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The "school of life" : differences in U.S. and Canadian settlement policies and their effect on individual immigrants' experience

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“THE SCHOOL OF LIFE:” DIFFERENCES IN U.S. AND CANADIAN
SETTLEMENT POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON INDIVIDUAL IMMIGRANTS’
EXPERIENCE

by

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A Major Research Paper
Presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature suggests that language proficiency in the main language of the destination country is one of the most significant factors in the integration of immigrants. This study examines the overall differences in U.S. and Canadian settlement policy, using the provision of language courses as an example of the ways in which adult immigrants are integrated into the host society. Eleven Haitian women in both countries were interviewed to compare the way in which participants accessed key settlement information and resources as well as their language acquisition. The findings reveal that Canadian-based participants were much more likely to cite professional institutions (“formal facilitators”) for referrals, whereas American-based participants were more likely to learn from “informal facilitators.” The findings also highlight differences in access and completion rates of language classes. Implications for how national settlement policy affects individual immigrants and their language acquisition are analyzed in the discussion.

Keywords: language classes, Haitians, immigrant, women, access, Boston, Toronto

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I wish to thank all of the women who shared their stories with me and inspired me with their courage, determination, and love of learning. I would also like to thank Dr. Marco Fiola for his time and thoughtful comments and suggestions on the planning, executing, and writing of this research project.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my parents, who taught our family to celebrate our own cultural and linguistic backgrounds, while teaching us to learn from, respect, and love the diversity beyond our home.

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I. Introduction

Numerous studies have pointed to the effect of language proficiency in the main language of the destination country on the process and success of integrating immigrants in a receiving nation. Upon arrival in their destination country, newcomers must negotiate many decisions, such as banking choices, enrolling their children in schools, and finding work, all in a language and system unfamiliar to them. In a 1999 survey of immigrants in the United States, 52% indicated that learning English was the biggest obstacle that they faced, overshadowing finding work or even discrimination (Farkas *et al.*, 2003).

Immigrants to Canada cited finding an adequate job as their most difficult challenge, followed by learning English or French (Statistics Canada, 2007). Indeed, rising numbers of recent immigrants are arriving with no knowledge of the main languages spoken in both the United States and Canada (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Thomas, 2009).

Recognizing these challenges, efforts in many nations that host growing numbers of immigrants have increasingly turned towards offering language courses for adults (Norton & Stewart, 2000; DeVoretz & Ma, 2002; Mattheoudakis, 2005).

Research has shown just how significant proficiency in the language of the destination country (referred to in this study as the main or destination language of the country, due to a lack of an official language in the U.S.; Chiswick & Miller, 2003) is to the economic integration of immigrants in Canada and the United States. Chiswick and Miller (2003; 2007) explain that language skills are complementary with other aspects of human capital, namely years of schooling and pre-immigration work experience.

Specifically, an increase in proficiency in the main language enhances the effects of earnings from education and the labour experience of the country of origin. The findings

of Chiswick and Miller (2003) predicted the results from a more recent report by Statistics Canada; using data from the 2006 census, the report highlights the economic benefits to speaking only English or French in the workplace (Thomas, 2009). Immigrants who do not speak an official Canadian language in the workplace demonstrate lower earnings (\$11,000 CAD less on average) than those who do use French or English on a regular basis. These earnings gaps are more pronounced for women (Beiser & Hou, 2000; Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005).

Beyond the workplace, a country's main language is used in hospitals, schools, courts, voting booths and on public transportation. Thus, in addition to promoting economic well-being, main language proficiency might be considered a measure of socio-cultural and political participation in the host country. Gozdziaik & Melia (2005) consider the provision of ESL classes to be best practice for new settlement communities. The authors maintain that English is the most important measure of integration and that miscommunication costs businesses \$175 million annually. While researchers have focused on economic integration based on language proficiency, considering the vast amounts of money and the focus on language proficiency by various governments, there are few studies that connect the outcomes of language proficiency with the policies and models of language course provision (Matthews-Aydinli, 2008).

This paper will attempt to examine the differences in language course provision by the United States and Canada, as affected by their general language policy; overall settlement structure, government jurisdiction and funding, political climate and popular opinion about immigration. While significant differences exist in these realms, outcomes appear to be similar, including barriers to accessing classes, concerns about class and

teacher quality, as well as in the attainment of a level of exit proficiency considered sufficient for employment success, the intended objective of these classes. Research shows that access and outcomes also appear to vary by cultural group and by gender (Beiser & Hou, 2000; Kilbride *et al.*, 2008).

The participants of the proposed study will be Haitian immigrant women, who have a unique status as both a racialized and linguistic minority within the United States and Canada. For Haitians, language is already a complex identity-marker, as the majority speak French Creole as their mother tongue while French has historically been the language of the elite, public office, and schooling in Haiti (Pégram, 2005). Although French is one of the official languages in Canada, francophone immigrants often report that their expectations for the use of French throughout Canada do not meet the reality (Stone *et al.*, 2008). Madibbo (2005) suggests that French-speaking immigrants from Africa and from the Caribbean in Ontario feel like “double minorities” and that their knowledge of French does not lead to integration more readily than for other immigrants. Indeed, as Aydemir and Skuterud (2005) find, for individuals with French as a mother tongue (immigrants and Canadian-born) and no knowledge of English, the earnings of both men and women appear much closer to the earnings of individuals with a foreign mother tongue when working in English Canada.

The proposed study will thus focus on the experiences of Haitian women, their access to settlement services in general, with particular importance placed on language classes, and the effect this has on their linguistic proficiency and integration in Boston and Toronto. For the purposes of this study, English classes will be defined as those classes intended for immigrants learning English as a second (or third, etc.) language

(ESL), whether provided in a formal program, such as the Canadian federally-funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes, or in a more informal setting operated by a faith-based organization. This paper will begin with a review of the literature, including differences between the language policy and settlement policy of the United States and Canada. Next the paper will examine the provision of adult language education and barriers to access, particularly for women. The subsequent sections will include an outline of the methodology of the study followed by findings from interviews with Haitian participants. The conclusion will suggest ideas for further study and policy implications from the findings.

II. Background and Literature Review

Language Policy

A member of a linguistic minority is a person who speaks a language that is in a subordinate status within a polity (Paulston & Heidemann, 2006). In Canada, much of the focus has been on French-speakers as the linguistic minority of political significance. In 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau pushed forward language legislation in the form of the *Official Languages Act*, establishing French and English as the official languages and employing a model known in language policy planning as the “principle of personality” rather than focusing all of the rights within the “territory” or province of Québec (Wiley, 2004). The intention was to protect anglophone rights in Québec and francophones in the rest of Canada, thus to maintain and promote “official” language minorities (Auerbach, 2000). The focus was on equitable services in education and through the federal government, rather than bilingualism (Burnaby, 1998; Fleming,

2007). Some argue the federal targeting of contexts where francophones and anglophones are minorities shifts attention away from non-official language minorities (those who speak a third language), especially in schools, where resources often go to advancing the acquisition of the second official language (Burnaby, 1998; Fleming, 2007).

Despite Québec's significance in framing the Canadian socio-political landscape, particularly in the domain of language, the discussion in this paper will explore the policies of English Canada. Québec is distinct by virtue of the *Canada-Québec Accord*, which gives the provincial government the responsibility for selecting its own immigrants and shaping their integration. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the integration policy of Québec is in itself a language policy (Williams, 2003); therefore it is a subject for a separate study.

Thus, this paper will focus on the settlement of immigrants in anglophone Canada. This is of particular importance given the study's target population of Haitians, some of whom are French-speaking. It is worth noting that within English Canada, immigrants have the right to primary and secondary education in either official language, just as do all Canadians, based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Brooks, 2004). They also have the right to federal government services in either French or English.

In contrast to Canada's long-standing negotiations with a linguistic minority group of French Canadians who are considered as a "founding nation," the United States' major linguistic minority group is comprised of a new generation immigrants, most recently from Latin America (Hanson, 2005). Unlike the Québécois, these migrants are not concentrated in a specific territory. Although there is no official language policy,

English is the *de facto* official language as it used in government administration, courts, schools, and on ballots (Wiley, 2004). Some proponents of English as an official language suggest that the lack of such a policy contributes to what they perceive as a lack of federal encouragement to learn English (Gozdziak & Melia, 2005). As such, every several years, the English-only or English-as-the-official-language movement surfaces in public and legislative debates (Auerbach, 2000). Most recently, this movement, led by California multimillionaire Ron Unz, has succeeded in outlawing bilingual education (wherein students receive their content education in two languages) from public elementary and secondary instruction in three states, including Massachusetts (Auerbach, 2000).

Settlement Policy and Political Climate

Studies have shown that overall, public opinions towards immigration are favourable in Canada, particularly towards government policies that aid in newcomers' integration (Jedwab, 2008). This may stem from the fact that Canada is one of the top ten nations with the highest proportion of foreign-born residents in its population (18.9%; Migration Policy Institute, 2005). It also is the sixth nation in terms of attracting the largest numbers of immigrants, with over 6 million foreign-born residents (Migration Policy Institute, 2005). These overall numbers may contribute to the high level of public consciousness, media attention, and considerable government policies targeting migrants directly. Besides the high numbers of migrants, a further reason why Canadians might be so favourable to settlement services and structures to support immigrants may be that the nation has enshrined the principle of collective rights in its Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other legislation (Brooks, 2004), used to bestowing linguistic rights to

minority groups (see Sections 16-23, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982). As such, government planning and spending for integration and multiculturalism, in the form of programs such as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), the Immigration Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP) and Heritage Language Maintenance, is explicitly targeting the foreign-born (CIC, 2004). Whether or not these services are adequate to serve the large numbers of newcomers, the programming is comprehensive and geared towards immigrants.

In a survey by the Carleton University Survey Centre in 2004, 57% of Americans agreed that immigrants “improve society” compared to 67% of Canadians (Jedwab, 2006). While the United States accepts the largest numbers of immigrants of any nation and has over 38 million foreign-born residents (MPI, 2005), it has a lower proportion of foreign-born than Canada, at about a tenth of its population. In contrast to the collective rights protected by Canadian law, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights place emphasis on individual rights (Burnaby, 1998), making programs and funding directed at immigrant politically unpopular (Fix *et al.*, 2001). As such, programming that is intended for the immigrant population does not target them as a group, but rather as *individuals*, with the same types of needs as American-born citizens: work training, access to literacy instruction, and housing. Funding and programming targeting immigrants are through “mainstream programming” and not earmarked as ESL funds (Burnaby, 1998; Fix *et al.*, 2001; Auerbach, 2000). This includes programs such as *Welfare-to-Work*, Adult Basic Education, and Title I Literacy, which is literacy instruction for children in elementary and secondary schools (Fix *et al.*, 2001).

Programming for refugees is one exception to not targeting immigrants with public programming or funding, because the political climate encourages the provision of settlement services based on humanitarian grounds. Fix & Simmerman (2001) explain that the refugee resettlement program, with cash assistance and social services, “represents the closest approximation the federal government offers of a proactive integration policy” (p. 51). Indeed, the other legislation and programming that targets immigrant adults is predominantly negative, involving security or reducing rights. For example, the 1996 welfare reform act singles out immigrants by cutting off their rights to federal programs, such as cash assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid (Fix *et al.*, 2001). This is in contrast to Canada, where Permanent Residents are eligible for free medical care.

