter case this means you have passed the test to become a Canadian citizen and completed all its requirements, such as amount of days spent in Canada and that you are sufficiently proficient in English or French. Does this exclude immigrants from speaking their minds and having a direct influence on decisions and services that affect them directly? In this chapter, I will discuss more in depth data I collected while doing participant observation at Options Community Services, to provide insight into how such organizations work, and how they interacted with their clients. This will also shed light on the integration process, as the services that are provided for immigrants settling in Canada can give an idea of what is considered useful and necessary, by settlement organizations working with immigration, to become a competent member of Canadian society. The ethnography that is presented will also continue the argument made in the last chapter that multiculturalism does not necessarily mean that people of different cultural background create relationships with one another and live together in harmony, but rather that there is room to choose to remain mostly within your own ethnic community, and this choice must be tolerated. I will also use the second part of this chapter to discuss the work environment for staff that are employed in such organizations and the backgrounds and motivations they have for performing such a job.

Options Community Services is a non-profit organization located in British Columbia, Canada. It contains many divisions, each help people in need, such as homeless, domestic abuse victims and immigrants and refugees for instance. My time was spent with the division called Immigrant Services. A very important part of their work is helping immigrants search for, find and keep employment. Immigrants can learn how to write a good resumé, how to make a good impression in an interview and how to accentuate and focus on their skills. A young man who worked as a recruiter for a big firm in Vancouver told me that they had been searching for someone who spoke Cantonese for a position but struggled to find someone suitable. He later discovered that many of their applicants actually spoke Cantonese fluently, but had not listed it on their CV because they did not recognize it as a skill. Being able to write a good resumé is crucial when searching for employment. Immigrant Services also helps immigrants learn about the Canadian labour market, and what is expected of you as an employee to help immigrants keep the position when they have been able to acquire one. This can seem like simple things, such as you are expected to be punctual and to call if you are sick and cannot come to work that day, but these basic rules of employee behaviour are not necessarily obvious to people who are used to different workplace environments. Immigrant Services also help immigrants find affordable and appropriate housing. Finding housing that is affordable is always a challenge, but for immigrant families, finding housing that is appropriate can also be a struggle. Canadian houses are mostly built for “western nuclear families”, mom, dad and two or three children, and not families with many children, or families where several generations live together.

Options Community Services’ Immigrant division also helps vulnerable immigrants who are not in a position to access settlement services. These are often refugees who have experienced war, immigrants and refugees with almost no English skills, and immigrants and refugees who are of poor health. They gain access to a hands-on caseworker who speak their own language and receive help with whatever they may need in order to reach the level of knowledge they need to be able to access other settlement services. This can for instance mean learning how to shop and pay for groceries in Canadian stores, how to book a doctor’s appointment, or open a bank account. Immigrant Services also aims to help immigrants create social connections across ethnic communities. This is often combined with English lessons which are often done in combination with activities such as arts and crafts or cooking. This way, immigrants can meet other immigrants and get to know each other while doing something positive that interests them and learn English skills at the same time. To create community connections, Options Community Services also collaborate with other local units, such as the

police, who will come and talk about their work during English classes, or student nurses who may come in and offer free, basic health check-ups or do presentations as part of their own practicum period. This is done to help immigrants feel safe when interacting with official representatives in their community, and also learn about how things work and what to expect in a Canadian society.

Options Community Services offer after school programs for youth to inspire youth to be involved in leadership and learn about their community. Immigrant Services also help immigrants study for the test they must pass when applying for citizenship. In short; Immigrant Services are concerned with helping newcomers acquire necessary language skills, ensuring their access to information, connecting them to community resources, building their knowledge of life in Canada and enabling labour market participation. This is therefore viewed as knowledge that is instrumental in settling in Canada, and invaluable to their clients.

#### The multicultural committee

During my time spent with Immigrant Services, I attended several meetings with a committee that was created to help Options Community Services start up a new Community Connections program for senior immigrants in particular. They had invited people from different ethnic backgrounds that had been in Canada for a variable amount of time. There were senior immigrants from China, Shanghai, Costa Rica, Mexico, Korea and India. They had resided in Canada for five to fifty years, some were Canadian citizens, and some were permanent residents. They were invited to share their experiences and struggles when they moved to Canada and explain what services they need in the community. The participants seemed pleasantly surprised by the opportunity to speak their mind on such an important topic. They expressed gratitude to be given the chance to speak up on what they consider to be important for seniors immigrating to Canada. The seniors were very interested in social activities in their community and had many suggestions as to what this new program could contain, such as physical activity, singing, field trips to visit museums and national parks, going golfing, doing gardening together and learning computer skills. When asked what barriers they experienced that prohibited them from doing these things on their own or joining such groups, they were quick to mention individual economic situation and poor English skills. This is where Options Community Services come in to provide volunteers and staff that can help with translating and practicing language skills and provide the funding that is needed so that activities can be as affordable as possible. After a while of discussion, one of the immigrants who had been in

Canada for many years explained that a barrier is also that people tend to cling to their own culture and people within their own ethnic community. This way people only practice their native language and do not learn the English skills that is required to be able to socialize with people of other ethnic communities. He explained that he thinks people should socialize more outside their ethnic community and not segregate themselves because that can lead to racism and prejudices between social groups. In fact, socializing within your own ethnic community is facilitated by other local organizations and many of the activities suggested above are already provided by churches within the large communities in Surrey, such as the Korean community and the Chinese community. However, the man, who is Korean of origin, admits that when he goes golfing he prefers to go golfing with his Korean friends because he finds that easier and more comfortable even though he has resided in Canada for many years. The staff responds that they agree that people should socialize across ethnic communities and social groups, but they obviously cannot force people to become interested in this. Instead, they suggest investigating if there is a demand for multicultural community programs amongst immigrants. They would like to provide a program that is less limited and isolated than for example within a church. The staff suggests that some days in the week can be for specific ethnic groups, such as walking club for Chinese, or cooking club for Punjabis and then rather have a get together for the different groups occasionally. This way, it may feel more comfortable for first time participants, especially if they are not proficient in English. The participants are all in favor of being part of multicultural groups, which might be symptomatic of the personalities that would like to participate in a committee where integration and multicultural, community-connections programs are discussed. During the discussion on multicultural versus specific ethnic groups one of the Chinese ladies chimes in in her rusty English; "Different ethnic people communicate, must speak English!" The committee group nods in agreement, before they all take a break where the Chinese talks to the Chinese, the Koreans to the Koreans and the Indians to the Indians.

During this discussion on multiculturalism and integration, it becomes evident that the consequence of having liberal immigration policies may be a society where ethnic and cultural communities becomes so large that they are able to serve the needs of the people within these groups on their own. This means that people are not forced to explore cultures, languages, people and practices outside their own ethnic community. It is possible to live in Canada for many years and avoid learning skills that is considered invaluable in order to integrate such as English language skills. It was explained to me that some people are not interested in learning



English, even some youth. They know that they will be able to find a job within their own ethnic community and do not see the need to make the extra effort to learn a new language. This discussion also further highlights the point that I have made in previous chapters that multiculturalism is not only about tolerating and mixing with people of all cultures and ethnicities, but also tolerating and accepting that people have a choice and may choose not to do so. Staff sometimes discussed integration policies in other countries known for a high level of immigration such as Australia and The United States. Some pointed out that they were under the impression that immigrants in Australia and The USA seemed to be more integrated or involved in society than in Canada, despite Canada's superior welfare system and the adequate presence of immigrant services. They suspected it may have something to do with immigrants in these countries having more of a sink or swim experience. Immigrants are not handheld like they are in Canada, receiving all the help they need from they first arrive in the country. In Australia or The USA there is no option or possibility of living there for over ten years and not learn any English at all, which can happen in Canada, especially amongst senior immigrants. Some staff members also questioned if their clients actually learned anything from them at all or if they were just giving them a place to meet friends and speak in their native language, to which other employees responded that it is up to the clients themselves to become independent and learn how to do things on their own, instead of continuing to rely on settlement services. The personal motivation from each individual has to be there.

