Co-Creating a Curriculum Journey: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Immigrant Youth in an Urban Alberta Community Negotiate Liminality in their Lived Experiences

by

Mildred Tsitsi Masimira

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University of Alberta

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Abstract

Many people have told stories concerning their experiences as immigrants in diaspora communities (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000). Many of these stories tell of unimaginable hardships, strife, pain as well as joy as immigrants settle into the host country. The diaspora literature in Canada has not adequately documented research on immigrant youth from their point of view. More so, research on Zimbabwean immigrant youth is non-existent. This study seeks to understand immigrant life journeys of Zimbabwean youth with a focus on the "liminal" qualities of their experiences. A significant number of researchers (Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967; and more recently Anzaldúa, 2000; Bhabha, 1994; Ledgister, 2001; Bannerji, 2000) have discussed liminality as a phase that everyone encounters at different points in life.

In the summer of 2014, six immigrant youth from Zimbabwe, all residing in Alberta, agreed to take part in a participatory research study that explored this main question: *What implications does conceptualizing Zimbabwean immigrant youth experiences as liminal, through the collaborative creation of a curriculum artefact, have for understanding immigrant youth experiences and how can this process contribute to the youths' ongoing negotiation of their experiences?* I wondered: *Will the youth understand their experiences as liminal? What curriculum artefact will the youth create with me? How do youth negotiate their experiences and how has the participatory research process aided in their curriculum journeys?*

Focus groups (Kitzinger, 2004) and interviews (Creswell, 2007) engaged youth in discussions to explore their understanding of their own identities as immigrants, thereby creating a space where they could effectively negotiate liminality. The participants engaged in a total of seven focus groups along with one individual interview each. The culmination of the study, based on youths' interests and what they identified as important, congruent with participatory

research sensibilities, was the creation of a curriculum artefact in the form of an e-handbook. The purpose of the artefact was to articulate information about life in Canada to prospective immigrant youth.

Study findings indicated that the research participants identified with the concept of liminality as it manifests in their daily life experiences. They articulated liminal experiences through three themes that emerged from our discussions: parent-child tensions, language, and foreign credentials/professional upgrades. Findings also included the ways in which youth negotiated their experiences of liminality. This study adds to the body of literature on youth immigration and education, with specific emphasis on Zimbabwean immigrant youth experiences conceptualized as liminal.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Mildred T. Masimira. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Co-Creating Educational Strategies: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Youth in Alberta Negotiate Liminality in their Experiences within a Diasporic Community", No. Pro00046301, April 4, 2014.

Some parts of Chapters 1 and 2 in this thesis (pp. 4, 12, 14-16, 58, 61, 66-67, 78-82) have been published in the following article:
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Dedication Page

I dedicate this project first to the Zimbabwean youth who made this project possible. You have come into your own in ways that make me proud to be a Zimbabwean in the diaspora.

To my parents, and siblings, for their unwavering support as I worked on this project.

To my family, for being the immediate help I needed to complete my work.

To Justine, a true sister who understood this journey and was kind enough to walk alongside me.

To David Smith, for genuinely understanding the complexities of my life as a graduate student in Canada and for encouraging me when I thought I would not make it. You understand "Ubuntu" in ways that amaze me still.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"O my body, make of me always a [wo]man who questions!"
– Frantz Fanon (2008, p. 232), *Black skin, white masks*

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Immigrant Studies, Youth and Liminality

As a first time immigrant to North America a decade ago, my experiences were characterized by a plethora of questions. I questioned why I had left my safety net, my home. For the first time I wondered who I was in this new cultural context, and more importantly who I was becoming. This led to ruminations about other immigrants and how they were experiencing life. Did they encounter similar experiences? An opportunity presented itself in the form of my doctoral research, and I decided to explore the experiences of immigrants in more detail as immigration is a continuous trend in the Canadian context.

The advent of immigration to Canada, with the first wave of immigrants primarily from the British Isles in 1867 (Le Goff, 2004; Head & Ries, 1998) to present day indicates that immigrants continue to arrive in Canada and make positive contributions to the country's economy (Dungan, Fang & Gunderson, 2013; Halifax Partnership & the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, 2015). As such, an extensive body of research has focused on a variety of topics concerning immigrants. Boyd and Vickers (2000) and Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (1994) focus on the reasons why people leave their native homes. Other literature invites attention to settlement issues for new immigrants who are often visible minorities (Johnes, 2000; Bernard, 2008).

Settlement literature explores challenges of immigrant economic integration (Hum & Simpson 2004; Picot, 2004; Li 2000). Kazemipur (2001) and Waters (2011) present a wider discussion on settlement citing newcomer status, language barriers, incompatibility of

educational credentials, limited transferability of job skills, unfamiliarity with the market demands in the new home, and lack of access to informal job-hunting networks, as some of the major challenges that immigrants contend with. Li (2003) deconstructs widely accepted definitions of immigrant integration to show how narrow understandings may in effect interfere with settlement of immigrant populations. Immigrant literature also attends to the ways that immigrants adapt in the host culture (Rifaat, 2004; McIsaac, 2003). With respect to education, the learning experiences of immigrants, both in and outside the classroom setting are considered important (Rong & Preissle 1998, González, Moll & Amanti, 2013). All these studies in their different ways contribute to an immigrant discourse that primarily benefits the larger communities in their understanding of immigrant populations.

Amidst the cited challenges, diaspora communities have continued to thrive. One factor that is important for immigrant communities to thrive is a deepened understanding of the experiences they encounter in the new country. This study seeks to understand immigrant life journeys with a focus on liminality[1]. My study engaged a local immigrant youth group as they discussed their experiences. Primarily, I explored participants' understanding of liminality as it aligned with and enabled them to share their experiences with each other. I argue that liminality is a core concept that manifests in immigrants' experiences. Freire's (1970, 1973) concept of "name it to change it" is demonstrated in the way liminality can be used as a term with which participants identify to explain their life experiences and voice their feelings about those experiences. I describe the work we did together in an effort to better understand how immigrant youth negotiate their life experiences. I utilized a participatory research approach including focus

[1] Liminality is defined as a threshold or in-between experience that induces ambiguity, complexity and tensions in the people experiencing it, Oxford English online dictionary (2012). More on this term will be discussed in Chapter 2.

groups Kitzinger (2004) and interviews (Creswell, 2007, 2009) to capture the interactive inquiry process, culminating in the creation of a curriculum artefact that the youth participants identified as beneficial for future Zimbabwean immigrant youth. In this study I describe some of my experiences as a member of the host community, as well as the perceptions of the participants concerning their liminal life experiences.