Issues of Access to Institutional Services Connected with Language Proficiency

Regardless of the provision of services, immigrants can not take advantage of them without knowledge of their existence and access. Most studies that examine issues of immigrant access to institutional services look at access to health care services (Deri, 2005). A few of the health studies relate access to language abilities, even the level of proficiency in the main language of the receiving nation. In a study by Ponce *et al.* (2006) “limited-English proficient” adults had up to 2.5 times higher risk for lower access to care and health status compared to those who spoke English only. Another study in California relates the lack of parental English proficiency and access to health services for their children (Yu *et al.*, 2006). Specifically, Yu *et al.* found that children from non-English-speaking families were more likely to be uninsured, to lack doctor contact, and to access health care in foreign countries on infrequent visits; these

children were also less likely to use emergency rooms. Thus English proficiency levels can affect the well-being of an entire family through differential access to health care.

One study by Stewart *et al.* (2008) did investigate the types of social support used by two groups of newcomers to Canada: Chinese and Somali immigrants. Both groups identified language as a key part of integration as well as a major challenge to accessing information and services. Furthermore, the authors found that the types, sources, and appraisal of social support differed depending on the home culture. The Somali and Chinese participants had distinct understandings of social support, with the Chinese expecting more government support and the Somalis relying on informal or faith-based networks. Support seeking was considered a coping strategy for settlement, and over time, participants reported seeking support less from peers and more from professional sources to widen and diversify their contacts and obtain more information and ideas (Stewart *et al.*, 2008). The present study will investigate the various channels through which immigrants access services, as well as any language issues that arise, either as barriers or facilitators to their settlement.

Government jurisdiction and funding of ESL courses

Although education is within the realm of provincial jurisdiction in Canada, the federal government stepped into adult language education in the 1960s to try to control the economic integration of immigrants (Burnaby, 1998; Auerbach, 2000). However, the government was criticized for supporting courses not taught by qualified instructors and excluding women or those not destined for the labour market (Burnaby, 1998; Auerbach, 2000). In 1990, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program was established. Individual non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, and private organizations can apply for funds to deliver LINC classes.

Burnaby (1998) suggests that the federal government “eased itself over the federal/provincial boundary” (p. 253) by calling the ESL classes “training” and by dealing directly with service providers. All but the initial language training for adults has been left to the provinces, thus there are clear government roles over language education, with adult basic education provided by the provinces. Federal funding for LINC was 92.7 million dollars in 2003-2004. It should be noted that immigrants pay a significant amount of this budget, given that their permanent residency fee is almost \$1000 (Fleming, 2007). To contrast further with the United States (see below), the Government of Canada’s services for integrating immigrants spends more on programs such as LINC and the Immigration Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP) than on security and border protection, including detentions and deportations. In 2006 the government spent \$675 million on Integration programs and \$450 million on the Canadian Border Service (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2008).

In comparison to Canada’s LINC program, it is difficult to describe American government jurisdiction on language course provision, because programming is less comprehensive on a federal level and because of the complexity of the policies, funding, and the means of delivery. There is a lack of national uniformity and divided responsibility between government levels. The federal government has various funding policies that might include, but seldom target, adult ESL learners; grants are made to states and small organizations. Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 is the umbrella federal funding for adult basic education, literacy, and ESL. Currently, the funding formula completely discounts the needs of ESL students, because it delivers aid to states based on the number of individuals with less than a high school degree

(Capps *et al.*, 2009). A study by the Migration Policy Institute (2009) found that in 2005-2007, 52% of adults speaking English as a Second Language had at least a high school education. These 11.2 million adults are not considered in the funding formula, with additional disregard for the type of differentiated instruction that might best meet the needs of ESL learners as opposed to students with low levels of literacy (Capps *et al.*, 2009). The formula also underweights less-educated ESL learners who need both basic education and language instruction.

Of all students in adult education programs, 45% are actually immigrants seeking English as a Second Language (Matthews-Aydinli, 2008), making them the fastest growing group of learners in adult education. The concentration of policies regarding immigrants in the U.S. remains on security, rather than on integration. In 2006, the Department of Homeland Security spent almost twenty times as much on border security, patrol and detention (\$9.5 billion) as was spent on adult basic education, under which is included ESL instruction (\$570 million) (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2008). Recent trends actually indicate that the amount spent on adult basic education may be decreasing (Capps *et al.*, 2009). More resources, funding, and accountability mechanisms are available for childhood education that may benefit the children of immigrants through the *No Child Left Behind* Legislation (\$750 million for Title III grants to “Limited English Proficient” students in grades K-12 in 2002; United States Department of Education, 2002).

Provision and outcomes of Destination Language Courses

Course provision

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) was carefully developed to include a task-based assessment (Norton & Stewart 2000), twelve Canadian Language Benchmarks for expected outcomes, as well as course levels designed to help students attain those benchmarks and earn a final certificate. LINC does exclude immigrants who succeed with naturalization, for which they are eligible after three years of residency, and those whose claims for asylum have not yet been accepted by CIC (Burnaby, 1998; CIC, 2004). Other ESL courses are offered locally and provincially, but without the LINC certification, which has become a standardized measure for employers. Some criticism of LINC is that it separates language from literacy education, identifying the learning to read process as entirely distinct from learning a second language (Burnaby, 1998; Auerbach, 2000). This disregards adults who may have difficulties with reading as well as a low level of linguistic proficiency. In contrast to the United States, Adult Basic Education, which focuses on basic skills including literacy, is not considered a program targeting immigrants in Canada. It is intended for those who have obtained less than a grade 9 education or those who have low levels of literacy. This may be because immigrants arriving to Canada have a higher level of education than the average population, a gap that is not as wide in the United States (Hanson, 2005).

In the United States, ESL courses are more tied to Adult Basic Education courses, including vocational programming through the *Perkins Education Act* (Fix *et al.*, 2001), literacy classes, and General Educational Development (G.E.D.). Therefore, in contrast to Canada's target groups of those who have not yet obtained citizenship, these programs

are all-inclusive, not aimed towards immigrants. The focus remains on work training or basic language, but less on linguistic proficiency outcomes necessary for jobs that require high levels of language and literacy. The 1998 *Perkins Vocational and Technical Assistance Act* focuses on training leading to employment, and accountability is measured by employment rates, not academic or linguistic outcomes (Wonacott, 2000). Although the Act does identify “limited English proficient” adults as one of the programs targeted groups of “individuals with other barriers to educational achievement,” Wonacott (2000) argues that the bill is targeted for work force development that only “coincidentally” meets some of the needs of immigrant learners. Critics of serving immigrants within a vast set of mainstream institutions suggest that these organizations are not responsive to immigrants’ specific needs; for example, they may not perceive a need for translators (Fix *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, there is no comprehensive federal government program, assessment, benchmark or curricula guide. As such, there is little accountability for the programming that is enacted with federal funding (Burnaby, 1998).

Gozdziak & Melia (2005) highlight four model ESL programs in the U.S., with four distinct funding strategies, stakeholders, curricula, and venues. These include a public school-based program affiliated with TESOL, an alternative high school with a GED program for immigrants and refugees, a public library-based program, and a family literacy program entitled Even Start. While these models may be exemplary, there are few avenues to measure outcomes or replicate best practices because of the ad hoc nature of the settlement sector.

Barriers to access

On both sides of the border, even when they are offered, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are not easily accessible. The fact that Canada's LINC program is only offered to permanent residents and accepted asylum claimants is one example. In Canada, the CIC (2004) reports wait times of over six months for LINC classes that offer childcare and are conveniently located. In the Toronto area itself, research by Lo *et al.*, (2007) indicates a "spatial mismatch" between urban service provision, including the availability of language classes, and the increasingly suburban residential location of immigrants. In the Peel and York regions of the Greater Toronto Area, there are 7,186 LINC spaces for 33,357 newcomers (Lo *et al.*, 2007).

Location reflects another deterrent, which is the access to transportation. While LINC attempts to ease transportation barriers by offering cash or subway fare, immigrants need to first come to the LINC centre to pick up their token for their following two trips. Childcare is another issue, most often affecting women (Bayley, 2004). While LINC offers childcare, the spots with childcare services are often filled first, and the longest wait times are for those adults requiring child-minding before their children reach school ages (Kilbride *et al.*, 2008). Women are more likely to seek language classes after their children are well-settled or finished with their early schooling years; by this time, the women may be citizens, thereby ineligible for LINC (Norton, 2000; Kilbride *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, research shows that the English language proficiency gaps between men and women grow with increases in length of residency, with men attaining higher levels of proficiency than women (Beiser & Hou, 2000). A Canadian federally-funded study demonstrated that women with professional credentials

were more negatively affected than men from their same ethnic group by the lack of services in childcare and language training (Kenny & Cap, 2003). In contrast to the childcare needs of women, men more frequently report that the missed job time or money required to attend classes is a deterrent to their attendance (Bayley, 2004).

Recent research has also uncovered cultural reasons why language classes are not meeting the needs of newcomers. In a study in Toronto by Kilbride *et al.* (2008), women from Urdu and Punjabi-speaking groups were uncomfortable leaving home for classes in the evening or at night, studying with male counterparts, or taking public transportation independently. As cultural expectations dictate that women are the keepers of culture and language, male family members may discourage them from learning English (Kilbride *et al.*, 2008; Kouritzin, 2000). Given these non-tangible deterrents to language class attendance, critics wonder if the current solution of adding more programs and securing transportation will matter to those who are uncomfortable even leaving home. Kilbride *et al.* (2008) conclude that the current one-size-fits-all approach is not serving immigrants and their complex needs based on cultural and gender differences.

Immigrants in the U.S. also experience concrete and intangible barriers to ESL classes. Due to the high need for learning English, wait lists for admission are common. In the state of Massachusetts, a study by Mass Inc. found that while the state's ESL classes serve 18,000 students per year, there are over 20,000 people on growing waiting lists, particularly in urban areas where classes are needed the most to meet the needs of growing immigrant populations (Sum *et al.*, 2005). Similar to Canadian findings, ethnic, gender, and even age differences have been found to prevent newcomers from accessing classes in the United States (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Hubenthal, 2004; Kilbride *et al.*,

2008). Menard-Warwick's study (2005) of Latina women in the San Francisco area demonstrates that factors both internal and external to the individual can deter students from learning. These include job constraints, class schedules, teacher quality, availability of childcare, and the political context, such as undocumented status. The author also highlights the importance of complex factors, such as the linguistic factors of the native language, the educational history of the student, and family background. Kouritzin's work (2000) also points out that some women may experience feelings of "ambivalence" to learning English, based on whether or not they voluntarily migrated, followed a husband, or fled turmoil in their home country.