For the remainder of the meeting the staff talked about their vision and hopes for this committee group. They intended for it to be a multicultural group that will provide feedback for them on how their existing and future programs function and would be received in their community. By multicultural, they explain, they mean multi-lingual<sup>17</sup>. They hope this committee will provide more of a connectedness in the community and reach more people, by having representants from several countries of origin. However, they emphasize that this does not mean that they will put pressure on senior clients to mingle "across cultures" all the time and that all services will be provided for multicultural groups only, but that they hope that this advisory committee especially can come together and share their experiences and hopes for the future with each other. The staff also explains that being multicultural, or multi-lingual, is not solely about representing as many languages or countries as possible. It does not matter if there are five Chinese speaking people and only two Punjabi speaking people, the most important in

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<sup>17</sup> A very specific and practical definition of multiculturalism used in this meeting to help explain to immigrants with poor English skills what multicultural can mean. For a political and historical perspective on what multiculturalism is, see chapter 3.

a multicultural group is how welcome you feel. That is what makes a group multicultural. A Chinese lady stands up and explains that the most important benefit of a multicultural group is that they know things others do not; “If we share the greatest things we have to offer and learn to understand – we can build a good and harmonic society. Start with the little things, and from there it can grow”.

The staff explain that the program and services they will provide for seniors will not be a matter of age or culture, but a matter of the specific clients’ needs. Options Community Services is dependant on showing their funders that there is a need for their programs in the community where they are located, and their funders will ask them how they collect this information. For this purpose they can use the reports from such committee meetings where they receive direct information from immigration and clients themselves on what their needs are. At one point the staff ask one of the Punjabi men if he thinks the Punjabi community will be interested in such a service or if the Gurdwara<sup>18</sup> already provides all the services they need. The man answers that their job as Punjabi immigrants is not to isolate themselves. If they wanted to be isolated and to remain only within their own ethnic group there is no reason to be in this multicultural society. Any man with integrity should connect and interact with people from many different groups and religions. This perspective on multiculturalism highlights my argument that it is as much about an attitude and understanding of sociality and relations as it is about government policies and moral, legal and political principles.

#### Newcomers, and social and local citizens

Options Community Services mostly help permanent residents, foreign workers or refugees, but in some cases, they will also help Canadian citizens, even though the only programs that receive funding for naturalized Canadian citizens are some of the programs that help immigrants find work. This gives insight into the staff’s and the organization’s sense of responsibility towards their clients and society at large. Within Options Community Services, immigrants are referred to and talked about as “newcomers”. Newcomers are used as a broad term to describe anyone who come to Canada from another country. If you came as a refugee, a refugee-claimant, a skilled worker, temporary foreign worker, international student etc., you are still a newcomer. They emphasized that you do not stop being a newcomer after a certain number of years, it comes down to what your needs are. If you have been in Canada for several

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<sup>18</sup> The Gurdwara is a place of worship for Sikhs.

years, you still might be in need of settlement services or community connections services, and you will be eligible to access these services. This means that when Options Community Services did, in fact, choose to help Canadian citizens they did so out of the feeling of social responsibility, if the situations would let them. Clients who had previously been permanent residents, and therefore eligible to access the majority of the settlement services they were in need of, sometimes displayed frustration with the restrictions given to them when they became Canadian citizens because they still felt that they were in need of settlement services. One employee in the office explained an incident where a client had become a Canadian citizen but asked to give it back and regain her status as a permanent resident when she discovered that she would no longer have access to many of their services. This can point to a discrepancy in what the funders and the government see as necessary skills and knowledge for newcomers to Canada to have to become a competent citizen, and how immigrants themselves feel, and the organizations and staff working closely with them observe on a daily basis. This can explain why organizations such as Options Community Services choose to refer to their clients as newcomers, instead of immigrants. They view “newcomers” as immigrants who are in a fluent process where the number of years you have been in Canada, or your legal status play no part in determining your needs as a client, and as a newcomer in this country. Every newcomer is different and arrive with individual needs, that might change over the years. Even though their needs might change, it does not always mean that they will decrease correspondingly with years spent in Canada. “Newcomer” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “one recently arrived”, while “immigrant” is defined as “a person who comes to country to take up permanent residence”. This also tells us that newcomer is a broader term that includes people that come as temporary foreign workers, or international students that only plan to be in Canada for a certain amount of time. Therefore, the term “newcomer” describes all of Options Community Services’ clients, regardless of their intentions of permanent residence in Canada.

In the beginning of this chapter I wrote that immigrants in Canada cannot vote in public elections or run for office unless they are a legal citizen of Canada. However, permanent residents have access to welfare, settlement services and health services. Steven Vertovec (1998) calls this “social citizenship”, an extension of legal citizenship where one has access to welfare or other public resources. Exploring new meanings of membership and participation in communities and drawing on T.H Marshalls’ (1950) famous work on social citizenship, Vertovec writes:

In this sense “citizenship” is coming to refer to a general corpus of rights, duties and activities of individuals and groups relevant to the expression of their interests with regard to public sphere decisions affecting life opportunities, quality of life, and/or representation to others in society (Vertovec 1998:188).

In this sense, immigrants in Canada can become “social citizens” by the fact that they do have access to services in their society and they do have the ability to participate and acquire “membership” in their local community. This form of citizenship can be further explained by “local citizenship” that Steven Vertovec (1998) also writes about. Local citizenship is intertwined with the city, which is relevant for this chapter, as the city is often an urban location of diversity. In the city, people from different places, local or global, gather to live and participate in society. The city one lives in is the first place one gets a sense of whether or not one belongs to this particular community (1998:189). This can occur by participating in local grassroots organizations, volunteering, or participating in your community in other ways. By participating in your local community, you have the chance to make your voice heard. This is demonstrated in the above descriptions of the multicultural committee meetings. Immigrants who have not yet become citizens are not able to represent themselves on a national political platform, however, I will argue that they do have a chance to speak their mind in relation to local events, such as programs, services and happenings<sup>19</sup> that apply to them and their community. Options Community Services ask their clients what their needs and wishes for their local community are, so that they are able to report back to funders why they should choose to support precisely their programs. The immigrants that agreed to participate in this committee were very pleased with the opportunity given to them, and had no problem speaking with great enthusiasm about what would make their settlement process in Canada run smoother. They expressed gratitude towards Options Community Services and explained that they had given them a place to talk to people and a place to go when they were battling the isolation that comes with migration. In this sense, I will argue that community organizations like Options Community Services provide immigrants with a sense of “local citizenship”. They are able to participate in a local organization where they can find a sense of belonging, and that will help them come into contact with other such parts of their local community. At the same time, they have the chance to be heard on important local issues that affect them greatly and are able to influence the way that Options Community Services create, structure, design, and carry out

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<sup>19</sup> During my time spent with Options Community Services there were for instance arranged happenings such as Korean Senior Forum and Chinese Senior Forum which focused on providing information in Korean and Chinese that would be helpful for senior immigrants belonging to these ethnic communities.

their services. Cities are locations where often the most multicultural communities are found, and through organizations like Options Community Services, the city's permanent residents are offered a chance to speak about the challenges and needs that exist within a multicultural society, without becoming legal citizens and run for office, or vote in elections. Steven Vertovec (1998) explains that redefining citizenship means to explore the frameworks for participation and group involvement more. Participation gives immigrants a sense of belonging and involvement in a community and therefore they can develop a sense of local and social citizenship, where they are in fact represented and heard on matters that affect them and their communities.