This study focuses on Zimbabwe immigrant youth. The term "youth" has been much contested. The study of youth has gained momentum over the years as authors try to define who this subsection of the population is and how youth culture operates. A number of authors (Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Levine & Sutherland, 2010; Marshall & Leadbeater, 2010) encourage the inclusion of youth in research and in development. The term "youth" lends itself to various meanings depending on where one is situated both geographically and contextually. The "new" sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1990) addresses this complexity by offering some poignant thoughts around re-conceptualizing definitions of youth. No longer should they be designated as the silent observers whose destiny is determined by everyone around them, but the youth themselves should take an active role in matters that are pertinent to them. James and Prout refute that youth are only typified by the "storm and stress" emotional roller coaster experiences that Cote and Allahar (2000, p. 16) describe. Rather youth are seen as people that actively engage in discussions about real issues such as identity exploration, peer group acceptance, or the needs for family acceptance, that concern them (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009) and make creative efforts to change their circumstances. Research methods that include the voices of young people are ideal according to the new sociology and participatory research (PR) is one such method, which in my study will seek to engage immigrant youth in a collaborative process of knowledge making about their life experiences.

As there has been an influx of immigrant populations from all over the world into Canada it is crucial to continue to focus on studies that seek to improve immigrants' lives in Canada. Numerous studies (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Teske & Nelson, 1974; Passel, 2011; Tienda & Haskins, 2011) have been devoted to understanding diaspora communities and "giving voice" to voiceless immigrants. My study involves a Zimbabwean community in Alberta, Canada. My focus in this study is a collaboration amongst the youth with the aim of better understanding what I am calling, based on my own experiences as a Zimbabwean who immigrated to Canada as a youth, the *liminal* places that they inhabit, and how they negotiate those experiences.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word liminal first appeared in publication in the field of psychology in 1884, and it refers to: "A transitional or indeterminate state between culturally defined stages of a person's life; such as a state occupied during a ritual or rite of passage, characterized by a sense of solidarity between participants" (OED, 2012, para. 1). The word has its etymology in the Latin verb "*limen*" which translates as "threshold" meaning the lower part of a doorway that must be crossed when entering a building. One thing is clear from this definition; there is an anticipation of a "crossing over" that relays a person to another place.

Other sources (Wendling, 2008) show that the word liminality or living *in-between* worlds was first used by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1921 and this sense of the term will be taken up in more detail in the second chapter. With immigrant youth, liminality represents what I have come to see as that place that they constantly negotiate with families, friends and others in their circles. Growing up in a context that is different from their native land, the youth negotiate in order to find their place as part of society in the new country. It is my

interest to better understand this threshold experience and what transpires there for Zimbabwean immigrant youth that inspired my intention to use participatory methods for youth to actively engage with each other to understand their experiences of life *in-between* in my study.

In the context of educational research, my study is an investigation in curriculum studies, with a focus on critical pedagogy. Curriculum theorists (Giroux & Penna, 1983; hooks, 1994) have tackled curriculum issues including content, form, stories, lived experiences, and many others, in an effort to provide meaningful education for students. Immigrant youth are a significant segment of the changing demographic of the community and classroom. As a consequence, educators and other stakeholders (i.e. parents and friends) continue to grapple with their pedagogical practice and/or their personal lives as they welcome immigrant citizens. The aim of my study was to illuminate issues that affect immigrant youth, with a specific focus on the liminal places that they constantly negotiate within their homes, schools and the community at large. The new insights that emerged can inform the understandings and practices of education, not just in the formal classroom setting, but also in the way that parents and the community at large engage with immigrant youth.

At a church conference in 2013 some members of the Zimbabwean community in Alberta, myself included, had an afternoon of discussion about pertinent issues in our lives. We were divided into groups according to age and in these sessions I noted the engaged ways that the youth talked to each other, how they took ownership of the subject matter and attempted to find resolution for their own dilemmas. In thinking about my then upcoming study I decided to use participatory processes of discovery with the youth considering they had already engaged in highly interactive, team-oriented activity addressing topical issues. I felt the necessity to offer

them a space to continue this discussion, so they might communally explore their experiences, given more time.

Of the many issues that were discussed by the youth group, one caught my attention. The youth had brought up the issue about their struggle with identity because of the competing pressures of parents at home and the host society as they knew it. Living in a foreign land, they were also very aware of the expectations that their parents had as far as traditions of the native country were concerned. It is at this point that I wondered if the concept of liminality might be significant for the youths' experiences based on the following three factors: First, the term "liminality" allowed me as an immigrant to name some of my own experiences, and so I thought it might be useful for the youth to name this conundrum they were faced with, and begin to understand what it meant in relation to some of the struggles they had enunciated at that conference. Second, the discussion around liminality illuminates both the contentions and the strengths exemplified in this place. Lastly, the discussion on liminality might inform how the youth negotiate the *in-between* experiences that present in their lives.

Coming to America: My Auto-ethnographic Account

Life and preparation for the U.S. A month before I left Zimbabwe for the U.S. I was working as a manager for a non-profit organization that supplemented food to people living in the remote areas of the country. My workplace was about four hours away from my parents' home, so whenever I was not working, I went home to visit. On that visit home the admission letter for the U.S. University had arrived and everything was set for my departure. I had some misgivings about travel to the U.S.; after all it was soon after 9/11. All the same, I put on a brave face because all was well. Or so I thought. I had an American sponsor ready and waiting. I had always wanted to pursue higher education abroad, with the ardent encouragement from my

parents who always believed that education would create better opportunities. I realized the gravity of my decision to study abroad. Needless to say, at that point, I did not realize the extent of the effect that decision would have on me. On the one hand, I was ready to pursue my educational dream, but on the other hand I was leaving my whole family, friends, my safety net behind. The "push" for me was the need to experience life abroad and the "pull" was the opportunity for graduate study overseas. This marked the beginning of my dwelling in a liminal place, at least perceptually. I was heading for the unknown. To watch the goings on in the U.S. in the media was one thing, to be heading there was quite another.

The journey and life away from home. When I left my hometown, the picture that is most vivid in my mind was that of my youngest brother, only thirteen at the time. His image is the hardest to forget because he was the one missing from my immediate family the day my life changed forever. He did not go with us to the airport; it was his first day in junior high school. At the airport it seemed like the call to check-in took forever. We were making small talk, but it was clear that the impending event was weighing heavily on everyone. Everything inside me wanted to go back home. I wanted to go back home; surely nothing was worth more than what I had right there: love I could trust, family I could depend on. But I could not go home because a part of me wanted to make everyone proud; my parents especially who had spent the last months tirelessly working out the details of my departure. On my way to the check-in area I turned once and waved one last time. As I turned the corner the tears flowed uncontrollably. I could not hold back for it was at this point, though still technically in my native land, that I felt the pangs of separation as I realized I may not see my family and everyone I held dear for years to come. The trip was long; layovers seemed endless, punctuated by deep thoughts, staring blankly out of the airplane window, fitful naps and more silent tears.