Quality of ESL course outcomes

All of these factors internal and external to students will impact their attainment of an English proficiency outcome suitable for employment. A report by the government of Manitoba (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2003) recommends that immigrants who would like to work in professions such as engineering, nursing, or welding need a minimum Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) of seven to be successful. In theory, the LINC program was created with the idea that the CLB of 12 would be the "advanced" exit proficiency for success as a professional (Norton & Stewart, 2000). Still, most LINC centres do not offer courses beyond level five, which is a CLB of seven and considered intermediate (CIC, 2004). A CIC evaluation of LINC considered this lack of advanced course provision as a key weakness of the program and the province of Ontario received a grade of "C" in part due to offering language levels only up to CLB 5 (2004).

A study by Man (2004) investigated the gaps between language proficiency outcomes from classes and the linguistic demands of employment for women who arrived

in Canada from Hong Kong and Mainland China. Most of the women held professional and managerial positions in their country of origin. In Canada, they found themselves in precarious and part-time employment and these women suggested that ESL classes are inadequate for meeting their employment needs. CIC's response to this lack of LINC provision at advanced levels was to create the *English Language Training* (ELT) in January 2004 (CIC, 2004). This program is delivered under the Immigration Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP) and it includes mentoring and job placement linked with the Canadian Language Benchmarks 7-10. The same evaluative study by CIC (2004) cited above also identified the variation in teacher quality as another of LINC's weaknesses. However, all teachers are required to have TESOL accreditation from specific centres that teach the Canadian Language Benchmarks and assessments.

Several studies in the United States have suggested that most adult education instructors are under-qualified to teach. A U.S. Department of Education study in 1997 (Bayley, 2004) revealed that only 30% of instructors had training and only 3% had ESL degrees. Those with ESL degrees may be more likely to enter the more secure profession of public school teaching, particularly in the United States, where more funding and resources are available in the K-12 sector of ESL. Due to the lack of accountability, the lack of assessment in the United States, and the deterrents to attendance, which tend to prevent individuals from continuing through advanced levels of coursework even when they are offered, it is difficult to assess and study the proficiency levels of those who enter Canada or the U.S. with little or no English proficiency, complete a series of English courses, and then enter the workforce. However, findings by researchers in both countries (Thomas, 2009; Chiswick & Miller, 2003, 2007; Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005)

highlight the income gaps between native English speakers and non-native speakers, suggesting that immigrants are not learning English well enough to compete with native English speakers in the labour force (when controlling for years of schooling, country of origin and other factors). The ramifications are pronounced. A report by Mass Inc. (Sum *et al.*, 2005) in the state of Massachusetts found that the level of an immigrant's English greatly impacts his or her earnings. On average, an immigrant who speaks only English at home earns 2.5 times as much as an immigrant who does not speak English well (\$38,526 vs. \$14,221). Immigrants who do not speak English at all earned only \$9,064, with immigrants who speak it "well" or "very well" in the middle (\$23,176 and \$34,264 on average, all in USD) (Sum *et al.*, 2005).

Proposed Research Study

The current study will attempt to explore individual experiences of Haitian immigrant women with language classes in Toronto and Boston. As language has been identified in the literature as a very important component of economic integration, the research will use language proficiency as an indicator of overall integration. Specifically, the investigation will note differences, if any, in access to or outcomes of language acquisition classes as they affect the women's settlement in Boston or Toronto while they attempt to access other mainstream services, such as medical care, schooling for their children, and find work. Furthermore, efforts will be made to link the women's individual experiences with elements of the Canadian and American government language and immigration policy as identified in the literature review. While significant differences exist in these realms, the hypothesis is that outcomes may be similar in both jurisdictions, including barriers to accessing or maintaining attendance in classes, concerns about class and teacher quality, as well as in the attainment of a level of

exit proficiency considered insufficient for employment success, the intended objective of these classes. Based on the literature review of national policy, one might expect Canadian participants to have greater interaction with formal settlement institutions. Overall, language classes are used as one measure of how immigrants access services and begin the steps towards mainstream integration.

The Haitian Immigrant Experience in Canada and the U.S.

In the Canadian context, 95% of Haitians migrate to the province of Quebec and 95% of those settled in Montreal (Pégram, 2005). Haitians are more likely to be classified as living in low-income conditions; the average income for Canadians of Haitian origin was \$20,000, one third less than the amount for the general population (Lindsay, 2001). In data from the census of 2001, Haitians were found to be more like to be unemployed (16.4% compared to 7.4% of Canadian labour force participants). Haitians are the largest group of visible minorities within Quebec and the 10th largest non-European population group in Canada (Lindsay, 2001). Madibbo (2005) highlights the unique perspective of Haitian immigrants living in Ontario, an English-speaking province. She argues that the black francophone immigrants living in Ontario, including Haitians, are confronted with institutionalized racism coming from the government and francophone mainstream as well as language discrimination by the Anglophone majority. With a lack of funding for francophone institutions within Toronto, black immigrants must compete with native French Canadian groups with differing agendas (Madibbo, 2005). Madibbo concludes that these black francophone immigrants are “double minorities” in Ontario, categorized according to their racial and linguistic profiles as outsiders. While many may arrive to

Canada with expectations of a bilingual country, the linguistic realities of Ontario may be more comparable to those of the United States.

In the U.S., Dudley-Grant and Etheridge (2007) depict a struggle between Haitian-born Haitians and American-born Haitians. They also highlight tensions between Haitians of differing social classes, linguistic differences, and ambivalent attitudes to the Black American community. Pégram (2005) suggests that Haitians are a “double minority,” confined to secondary status and isolated by other groups. As they face mistrust and discrimination from American-born African-Americans, they do not feel solidarity with black people. While Boston has a smaller community of Haitians, it is receiving more recent waves of Haitians from all social classes. Pégram (2005) writes that because Blacks are an even smaller minority overall than in New York City, Haitians in Boston are faced by more intense discrimination from the majority white society, especially in housing and employment.

Within the Haitian community there exists a tremendous diversity of backgrounds and experiences in terms of language, class, years of education, and immigration status. This is true of the participants in this study. Labelle & Midy (2002) suggests that the racialization of Haitians takes on different forms depending on location and the “proximal host” society (p. 22). The new waves tend to have low formal schooling, are family-sponsored immigrants, and do not have the same ability to speak French as previous waves. While Haitian Creole incorporates words from the French lexicon, it is influenced by a variety of African languages and is thus distinct from French. In Haiti, only 10% of the population understands and speaks French fluently (Pégram, 2005). French therefore embodies an elitism associated with

education and the ruling political class. Although a question was asked regarding proficiency in French, it did not become a significant variable in this study as explained below.

III. Methodology

Research Design

The current study will take a qualitative approach, because it is exploratory. The principal investigator intends to gather information that would be helpful in expanding future research to include a greater number of participants or other cultural groups that reside in Canada or the United States. Furthermore, while numerous studies have examined the importance of language proficiency on settlement from an economic perspective as well as the structural differences between the United States' and Canada's immigration policies and programs, few have looked at how this impacts the lived experiences of the immigrants, the process of their settlement and integration. This study values the participants' subjective experiences to construct the way in which governmental programming affects immigrant settlement.

Participants and Settings

The study involved a goal of ten participants, with five in each jurisdiction of Toronto and Boston. Eventually eleven women were interviewed, with six in Boston. The participants were Haitian immigrant women, who have been in Canada or the United States between three and eleven years. This was considered an appropriate amount of time for the women to have some longitudinal perspective on their settlement, yet their recent experiences remain fresh in their minds and pertinent to incoming immigrants. Furthermore, by arriving in a similar range of years, the women have had a similar amount of time to acquire English. The women were

recruited with the expectation they would have children of school ages, between 5 and 18 to enhance the likelihood that the women have had at least an experience with an English-speaking public institution, even if they themselves have not attended an English class. This requirement for participation in the study also was intended to connect to the literature suggesting that women sometimes must delay their own acquisition of English in order to care for their young children as they get acclimatized to Canada or the U.S. (Norton, 2000; Kilbride *et al.*, 2008). In the end, two of the Toronto-based participants had children who were under 5, but they all attended some form of daycare, also an English-based institution. The expected age of participants was a range from 25 to 60, so that the women might be considered eligible for the labour force. This age requirement was useful to find out if the women use English at work or find their linguistic proficiency to be a barrier to their desired employment status. The actual age range of the participants was from 27 to 48. Women who were not born in Haiti or who arrived in the U.S. or Canada before age 18 were intended to be ineligible for the study. Likewise, women who attended public schooling up to grade 12 in either Canada or the U.S. were to be excluded from the study, because they would have been exposed to English in a formal environment outside of adult ESL classes. In the end, one participant Aline, arrived at age 16 and did attend a public high school in Florida for one year.

Participants were recruited in two fashions, depending on their location. The principal investigator used a snowballing technique for recruiting participants in Toronto. She identified and contacted, by email and in person, three organizations serving francophone immigrants in the greater Toronto area to post a flyer indicating the characteristics of participants, compensation offered, and the fact that the interview will cover settlement experiences and language learning and should take roughly 45 minutes. In the end, five participants were

recruited through contact with a shelter serving refugees in downtown Toronto. Former residents of the shelter also referred other Haitian acquaintances. In Boston the principal investigator, a former ESL teacher, posted a flyer with the same information on the parents' information board in the school where she had taught for several years, which serves many Haitian elementary students. All six women who responded to this flyer were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, or in a quiet, neutral location most convenient to the participants, such as a public library or café in their neighbourhood.

The localities of Toronto and Boston were chosen for specific reasons. While a majority of Haitians move to Québec because of the usage of French, increasing numbers have more recently moved to Toronto. Haitian immigrants to Boston have also arrived in more recent waves, compared to those who fled to New York City and Montréal in the 1960s and 70s (Pégram, 2005). As Toronto is a smaller hub for Haitians in the Canadian context, Boston is also third to Miami and New York City in terms of welcoming Haitians. Both Toronto and Boston are English-speaking North American urban centres experiencing growth in the percentage of foreign-born residents. However, striking demographic differences do exist. In Toronto, 64% of newcomers do not speak English or French at home, whereas in Boston 33.4% of residents over age five do not speak English at home (Statistics Canada, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Instruments/Data Collection Tools

The researcher used two instruments during the course of the study. The first is a semi-structured interview, which was developed specifically for this research. It is divided into five parts: Part I involves questions about the demographic identity of the participant; Part II surveys the backgrounds, experiences, and expectations of the women prior to migration; Part

III looks at their experience with settlement in general; Part IV involves their experiences with language classes in either the U.S. or Canada; and finally, Part V asks participants to evaluate their overall quality of life compared with their life in Haiti, with specific attention to how language proficiency in English has affected their situation. The majority of settlement questions focused on how participants “found out about” a particular service or institution and what language they used in negotiating that access. The questions on language classes referred to the quality of the class as well as completion rates and issues of access. The questions were posed in English. If participants did not comprehend the meaning of the question after it was rephrased once in English, then the principal investigator asked the question in French, but this was necessary only once or twice in each interview, except in the case of Délima. Because of the class and educational distinctions assigned to French and Creole in Haiti, English was the preferred language of the study, however the principal investigator sometimes used French for clarification, particularly in the beginning to make the participant feel at ease to use either language. The questionnaire is attached in the Appendix.