### Being an employee in the “settlement industry”

When the month of March arrives, tensions run high within Immigrant Services of Options Community Services. The reason is that the majority of the staff are hired on one-year contracts that ends in March. This is due to the funding cycle of the funding bodies, such as the government and other organizations that provide funding for settlement services. The organizations rarely know which programs will receive funding for the following year, and therefore they rarely know which employees they will be able to keep before the end of March month. My interlocutors referred to their line of work as working in the “settlement industry”. There are many organizations that offer settlement services, and in local communities they often meet each other when there are joint events for immigrants in Surrey. The organizations often compete for the same funding, and therefore the work environment and contracts that are offered to staff are often similar. The “settlement industry” is heavily influenced by the immigrant and refugee streams. This creates a lack of job certainty that the staff is painfully aware of. March is a hectic month where the managers and program leaders are busy writing proposals and working out budgets for the following year, while the staff are left whispering in their offices about who they think will have to be laid off by the end of the month, and what to do next. Managers are often not able to tell their employees anything in advance of this month, which leaves employees in a state of limbo, working a job that they do not know will exist the next month. Some staff explained the settlement industry as brutal. The organizations do not only compete with each other for funding, they also compete with other sources of information increasingly available to immigrants. Due to the accessibility of information on the internet, the settlement industry is reclining. The most resourceful immigrants no longer need a settlement worker to tell them where their nearest doctor is or what school their children should apply to,

as this information is easily accessible online. Also, immigrants that belong to the largest ethnic communities such as Koreans can find information elsewhere as well. The Korean community have become so large that immigrants are sufficiently provided for and helped by their own community when settling in a new country. This change in the settlement industry market led to the termination of the Korean Settlement Worker position, and a reduction in several other positions. Currently, there is a high demand for Arabic speaking employees to accommodate the large number of Arabic speaking immigrants that are arriving in Canada. Funders prioritize the category of immigrants they deem currently need the most help. This affect the staff within non-profit settlement organizations, as the organizations loose funding for other categories such as Korean immigrants. However, there is still Korean immigrants in need of services, so the workload that was carried by the Korean settlement worker is projected on to other Korean speaking employees in different positions that can work as a translator. Funding and immigration policies decide the destinies of the staff, so when March comes, the mood in the office is distinctively quiet and grave.

Funders prioritizing the needs of immigrants of certain ethnicities above others' can be criticized for being exclusionary. I was explained that every year Canada has a wave of immigrants of certain ethnicities and these will often be prioritized. When Justin Trudeau famously promised to take in 25000 Syrians in a matter of months, and then greeted the first arrivals at the airport<sup>20</sup>, Options Community Services experienced an overwhelming amount of calls from people wanting to volunteer. They discovered that people who wanted to become volunteers were only interested in working with Syrians. Refugees of other ethnic groups were not as interesting. They wanted to contribute and provide help for the refugees they had heard about on TV and read about in the newspapers. The Syrians were automatically given permanent resident status, along with social security numbers and access to healthcare, and were even as already mentioned, symbolically through one particular family, greeted by the prime minister himself when they arrived. The reality for refugees from other countries is different. It is this kind of differential treatment that Giuliana Prato (2009) has, as mentioned in chapter three, criticized. She explains that the government prioritizing one category of people over another can lead to resentment between groups of people and give the impression amongst others that people of a certain ethnicity is a pampered minority or favoured by the government and Settlement Services organizations. Consequently, the government's political actions towards waves of immigrants from a certain country or of a certain ethnicity or culture does not

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-12-11/justin-trudeau-shows-airport-welcome-canadas-first-syrian-refugees>

only affect employees within the settlement industry, but also people's incentives to volunteer, and the experiences other refugees gain when coming to Canada.

### Employees' motivations

As we have just seen, working in the "settlement industry" can be an uncertain job, with a low level of security. This led me to question the motivation employees have for working in settlement service organizations. It is important to mention that every employee working in the Immigrant Services department were immigrants themselves, some came as children with their parents and some came as adults. When I asked Jack, an Asian-Canadian employee in a settlement service organization what was the most important thing about his job and why he continue to do the job he does he answered:

*"You help other people who need your help, and that's just like a really good feeling. That you can help these people. Its like helping yourself from the past almost, you know? It feels good to be one step ahead of these people and you can just, like, give them guidance. Cause like, isn't that why all teachers teach? Like you're helping these people, you can give them answers. (...) For some reason the success stories stick with you, but only briefly. Some of my favourites or the ones I have a soft spot for are those who cannot be helped by the settlement work that we do (...). When I find out about their circumstances, I don't know, I get really involved personally. I don't know why, but now that I think about it they're all Asian males. So maybe it's a subconscious thing, I really don't know. Not because they're Asian maybe, but because their minorities-minorities. Like, even at the settlement service, we can't help everyone. Those people who cannot be helped are usually memorable cause they're such difficult clients. That's what frustrates me that these people shouldn't have these problems (talking about difficulties getting a job in Canada), Because if you are totally skill-less, don't speak English, can't get jobs anywhere, I'm sorry its supposed to happen that way, but like these guys who had jobs for years back home, and they don't have a job here, like, those are the guys that I feel for. The only reason I have this job and the volunteers have the volunteer-jobs is because I happen to be a product of this society, but they're not. That's the only reason why".*

Jack explains that his experiences being an immigrant himself led him to develop a soft spot for other people who find themselves in the same situation he was once in, and because he sees some of himself within them, he feels urged to help them. Because of what he has learned from settling in Canada and integrating into Canadian society he feels he has accumulated

knowledge that is invaluable for immigrants. He also recognizes that he has acquired the position that he has because he is well integrated and has resided in Canada for a long time. This makes him feel emotional for immigrants who come to Canada with higher education, and struggle to achieve the same positions in Canada as they had in their home countries. He works a little extra hard for those clients.

Karen, another employee in the settlement industry explained that she used to volunteer for organizations working with immigrants and she also learned about migration during her education, but it was first when she lived abroad on her own she realized to some extent what migrants go through on a daily basis.

*“I think being abroad I saw just the tip of the iceberg of what its like for these people. Like, I understood what its like to not know where you’re going or not understand the language and maybe have some people yell at you cause they think you’re dumb because you don’t know the language. And I’m like this super-privileged educated white lady who, you know, in general people don’t view as a threat at all and I don’t have any cultural constraints as far as, like, in my own home. I don’t have a husband telling me to stay home and watch the kids or whatever. And so, I was just like oh my god, I just can’t imagine then, if I were abroad as a refugee. And by abroad, I mean in a new place. Also, that was a thing, I was just visiting. I knew it was temporary, I knew I had a home to go to. So just experiencing that tiny part of it just really made me feel a lot of empathy for them (refugees and migrants) and that I just need to help these people. I couldn’t even see another career path, I don’t know, it was just very like, we have to do something, we have to help these people”.*

She explains that it is easy to get caught up in reports that are due or paperwork that should be done, but the best part about this job is when you stop and look around and see all the people you have met, whether they are clients or volunteers. They all came to the organization because they needed something to do, an intro to Canada, anything if possible. Many times, Karen was someone’s first contact in Canada, and that is truly valuable to her. She is always surprised by the clients’ joy when she returns from a holiday, for instance. She thinks the reason for this is that she is a part of a safe place for immigrants, they know they can come to her if they have any problems and they know that she is a trusted person. These are all elements of her job that she emphasizes as both important and rewarding.

Anna came to Canada as a child and explained some of her background and experiences that are important while doing the job she does.