Two days later, I reached Atlanta, Georgia, my port of entry to the U.S. This time I felt an entirely different sensation: sheer panic. I was starting a new life indeed. Airport officials searched my little backpack, asked why I was in the U.S. and again peered at my backpack, probably wondering why it was so small if I was staying for a while. A little later, I met my sponsor, who drove me to school and helped me settle in. She called me a few times after that and that was the last I heard from her. I was quite bitter at her lack of attention, but I soldiered on. Over the course of the next five years, I cleaned houses to get myself through graduate school. After my masters, it took too long to get a professional job. By this time, I was married and had a daughter to think about, so it was at this point that I decided to leave the U.S. for Canada.

I am now the mother of two girls and my husband and I are doctoral students at a university in Edmonton, Alberta. We have not been home in thirteen years. Looking back I realize that I have lost a lot, but I have gained a lot too. I have concluded that immigration is an intricate dance of trade-offs. I have lost the closeness of family, and although we talk over the phone almost every week, it's not quite the same. The little brother I left is now a strapping young man with a deep voice; my sisters have since married and branched out on their own. They have the advantage of proximity to each other that I can never regain, at least not entirely. I have gained two beautiful girls who are a beautiful mix of the life I left and our current life in Canada. The life both my husband and I left is one they know vicariously through the stories we tell them and through those phone conversations. They also possess the language and "accent" of the host country, which is important, for as Fanon (2008) would say, "a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by this language" (p. 9). Together, we share an existence in a liminal place of being almost, but not quite, Canadian, nor Zimbabwean;

of not fitting fully in either place. Nevertheless, I have gained a strength of resolve that I am positive I could never have attained, at least not to the extent I have, if I were back home, sheltered by my family.

I am a black woman from Africa who shape shifts[2] constantly to live in this North American context. This is my current reality; my home away from home, the place where my children were born. They have not been to Africa, but have attachments to the native land through the stories we tell them. I see liminality as a place of strength, where a new identity, one that is fluid in nature, is born. Anzaldúa (2000, 2002) calls it the land of *in-between* and Bhabha (1994) has referred to it as the third space. These authors acknowledge the fluidity of this place, where identities are constantly changing based on the context. This particular type of shape-shifting is important because it focuses on one's subjective response-ability[3] (Karnaze, 2011) to change life circumstances particular to living well in a particular place. I realize I am still Zimbabwean, though in some ways, I am now different from my own siblings, who have never left Zimbabwe. I am not better, just different. My story shows my ties to "home" (McLeod, 2010; Ledgister, 2001; Anzaldúa, 2000), which is a key idea in my study, the connection between home and safety for some individuals such as me, and family pride in education.

Locating Myself: Liminality in Daily Life

[2] I am aware of the various connotations of the term "shape shift" in different cultural contexts. I use the term in this paragraph simply to explain my own process of constantly moving in and out of my own cultural understandings so I can live well in the host country. I am however, beginning to think about immigrants in general as shape shifters as a category that I could explore further in my interpretation of the information that will be complied through interactions with the research participants.

[3] This term is defined as the "conscious choice to find healthy responses to what happens in life, so that instead of blaming outside forces for what happens 'to us' we focus on what we can do." This is fitting considering that one of the focal points of this study is to understand how youth negotiate liminal life experiences. http://mindfulconstruct.com/2008/12/01/response-ability/

Contested places: Experiences with liminality. In this section I introduce two vignettes that mark my experiences with what I am referring to as liminality. They occurred years after the literal "border crossing" from Zimbabwe. I follow the vignettes with a discussion on my thoughts about these experiences. The vignettes are recent and poignant since I raise two children with the hope that they will be treated like they belong, and with the hope that they too will treat others like they belong. Inhabiting a liminal place, I understand I will never entirely belong, but I wonder if my children will, given that they were born here. What does belonging mean? Who defines it? How could an in-depth understanding of this idea of belonging serve as a compass that guides communities who are faced with new immigrant neighbours? What would the implications be for educators who are faced with the task of educating immigrant students? It took both a physical and psychological border crossing for me to understand the sense of liminality in relation to my life experiences. What types of borders will my children have to cross here? When they go to Zimbabwe with me, will they have similar experiences?

After asking these questions and reading the works of Anzaldúa (2000, 2002), Bhabha (1994), Fanon (2008) and Wendling (2008), I started delving into my own life to see what aspects of these authors' lives were mirrored in my own. I knew I inhabited a liminal place especially after the border crossing from Africa to North America, but I had never really considered putting pen to paper naming the liminal places. Feminist authors (Anzaldúa (1981), Collins (1986), hooks (1994) regard writing as a political act. I felt that it was time to write my own experiences as a way of making sense of my place in the world and to start thinking about what I could do to live my life to the fullest. Anzaldúa (1981) says about writing,

> I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you. To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself,

to achieve self-autonomy. Finally, I write because I am scared of writing, but I am more scared of not writing. (p. 187)

I extend this idea of self-introspection that is externalized through the writing process to serve as a starting point to forge relationships with immigrant youth with similar struggles, and to create a place to consider, communally, what could be done to get the most out of life in liminal places.

My personal vignettes in the following section are presented in italics[4], not only to jolt the reader's mind but also as a way of "perturbing" traditional writing styles that focus on uniformity throughout the text. Anzaldúa (2000, 2010) interchanges English and Spanish when she writes, I use the font as a statement to my own experiences, as they occurred in my material reality. I am, in a sense using these narratives as a window to my own reality, "positioning myself as explicitly involved in the questions" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 30) that concern my study. Regarding this engagement with the self through narrative Goldberg (2013) notes: "By making personal experience foundational, barriers are reduced for marginalized groups that want to research their lived experiences and explore possible avenues to social change from that research" (p. 156). The vignettes put my own experience out there. Since I asked the participants in my study to do so, I decided to share my experiences too, as a way of engaging deeply with my own experiences. These are stories that I also shared with the youth in my study to explain to them my understanding of liminality. Lundy and McGovern (2006) exemplify the significance of self-revealing in matters of personal truth in the words of one of their research participants:

If you are going to have any deep healing you have to get some expression of truth even if it is only my truth. It doesn't have to be your truth. It doesn't have to be a shared truth.

[4] The italics are used primarily to separate the vignettes presented on the next page from the regular text.

> But before I can actually be healed I have to feel that somebody's heard my story and if they haven't heard my story then I am not open to letting it go. (p. 83)

In a sense, through this process of self-revelation, and by extension my study, I am finding healing for myself. Perhaps, our collaborative explorations into the experiences of youth post-immigration may provide a similar gateway of healing for the youth in my study. With these ideas in mind I proceed to the vignettes. The vignettes marked my experiences with liminality after the literal border crossing from Zimbabwe. Following my stories, and a brief discussion, I outline the research problem, rationale and significance of my study.