As all of the interviews were conducted over 90% in English, the researcher used a second instrument to evaluate the proficiency of participants, the *Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral* (MELA-O). The MELA-O was developed by the Evaluation Assistance Center at George Washington University and the Massachusetts Assessment Advisory Group (MAAG) and is based on an instrument used by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009). It is an observation scale used to assess the oral language proficiency of English language learners in grades K-12 as compared to their native English-speaking peers. The principal investigator is a qualified MELA-O administrator (<http://www.doe.mass.edu>) and, with

participants' permission, assessed interviewees on their oral language skills while later listening to the recordings. Participants were given the option to decline both the audio recording and the assessment. One shortcoming is that the assessment was developed for students in classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12, but the principal investigator modified it for comparison to native-language adult peers that the women may encounter in the workplace or at any public institution.

In addition to the formal assessment, participants were asked to self-report their proficiency in English, Beiser and Hou (2000) showed to be an accurate measure of their overall language proficiency. Beiser and Hou used a self-reporting measure in their study, citing research by Chiswick and Miller (1998) wherein the authors examined proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking in the workplace and informal settings. They found that the proficiency results were consistent in all of the language domains, and therefore, one self-reporting measure is reliable for overall language proficiency. However, due to the researcher's training on the MELA-O, the observation scale was an added measure of the participants' comprehension and production of English, which may contribute to the findings.

Procedure

The initial phase of the study involved a literature search on immigration, language, and settlement policies and programming in both Canada and the United States. Particular attention was paid to English language classes and a gender analysis of access and outcomes of these classes. Based on this research and the principal investigator's experience as an ESL teacher, a questionnaire was developed for the semi-structured interviews. The next phase of the study involved the formal recruitment of participants. Due to her connections as a former teacher in the Boston area, the principal investigator was able to interview six participants.

Limitations include that all of these women were connected to the same elementary school where the principal investigator taught and two of them participated in an informal parents' ESL/civics class held last year and led by the researcher herself. The investigator was careful to reinforce that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality through aliases and the safeguarding of audio files and transcripts would be strictly maintained.

By contrast to the principal investigator's familiarity with the Haitian community in the Boston area, Toronto recruitment proved to be a challenge, with the result that initial participants were all affiliated with a single shelter for refugees and had previously lived in the United States. While this provided for a unique direct comparison on the women's experiences accessing services and language classes as newcomers in two countries, the original intention of the study was to have strict comparisons of non-English speaking newcomers arriving to English-speaking communities in two different countries. It should be noted that the Boston area participants also did not have "clean" immigration stories, as at least two of the women had traveled on multiple visas and even given birth to a child in the United States before immigrating permanently. This simply highlights the "transnational" nature of modern migration patterns, wherein individuals' lifestyles, relations, and identities cross borders (Wayland, 2006a).

In the case of the Toronto participants, most of the women had been denied asylum in the United States and were claiming status in Canada, sometimes after up to seven years in the U.S. This length of stay in the U.S. impacted their English language skills upon arrival in Canada, skewing the original intentions of the study, although it does highlight differences in access, availability, attendance, and outcomes of language classes. Due to the fact that all of the women were applying for refugee status and their claims had not yet been accepted by CIC,

Table 1: Participant Backgrounds and Language Proficiencies

Name	Age	Years of school in Haiti	Marital status	Year of Arrival in US	Year of Arrival in Can	Total # Years in Eng-speaking locale	# of children	Self-described knowledge Eng before arrival US	MELA-O English comprehension (max. 5)	MELA-O English production* (max. 5)
Mirlande	43	15	Single	2005	2008	4	2	Not very well	4	3
Aline	27	7	Single	1999	2007	10	1	Not at all	5	3
Delima	37	2	Married	2000	2007	7	2	Not at all	3	2
Madeleine	40	14	Married	2000	2007	7	3	Not very well	4	3
Patricia	30	14	Married	2007	2008	2	2	Not very well	3	2
Colette	43	12	Married	2003	n/a	6	3	Not very well	3	2
Yvonne	40	14	Single	2007	n/a	2	1	Not very well	4	3
Velma	43	12	Married	1998	n/a	11	4	Not at all	3	2
Mireille	39	9	Single	1999	n/a	10	1	Not very well	3	2
Fanny	48	12	Married	2002	n/a	7	2	Well	5	3
Beatrice	52	10	Widowed	1998	n/a	11	2	Not at all	4	3

*The MELA-O production score is the lowest value of the individual measures that form English production skills: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. For example, an individual can have values of four for each measure, but a three on grammar, and will receive a 3.

they were ineligible to attend LINC classes as mentioned in the literature review. Thus, most of the women were taking generic community ESL classes. Another contrast to the Boston context of the study is that the principal investigator did not have a prior personal rapport with the participants in Toronto. Regardless, interviews were all conducted using the same semi-structured interview protocol and were audio recorded with the consent of participants. The principal investigator also took field notes and reflections on each interview. Transcripts of the interviews were coded and general themes emerged which will be discussed below along with recommendations for language and settlement policy.

Data organization and analysis

In the end, the principal investigator was able to interview six participants in the Boston area and five participants in the Toronto area. After transcribing the interviews, the principal investigator looked for broader themes through keywords that answer the larger research question of how differences of government structure contribute to immigrant access to settlement information and services, with a specific interest in the impact on language use and proficiency. The data was coded on whether participants identified a family member or a service agency as to how they found out about their current housing, ESL classes, or other services. In this case, “facilitating factors” towards accessing services and therefore towards integration, were coded as either “informal” (networks of family and friends) or “formal” (agencies, news programs, government pamphlets, border services, etc). Informal negotiations for accessing services and programs were more likely to be done in Haitian Creole, whereas formal negotiations occurred more likely in English. Facilitating factors could be coded twice only if they offered more than one referral (i.e. if a newcomer centre referred the participant to both housing and an educational program).

Table 2: Examples of Settlement and Integration Facilitators as Coded for Analysis

Informal Facilitators	Formal Facilitators	Self-Facilitating
Family members	Employment agency	Proximity to home
Friends	Shelter	Internet search
Cartoons	Community College teacher	Direct phone call
Husband	Flyer	Prior knowledge

The investigator also analyzed the perceived quality of the ESL programming and how English was perceived as a factor in the successful settlement of the immigrant. An example may be whether or not the ESL program offered various levels to advance and obtain a certificate or whether it was more informal. To ensure trustworthiness, transcripts were read several times, highlighted for key themes and then the principal investigator used constant comparison techniques to compare to the research and to the other participants' experiences. Based on final themes that emerged, the researcher will attempt to explain any similarities or differences among participants, particularly between the Boston and Toronto cohorts, in the discussion that follows.

Limitations

This study is qualitative and cannot be considered a true comparison between the settlement experiences of immigrants in the U.S. and Canada. It is not representative of other ethnic groups, nor of the many receiving communities in which immigrants settle throughout the U.S. and Canada. Sometimes reference is made to the locations of "Canada" and "United States" rather than the sample sites of Toronto and Boston because of the confounding issue that all of the Toronto participants originally settled in the U.S., in Florida, Philadelphia, and Boston and these experiences were included in the U.S. analysis. A comparison group of Haitians who had

arrived directly to Toronto from Haiti would add to the research, as would an exploration of the experiences of Haitians arriving in Québec, to a francophone society with established communities and networks of Haitians. One feature of the study that may impact findings is the personal connection the principal investigator had with the participants in Boston as a former ESL teacher at their children's school. The researcher attempted to establish the same friendly, professional rapport with the Toronto sample.

IV. Findings

Facilitating Access to Settlement and Mainstream Services

As stated above, transcripts were coded for the way in which the participants accessed ("found out about") programs, services, and other necessities upon arrival, such as housing, schools for their children, language classes, and jobs. From the data, patterns of referral emerged as to whether participants found out about services through social networks or through more professional, institutional means. As such, referrals were recorded as "informal facilitators" or "formal facilitators," with a separate category for those who mentioned they found the service through proximity or through their own search, "self-facilitating" their settlement (through the internet, prior knowledge, etc. See table 2.). A distinction was made between initial settlement and current situations (therefore how the participant found out about her *initial* housing and then how she found her *current* housing). In the final analysis it is difficult to make assumptions about changes over time, given there were no questions about intermediary steps (if multiple moves were made between several houses or schools). Nevertheless, participants made clear statements about their need for and pride in independence, which was presented as an objective and will be linked with improving language skills and explored further below. In

Table 3: Facilitating factors towards settlement and integration for U.S. settlement

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Participant	Years in US	Informal US facilitating factors	Formal US facilitating factors	Proximity/self-facilitating
Mireille	10	7	6	3
Yvonne	2	9	3	2
Velma	11	11	5	2
Collette	6	16	4	1
Beatrice	11	12	5	1
Fanny	7	8	16	1
Average American sample	7.8	10.5	6.5	Total: 10

□

Table 4: Facilitating factors towards integration for dual-nation settlement

Participant	Years in US	Informal US facilitating factor	Formal US facilitating factor	Proximity/self-facilitating	Years in Canada	Informal Can facilitating factor	Formal Can facilitating factor	Proximity/self-facilitating
Mirlande	3	4	3	2	1	3	10	1
Aline	8	6	2	3	2	3	24	4
Madeleine	7	5	3	1	2	4	17	5
Patricia	<1	3	0	1	1	5	9	1
Delima	7	10	1	1	2	5	11	1
Average Canadian Sample	5.2 years	5.6	1.8	Total: 7	1.6 years	4	14.2	Total: 12

this section, contrasts between the participants who settled in Boston and Toronto will be made in terms of the references to informal and formal facilitators. Tables 3 and 4 highlight these differences, with far more “formal facilitators” being cited in Canada.

Informal facilitating: Toronto sample

It should be noted that the five participants who have settled in Toronto have spent time in the United States and their reflections on those experiences are reported below in the section on the U.S. Furthermore, three of the five had family or friends in the United States, but none of the five had any relatives or prior contacts in Canada. Thus, they do not have the same social networks as many of the participants in the Boston area had on arrival in the U.S.

Nevertheless, these women sought help from informal contacts, overwhelmingly from other Haitian newcomers. Examples include finding out about day care, the Department of Motor Vehicles, church, language classes, or employment agencies. When searching for a family doctor, Mirlande says “I asked! I asked people, Haitian people again, I asked people to tell me where the family doctor is.” Sometimes the support is actually to accompany an individual to access the services, often to translate. Other times it is simply to offer information. When Patricia was looking for day care services for her son, she says “my friends, my Haitian friends give me the number and I just called and they give me an appointment and they put me on waiting list and after they call,” demonstrating that she was able to follow through independently on accessing the services, once she had the initial information. Aline similarly is able to acquire the kind of information she needs from others, such as how she got her driver’s license:

I just find out. I figure it out. I look at...actually, I asked my friend. They sent me, the one in Keele. Keele and Sheppard I guess and then after that when I moved here I asked somebody in the building, they said there’s one in Victoria Park. That’s when I went there to take my test.

A pattern emerged for all participants wherein this negotiation for information about services with informal Haitian networks typically takes place in Haitian Creole, followed by contacting the more formal institution, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles or community centre in English. This chain of accessing services involves a blend of informal, formal, and self-facilitation.