*“I know for a fact that people who come here and don’t have support... like, the first four years of living in Canada are the worst four years of your life. Like, not only the lack of, I guess, money in terms of how that translates to, like, physical things like a nice house or a car or nicer food and things like that. Not just the material things but also the social isolation that you feel from like not having anybody that you know at all. (...) In my mind when I was little I knew we didn’t have money for anything and I knew I couldn’t ask for anything. When I hear new immigrants coming here or people planning to come here I’m like no, this is not like a field of roses, you need to tell them what they’re going to because if they are not prepared they’re gonna hate it. No matter what, they’re gonna hate it. Even if they are prepared, like, even if their English is okay, the shock, the cultural shock, and the isolation and not having all your stuff, like, that’s awful. In my head that’s what it means to be an immigrant. Even the food, its like not the first thing you notice, but one of the things that hits you the hardest. Like, all your stuff is missing that’s okay, that’s frustrating but like, you’re pushing through it, but not being able to, like, eat the same kinds of things you ate or to make yourself, like, a meal without feeling like you miss home. That’s something that, I don’t know, for me I think food is one of the first things that make you like really homesick.*

*At some point you can get a little insecure that there is no one else like you. Where I grew up, my kind of people weren’t too common. I remember, maybe, two years after we moved to Canada, we were in the school-system and my brother was getting bullied. I don’t know why, but I thought it was because we were immigrants. (...) I knew, coming here, that no one knew what my home country was. But I also knew that everyone who wasn’t white was from another country, or at least that was my assumption. I thought all the other kids who weren’t white were automatically immigrants. But they rounded us up (the school-system), all the immigrant kids, and they would teach us about Canada and multiculturalism. They taught us in kindergarten about their multicultural mosaic, I think it was called. Which is like one of our official, like, the things that we tell everyone in society that Oh, Canada is like a quilt like a mosaic, it’s a patchwork of different cultures and people and we all live together in harmony. And then there we would all talk about Oh, I’m from this place, Oh I’m from that place. So, I was like Oh, I’m not alone but even though people weren’t from the same country as me I am not alone in the sense of like if you’re an immigrant, you’re part of the club”*

Anna draws on much of her own experience, which she thinks helps her do a better job. She stresses the fact that it does not matter who you were or what your circumstances are before you migrate, you will always find it hard, difficult and lonely to settle in a new country. This

has made her extra sympathetic towards immigrants and extra aware of the struggles they go through. She also ties her explanation up to what she learned about multiculturalism in school. Meeting other immigrant children in school and learning about Canadian values made her realize that there were many people like her in Canada and gave her a sense of belonging by “being part of the club”. This sense of belonging is something she hopes she can pass on to her clients.

It seemed important for staff to be clear about the fact that everyone struggles in the beginning of settling in a new country. Even though the atmosphere in the office usually was light and cheerful, it was important for staff to convey to clients that they know what they are going through, they have been there themselves, and it may take time to overcome the struggles and isolation one experiences in the beginning. Anna had a specific way of conveying this message during one of the first sessions in Discover Canada, the class where immigrants receive help studying to take the Canadian citizenship test. Anna drew three big faces on the board, one face was smiling, one face was crying, and one face was something in between the two previous ones. She explained that immigration can often start off feeling like a honeymoon. Everything is new and exciting, and you are filled with hopes and dreams for your future. This honeymoon period can last for a few days or maybe even six months. Eventually you will move on to the next phase, Anna explained, while drawing an arrow towards the crying face. Homesickness kicks in and you start to realize that everything is not exactly as you envisioned, and you might feel a bit lost. It is very individual how long this phase can last. For some, it will last for years. Then she drew an arrow to the face with no expression at all. She explained that eventually the crying face period will pass, and you will reach a phase where you are content, or maybe numb. You will have adjusted to your new life in some ways, but it doesn't mean that you will be completely happy. She then drew arrows all across the board, until all the faces had arrows pointing towards each other and back at each other. She explained that each day will be different. You will have days where you are the crying face, and you will have days where you are the face smiling with excitement and anticipation, and you will have days that are just okay. She explained that no country is perfect. You must be patient, and most importantly – learn.

The employees within the “settlement industry” experience little job-security, and they know they will in no way become rich by working in this sector. However, it is obvious that the experiences and skills they have acquired through migrating themselves at one point in life and experiencing other cultures up close, has made them especially equipped to guide others through such a process. In a sense, it has installed in them a sense of responsibility for providing

answers to others who are attempting to make the same changes to their lives as they have done in the past. However, their answers to the questions about their motivation do not solely point to altruistic motives, they also explained that doing something for others made them feel good about themselves. Jack once explained to me that when he saw all the awful things happening around the world on the news, he felt like he could sit back and relax and say that at least he was doing his part by helping these people who come to Canada. Several explained that helping others gives you a good feeling. The good feeling within themselves and the perception of their job as being rewarding is what makes up for the lack of job-certainty and long-term contracts. Lisa Malkki (2015) writes about “the need to help” amongst humanitarian workers. She explains that people seek out to be a part of something greater than themselves, and find their own ways doing so. For some, this means to help others. Malkki found that it is not only the person who is considered to be in need that is helped, the giver often demonstrates a neediness him or herself, the need to help. For some, doing humanitarian work abroad was a great escape from the familiar every day life at home, while others were consumed with the possibilities of self-transformation. Malkki writes: “The benefactor’s own need to help those in need may generate actions that in fact help the benefactor him/herself in surprising and vital ways” (Malkki 2015: 8). For Jack, the job of doing good for others and helping immigrants who were in a situation he himself had once been in was a way of self-transformation and growth, as well as a way of easing his conscious. He also demonstrates a great passion for his line of work and struggles with saying “no” to some of his clients’ request. Karen explains her experiences of being abroad alone as something that left her with no other choice than to help others, while Anna’s worries that other immigrants experience the same misery as herself when migrating, led her to feel the need to help others in the same situation. What they have in common is that they all enjoy doing good for others and benefits individually from working with immigrants in need of settlement services.

An additional factor that may be important when it comes to working in a settlement services organization is that immigrants often have an advantage in terms of speaking their native language, which is often required in some positions. Therefore, working in the “settlement industry” is often a suitable entry-level job for long term immigrants who are graduating school or recently arrived immigrants who are searching for a first job in Canada and speak a decent level of English. These are often young people who might not be as consumed with the importance of long-term job-security. The skills required for working in the

settlement industry is not necessarily learned in university, more valuable knowledge can be learned by walking in your clients' shoes yourself, as I have demonstrated in this chapter.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Culture and race

During my time in the field I was able to observe one of Options Community Services' after school programs. This program was directed towards girls from the age of 9 up to 13. The focus was on educating the girls on important matters such as health, their local community and other matters that apply to girls of that age, such as puberty for instance. The focus was also on creating a safe environment and solidarity between girls of this age and promoting physical activity through sports and exercise. The first time I attended this program, the girls were asked to collaborate in groups and draw a girl on a big piece of paper. They were all quickly consumed with the task and had many suggestions and opinions of how the girl should look, especially what skin colour she should have. They were dissatisfied with the colour range of the crayons that resembled skin colours, so one girl asked the teacher if she had any more crayons that resembled skin colours. The girls had decided that they wanted the girl to be brown, but the only brown crayon they had was too dark, so the girl almost looked black, which was not the look they wanted.