My experience of liminality. *I am looking to register my daughter for the new school year. I walk into the school that I have selected with the hope of getting my child registered. I get to the reception area and the lady at the desk looks up for a brief moment and goes back to her work. I can tell that she is not really paying attention to me, and I think I know why. It's almost as if she expects, or rather, dreads to get into conversation with yet another immigrant, whose documentation she will need to verify, both for authenticity and appropriateness for school registration. I can also tell that she dreads talking to yet another person who cannot speak English properly. When I greet her and explain the reason for my visit, she is visibly taken aback, and I can actually see her mental readjustment to the phenomenon of the English-speaking immigrant in front of her. She is curious to know what I do for a living and when I tell her I am a student, her attitude changes even more. She begins to answer my questions fully and satisfactorily.*

Do I see liminality in another? *I am at a gynaecologist's office. It's a fairly small place and though patients tend to speak in hushed tones when they get to the desk, other patients in the waiting area can make out what they are saying. A pregnant lady walks in, she is Pakistani, she is late for her appointment and she looks very flustered. The nurse at the desk tells her she is late and she cannot be accommodated. The lady, whose English would be regarded as sketchy, struggles to explain why she did not make it on time. Nobody is really listening because they keep telling her that she cannot be seen. She acknowledges that she understands that but she needs to reschedule, and get directions, so she can rush to the other lab before she is late for that appointment too. The nurse at the desk starts inquiring about a translator, who is obviously absent, because she cannot understand the 'heavy accent." I bristle in my seat because I am thinking at that very moment: Nurse, you hear an accent, she hears an accent, and I hear an accent too. This is not a one sided thing. I stand, walk towards the desk and ask if it's ok if I get the directions so I can show her where she needs to go, since I do not speak her language either.*

The nurse seems to hear me fine, we reschedule, get the directions and I escort the lady to the lab.

Thinking through my experiences. As I look back through the years since my immigration, I realize that I always knew that I was treated differently in many instances. Whether it was the more often than not condescending question, "Where are you from?" or the fully exoticizing, "I like your accent," or hearing people talk about Africa as if it were a country, a very backward country, I tended to always be on the defensive. I felt the urgent need to defend myself, my country, and my kinsfolk (as if I really could speak for everyone). Speaking specifically within the context of colonization, Fanon (1963) terms this simultaneous responsibility for self, race, and ancestors as the triple person phenomenon. Now, having children of my own, which I think has mellowed me out quite a bit, I seek to understand things more. Pain is undoubtedly one of the first emotions I felt with each incident I described above, but as I begin to ruminate on the experiences I find gems of insight that I never saw before. Prior to thinking about writing I was mostly enveloped by a cloud of pain, bitterness, or self-pity.

The two vignettes presented above, apart from being steeped in racist logic in its various permutations, in my view, can be understood in terms of liminality because they serve to create the "us" and "them" binary opposition that renders "them" liminal beings. The focus of my research is identifying instances of liminality and subsequently addressing processes of negotiation, which represent the possibilities in liminality. To get to that point (as in most transition rites) one has to first live through the period that precedes the negotiation stage, often consisting of a trial of some sort, to be able to identify the negotiation needed therein or after the fact. My vignettes are a combination of both; they show both the pain, shame, hurt, separation which are all characteristics of liminal experiences. They also speak to the resilience, tact, and ability to reflect (negotiation). An example of negotiating liminality would be my response to the

woman at the desk at the school. I believe her actions were deeply embedded in exclusionary understandings of immigrants. As a result I was put in a painful liminal place, which I had to subsequently negotiate using my ability to speak a language that she understood, but did not expect from me.

Are my vignettes narratives of exclusion/isolation? Yes. Are they solely that? I think not and that is the point I am trying to make. I do not think I have ceased to be a liminal being myself — even years after the immigration experience, I just think I have gained the ability to name my circumstances as liminal, so now I can then find ways to move forward with that knowledge (negotiation). I explore this concept further in Chapter 2, questioning whether there is such a thing as a post-liminal phase in the case of immigration.

Immigrant youth are constantly negotiating life between worlds. Because there are tensions that exist in their process of trying to negotiate those worlds, these tensions become symptomatic of life *in-between*. So, maybe liminality is a combination of tension and possibility, one cannot exist without the other. The vignettes also exemplify experiences of liminality or inhabiting the third space (Bhabha, 2001) in two distinct ways. The first vignette showed me living in the liminal place, and the second showed my perception of someone inhabiting what I feel is a liminal place.

"I inhabit this liminal place." My first vignette was one in which I felt I lived in the third space because I was regarded as the other. I needed help; I sought out a place where my needs could be addressed, just like any other parent who wants their child in school. I did not anticipate being met, especially in a school setting, with a cold demeanour, and a palpable disdain for difference. So in this instance I used the only resources I had at my disposal. My reasonable command of the English language, and upon the receptionist's further inquiry, the

fact that I was a doctoral student in university, served to get me what I needed. The interface created by my use of the English language and the divulging of my own education became the currency needed for the transaction of registration to take place. My study explores liminality and how immigrant youth negotiate it. The negotiation that took place for me as I tried to register my daughter for school, I expect, is like the strategies used by immigrants everywhere. I began the study wondering if immigrant youth would bring such strategies to light based on their experiences.

"I look at you, and I see myself: I am you, and you are me." My second example of liminality was one I felt vicariously through the experience of a fellow immigrant. In a sense, I thought I understood what the lady was going through because I had gone through the same in various instances. Liminality is a powerful state/place to be in because it can induce the type of empathy necessary for reaching across differences, in solidarity with others, hence building a bridge that enables communication and coexistence. I remember a Korean classmate's account of her experiences as an immigrant who did not speak English, her struggle to learn the language and the isolation she felt in English class and in society. She took her children everywhere so they could help her read things written in English. I believe my Korean friend was in a liminal place because of exclusion and isolation that she spoke of. She also cried when recounting this experience so there was no doubt in my mind that she felt like a liminal being through that experience.

In the second vignette, because of feeling the same way myself in different circumstances, such as the school vignette, I felt moved to help. I wonder if some of these experiences are like looking into a mirror where you actually see the reflection of yourself in another person. I believe my Korean friend did have agency; she took her children wherever she

went, and they were her bridge to a foreign language. Though I am aware of the underlying systemic issues in these situations, such as blatant racism, or the inability to deal with difference, these are not the focus of my study; rather, my focus is on liminality and negotiating it. In that moment of storytelling by my Korean classmate, the emotion in the class was raw, and I believe in that instant all our classmates were taken to the threshold, to this liminal place with her and we knew, albeit for just a moment, what it was like to be a non-English speaking immigrant in an environment where English is the language of instruction and the language for living. For the lady at the doctor's office, frustration gave way to humiliation as she tried to speak in even lower tones but the nurse continued talking within earshot of everybody. The immigrant's "heavy" accent seemed to be another culprit in the conversation, but I was sitting there thinking: I hear an accent when the nurse speaks too. How is it that this never comes up in conversations? I wonder what would have happened if, when the nurse talked about an accent, the lady would have responded with: "I hear an accent too. Let us bear with each other."