Formal facilitating: Toronto sample

In tallying up the types of facilitators used, newcomers in the sample who have settled in Toronto much more likely to refer to formal facilitating agents rather than informal networks of settlement help. Aline, who has been in Canada less than two years, provides a good picture of all the types of formal facilitators that have allowed her to find housing, improve her English, find a job, attend college, and pursue her dreams of becoming an R.N. She cites the Fort Erie border guards, the Red Cross, the Globalview shelter, a Security guard class, a G.E.D. program, the local newspaper, a bank, a social worker, two Colleges, a Newcomer Program, and key contacts at her daughter's school and at one college with helping her to become settled in Toronto. Her experience also highlights the interconnectedness of the agencies, as she recounts how right upon arrival at the border immigration officials referred her to a contact at the Toronto train station, then to a first shelter which was full, then to the Red Cross, who sent her to Globalview shelter, her initial housing in Toronto.

Madeleine had a similar inter-institutional referral experience when finding a school for her son. The social worker from the shelter helped her to register him in one school, but when Madeleine moved, the school gave her the paperwork and made contacts with a school closer to her current housing. Due to her experiences with formal institutions, Madeleine seems well equipped to work through an emergency or problem with the authorities or paperwork. When

asked where she might refer a newcomer friend with a problem, she suggested, “the government place... the Legal Aid.” Aline recognizes that the shelter (which provided many referrals beyond simple housing) worked to help her settle and when asked the same question about referring others, she responded “the first thing I would suggest to the person is there’s a shelter. Everywhere in Canada has a shelter, if you have a problem; you know, look for a shelter.” Mirlande was also satisfied with the services she received at the shelter and would refer others because “the shelter can give them whatever information we need.” This demonstrates their understanding that when in need, there are formal services to approach in Canada.

Although Mirlande is currently going to English classes full-time, she has already accessed an Employment Resource Centre, where she registered for a course that would enable her to continue her career as an educator, her job in Haiti. While she still has several steps before she can become a teacher in Canada, she was able to access the information through a formal agency and proves quite knowledgeable about the process:

I took a course...let me see Employment Resource Centre at [location]. I took the course, I was doing it for 5 weeks. They help me to, to go to the same way, like education, but they said ah I have to apply for this kind of work by giving my university diploma, my transcript, and a letter from the school where I worked and yes that’s it...and after it has to be notarized by a notary...I’m still waiting for the Ministry of Education.

Whereas in Florida a friend found her a job, in Toronto Delima does not yet have a job because she is taking courses full-time. Similarly to Mirlande, however, she has already been to an Employment agency to prepare for her eventual job search. She is impressed by the level of service provided in Canada, stating:

When we were in the U.S., we working hard, but they don't care about anybody, but in Canada they care, even though nobody working, they care about children, anybody coming Canada.

Aline also refers to some level of service or government agencies as "they," stating "then you come here, they force you to go to school and that, they do a lot!" All of the participants referred to the free public schooling for their children, language classes for adults, and other educational benefits as one of the best features of their settlement in Canada.

Informal facilitating: United States

All 11 participants who had some period of stay in the United States reported more informal facilitating factors than formal, whether they remained in the U.S. or continued on to live in Toronto. Still, informal support took on many forms, including physically leading a newcomer to an agency, providing information orally, or acting as a translator. Television was also considered as an informal facilitator, when cited three times by participants who, without access to English language classes, watched cartoons and other programs to improve their English.

Stating "there's no housing thing in Florida," Aline, who arrived in Florida after a boat crossing all alone at age 16, goes on to recount how she eventually found shelter with a Haitian boyfriend after a connection with a family member did not work out:

That's what pushing me to have my baby, because at my age, I came to Florida I have no one, nobody and then it's only my uncle that requests that he needs and then when I contact my family...then kick us out. I didn't have a place to go. And I hung out with friends and school and after that I find somebody wants to be with me. I be with the person just because I need somewhere to live! So that's how I become...live my life until I come to Canada.

A former elementary school teacher in Haiti, Mirlande also struggled to find housing for her and her two children along with suitable work and was relying on informal Haitian networks in Florida. Tearfully, she expressed the following:

It was me and my children. It was really, really difficult. I didn't really have...I was like a nomad. Here one month, two months, on this side, always in one room with the children. It was really, really difficult. I did all kinds of...things I wouldn't want to do, I was forced into doing. When I say that, it wasn't really like a job. I help people and then they help to take care of me. It was so hard for me. I always lived with someone; like she had her house, she lent me a room, I stayed with the children. Yes, it was really difficult.

Due to a lack of time, childcare, and work obligations, Madeleine was unable to take English classes in the United States. Still, upon arrival in ESL classes in Toronto, she was able to enter into level 4. Without formal training, she cites informal facilitators: "I read book and I watch TV. I always talk to people and I have my family, the children...cousin, they all speak English." Beatrice reports that her aunt physically brought her to a specific community centre to learn English: "The first time I came, my aunt go to school to show me to go there." When asked about how she found out about a variety of community services, Velma states "my family walking around with me, showing me where I supposed to go, if I need to go in the store, in the market, the park, if I need a job."

The importance of family interdependence was reinforced when Velma considers how she would resolve a problem with authorities:

Oh, if you have a problem, you try to resolve your problem with your...that's your family. They're supposed to try to resolve your problem...so you don't have to inform the people outside come in your family to...to show you how to supposed to treat your family. You're supposed to know that....that's your privacy.

Four of six Boston-based participants indicated they would also seek to resolve any legal problems by contacting a family member. In fact, Mireille recounts how beyond greetings, she tries to communicate only with family: "When you talk to someone, you don't know which one is the good person, you don't know which one is the bad person, sometime when you in trouble, he better you talk to your family, your Mom specially and that's it." This independence from formal outside help is not as evident in those participants who have settled

in Toronto. This may be due to a lack of family networks or to differences in service provision.

Formal facilitating: the United States

Despite a reliance on support from family and friends, the U.S. participants did access services through formal channels. When finding daycare for her son in the U.S., Madeleine said, “I just go to the city and apply.” In fact, Madeleine was able to access other formal institutions in her quest for English and education, but was held back by her lack of paperwork:

I was in one class. It's a public um government...in the states, but it was, they show you how to say fish, how to say busy, how to say count one to three, but I already knew that. It's the basic! The teacher told me, it's too...this level is not yours; you have to go to college. They give me paper, I go to college. Messier College in New Jersey, but I can't go, because I suppose to have a social...but I don't have, that's why I waste all my time...for nothing!

Thus, while Madeleine was able to successfully negotiate several formal contacts in the U.S. in order to improve her English, she is frustrated by the ultimate lack of access to instruction due to immigration policies excluding those without status. Mireille provides an actual example where she sought formal help to resolve a potential documentation issue: “Like for example I thought I was lost my license and my passport, my Green Card, I went to the police office to tell them I lost my paper and they give me a paper to make sure my thing is lost, but it wasn't.” None of the women who settled in the U.S. referenced finding a job through an agency, unlike the Toronto participants who have done preliminary searches in preparation for their eventual job hunt.

Colette acknowledges the formal manner in which she hears about a community English class, “because they, they always send all neighbourhood the paper to go to apply after that they call you.” Fanny recounts how she now distributes flyers so that others might access the community learning centre where she took several courses, including English language

classes. This is a context in which Fanny demonstrates her increasing independence and integration, wherein she has become a formal facilitator by posting the flyer for a community centre.

Aline, who lived in the U.S. for eight years and in Canada for less than two years, draws direct comparisons between the U.S. and Canadian settlement services. She states,

in Florida, I didn't find housing...in Florida it was so tough for me...I didn't know no place in Florida to go for help. Canada is way different in everything, everything you mentioned. In United States I don't know if they have it, because I never knew; maybe people who participate are people who have paper, like me I was an immigrant, I didn't have social, I didn't have nothing, so even my daughter has a social, she be able to get nothing, so I don't know nothing about Florida....My life is totally changed from United States from Canada.

So for Aline, one of the key issues is lack of knowledge about where to go for help.

Meanwhile in Canada she is much more self-sufficient and able to refer others for help.

Self-facilitating processes of access and integration

Whether settling in the U.S. or Canada, Haitian women appear equally likely to become self-facilitators in the process of integration and access to services. The theme of independence or the lack thereof was common for all of the women. Many times the women portrayed their struggles as a lack of independence or agency (Ralston, 2006). While it does not allow for U.S. and Canadian comparisons, it is important to note the women's own agency in their settlement process. Several themes emerged of social, financial, and linguistic or educational independence, but for this study, the focus is on the significance of language in helping the women to feel a sense of agency.

Many of the women expressed the need to be socially independent. All of the Boston-based participants lived with relatives upon arrival, but were anxious, if not desperate, to have their own housing. Mireille sought independence from the influence of her parents:

Now I can say no, they're not going to be mad at me. But before maybe they're gonna be mad at me, and maybe they're gonna punish me. So now nobody can punish me because I said I wanna do something.

Still, Yvonne refers to the challenges of seeking an independent (perhaps more individualistic)

American life:

Here in the United States, this is the school of life. You know you learn, you make mistake, and you learn a lesson about the mistake you made. In Haiti, I don't think so. You have your family to help you all the time, so it's not the same. You are here by yourself, even the, even though my mother is here...this is my life.

Financial independence was especially a concern of the women who worked in Haiti.

Colette explains how she ran a small business in Haiti and how she misses "my 'yours is yours,'" the satisfaction of financial independence wherein whatever she made belonged to her.

Yvonne also feels left back with her life plans compared to her home country: "In Haiti I can say I have a life. I go to work. I take care of my child, but here, oh it's very tough because I supposed to...restart."

Fanny in particular had financial independence in Haiti, running her own business, traveling back and forth to the U.S. on visas. She states that she did not see a need to come to the U.S., because she was economically comfortable and able to travel here for work and pleasure until political chaos and violence forced their departure earlier this decade. Still, as Yvonne and Beatrice acknowledge, this independence comes with burdens, and the financial expectations she has for herself based on her life in Haiti, where she had maid service and a private home, and for her children's future, including university tuitions:

In Haiti, it's different. In Haiti I was very independent, financially independent and I had my own house, only had to pay some bills, like electricity or whatever, but it's my house. I don't have to pay mortgage and everything. It's my house and I have my business that I was the boss, you know, but here...I got some difficult day."

By contrast, Mireille, who did not work in Haiti, delights in her newfound financial independence:

I think it's very good for me, because in Haiti I wasn't work. But here, I workin' myself. I take care myself and my son, so I feel okay...even I don't save money, but sometime I can buy something by myself. I can buy something for my son. I don't need to go with someone to say give me, please could you give me these?

Educational growth and linguistic development become the forms through which the women express their independence in their host countries. Aline remarks that Canada can offer newcomers a lot "as long as you focus to do, Canada is giving it to you. It's just know what you want." Therefore, while she recognizes Canada can offer a lot, she also recognizes the individual's self-determination. She lists how she was offered "several choices" in terms of programs when she came to Toronto. She considered "this and that," choosing between English classes and the security guard class. Before these options, Aline references the isolation and frustration of living in the U.S. under fear of deportation, without access to schooling or other help:

No, I don't work. I never have work permit, they never give me one. So now I came to Canada, I could work, I have bank account, this and that. I didn't have that in Florida...I didn't have nothing. I didn't have the access to do nothing. Even in the country, I just sitting down watching people.