When doing fieldwork, anthropologists may discover ways of speaking about issues that are different from what they have learned as polite and respectful in their own society. In Canada, I noticed that race was talked about in a way that made me feel slightly uncomfortable in the beginning. My interlocutors did not talk about race by referring to the country of one person's origin. They described them by the colour of their skin, something that, in my own society, is considered offensive. However, in Canada, my failed attempts to guess a person's origin could be considered even more offensive. For instance, if someone was talking about a person I had not met in person and I discretely tried to ask my interlocutors if said person's family was Canadian, they would simply answer: "No, he is a brown dude". This response startled me at first, but I quickly learned that this way of speaking about race was in no way considered to be offensive. It was more offensive if I for instance referred to someone as Chinese, if they were in fact of Korean origin. Also, it was important to remember that many people considered themselves to be Chinese-Canadian or Korean-Canadian, even though they

were not born in Canada. It was also, understandably, even more offensive to assume that someone was Canadian, simply because they were white. This may be a result of living in a multicultural society where multiple countries of origin, cultures and race are represented constantly. By describing a person's race as exactly what you see, you avoid insulting anyone by disclosing your assumptions about their origins and avoid the risk of ignoring the Canadian part of their identity.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the concept of race, as used by my interlocutors. I will describe immigrants' perceptions on Canada from the outside, and in relation to The United States, since many of them explained The United States as a country that seemed to be "more racist" than Canada, which helped make their decision to immigrate to Canada instead of The United States. I explore some reasons which may help explain why people have this impression.

To help understand race in relation to culture, I will draw on work done by Kamala Visweswaran (1998) which gives insight into the relationship between culture and race in a historical perspective. She explains the link between the two concepts, and I will discuss how they have become entangled in a web of political correctness. Further, to connect the discussion to multiculturalism, I will explore the arguments made by sociologists Lentin and Titley (2011). They also discuss the entanglement of race and culture and describe the misunderstandings of these words as dangerous. They pose an important question. Does racism not exist in a multicultural society? They argue that use of the word race has become politically incorrect because of its connotations to something negative – racism. Does the absence of debates on race lead people to believe that racism has ceased to exist, especially in societies where multiculturalism is supported? I will explore how these perceptions fits in with the narrative of the rise and fall of multiculturalism as discussed in chapter three, along with my interlocutors' answers to whether or not they see racism in their society.

Anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran (1998) gives us a historical overview of the debate of race amongst anthropologists. She starts with Boas' work, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which was, at the time, considered to be progressive and anti-racist. Boas' suggested that we should move towards a colorless society, which could be achieved for instance through "interracial marriage" (Visweswaran 1998:71). Visweswaran moves on to explain that Boas and his students, in the years leading up to World War 2, argued to separate race and culture from one another. Race was to be seen as something biologically inherited, while culture was shaped by environment and language. Therefore, race could not be viewed as a set of qualities and patterns of behaviours biologically inherited by a certain group of people from another. Visweswaran

argues that this distinction between race and culture has led to some challenges in the modern development of the concept of culture (1998:72). Boas and his students saw racism as an important problem of the modern society at the time, but nevertheless believed in race as something that existed, and that had scientific value. Their aim was to replace what had previously been viewed as inherited traits defined by race, with the notion of culture (1998:72). In the years following, race and culture were further explained and debated as two antonyms. “Culture draws its identity from race because it constitutes everything race is not: learned behavior. Race draws its identity from culture because it constitutes everything culture is not: biologically inherited traits” (Visweswaran 1998:73). Visweswaran further asks: “(...) why it is that race continues to be one of the most prevalent forms of social distinction and discrimination. If race is only epiphenomenal, how does it continue to ground material reality?” (1998:73). Post-Boas, scholars of social sciences shifted towards discussing race as a word associated with negative values. Visweswaran argues that it is a myth that we can, in fact, live in a color-blind society. Race cannot be separated from racism. Some scholars argued that the word race could never be neutral or free of values, and therefore could not be an object of simply scientific biology. Others, Visweswaran explains, argued that the term race was prejudiced in itself and should therefore not be used in our vocabulary (1998:74). Visweswaran’s argument becomes clear as she writes: “This is, in my opinion, the correct view: race has no meaningful biological definition outside of the social assignation of race to biology” (1998:74). She further explains that the two poles of the debate can be summarised:

On the one hand, race is an essence: it exists and can be documented scientifically. On the other hand, race is an illusion: it does not exist except as an arbitrary set of social designations masquerading as biological reality and should be banished from our vocabulary altogether. The second position is as dangerous as the first: if race is too contentious politically, say its proponents, we must simply refuse to speak of it, unwittingly amplifying the nature of culture so that it becomes as essentialist and deterministic as race was once seen to be (Visweswaran 1998:75).

Visweswaran’s point is that race and racism is intertwined. Race will always carry the negative associations that racism holds. However, we should not eliminate race from our vocabularies or our debates, because racism continues to be the most prevalent form of discrimination between humans, and the negative connotations that race carries, will be wrongly projected on to the word culture, leading culture to be misunderstood and misused. If race ceased to exist, how do we explain that racism persists? (1998)

### Race and multiculturalism

Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley (2011) are sociologists that further illuminates the argument that racism persists, whether we ignore talking about race or not. In relation to the rise and fall of multiculturalism as discussed in chapter three (Kymlicka 2010), they are concerned that a near undisputed fact has become that racism does not exist in a multicultural society, and that the discrimination and prejudices that do exist originate from culture instead of race. Lentin and Titley heavily criticize this separation of cultural discrimination and racism and argue that racism has always been intertwined with culture. They argue that public debates in social media and on the internet has returned to the outdated definition of racism as something solely related to biology; skin color and looks. Therefore, anything discriminatory in other ways, for example towards culture or religion can be labelled and justified as non-racist (2011:52). Racism is also something that became heavily rejected in the aftermath of World War 2 and the catastrophic experience with the race based genocidal ideologies of Nazism and Fascism, and the result was that it became increasingly difficult to discuss. Lentin and Titley argue that if race is no longer talked about, some would be inclined to believe it no longer exists. The cliched mantra has become that we are all unified, because we are part of the one and same human race, while it is our “cultures” that are incompatible. “In the current conjuncture, the separation made between racial and cultural arguments about immigration, Islam or multiculturalism is as dangerous as it is artificial” (2011:62). They argue that this separation comes from efforts to make talking about race politically incorrect, and therefore suppress discussions on this topic in the public sphere, while at the same time making culture a way to discuss differences between groups and categories of people. One finds alternative ways to talk about “others” in a sense that refers to race, for example by using cultural markers, or religious clothing, such as the veil, as racial signifiers instead of skin color. Lentin and Titley write: “It is not difficult to see how race and culture work in the same way when applied as a means of formulating the problem posed by Otherness in society” (2011:62). They make it clear that the assumption that racism cannot exist after multiculturalism is misconstrued, and that culture has become a word that is used when speaking about people of other ethnicities, to avoid the negative connotations surrounding the word “race”.

As the beginning of this chapter demonstrate, race, or skin color was not an elephant in the room amongst my interlocutors. They seemed to display a rather relaxed attitude towards race. The attitude towards race in general became clearer one day I was out recruiting clients with a staff member. One way that Options Community Services recruit clients for their



programs is by doing what they call outreach. Briefly explained, this means being visible at places where immigrants gather and spread flyers and information on what services Options Community Services can provide. At a Friday afternoon I was able to help do outreach at a local mosque. We went there around the time of the Friday prayer as this is an important communal prayer where many Muslims participate. We stood outside the mosque and handed out flyers as people exited. The flyers were written in Arabic and had information about free English classes. Many people were genuinely interested in the flyers and we quickly ran out of flyers to hand out. However, most spoke very good English and were actually more interested in being able to work as an English teacher or volunteer. Even the Arabic speaking volunteer we had with us approached people coming out of the mosque in English. Some took the flyers to pass them on to relatives or friends they knew who might be in more need of such classes. At the same time, we noticed another man from a different organization who was also handing out flyers outside the mosque. The flyers were about an upcoming Muslim youth event he was promoting. He asked us what we were doing there to which we replied that we were handing out flyers about free English classes for refugees and refugees-claimants. The English classes are also available for permanent residents and other newcomers, but without getting a chance to say so, the man from another organization chimed in: "Oh, so you just assume everyone here is a refugee?" I asked the staff member I was with about this incident when we drove home in his car. He found it slightly amusing that the man outside the mosque had tried to belittle him or put him on the spot by accusing him of doing some sort of racial profiling. The staff member explained that he obviously just assumed many of the people in the mosque were refugees and he saw no problem in admitting that. "You automatically do a bit of racial profiling when doing outreach. There is no point not to be honest about it".