All the same, my intervening put an end to the whole scene, much to the relief of everyone involved and present. I am still nagged by some questions though: Why did I intervene? Was it out of pity? Out of empathy? Did I see the lady, and therefore myself embarrassed and belittled by the whole conversation? The spirit of solidarity allowed me to intervene. That room was full of women, some with their husbands, but no one said anything. They were all quiet, some looking on, others peering intently into magazines. I was the only other visible minority in the room, so did they assume that I should be the one to help out, and if so why? If not, then why did nobody do or say anything? I came to the conclusion that having had the experience of what I name as liminality myself, I realize my interconnectedness with others and so can look at a particular scenario involving what I perceive to be liminality and

actively participate in it. Aboriginal activist Lila Watson (1995) appropriately summed up this recognition of the interconnectedness of humanity and our stake in life when she indicated that helping is not enough; rather, the recognition that our liberation is inextricably intertwined is more important.

In the two vignettes, I, as well as the Pakistani woman in the second vignette, were forced by circumstances to face the fact that we are immigrants in a foreign country who have to cope with stereotypes that are ingrained in the culture. Our actions in both circumstances were more or less successful negotiations, as we sought to achieve what we set out to accomplish. Liminality in this context is a state that one gets into voluntarily (as in my choice to immigrate to North America, or the decision to participate in certain rituals) or involuntarily based on a variety of factors such as economic or political strife resulting in people relocating as refugees, or living in places where one is a visible minority. Underlying the two vignettes was this notion of "us" and "them." Liminality is premised on exclusion of "them" in various forms. Based on how one understands the concept of liminality, it has the potential to transform into a place of liberation. For me the ability to name my location as a liminar, allowed me to engage with what that meant for me. I understand that I am on the margins in various ways and as long as I am in Canada I will be "from somewhere." Knowing this, I then began to look at what I had to offer, what I could do to live well in this context, regardless of the fact that I was "not from here." This knowledge has allowed me to engage with questions of difference in less defensive ways; to be confident in who I am even though sometimes people attempt to demean me.

Understanding one's existence in a liminal place as a potentially positive thing marks the difference between seeing it as positive or negative. For those who envision possibility, Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space" represents a whole new area of awareness, and

conceptualization. Bhabha's concept allows people to see the possibility of a hybrid identity, one that sees things differently based on prior experiences. Hall (2006) sees diaspora identities as, "those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 235). Continual transformation is possible, allowing for new ways of being with the "self" and those who surround us.

I believe that all liminal experiences embody some type of exclusion/separation/ alienation in the beginning, which is why I was able to recognize that my life as I knew it had shifted when I physically moved from my home country. In a coming of age ritual for example, the initiand[5] (Turner 1967, 1970) is separated from the crowd until such a time when he/she can rejoin the group. The initiand understands that the separation is necessary for the transition into adulthood to be complete, so although the ritual itself may be rife with uncomfortable ceremonies, he/she focuses on the goal, hence the whole process, though very real, seems to last but for a moment until they find themselves ushered into adulthood.

In the same way, I submit that the way one responds to liminality becomes a conscious perspective after one realizes how and where one is positioned and how this place can be one of possibility and not just negativity. Without that realization, one may never see the potential in residing in liminal places. This is where I see a difference in the vignettes presented above. I claim liminality as a place of possibility because I have experienced it myself, but this has come after a lengthy process of seeking to understand who I am. In the second vignette, I saw liminality in the Pakistani woman's experience, but I can never really know if she would conclude that the experience could be a place of possibility if she had a chance to engage with her experience on a deeper level.

[5] "Initiand" is one who is about to go through an initiation ceremony.

My hope is that my study with the youth can begin to ask some of these questions by arousing an interest in the youth to delve deeper into their own experiences. Perspectives concerning the positive possibilities that can result from life in liminal places come after the fact, as one starts questioning and understanding the meaning of liminality in one's life. It is important for a person to define liminality for themselves, though in the second vignette, I defined it for the woman based on what I perceived might have been happening for her. The youth that I engaged with had the opportunity to define their experiences for themselves as well as collaborate to create a curriculum artefact to raise awareness with prospective immigrant youth about likely experiences they would encounter after immigration.

The construction of certain kinds of knowledge, in most cases, determines how people will react in particular circumstances. The notion of people "othering" particular people is so deeply ingrained in culture, it is repeated so many times, that it becomes a kind of "truth" that takes effort to undo. It is therefore important to create a new type of consciousness within the liminal place that allows the retelling of stories of liminality in ways that reframe perceptions of immigrant people and showcase their resilience in spite of everyday challenges, which is the intent of my study. Next, I give some background to provide the backdrop for my work with the youth participants.

Background for My Current Research

My initial research direction, which was to explore AIDS in immigrant populations was met with a degree of unease by some fellow members of the Zimbabwean community and the professionals I consulted, based on the stigma still attached to the disease, and my intention to focus on an immigrant population. In their minds' eyes, and I see this as well, I would have been focusing on a sensitive subject with a vulnerable population. The unease I registered through

these consultations, spoke to me of the power of being signified in specific ways, which can have its disadvantages. This ultimately led to my current explorations.

Above, I have briefly engaged with the question of liminality with the aid of a few vignettes from my personal experiences with liminality. Further to the issue of signification, some labels, such as "immigrant," whether we name ourselves or are labelled by others, point towards a liminal identity that continues evolving in different ways. More importantly, I wonder how immigrant people living in Canada, myself included, negotiate our identities so we can truly be comfortable in this context. The answers may open us up to a place where we can venture in depth into sensitive topics such as HIV/AIDS. Everyone has a stake in the HIV/AIDS conversation, regardless of where one is located geographically. Societies can then work together towards a better understanding of such important issues.

Research Problem

My study primarily seeks to understand immigrant youths' liminal experiences. It also focuses on the strength garnered in these liminal places as youth learn to navigate through life in their new country. Some studies (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993) on immigrant experiences have used terms such as "assimilation", "adaptation" and "acculturation" to describe immigrants' ways of settling into the new country. More recent studies (Hoerder, Hébert & Schmitt, 2006; Oh, 2011) however, have rejected these terms as primarily indicating what immigrants are expected to do, opting instead for the term "transculturation," which acknowledges the agency that immigrants in general employ in navigating the host landscape. Transculturation can be seen as a negotiation of the liminal spaces between the old and the new country. According to Fernando Ortiz (1947), who coined the term in the twentieth century,

> Transculturation encompasses more than transition from one culture to another; it does not consist merely of acquiring another culture (acculturation) or of losing or uprooting a previous culture (deculturation). Rather, it merges these concepts and additionally carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena (neoculturation). (p. 102-103)

Is it through this process of transculturation that immigrant youth negotiate liminality? More needs to be understood about the experience of immigrant youth, how they navigate their landscape and develop their sense of identity. This process is particularly important for youth because without being confident about who they are, they will always feel out of place. As Freire (1985) might suggest, this process of identity formation allows the youth to "grasp with their minds the truth of their reality" (p. 85) which is a form of education for them, as well as an opportunity for the inner healing needed to address the conflicting experiences they encounter. The process of self-understanding has wide-reaching implications for educators and the community at large.