At the same time that Yvonne regrets living with her mother and not being able to work while she studies full-time, she also acknowledges that her English ability and studies are...

the most thing I have. I think I like in Boston I have education, because I don't have this in Haiti. In Haiti you can go to school if your family, your parents have money so you can go to school, a better school, but here, if you want, if you can't, no matter what, you can go to school. You don't have um...to have a family who have money to go to school, so in Boston, the government help you to go to school, if you can and if you want.

Each of the women refers to her desire to gain more independence and much of this is reflected in the pride they report in accessing services on their own and in English. Aline makes a direct connection between her self-facilitating and her English abilities:

When I came here [Canada], I speak a little English. I could defend myself, but I didn't write English. So the school that I go, my teacher help me a lot. Now, if I want to write a letter I know how to do it, on my own. I know how to do it. So Canada help me a lot in my English. I speak English in the United States just a little in the TV; just I didn't stay in school really. I didn't know how to do certain stuff, but coming to Canada, I think I learn a lot from Canada.

Colette expressed a lack of comfort in leaving home without a family member to translate during the first years of her stay. When going to parent-teacher conferences, she attended with her husband: "we went together, but he spoke with the lady. I feel embarrass, but after that my husband explain to me...what's going on." Whereas Colette explains that during the initial settlement "everything I can tell you, it was my husband," she eventually turns down a hospital interpreter because "I did by myself...I feel better because when I came here, I can not do that!"

Aline used her improving English literacy skills to find new housing independently when her former housing was inadequate. While initially she found housing through the shelter and then a Haitian friend, she found her current apartment through a mainstream newspaper. Mireille connects her independence to her improving language skills in English: "because if I go anywhere, I don't need no one to talk for me. I can talk by myself. Even at the hospital for me or for my son, so they understand me. I understand them. They don't have a problem to understand me what I'm say."

While running her own business, Fanny was also educationally independent, constantly taking courses in Haiti, such as English classes or typing school, improving her skills and praised for her abilities in French. This independent spirit continued after her arrival in Boston: "I was excited about speaking English. That's why from the first day I was thinking about finding a school to go. And this is true that the first day that I come here...I was in school." She also cites her education, language skills, and knowledge as the reason she was able to get a driver's license and find a church independently. In passing several tests, such as

the Certified Nursing Assistant test and the G.E.D. exam, Fanny also references her ability to read for information and do internet searches. Fanny links her independence to her language skills, giving an example of parent-teacher conferences when her husband went off to translate for his sister's children: "I have to go for each classes to meet with the teacher, ask questions and everything, but if I have to, if I couldn't do that, I would suffer, because I need somebody to speak or translate for me, you know, I never need that." Eventually Fanny became a teacher's aid for a "bridge program" at a newcomer centre and also now distributes flyers for the centre, signs that she is becoming an independent facilitator herself.

Summary

As seen in the above sections, women drew from many sources of information and resources to facilitate settlement process. Distinctions were made between access through informal facilitators, formal facilitators, and self-facilitating skills. In a comparison between participants who settled in the United States and Canada, the U.S.-based women were more likely to rely on informal networks, whereas the Toronto-based participants made direct connections with more formal institutional services. All of the women emphasized the importance of independence, however, in social, financial, educational, and linguistic ways. The next section will detail the various experiences the women had with accessing language classes, as a measure of their ability services in their host community.

Access to, quality, and outcomes of English Language Classes

This study chose to focus especially on language classes because of their importance as a service offered to newcomers in various forms, the investment placed in these programs, and because they are a crucial aspect to settlement, given the economic benefits of language skills. The findings reveal structural and political differences between the U.S. and Canada.

According to a U.S. study by Farkas *et al.* (2003), 87% of immigrants feel that it is extremely important for immigrants to be able to speak and understand English. Participants in this study concur and have all attended at least one class in their host country.

Velma states that in the U.S. “many people speak English, they don’t speak Creole...you have to go; if you come here you have to go to school to learn about English. You can’t understand when people speak, when people do something.” Mireille echoes the same sentiments on the importance of English, demonstrating how much more independent and efficient it is to use English:

Because the people that live here it’s not only Haitian. We live in a English country, so if I can’t speak English, I’m supposed to have a translator. If I don’t have a translator I’m supposed to speak by myself, otherwise I think I’m gonna have a problem. If I have a problem, like I have before I come here, then I wasn’t speak English, um, when I went to the doctor, they make me stay a lot, because I’m supposed to wait to trans...the people come in to translate for me, but now I don’t need to. I can speak, I can help myself, so I just go and I go back so quickly.

English is not only a means of financial independence, but also of survival. Velma recounts how she was once treated in a job interview:

Sometimes if you want to apply for a job, talk to somebody, if I don’t understand, they don’t understand me, so they say “oh you have to go to school. Learn something! Learn English! If you don’t speak the same language as you with people and they say, “oh I can’t take you. I can’t hire you because you don’t understand English, you don’t speak English. You have to go to school, learn about how to speak English, how to work.

Velma recognizes that hearing Haitian Creole makes non-speakers nervous, so she maintains a language division inside and outside of the house, attempting to speak only English in public. Three other participants made references to the importance of linguistic consideration of others, such as not speaking Haitian Creole in front of non-Haitian co-workers.

English becomes a source of pride and independence. When asked about what is better for her in the United States, Beatrice says that her education level is “better...because you don’t

“speak English in Haiti and here you speak English. I speak two languages!” Fanny also expressed pride in her “advanced” English, telling of how she once dropped a class in her associate’s degree for fear of the level of English required. As the class was required for the degree, she took it a few semesters later and noticed the improvement, flipping through her binder to display the assignments on which she received A’s to the researcher.

Because of the different experiences of the participants in terms of their years of schooling in Haiti, their years in English-speaking host communities, and the programs they attend, it is difficult to assess and compare their proficiency in English or the quality of the English classes they attend. The linguistic results on measures of comprehension and production on the MELA-O [Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral] assessment were fairly even between U.S. and Canadian-settled participants. The average comprehension score (out of 5) was 3.7 for the Boston cohort and 3.8 for the Toronto cohort. The average production score, which includes fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, was 2.6 (out of 5) for both Boston and Toronto-based participants. Without experience in multiple classes for comparison, the participants were mostly favourable about the quality of the classes. Most cited the fact the classes improved their grammar skills or that their teachers were nice. Toronto-based participants were, however, able to make direct comparisons between their lack of ability to participate in classes in the U.S. and the fact that they are all currently enrolled in full-time programs. Thus, any key measurable differences between the two groups in this study lies in the structural differences of the programs and political differences between the U.S. and Canada.

In Toronto, because of their refugee status as claimants awaiting their hearings, participants are ineligible for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), which

makes their experiences somewhat less comparable than it would be in the standard federal programming of LINC. The women are therefore unable to access the on-site daycare and covered costs of transportation that LINC provides. Still, they each reported going to an assessment centre, being offered more than one course in their neighbourhood, attending a certain level, and expectations for further study, through programs they heard about at these community centres. In Canada, with financial assistance from federal social benefits, newcomers are allowed to take advantage of full-time free classes, even before their claim for asylum is accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Four of the five Toronto-based women referred to living on social assistance. While Aline works as a security guard, attending classes for her G.E.D., the four other women based in Toronto are taking English classes full-time, six hours per day. They have found free or subsidized daycare for their children who are below school age. Due to the fact that the daycares are not affiliated with LINC, two of the women had to stay home from classes during the Toronto city strike that occurred during the interviews for this study. With LINC, children are on site and the women would have been able to continue their classes during the period of the strike, lasting over a month.

Two of the Toronto-based participants recognize that their difficult American experiences with accessing language classes might be different than other newcomers to the U.S. because of their status as refugee claimants. As noted above, Aline says “in the United States I don’t know if they have it, because I never knew; maybe people who participate are people who have paper, like me I was an immigrant I didn’t have a social, I didn’t have nothing.” With the lack of opportunity for subsidized studies and necessity for employment, jobs took up a significant amount of the women’s time in the U.S. Meanwhile, Toronto-based

participants recognize that as they study full-time, they have difficulty finding jobs. Two of the women acknowledged that their husbands have been laid off. This is consistent with research stating that Canadian newcomers cite finding jobs as their primary concern (Statistics Canada, 2007). For women like Patricia and Madeleine, however, even if they could find work they are not seeking an interim job in Canada until they find something in their field; therefore they focus on improving their language proficiency and gaining Canadian experience.

U.S. participants had a range of experiences with language classes. Two of the Boston-area participants, Velma and Beatrice, are sisters, arrived at the same time, and live side-by-side in public housing, yet attended classes in two different cities, and had wait times ranging from one to two years, which are consistent with findings regarding wait times in Massachusetts (Sum *et al.*, 2005). Mirlande's experience with a computer-based class at her daughter's elementary school in Florida was disappointingly "so-so...because if you can't pronounce a words, we can't, because we don't have a teacher to say how to say that, you just click, click...and I didn't like it." Participants in the Boston area also reported that levels only continue to level 5, whereas two of the Canadian participants with fluencies already higher than the U.S. participants, were on level 7 (out of 12 Canadian Language Benchmarks), with more content in reading and writing.

While living in the U.S., 10 participants had to drop out of classes at least at some point in order to work or for daycare reasons. In the U.S. Aline had to drop out of high school after her child was born: "I only did a year, then I got pregnant by her, then in Florida it's not that daycare is as easy as [Toronto]...and then I decide to drop out from school, because I didn't have the help that I could get for my daughter." Participants in the U.S. were also not eligible for social assistance while they studied, therefore had to drop out as soon as they received work

papers. When asked if she took an English class in Florida, Mirlande states “I did, but not a lot, not like in Canada...only for two weeks, like if I don’t have a job, I don’t have a job and I need it. I have to work, I have to do something, so I take it, I can’t do anything.” As a former teacher, Mirlande felt a real shame in not being able to take time to study English. Delima also only studied English for two weeks before her paperwork came allowing her to work. Based on the 1996 *Welfare Reform Act* (Library of Congress, 1996), “resident aliens” are ineligible for social assistance, including food stamps, welfare, public housing, or Medicaid, unlike in Canada.

Due to the fact that courses are taken at night, between working full-time, many Boston-area participants cited fatigue and health-related factors as a reason for quitting classes. While Mireille is interested in taking further courses and even completing a G.E.D. program, she is reluctant to take classes due to fatigue, the weather, and a bad experience with a teacher who did not clarify the work for her:

She give me the paper like that, I’m not sure what I’m gonna do, I’m gonna try, but I feel tired, I say “oh no I’m not going to waste my time, but I’m not gonna do it,” I just quit.