### Racism in Canada

Why do immigrants choose to come to Canada, instead of any other country known to be open to immigration, such as for instance Australia or The United States? When clients at Options Community Services were asked this question during an English class, some answered that they chose Canada because of the beautiful nature, the good school system and to open doors for their children in the future. Many of their answers reflected that they had someone in their network who had passed on information about life in Canada, and portrayed Canada as a prosperous and good country to live in. However, to answer why they came to exactly Canada and not The United States, some of them answered that they considered Canada to be safer than

The United States and less racist. They viewed the USA as a dangerous and violent country, and because Canada seemed to be less racist, it would be a better place to immigrate to.

Canada and The United States do arguably have very different immigration policies and the dichotomy between these two countries were often brought up when I talked to my interlocutors, and especially when we talked about what was “Canadian”. In the true spirit of Fredrik Barth’s “Ethnic groups and Boundaries” (1969), many of my interlocutors explained Canadian culture by pointing out in which ways they were different from their neighbour in the south. The United States is a country with significantly more inhabitants<sup>21</sup>, and is constantly talked about in news all over the world. As it becomes clear by the clients’ answers described above, Canada is in many ways seen in the media and the public as the liberal and open brother in the north, ready to greet refugees at the airport while The United States’ president impose discriminatory travel and immigration bans wherever he sees fit, or perhaps unfit<sup>22</sup>. The stark contrast between the two neighbouring countries’ current public and political attitudes towards immigration creates an image of Canada as a warm and welcoming country. The more closed The United States becomes, the more open Canada seems to be. The comparison between these countries also seemed to emphasize to my interlocutors a set of values and ideas that explains who Canada is as a nation, and why people choose to live there. Therefore, it became especially important to make it known that you are not American. One of my interlocutors had lived in The United States before coming to Canada and when I asked him if he thought that part of his life played a part in his identity and his life now, he told me that he renounced his “Americanism” the day he got a Canadian passport, without elaborating on exactly what that “Americanism” was. Canadians travelling abroad are used to being compared to Americans or mistaken for being American. Along with being a significantly less populated country, they have learned to emphasize what makes Canada different from The United States. One of these important differences is for instance the social services that are provided by the government in Canada. Canada and the USA are countries built on immigration, and for my interlocutors it was important to highlight that in Canada, immigration something that they treasure as valuable and significant for their country, and something they should pass on to the next generations. Some Canadians were also eager to explain to newcomers how lucky they were to be in a country like Canada. One of my interlocutors once had a conversation with two born and raised

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<sup>21</sup> Canada has about 35 million inhabitants versus USA’s 325 million.

<https://countryeconomy.com/countries/compare/canada/usa?sc=XE23>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/feb/15/trump-travel-ban-unconstitutional-appeals-court-ruling-virginia>

Canadians about his struggles living in the country to which they replied: “But dude, you’re in CANADA”, as if he had won the lottery. In many ways, explaining that one is Canadian is about emphasizing the features that distinguishes Canadian culture from American culture, as they are so often a subject of comparison. As demonstrated by the ethnography above, this distinction also reaches migrants considering moving to a new country and help them make the decision of which country to move to and why. Immigrants that are already in Canada learn about this distinction between the neighbouring countries and pass the information on to people in their network at home.

The perspective on Canada as a less racist country than The United States is, of course, a relative one. My interlocutors’ relaxed attitude towards race does not necessarily imply that racism is not present, as explained above by Lentin and Titley (2011). One of my interlocutors, who came with her husband and daughter about six years ago, explained that it was very difficult for them to come to Canada. She said that trying to make your way around a new society in a foreign language, many people are prejudiced against you. They assume you are not very smart, because of the language barrier. She explained that she does not see Canada as a discriminating country explicitly, but that you can sense the discrimination from individuals at times, they just will not say it to your face. She used to have a job in a grocery store and explained that people were always polite but that she could sense if a person were prejudiced towards her and did not like her, based solely on her accent and looks.

This led me to directly ask another one of my interlocutors if he sees racism in this society, to which he answered: *“Yes, I see it. Its mostly verbal. Little put-downs here and there. I don’t think they do it to be racist I think they do it because their just pissed of at me and they just want to get it out of their system and I happen to be an Asian kid. I think that’s the only reason why. If I was trying to piss someone off with an aboriginal heritage I would maybe say something stupid about the aboriginals, I don’t know, like in the heat of the moment. I see it as that, like, I’ve never personally felt like I was ever attacked because of my race. Once you have the language I don’t think people attack you that much. If you’re a black woman in a hijab carrying two babies and someone screams a racist slur at you from a car, yeah that’s racism, but its also stupidity. Its more about stupidity. If someone was being racist to you and you could respond to them in perfect English, they wouldn’t do that. Once you have the language, the possibility of racist things happening to you in your life would be minimized, which is why I feel passionate to help these people learn English. Because that’s their survival tool kit. You can be whatever you want, just speak the language. Maybe I’m discriminatory that way. You gotta*

*learn the language. Maybe in this liberal world that's the wrong thing to say. But you need to learn the language".*

He explained that whenever he has had conflicts with people from other cultural backgrounds he does not think of them as cultural clashes, but rather something that happened because he was simply being a terrible person or that person was being a terrible person. "It has nothing to do with race or religion. It's about the work we do or the stuff we say". However, he sees racism as something immigrants can avoid, or fight back against by learning the language. This answer clearly refers to racism as a result of frustration or due to inferior knowledge and understanding between individuals. In a multicultural society, lack of language skills is often the easiest way to recognize that someone is new to the country, as people of different cultural backgrounds is represented at all times. He sees racism as something one can avoid as an individual through integration, and especially learning the language. It is important to mention that he described his home country as a more conservative and less inclusive one. This will of course impact one's impression of racism in Canada, as I mentioned above, whether a country is more or less racist is relative. Immigrants' experiences from their countries of origin will colour their understandings of reality in the country they immigrate to. Structural discrimination was not often a topic of our conversations, except when it came to immigrants struggling in the labour market, as described more in depth in chapter four.