Research Questions

As I mused over my own experiences with immigration, I was left with questions, which serve as the impetus for this research study. I have managed to define myself as living in a liminal place and I wonder if fellow immigrants who immigrate as youth think the same. My main research question is:

> *What implications does conceptualizing Zimbabwean immigrant youth experiences as liminal, through the collaborative creation of a curriculum artefact, have for understanding immigrant youth experiences and how can this process contribute to the youths' ongoing negotiation of their experiences?*

The sub-questions are as follows:

1) *Will the youth understand their experiences as liminal?*
2) *What curriculum artefact will the youth create with me?*
3) *How do youth negotiate their experiences and how has the participatory research process aided in their curriculum journeys?*

Rationale for the Study

Understanding immigration has become crucial in understanding both formal and informal education, around the world (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000). Canada is a country built on immigration and has continued to welcome immigrants from all over the world (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). When immigrants arrive in Canada, they have to navigate new territory, aspects of which are pertinent to my study. For youth specifically, it involves perhaps, living with their parents again after some time apart, or growing up in a cultural context that differs from what they were previously exposed to (McLeod, 2010). The need to navigate the school experience can also be challenging (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997; Igoa, 1995). All immigrant youth experiences share this in common: the need for the continual redefining of themselves as youth living in a foreign country.

It is from a position of separation from one's roots, intended or coerced, that I premise my study. This experience is characterized by a disengagement from the familiar place and the subsequent immersion into the diaspora context, with its myriad of unknowns. It is the negotiating of liminal places that I seek to better understand, through engagement with youth and from their perspectives. Our work together showed both the strength and ambiguity of these places, as identities are continually constructed and deconstructed when people, and immigrant youth in particular, find ways to literally "survive" in a different country. My study focuses on

immigrant youth because their perspectives are crucial for understanding their life experiences, allowing them to be good citizens in a foreign country.

The quality of life for immigrants in foreign countries has been well documented in research literature. Struggles with culture shock, language barriers (Igoa, 1995), the lack of documentation and its attendant problems such as lack of access to critical resources (i.e health, or hyper-documentation) (Chang, 2011) are just some of those challenges. A few studies have also shown the resilience of immigrant populations in foreign lands (Ledgister, 2001; Bannerji, 2000a). My study will discuss experiences of a group of Zimbabwean youth in the Canadian context. More so, there seems to be a general assumption that immigrants should at some point go back to where they came from (Das & Singh, 2013; Bannerji, 2000b); there is less understanding that for most of them this has become home and they intend to stay here, for a variety of reasons. To be able to make their mark in the host society and to create safe spaces which they and their families can call home comes with a lot of work, consisting of negotiation. The work I talk about here spans a continuum that has on one end negotiating the challenges that come with the generational gap between parents and their children, to how families and communities address the challenges of language, culture, identity, priorities, and ideas of what it means to "belong." It is this work that I seek to illuminate in my study through my engagement with immigrant youth. McIntyre (2000) acknowledges that listening to young people's stories and giving them opportunity to speak about their lives allows for active reframing of teaching pedagogies, which in turn benefits them and the society at large. My own experience as an immigrant youth started me thinking about the changes that had taken place in my own life, the choices I had made and that made me wonder about other immigrant youth who left home and

how they were handling life in the host country. It is with such thoughts in mind that I recounted my own immigration story as a starting point.

Significance of Study

The questions that guided my study were important not only because of my own experiences as an immigrant, but speak to genuinely helpful implications for parents, teachers and community education planners, whose unique mandate is to nurture the well-being of immigrant children. My study adds to the body of literature on immigration and education, with specific emphasis on immigrant experiences that might be conceptualized as liminal.

An understanding of liminality in relation to immigrant youth experiences creates a pedagogical place that allows the immigrant youth involved to learn more about their experiences, from their own perspectives. And since the youths' retelling of their experiences is not enough to bring about change, my study presents a process in specific detail that brings youth to question their place in this world to inform parents, teachers, and the community at large. Engaging with the concept of liminality, as it has been presented in the variety of ways by various theorists (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bannerji, 2000a, 2000b; McLeod, 2010; Ledgister, 2001), can bring about an understanding of who immigrant youth are, and more so, what they do to negotiate life in their circumstances. By allowing immigrant youth to enunciate their experiences and talk through their feelings and reactions, they were able to make sense of the place in which they found themselves. They also completed the study with a better sense of themselves and by extension the knowledge they acquired in the process of the study can be useful for their interactions with other youth, educators and the community at large.

The study is significant in three distinct ways: Firstly, since the participants were a group of Zimbabwean immigrant youth who were a mix of those who came to rejoin their nuclear

family after their parents had been in Canada for some time and those who came to Canada by themselves, both their perspectives can give our society a window into their perceptions within the context of the life altering phenomenon of immigration, thereby resulting in a greater understanding of their experiences.

Secondly, for the youth themselves; the opening up of these discussions enhanced their understandings of their experiences. Such understanding is important because it reveals the thoughts of immigrant youth in their own words to one another thereby starting the process by which the youth can begin to or continue to make sense of their own place in the world. Further to this, this information was useful to the youth themselves, to better understand the dynamics between them and their parents at home, in the community, and for some, their adaptation into the formal school system.

Lastly, discussions around the questions raised in my study can allow other youth to learn from the study participants' experiences. The discussions that took place with the participants also have definite implications for curriculum and the educators that implement it, and for the community at large. Curriculum is more than just the material text – the mandated content that we are familiar with in schools, rather, curriculum is a way of being with other people, and a way of engaging with them that acknowledges the potential and the knowledge that resides with them. This understanding of curriculum is vital because it helps educators and the community to understand students' life worlds in ways that allows students to live full lives and to fully enjoy their curriculum journey. This curriculum journey is characterized by sensitivity to difference, to alternate ways of knowing and making meaning, different value systems and the acknowledgement that all these perspectives enrich the journey of learning. Ultimately, educators and community members can reflect a sound knowledge of immigrant students'

experiences (Adams, 1997; hooks, 1994). I am by no means postulating that my study speaks for all immigrant youth, but it can provide insight for communities and educators to continue to improve formal and informal education for immigrant youth when they join the Canadian community. The study also provides useful information that will help new immigrant youth navigate the liminal places in which they find themselves within learning contexts.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter 1 started with an introduction to immigrant literature, research with youth and a brief account of the concept of liminality and how it may inform discussions with youth participants. I then continued with my personal account of life before Canada and the process of becoming an immigrant to North America as a youth aged twenty five, coupled with the beginning of the feeling of liminality for me as an individual. Chapter 1 also covers two vignettes about my experiences of liminality in Canada, followed by a discussion. Chapter 2 is my review of literature. I discuss my study's connections to curriculum, followed by a detailed section on the Zimbabwean population in Canada, and then I discuss some of the reasons why Zimbabweans have left the motherland to find abodes in different countries around the world. I continue this chapter by addressing some core discourses on immigration. After this, I explore the term liminality and its various permutations by looking at the works of Arnold Van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1967, 1970), Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2000), Himani Bannerji (2000) and F.S.J. Ledgister (2001). Following the literal exploration of liminality, I offer my own understanding of the term. The final part of Chapter 2 focuses on some possible ways of being and engaging with each other to foster better communities.