While Velma recognizes the importance of going to school she is adamant that she is “all done! Because I’m so tired! When I went to work and then go back, go to school, I feel sleeping, so I just stop.” Naturally, those who work full-time and are expected to take evening classes are too tired to continue. Even when they take classes, the maximum number of hours the U.S. participants took classes was twice a week for a total of six hours. This is in contrast to the six hours per day that participants in Toronto take.

In summary, while it is difficult to measure differences in the linguistic proficiencies of participants, experiences in taking language classes differed significantly depending on where

the newcomers were settled. While living in the U.S. all of the women reported taking free English classes at some point or another, but all but one also acknowledged that working full-time and lack of childcare prevented them from continuing on. At the same time, all of the women based in Toronto are currently enrolled in full-time classes while receiving social benefits for which they would be ineligible in the United States.

V. Discussion

While the findings highlight many issues for Haitian immigrant and refugee women in the U.S. and Canada, two key issues will be developed in the discussion section: access to services and language acquisition. The results of participant interviews suggest that differences in U.S. and Canadian policies and institutional structures affect the way in which immigrants and refugees find out about and access services with implications for their language development and proficiency. Due to the significance of language proficiency in newcomer integration, a special focus on access to and outcomes of language education classes also revealed differences that may be attributable to varied U.S. and Canadian policies and practices.

Facilitating Access to Settlement and Mainstream Services

While many studies reveal the positive health benefits of social networks as a buffer to other challenges (Mulvaney-Day *et al.*, 2007; Viruell-Fuentes, 2007) or look at their ability to make job referrals for newcomers (Garcia, 2005), little research has examined the way in which social networks allow immigrants to access other services and integrating factors, such as language classes, educational programs, schooling for children, or a driver's license. The present study demonstrates the importance of these networks as "informal facilitators," particularly in the U.S.

One Canadian study highlights the specific access challenges of immigrant women who are caregivers for a family member who is ill or has a disability (Stewart *et al.*, 2006). The findings indicate that immigrant women family caregivers experience barriers to health and social services that are similar to Canadian-born family caregivers that have low incomes, precarious work, and heavy caregiving demands. Additionally, the immigrant women face unique challenges, such as language proficiency, immigration status, and separation from other family members in the home country. Stewart *et al.* (2006) noted that the immigrant women avoided formal services for multiple reasons, including lack of cultural sensitivity. Recommendations by both professionals and immigrant women caregivers themselves included outreach initiatives involving volunteers and “health brokers” from the same background (p. 336) that could make connections with immigrant women to inform them about services in a linguistically and culturally-appropriate way. In fact, the authors note that formal support services for caregiving activities (such as day programs or visiting nurses) are rare in immigrants’ home countries, where women most likely relied on kin and informal networks.

Other health research points to the importance of these informal social networks. A study by Viruell-Fuentes (2007) attributes the “healthy immigrant effect,” the finding that first-generation immigrants tend to be healthier than American-born individuals, to social networks. Sable *et al.* (2009) investigated research suggesting that social support networks and anecdotes carry more weight for certain health decisions, such as contraception methods, than the influence of health care providers or expert sources. The authors note that the linguistic and economic barriers that some women face in trying to access institutional care (particularly in the U.S. where medical insurance is difficult to access) may make them rely more heavily on social networks. However, while the participants, Hispanic women in a small Midwestern city,

cited informal networks of other immigrant women for sharing information and resources, these same connections also contributed to “misperceptions, misunderstandings, or even substitutions for professional health care” (Sable *et al.*, 2009; p. 148). This demonstrates that the informal communication of information can at times hamper settlement and overall well-being.

Borjas (2006) also demonstrates a negative impact of informal networks, yet from an economic perspective. His study highlights the income gaps between immigrants and U.S.-born individuals, suggesting that, more recently, second generation immigrants are not approaching native-born earning levels as quickly as in previous years. Borjas (2006) suggests that “social mobility” is hindered by the formation of ethnically distinct social and economic structures. Thus, by maintaining and relying on informal networks, newcomers may be accessing the same level of job prestige as their ethnic group peers, which may perpetuate a cycle of precarious and low-paid work, particularly when immigrants are not encouraged and subsidized to pursue further studies or training in the receiving nation.

A study by Garcia (2005) identified three types of social networks used by immigrants from Mexico in a small Oklahoma town: a traditional subnetwork of family and friends, a church subnetwork, and a work-related subnetwork, centered on the meatpacking plant. This factory’s network, although not based on prior connections amongst the employees, was the most integral in developing the immigrant community within the town, particularly in the recruitment of new network members, beyond the capacity of the formal human resources department, and in helping to cover basic needs of new employees upon arrival (Garcia, 2005). In the current study participants likewise sought information from a variety of sources within the categories of informal and formal facilitators. Even amongst informal facilitators, there are

“subnetworks” that should be studied further. Distinctions might be made between faith-based or employment-based networks of Haitians, for example.

The present study did not see much of an increasing access to professional or formal sources over time, but this was difficult to measure because the focus remained U.S. and Canadian settlement rather than longitudinal developments. Although the Canadian-based participants had not been in an English-speaking environment for a longer period of time than the American-based women, they appeared to access more formal networks or institutional services. These professional interactions also took place in English. Only one Canadian participant, Mirlande, mentioned using French on the telephone to settle her telephone bill. Mirlande expected to use more French in Ontario: “I thought in Montreal we speak more French than Toronto, but I thought somewhere you could speak some office like French too, but they don’t, they don’t!” However, most participants chose to settle in Ontario rather than Quebec based specifically on the anglophone community and the fact that their children had already started their schooling in English. All of the Toronto-based women encouraged their children to speak some Creole or French, but prioritized English. Two of the five women did mention seeking services at the Centre francophone (which provides services and information in French to any Ontario resident) and one woman is trying to enroll her son in French immersion, indicating a diversity of service options not possible in the public institutions of the United States.

It is difficult to discern if the Haitians who had settled in Toronto would have relied more upon family and friends if they had wider social networks established in Canada. While it is clear that the Haitians based in Boston referred more often to the significance of family help, all also suggested the desire for independence. This is what Ralston (2006) labels as

“agency” in immigrant women of colour who she describes as too often excluded, as discriminated against, or as victims of oppression. Ralston defines agency as the idea “that immigrant women are conscious actors, not passive subjects in the various situations in which they find themselves. They act intentionally. They resist identification as aliens. They claim the right to belong to their country of settlement” (p. 184). As the women are frequently family caregivers, this agency has implications for the success and well-being of the entire family. The women might furthermore lead future social networks that might guide the settlement of new waves of newcomers.

Access to, quality, and outcomes of English Language Classes

In this sample of participants, ten of the eleven with experience in the U.S. had to stop attending taking English classes at some point due to the need to work or the expense of day care. This is in contrast to the five who continued on to Canada and are all currently enrolled in classes full-time. This would not be possible unless the women were eligible for social assistance in Canada. As of 1996, permanent residents of the United States are ineligible for welfare. The bill, entitled the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (referred to as the *Welfare Reform Act* of 1996, Library of Congress, 1996), restricts access to social assistance, explaining that “self-sufficiency has been a basic principle of United States immigration law since this country’s earliest immigration statutes.” Rather than rely on public resources, immigrants are encouraged to “rely on their own capabilities and the resources of their families, their sponsors, and private organizations.” The stated goal of the changes is to ensure that “public benefits not constitute an incentive for immigration to the United States” (Library of Congress, 1996). The explicit statement that immigrants should depend on informal networks and individualism confirms the findings of this study.

The provision of language classes is an example of one of the core differences in U.S. and Canadian settlement policy. In Canada, there are specific measures targeting immigrant families and federally or provincially funded institutions that are dedicated to the integration of immigrants. The U.S. has adopted a “universal policy” seeking to serve immigrants’ employment, language, education and social assistance needs within the mainstream. Fix *et al.* (2001) note the advantages of this type of policy, since mainstream agencies have “deep institutional capacity,” a developed bureaucracy, standard procedures, and strong political constituencies allowing for higher funding. It also minimizes the distinction between immigrants and citizens. The disadvantages include the lack of cultural and linguistic sensitivity (Fix *et al.*, 2001), ethno-specific outreach, funds set-aside to address immigrant issues, and the ability to respond directly to immigrants’ needs. While Canada has a “settlement sector,” Fix *et al.* (2001) maintain that any U.S. programs or funding directed towards immigrants were created in an “ad hoc manner” and do not constitute a coherent integration agenda for immigrant families.

In a study of newcomer adult learners at five educational programs in Western Massachusetts (Cushing *et al.*, 2000), the adults reported being confused about the 1996 welfare reform law and cited their immigration status as one of the main barriers they face in continuing their education. Many of the American participants in the present study maintained that they had difficulty finding time to take English classes. This confirms findings by Farkas *et al.* (2003) that learning English remains a greater challenge than discrimination or bureaucracy. By contrast, 46% of Canadian newcomers report the difficulty of finding a job compared to 26% who rate learning English or French as their biggest obstacle (Statistics

Canada, 2007). These findings are also consistent with the current study, as three out of the five women based in Toronto expressed their desire to work, yet had difficulty in finding a job.

Employment is a serious issue for immigrants to Canada. Overall, Robertson (2005) states that amongst foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers, unemployment rates are three times greater than the national average. Another federally-funded survey revealed that immigrant women with foreign credentials were much more negatively impacted in the employment sector than immigrant men, due to lack of childcare and language training (Kenny and Cap, 2003). Nevertheless, two of the women based in Toronto also mentioned that their husbands are unemployed and this greatly impacted the family settlement process. In general, the three women in the present study who referred significantly to their unemployment or underemployment status were the most highly educated in Haiti, which supports research indicating that more highly educated immigrant women feel a higher “intensity of loss” regarding their socioeconomic status and fulfillment (Khan, 2005). A study by Man (2004) interviewed women with highly successful careers in their home countries and found that ESL classes were inadequate for meeting their employment needs.

All of the participants who desired a job in the United States were able to find one. Still, one Boston-based participant expressed feelings of underemployment and another did not seem to be actively seeking employment due to childcare needs. In a report on the status of immigrants in Massachusetts, Sum *et al.* (2005) state that 75% of immigrants in the state have one or more deficit when entering the labour market; these include lack of language proficiency, a diploma, literacy or numeracy skills. Meanwhile, Wonacott (2000) explains how the U.S. 1998 *Perkins Vocational and Technical Assistance Act* managed to take away educational subsidies intended specifically for

women. The initial 1990 bill had set aside 10.5% of funding for “sex equity and programs serving single parents, single pregnant women, and displaced homemakers,” but these were suppressed in the 1998 Act. This lack of gender equity in funding language classes and vocational education is significant because of the primary caregiver role that mothers often assume with implications for the well-being of the entire family. In fact, a study by Waterman (2008) demonstrates how mothers who received more support in school-based adult ESL classes were highly motivated to support their children’s school success; the women were more likely to be actively engaged and collaborate with educators in contrast to those who did not receive explicit support.