At Options Community Services, multiculturalism becomes very explicit, in the sense that several countries and languages as represented as staff, clients and volunteers of different ethnicities work together on a daily basis, in a confined office space. One would understand how this could easily lead to conflicts and misunderstandings between people. However, they all have one thing in common, which is that they are living in Canada. They are learning about the same values and same guidelines of being in part Canadian. They all also know what it means to leave the country of your origin to start a life in a new one. They are, in a way, on "neutral ground", and they are happy to discuss the differences between countries, religion, practices and cultures. Many of them have the perspective that it is always better to ask-, than assume, because assumptions are what creates discrimination. Maybe being on neutral ground can make the questions a little bit easier to answer. Once I found myself in the middle of a conversation between a Korean-Canadian and a Japanese-Canadian. They were talking about stereotypes and if they could tell the difference between Chinese people, Japanese people and Korean people by simply looking at them. The Korean-Canadian jokingly and enthusiastically explained that he could often tell where they were from by the way they dressed. Chinese people

would wear the most expensive outfit, but often not a very stylish one. Japanese people would wear the craziest stuff, but still with a sense of style to it. According to some Korean stereotypes, the Japanese also have a particular style of walking, which is the source of some derogatory nicknames. The mood in the room was light and cheerful although some might see the topic of conversation as heavy and serious. They freely and jokingly discussed the tense relationships between the three(four) countries- China, Japan and Korea. They asked each other about current political matters, such as the North-Korean president and the South-Korean president meeting. At one point in the conversation the Japanese-Canadian was laughing along with the Korean-Canadian's jokes, and explained that she could understand people's animosity towards her country, recalling Japan's history of invading both China and Korea. She asked the Korean-Canadian if he felt any resentment or animosity towards Japanese, considering the history. He answered no and explained that his parents were also to some extent open and relaxed on the subject. They boycott any Japanese products on the market, but when Japan was hit by a massive earth quake, they still felt for them and donated money in solidarity. He explained that he remembers reading school-books in Korea when he was a kid, and they always made sure to point out that even though all the East-Asian countries were invading each other, Korea chose not to because they are a peaceful nation, after which he bursts out laughing. "Of course, they would have invaded someone if they could". This conversation confirmed my previous observations about my interlocutors having a relaxed attitude towards race, and not being afraid to tackle topics that might seem delicate or difficult. By being on neutral ground and both being open to answer questions about their cultural background, they were able to discuss these matters in a rather cheerful and friendly manner. Their cultural backgrounds were also something they had in common, because of these countries' connections to one another, which sparked a conversation based on curiosity and desire to learn about how one another had experienced historical and political happenings they both were familiar with.

To conclude this chapter, I find it fitting to cite Unni Wikan: "For what *is* racism other than the degradation of persons on the basis of inborn or ethnic characteristics? A model of the human being that portrays the person as a product rather than an agent, and as such caught in the grip of culture is reductionist and hence racist" (1999:58, italics in original). She argues that the word culture has run astray (1999). As discussed above by Visweswaran (1998) and Lentin and Titley (2011), culture has become a word used to describe differences between people in society, and in many cases the differences help describe "us" and "them". This shift away from the now politically incorrect phrase "race", has led to a profound misunderstanding of the

phrase “culture” as something one can use to disguise racism. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis; there is no such thing as a fixed item or object called culture, and “it” does not belong to certain groups of people. Lentin and Titley writes: “Racism has always been theorized in relation to, and on the basis of, the perceived behavioural and cultural characteristics of human groups” (2011:69). They worry that the belief that we are in a “post-race” era leads to the belief that we are also in a “post-racism” era. Their critique against this assumption is profound. As one of my interlocutors put it “As long as there are people on this earth, there will be racism, which is why I tell my kids you must always remember what you see in the mirror”. Racism is present in all societies, and the presumption that racism cannot exist in a multicultural society further accentuates the deep cracks in the incorrect and simplistic narrative of multiculturalism as a harmonic society where cultural interaction happens through endless cultural festivals, music and food.

I found through my interlocutors that it was acceptable to talk about race. Maybe that was symptomatic of the people that searched the line of work most of my interlocutors were employed in – non-profit settlement organizations working with immigrants. Still, I will point out that the Canadian government is not afraid to mention race and skin colours as shown by their definition of “visible minorities” as “persons, other than Aboriginal people, that are non-Caucasian in race, or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada 2016). Maybe it is too generalizing to say that people were able to discuss race in such an open way because Canada function as a neutral ground for immigrants, but I will indeed argue that Options Community Services functioned as such. As mentioned earlier, a staff member once told me that when one was wondering why people do what they do, the better option was always to ask- rather than assume. Assumptions help create prejudices and biases, and if you just work up the courage to ask - most people are happy to answer.

# CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have built on ethnographic data to discuss different ways of thinking about multiculturalism, with an emphasis on discussing what multiculturalism means in an everyday setting, for people who live in a multicultural society. In the beginning of this thesis I asked questions such as: What does multiculturalism mean for people who use the word as part of their everyday vocabulary? And further: Does living in a multicultural society influence immigrants' sociality in relation to transnational ties, citizenship, community participation and discrimination and racism?

To answer these questions, I have dedicated the chapters in this thesis to discuss three concepts; transnationalism, citizenship and race, in relation to culture. I have discussed these concepts with a grounding in everyday conversations and observations amongst my interlocutors, and used these concepts to say something about how they view the multicultural society they live in.

In chapter two, we meet three different individuals, Jim, Sofia and Peter. Jim, Sofia and Peter are from different parts of the world and came to Canada at different times in their lives. I begin with this chapter, and these individuals to give a sense of who my interlocutors are, and the way they think about their own lives and identity. In a society where many people have different countries of origin, I was curious to learn what their home country meant to them, and how it affects their lives in the country they have immigrated to. Jim lived a life he enjoyed in his home country, doing what he loves; playing music. However, he had a desire to take his career across international borders, and see what more he could achieve, out in the world. He fell in love and moved across the world for a special someone. Later, he finds himself living a very different life in Surrey than he expected. However, he still sees moving back home as the last way out, as he dreams of one day obtaining a Canadian passport and travel with the opportunities it would provide him with. He wishes to live a transnational life and does not feel deeply rooted in either country at this moment, but is motivated to staying in Canada, because of his hopes for the future.

When I met Sofia, she had only been in Canada for four months, and had already struggled a great deal with settling in. She claims she has no friends, or no life of her own in Canada. She relies greatly on her social network in her home country. She is constantly facetimeing, calling and texting family members, her boyfriend and friends. This social network is extremely important to Sofia in this early and uncertain period where she is trying to find her place in a foreign country. However, she does wish to make a life for herself and create a social network in Canada eventually.

Lastly, we meet Peter, who has lived most of his adult life in Canada. He has a big social network, both in Canada, and outside, due to his fondness of travelling. He has embraced Canada and learned to be more open towards people who chooses to live their lives differently, something that he claims his home country never taught him. He has also given up his citizenship in his home country and received a Canadian one. However, he still follows news in his home country, and feels sentimental to see his home country evolve and make progress.

While learning about these three individuals we also touch upon some of their ideas of the society they live in. Sofia, having spent a short amount of time in Canada, compares Canada to her home country. She is clear on the fact that there is no opportunity for her back home, but still likes to reminisce about her home country being less discriminating and more welcoming and tolerant than she has experienced Canada to be. Peter, on the other hand, explains that living in a multicultural society has made him a more open and tolerant person and he claims it has opened his eyes to diversity. He now appreciates living in a society where several ethnicities are always represented.

In this chapter, I argue that that transnational identities are as fluid as the societies people live in. I draw on work done by Steven Vertovec (2001), Peter Kivisto (2001) and Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995) to discuss that transnational migrants do not stop their lives in their home countries to start a new life in another country, as separate bulks on a linear line. I argue that exactly as a society is not something static, but rather ever-changing and evolving, transnational identities is something that varies in intensity and can seem more or less important in different situations and at different stages in your life. Further, I introduce Rogers Brubaker (2001) to discuss assimilation in light of transnationalism. Assimilation is often connected to ideas of forced homogenization, and the expectation that immigrants should give up their identity to become exactly like the people in the society they live in. Brubaker (2001) argues that this is a misunderstood perspective on assimilation. Assimilation means to become *similar* as something, and not completely the same. Therefore, one can assimilate and integrate into



one society, while still maintaining transnational ties to one's country of origin. Hence, I argue that transnationalism and assimilation and integration are not contradicting concepts on separate poles of a dichotomy.