Chapter 3 is the methodology section; in it I discuss Participatory Research (PR), which is the overarching philosophy that guides my study. I provide a discussion of the theories that

support the research design and the process of collaborative information gathering with an emphasis on people, power, and praxis, as well as the key practices of PR. PR's focus on decentralizing power and allowing the participants to be actively involved in the work is what drew me to this philosophy. I also consider the implications of the PR sensitivities as they related to my research study. I discuss my work with older youth and the implications for my study. The final part of this chapter outlines the limitations of my study, discusses the importance of reflexivity in my study, and in conclusion some ethical considerations. Chapter 4 sets out to report the findings of this research study and to bring to the fore more specifically the voices of the youth participants. I start with a narrative of a typical focus group session, then offer an introduction of the participants in the study and excerpts of the discussion we had together, including discussions about the creation of the artefact. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the study findings, including emergent and core themes. I then venture to address the core questions of the study, after which I talk about my experiences as a facilitator in this participatory process. I provide some direction for future studies and then write summative remarks to conclude my thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This section begins by outlining connections of my study to curriculum. Next, I briefly outline the contextual reasons for emigration by Africans, specifically as it is relevant to Zimbabwean immigrants. I proceed to give a brief synopsis of the state of immigration in Canada. Then I present a brief review of diaspora literature and the major discourses around immigrant groups and their experiences, showing the gap in research around issues of immigrant experiences, specifically the lack of discussions of liminality, with Zimbabwean immigrant youth, emphasizing the need for this research. Liminality, therefore, is used as an alternative concept for understanding immigrant youth experiences. Following that, I explore the concept of liminality from its origins in the 19th century, highlighting some key authors who have used the same concept in its varying permutations, concluding the literature review by forging points of agreement and contention arising from these authors' writings. After this, I offer my definition of liminality, which the youth used in identifying their own liminal experiences.

In the final part of this chapter, I address possible ways of being and engaging with each other, to add to the discourse on fostering better communities within the diverse Canadian context. This last section is important because I do not see liminality as a be-all and end-all. Rather, it serves to illuminate experiences and how they impact people. Hence, to move forward after revealing that, there is a need to at least suggest some ways that I consider useful to the ultimate intent of the study which is to better understand liminal experiences of immigrant youth and how they negotiate living *in-between* which can lead to action. This information impacts youth and also provides the community at large information that allows them to rethink the

process of engaging with immigrant youth needs. The Zimbabwean youth who participated in my study spoke to this discussion.

How does this study relate to curriculum inquiry?

When immigrants come to Canada, "settlement" and other type services offer information targeted to help immigrants live well in Canada. From my experience, these services are good, but most of the time they fail to acknowledge life experiences and values that immigrants bring to the host country. They also fail to recognize the challenges of adjusting to life in a new place. As a result there is almost an unspoken understanding that settlement services are offered to immigrants so that at some point they learn "how things are done here. With this expectation to assimilate migrants do learn, some faster than others. Assimilation is a prescribed standard that they need to meet to survive in this new context. Lacking from immigrant research is the knowledge, based on specific past and current experiences, that settling into life in Canada may not be as simple as it seems. This study explores the experiences, which I refer to as liminal, to help immigrants understand their curriculum journey that is life in the host country.

My interest in this study stemmed from my desire to explore the deeper challenges in the life journeys of immigrant youth, from the immigrant youths' perspective. The words of Ted Aoki (2005), "to be educated is to be ever open to the call of what it is to be deeply human, and heeding the call to walk with others in life's ventures" (p. 365) relay a convincing concept of flexibility, relationality that pays attention to experiences outside our own. Dewey (1897) in his pedagogical creed, made it clear that learning and pedagogy were not confined to institutions, but rather were present in actual lived experiences. Likewise, Smith (1999) revealed that for teachers to understand their students, they also needed to pay attention to their lived experience, to that which underwrites their lives. hooks (1994) echoed this same emphasis on students personal

lives in her exploration of an engaged pedagogy. Chambers, Fidyk, Hasebe-Ludt, Hurren, Leggo, and Rahn (2003) underscore that curriculum is always a verb, a process of quest(ion)ing, a sojourn in words and worlds. This means the process of learning is dynamic bringing about change as new knowledge is acquired. The process of learning more about their experiences was crucial for the youth in this study. This study was aimed at revealing the learnings that resulted from exploring the lived experiences of immigrant youth, who are in essence students of life. The education derived from personal experience is considered important for self-transformation, interruption and translation as evidenced by teleological[6] accounts of education (Standish, 1995, 1999; English, 2013; Kwak, 2012; Saito, 2009). With the focus on personal experience as a way of learning, a specific term related to how I envisioned this study would unfold is relevant.

The word curriculum comes from the Latin word "currere" which originally meant "running the course." Pinar and Grumet's (1981) reconceptualization of curriculum used this term in contemporary contexts to think differently about curriculum. According to Pinar (2004), the term currere emphasized a sense of that which a person "lived" through to be able to reach a certain stage. Currere goes beyond the traditional formal[7] school curriculum to include relationships and other forms of human interactions. The distinctions between formal and informal education have been contested in different ways. While authors such as Combs and Ahmed, 1973 and Eshack, 2006 consider these distinct categories, Colley, Hodkinson and Malcom (2003), for example, chose to see every learning situation as having formal and informal attributes. Though the distinction seems to have credence in literature, I have come to see them as points on a continuum as everyone goes through both formal and informal educational

[6] Teleological means the belief that purpose and design are a part of or are apparent in nature.
[7] In simple form, I understand the "formal" curriculum as any learning that takes place within the confines of an institution of learning, such as a high school or college. The informal curriculum is the journey of learning that takes place outside institutional settings such as schools, colleges, and universities, journeys such as this study.

experiences at some points in their lives. The term currere has come to be understood in contrast to the formal curriculum in school settings, which has received a lot of attention (Pinar, 1994, 2004; Grumet, 1976; Greene, 1995; Applebee, 1996). I find these authors' discussions of curriculum in and beyond school settings very applicable in understanding the informal curriculum. Clearly each type of curriculum has an expected end. For most educational institutions in our neo-liberal times, the goal is producing competitive students who are ready for employment within a market economy. Currere as a concept has relevance in my study because it extends to the liminal experiences that the youth discussed in the study, experiences that would be considered part of their life curriculum.