Another factor affecting access to courses and other settlement services in the United States was the treatment of Haitian refugee claimants during this period. Haitians have long had a difficult time gaining full immigration status in the United States. Just over one thousand kilometers from Haiti, Miami is close enough that there have been significant boatloads of Haitians to arrive at its shores, claiming asylum. This has important political repercussions, because the U.S. has consistently considered Haitians to be economic rather than political asylum seekers, thereby ensuring that they are not subject to state persecution that would warrant their protection under the 1951 UN Convention Refugee parameters (Charles, 2007). Several authors contend that this refusal to recognize Haitian state terror is systematic racist discrimination by the U.S. government (Pégram, 2005, Charles, 2007).

This systematic policy of prosecution, legal confusion, and social isolation has led to economic effects that perpetuate the vicious cycle. Charles (2007) maintains that the U.S. feared that an acceptance of Haitians would have a magnet effect triggering a mass exodus

from Haiti. Many claimants were, however, allowed to avoid deportation due to an amnesty in response to instability and ongoing natural disasters that had affected Central America. However, this policy was recently reversed and deportations have risen. This explains the fear in which the participants who are denied claimants lived in the United States. Staying indoors to avoid the pick-ups by immigration and customs enforcement agents in the streets, Aline missed out on years of education, language development, and working experience.

One of the key findings in a study of immigrant service provision in the Greater Toronto area by Wayland (2006b) is that communication barriers restrict access to services and many newcomers' needs are not currently being met by available language instruction. Thus immigrants are caught in a cycle in which they are unable to access the very language instruction intended to provide linguistic access to other services and employment. This highlights the importance of providing quality language instruction and outreach in a language that newcomers can understand.

VI. Conclusion

This study highlights the significance of access to information, resources, and services, including language classes, which is necessary for the settlement and integration of newcomer women. Distinctions were made between access through informal facilitators, such as family networks, formal facilitators, such as professional institutions, and self-facilitating skills. In a comparison between Haitian women who settled in the U.S. and Canada, the Boston-based participants were more likely to rely on informal networks, whereas the Toronto-based participants made direct connections with more formal institutional services. The informal interactions were more likely to take place in Haitian Creole, whereas the institutional services were provided in English, except for two citations of French services in the Canadian context.

Despite this settlement help, all of the women emphasized the importance of independence, in social, financial, educational, and linguistic dimensions. All of the women spoke of the importance of learning English, attended classes, and attempted to overcome linguistic barriers to services and integration. Structural and policy differences between the U.S. and Canada affected the participation rates of these women in language classes, with those settling in the U.S. likely to discontinue classes, citing work obligations, immigration status, or child care issues.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made. In terms of access, two recommendations can be made to improve informal and formal facilitation of integration. Due to the power of social networks, attempts should be made to solidify these networks and connect them to mainstream and settlement services either directly or through the internet. Formal institutions should use representatives from the same cultural backgrounds to perform outreach to these informal networks using their home languages. This would ensure that recommendations and referrals are raising the information level of the entire group at once, avoiding social isolation and the low-wage cycle of employment to which Borjas (2006) refers. The major recommendation for formal organizations is for cross-institutional communication and connections to solidify professional networks that work with immigrant and refugee groups. Regardless of the political climate, which might not target immigrants specifically, mainstream organizations need training on how to work with a diverse group of newcomers in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways. Immigrants without the linguistic proficiency or cultural knowledge cannot be expected to advocate for themselves and their families. However, it is clear from the findings that once they are aware of the services, immigrants can

act as informal facilitators for other members of their community and use their agency to contribute to society. This can be achieved if the networks supporting them are strengthened.

For recommendations regarding language acquisition, it appears that the major barriers are currently external to classroom pedagogy, but rather include policies regarding social assistance, childcare, and immigration status, none of which are in the control of immigrants. Classes in the main language of the receiving nation should be made accessible to all immigrants and refugees, regardless of their status, citizenship, or time since arrival. Given the importance of finding employment appropriate to one's skill level, experience, achievements, and interests, language classes should be linked with opportunities for jobs and career paths. As successful immigrant women will engender successful children, more flexibility should be given to women who are motivated enough to pursue studies and perfect their language proficiency in order to contribute to their host society and support their children.

As with any research, the present study raises new questions. Follow-up research may pursue the effects of marital and immigration status on access to services and information. Six out of the eleven participants in this study were married and referred to their husbands as sources of information, particularly for translation. In further studies, the experience of single women should be compared against those who are married, with implications for gendered studies of migration. Further areas of study may also include Haitians living in other jurisdictions, such as Miami, New York City, and Montréal. Haitians' integration in French-speaking Québec might be compared with other English-dominant, but multi-lingual contexts, such as Toronto and Miami. The research may also be extended to other cultural groups of even to other countries to determine if individual immigrants experience the varied models of settlement services and language course provision in different ways.

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Appendix: Interview

Participant Name [falsified] _____

Thank you so much for meeting with me today. I am going to ask you some questions about life in your country of origin and what the experience was like when you moved to the United States/Canada. I want to know more about the languages you know and use everyday. If a question makes you uncomfortable, you can say "I would prefer not to answer that." Also, please let me know if there is a word that you do not understand. Is it okay if I record our conversation today? That way I will not have to take too many notes.

Part I: Identity

First I will ask some basic questions about your identity. I will not use your real name and the information will be confidential.

1. What year were you born?
2. In what country were you born?
 - a. If not Haiti, for how long did you live in that country?
3. Are you marital status (married, single, divorced, widowed)?
4. In what year did you move to the United States/Canada?
5. What was your application status (primary or dependent?)
 - a. If dependent, who did you arrive with?
 - b. What is your relationship to [insert name from part a.]

Part II: Background, experience, and expectations prior to migration

Next I would like to know more about your background and experiences when you lived in your home country.

6. How many full years did you attend school in your country?
 - a. Do you know what grade it is equivalent to in Canada/the U.S.?
7. What was the language you used most often at home before you decided to emigrate to Canada/U.S.?
8. Did you know French before you moved to Canada/the U.S.?
 - a) Did you learn it in school? [if no, go to part c]
 - b) If so, for how many years?
 - c) How well did you speak or understand French before you arrived here?
[hand participant sheet to circle proficiency]

▪ "very well" "well" "not very well" "not at all"
9. Did you know English before you moved to Canada/the U.S.?
 - a. Did you learn it in school? [if no, go to part c]
 - b. If so, for how many years?
 - c. How well did you speak or understand English before you arrived here?
[hand participant sheet to circle proficiency]

- “very well” “well” “not very well” “not at all”

10. What did you know about the language or languages spoken in the United States/Canada before you came here?
11. What language did you expect to use outside of the home?
12. What language did you expect to speak inside the home?

Part III: Experience with Settlement in General

There are many new experiences when you move to a new country. Now I want to learn more about your move to the United States/Canada and what life has been like for you here.

13. To what city did you originally arrive in the United States/Canada?
 - a. Why did you choose this city?
 - b. If you are not in this same city, what made you move?
 - c. How long have you lived in the current location?

Think back to when you first arrived in Canada/the United States.

14. How did you find your first housing?
 - a. What language did you use to get the housing?
 - b. What language did you use with the adults in your home?
 - c. If you had children at that time, what language did you use with your children?
 - d. What language did you use with the neighbours where you lived at that time?
15. How did you find your child's first school?
 - a. What language did you use at the school?
16. How did you find out about your church, if any?
 - a. What language were the services in?
17. If you or a family member needed medical services, where did you go for help?
 - a. How did you find out about these health services?
 - b. What language did you use with the health worker?
18. How did you choose a grocery store?
19. If you have a driver's license, how did you find out about how to get it?

Now, let's talk about today. Sometimes things change over time. Sometimes they stay the same.

20. If you changed housing, how did you find out about your current housing?

- a. What language did you use with the people that helped you to get your housing?
 - b. What language do you most often currently use with the adults in your home?
 - c. What language do you most often currently use with the children at home
 - i. Why do you use this language?
 - ii. If not English, do you ever use English with your child?
 - iii. Do you help your children with their homework in English?
 - d. What language do you most often use with your neighbours where you live?
 - e. What language do you use with other family members outside of your home?
21. How did you find out about your child's current school?
- a. What language(s) do you use when speaking with teachers, administrators or other workers at your child's school?
22. If changed, how did you find out about your current church?
- a. What language is used at your church community, if any?
23. If you or a family member needs some medical attention today, where would you go?
- a. How did you find out about these medical services?
 - b. What language do you use with the medical workers?
24. Let's say you have a problem dealing with the authorities.
- a. How would you solve the problem?
 - b. Where would you go for help?
25. How did you find your first job?
- a. What language did you use in that first job?
26. Are you currently employed?
- a. How did you find out about this job?
 - b. What language do you use at work?
 - c. What is your family income? [*hand participant sheet to circle range*]
- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 0-\$9,999 | \$10,000-19,999 | \$20,000-29,999 | \$30,000-39,000 |
| \$40,000-49,999 | \$50,000-59,999 | over \$60,000 | |

Part IV: Experience with language classes in the U.S./Canada

In this section I want to know more about your experience with English in the United States or Canada.

27. Have you ever attended an English class here ?

[if not, go to question # 29].

- a. How did you find out about the class?

- b. Did you know of any other English classes being offered?
- c. Where was the class located?
- d. Why did you choose that location?
- e. How did you get there?
- f. How soon after your arrival did you start taking classes?
- g. Did you start classes before or after you got a job?
- h. If you have taken more than one class, how many have you taken?
- i. Were they all at the same location?
- j. How many levels did you take?
- k. Were you able to complete all classes?
 - ❖ If not, what prevented you from doing so?
- l. If the class was in Canada, did you reach a certain Canadian benchmark?
- m. Did you get a certificate?
- n. Was it easy to attend the class?
- o. Was there any assistance for childcare?
- p. Was there any assistance for transportation?
- q. What was the quality of the course?
- r. Who were the classmates?
- s. Did you attend the class with anyone you know?
- t. How easy or difficult was it to learn English:

“very difficult” “difficult” “somewhat difficult” “not difficult at all”
- u. Why was it _____?
- v. How often do you use your English?

- “all day everyday” “once a day” “twice a week”
- “once a month” “never”

28. If you have never taken a language class, did you know that there are English classes available?

- a. What has prevented you from attending classes?
- b. How often do you use your English?
 - “all day everyday” “once a day” “twice a week”
 - “once a month” “never”

Part V: Overall quality of life in the United States/Canada

Thank you so much for all of your answers. These last questions are about how you feel about your life in the United States/Canada compared to your life in your country of origin.

29. Have your housing conditions gotten better or worse since you moved here?
30. Has your overall economic situation gotten better or worse since you moved here?
 - If worse, do you think it would be better if you knew more English?
 - If better, do you think your English ability has helped?
31. Has your educational attainment gotten better or worse since you moved here?
32. Has your English ability gotten better or worse since you moved here?
33. Has your overall quality of life gotten better or worse since you moved here?
 - If worse, do you think it would be better if you knew more English?
 - If better, do you think your English ability has helped?

I very much appreciate your time today. I hope to help other immigrant women who are arriving in the United States/Canada to adjust during their first years of arrival. Do you have any questions for me? [Bring brochures or information for local services that might benefit these women]. Would you like to see the results of the study? You can also keep the audio recording after I have listened to it. Would you like me to send it to you? [Get email/address to send final report/recording].