In chapter three, we learn more about multiculturalism and its history in Canada, politically and historically. I start with describing my first encounter with the rental market in Surrey, Canada, which I experienced as difficult to navigate and coloured by social preferences relating especially to ethnicities and cultures. We meet Sarah and learn more about Sofia, in addition to meeting Youssef, who confirms that my experiences with the rental market are more than just a coincidence. I move on to discuss the historical events of multiculturalism in Canada, starting with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's declaration of Canada as a multicultural country in 1971. Further, I discuss multiculturalism as debated amongst scholars, and draw on Terence Turner (1993), Giuliana B. Prato (2009) and Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1997) to explain how the debate was previously discussed more amongst sociologists and political scientists, than anthropologists, and explain why anthropologists could, and should make important contributions. I draw on Will Kymlicka's (2010) theory about what he calls the rise and fall of multiculturalism. Kymlicka is a Canadian philosopher, known for publishing extensively on multiculturalism. He argues that what is perceived as the rise and fall of multiculturalism is indeed the result of a master narrative created by scholars, politicians and journalists, based on false and insufficient knowledge as to what multiculturalism is and what it was intended to do. Multiculturalism is not a political project gone wrong, where the result was that the government could ignore minorities in the name of protecting cultures, and hence creating cultural ghettos (Prato 2009). Instead, it is about equality, and recognizing and enforcing minorities' rights, to become more equal before the state (Kymlicka 2010, Prato 2009). Kymlicka argues that the master narrative of multiculturalism is too simplistic. Multiculturalism is not a synonym for a harmonic society where people of different ethnicities live happily ever after side by side, and connect through music, food and dance. It is more complex, as I have explained throughout this thesis. Through my interlocutors I came to understand that when they were talking about multiculturalism, a common word in their vocabulary, there was an underlying essence that spoke about tolerance as an important characteristic one learned through living in a multicultural society. Tolerate and learn from meeting and interacting with new people of different cultures, but also tolerate that people may choose not to do so and live mostly within their own ethnic community. I argue that multiculturalism is certainly about politics, but for my

interlocutors it is something that happens in meetings between people, a way of living and a corner stone of their society.

In chapter four, I ask whether immigrants have opportunities to influence and be heard on matters that affect them greatly. I argue that through local organizations such as Options Community Services they are able to participate in society and speak their mind on local issues and therefore influence matters that concern them as immigrants in the local community. I draw on Steven Vertovec's (1998) work on citizenship and argue that although long-time immigrant residents are not able to vote in political elections or run for office unless they have become legal citizens, they are able to obtain local, or social citizenship. Local or social citizenship is an expansion of the concept of citizenship and takes in to consideration matters such as participation and membership, something I argue they can achieve by joining local organizations. In this chapter, we also learn more in depth about options Community Services and the work they do. To demonstrate the level of participation and influence given to their clients, I rely on data collected during their committee meetings where a new program available to senior immigrants was discussed. In this committee, immigrants from different parts of the world were represented. These meetings were also a platform where the multicultural aspect of their society was discussed explicitly. The participants were all positive to a multicultural program. However, they recognized that some may feel more comfortable showing up to events where they knew they would find people of the same background. In these meetings, my arguments about the significance of tolerance in multiculturalism is further emphasized, as we learn about the staff's explanation of what makes a group multicultural. They explain that being multicultural is not about the numbers. It does not matter if there are five Chinese speaking people and only two Punjabi speaking people, the most important thing in a multicultural group is how welcome you feel. During the committee meeting it is also explicitly discussed that not all people wish to "mingle across cultures", and that this is a choice that needs to be met with tolerance as well.

In chapter four, I also discuss the work organizations such as Options Community Services do, and what this line of work entails. Due to the large number of immigrants in Surrey, there are several organizations offering similar services. These organizations often compete for the same funding, and every year they have to submit applications arguing why exactly their program is needed in their local community. This entails that settlement organizations are unable to provide job security for their staff, and many of them are hired on one-year contracts, not knowing if the position they are working will exist the following year. Also, easily

accessible information has also led settlement organizations to suffer. Resourceful immigrants no longer need settlement workers to get to know their local community and settle in as much of the information one needs is accessible through the internet. Some communities have also become so large, that many immigrants' needs are covered through their local church, for instance. I discuss the consequences this has for the employees in settlement organizations and ask about their motivations for becoming involved in this line of work. I draw on Lisa Malkki's (2015) "The need to help" to help understand the employees' answers.

In chapter five, I show how race and culture have become two concepts entangled in a web of political correctness. I draw on Kamala Visweswaran's (1998) work on how race and culture have become confused concepts in a historical perspective and explore the meaning of these words in an anthropological context. To bring the discussion on to what this means for multiculturalism I introduce Lentin and Titley (2011), two sociologists who writes about the relationship between culture, race and racism and how these concepts have become misunderstood in the public discourse on multicultural societies. They explore stereotypical and romanticized ideas about multicultural societies as harmonic societies where racism cannot prevail. It is these romanticized ideas that has led to the perception that multiculturalism is a failed project, that has ignored real immigrant struggles, while celebrating shallow cultural traits such as food, music and dance, as we also saw in chapter three. Lentin and Titley (2011) and Visweswaran (1998) argue that instead of using the word race, which has become politically incorrect to use in a public setting, people have instead shifted to talk about cultural traits to describe negative characteristics or the "others" in society. This is a negative tendency, which Lentin and Titley (2011) labels as a dangerous one. However, my ethnographic data shows that my interlocutors did talk about race explicitly, as does the Canadian government in their official definition of "visible minorities".

In chapter five, I use ethnography that discuss outside perceptions from immigrants choosing to move to Canada over the United States, due to an idea that Canada seemed to be less racist. I also describe my interlocutors' way of talking about race, something they seemed rather relaxed towards. I explain several situations I observed where skin-color was used to describe someone, something I explain was surprising to me, due to my own pre-conceptions shaped by the society I grew up in. I explore the thought of whether a multicultural society can work as a neutral ground, where one can be at liberty to ask questions on delicate matters, as we see in the conversation I describe between a Korean-Canadian and Japanese-Canadian. In the offices of Immigrant Services at Options Community Services, almost every employee or

volunteer was of different origins. The staff was conscious of the fact that conflicts or misunderstandings may arise, and several people told me that they always found it better to ask someone about their culture, or why they do things the way they do, rather than assume, because assumptions help build prejudices.

Chapter five discusses ideas about race and culture in multicultural societies and help underscore the argument made in chapter three. I argue that unwillingness to talk about race and racism, and the incorrect use of the word culture, furthers the hypothetical narrative and help reveal the deep cracks in these perceptions about multiculturalism. However, I also argue that my interlocutors were not entangled in this web of political correctness, as they seemed to discuss race rather open and freely. They were also clear on the fact that they do see racism in their local society, although they describe it as a multicultural one.

Throughout this thesis I have tried to deconstruct romanticized perceptions of multiculturalism, as well as arguing against the negative narrative of the “collapse” of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism cannot be labeled as simply something negative, or something positive. Immigrating to a multicultural society does in no way mean that you will come to a society where you will not experience struggles, injustice, discrimination or pain. It does mean, however, that you will meet settlement organizations ready to help you navigate and connect with your new society, and where you might get the opportunity to influence and help improve the services you received. In many cases you will have access to health care and welfare, and you will meet people who expand beyond national borders, who navigate and belong to different societies at once. The aim of this thesis has been to explain the way people perceive, experience and describe the multicultural society they live in, and what multiculturalism means from the perspective of ordinary people who use this word as part of their everyday vocabulary. Scholarly discussions about multiculturalism need to be grounded in peoples lived experiences, and through this thesis I hope that I have managed to do so.

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