In the Shona culture the expected end of the curriculum journey would be characterized by an individual's ability to take part in all the responsibilities that life brings. The informal curriculum in Shona culture is characterized by the journey itself, not the destination. To this end, African authors such as Mazuru and Nyambi (2012) have celebrated mothers as "the campus of every home and family… custodians of Shona/African cultural values, first teachers and co-partners in the Shona/Africana struggle for well-being and survival" (p. 1). In my own curriculum journey, learning involved understanding the mores and values of the culture, respect for elders, folktales that emphasize valour and the importance of hard work for the benefit of family and community at large. Learning to do chores, listening to grandmother telling stories by the fireside, singing and dancing were paramount, for they not only taught skills and values that resulted in women and men of integrity; they allowed families to work together. The focus of African values is to first turn inward, not in a selfish way, but rather so that one understands oneself in order to then understand others around him/her. In the host Canadian/American culture, the understanding of the "individual" goes against what has traditionally been the

mainstay of the Shona curriculum journey (Mawere, 2010; Gade, 2011). In the host culture, the journey is not characterized by running "alongside," rather it is a "sprint to the finish" that focuses on what an individual can achieve for him/herself first. In the end the tension between the curriculum as a type of "journeying together" and "running solo" becomes a point of difficulty for immigrant youth who have been raised to understand life as communal in nature.

Because my study was community-based, I had a different take on how I approached curriculum inquiry in this context. By understanding curriculum as running the course (Pinar, 2004), I emphasized that the "running" that I pursued in my study was one that did not focus on running against each other, in competition, but rather emphasized running the course "together" in a co-creative manner, through participatory (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) interactions with youth involved. According to Chimhundu (1980) proverbs and other forms of teaching such as the one exemplified above from Shona culture prove that, "… conformity, peace, tolerance, and mutual cooperation were among the things they cherished most" (p. 44). This study acknowledges that to run the course meaningfully, there has to be an understanding of immigrant youths' life worlds in a deepened sense. A position of liminality gives us a view of these life worlds. I see liminality as an important concept in understanding the lived curriculum of immigrant youths. Not only does the study of liminality illuminate individual experiences, but it helps to unpack the positionality of Zimbabwean youth and how this impacts how they undertake their life journeys. Without understanding their struggles, participants may be limited in their decision making around different aspects of their lives. More so, the people who encounter them may not understand them. The process of unpacking the liminality in the participants' lives expands for them, and those who encounter these youths in their curriculum journeys, what settlement in the host country involves.

The informal curriculum was the one my study pursued, exemplified in the youths lived experiences, and illuminated through the questioning, the thinking through, and the interactions of youth. The work of Pinar, valuing curriculum as lived, is synonymous with the African experience of curriculum. The work of educational theorists highlights potential problems when curriculum does not stem from lived experience. Maxine Greene (1988), for example, writes:

> If situations cannot be created that enable the young to deal with feelings of being manipulated by outside forces, there will be far too little sense of agency among them. Without a sense of agency, young people are unlikely to pose significant questions, the existentially rooted questions in which learning begins. (p. 3)

Ivan Illich (1971), another educational theorist and critic of formal schooling notes:

> Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence and fluency with the ability to say something new. (p. 9)

The words of Maxine Greene (1988) and Ivan Illich (1971) about the learning needs of young people illustrate some of the concerns that educators have identified as being crucial for democratic education to take place. Their words represent some of the issues that preoccupy those working in the field of critical pedagogy. The quotes also point to some of the anticipated ends to a useful learning experience: agency, questioning, and autonomy all of which, at different points, were exemplified in my study. I have always considered it critical to acknowledge learning that happens outside a classroom setting. As a result this study took place

in the community. The curriculum journey focused on participants' life experiences, with schooling experiences being a fraction of that discussion. Therefore, when I talk about educators in this study, it is important to note that the term extends to all those involved in the process of learning, in keeping with Freire's (1970) idea of knowledge as a two way stream, with no one person being the harbinger of all knowledge. The participants in this study educated each other, and in turn took on the task of educating prospective immigrant youth. Their interactive process also has implications for educators within the community and in formal school settings as well.

The lens of critical pedagogy brings this curriculum of immigrant experiences to life with the seminal works of some great authors. The basic premise of critical pedagogy is the need and drive to create "a new set of values that refuse to reduce life to its wealth generating potential, but which instead puts security, happiness, and freedom of all life first and foremost" (Malott, 2011, p. xxv). According to Giroux (1983), critical pedagogy is an educational movement guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action. In other words, proponents of critical pedagogy understand that security, happiness, and freedom are some of the core requirements for successful human existence. Freire (1970, 1973), who is considered the father of critical pedagogy, was preoccupied with and fully appreciated the relationship between education, politics, imperialism and liberation. Critical pedagogy also acknowledges the work of learning that transgresses classroom boundaries, thereby validating experiences and processes that occur outside formal classroom environments. My study is one such work.

Illich (1971), for example, was convinced that formalized education by its nature resulted in narrow minded individuals whose lives were regulated by the systems that had

schooled them. He argued that knowledge had to be an aspect of being in the world rather than a form of acquisition. Illich indicated that formal education had a way of undermining alternative or vernacular types of education and called for a system of conviviality. He defined conviviality as "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of person with their environment" (p. 24). Proper education, according to Illich, required autonomy and teamwork in perfect balance. Leadbeater (2000), a supporter of Illich's ideas noted: "More learning should be done at home, in offices and kitchens, in the context where knowledge is deployed to solve problems and add value to people's lives" (p. 112). My study found merit in these ideas because they supported the interactive, informal, and mutual learning processes that transpired through the use of participatory methods in my study.

Dewey (2004 emphasized the importance of self-directed life experiences in the education of learners. He noted: "True education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situation in which he finds himself . . . the child's own instincts and powers furnish the material for the starting point for all education" (p.17) Here Dewey re-emphasizes the central idea of autonomy in critical pedagogy. In effect, all the above mentioned authors in their specific ways, point to life experiences as the core of the curriculum journey.

Life experiences are pertinent to my study in that they form the basis of understanding those experiences that I am calling liminal in this study. To this end, an understanding of immigrant youth life experiences does have implications for the curriculum of immigrant youth coming into Canada and the larger society as it interacts with them. If life experiences are the basic ingredient with which to start understanding life in general, then immigrant life experiences become the core with which they understand their own lives. They also become the measure by

which the larger community learns more about, and subsequently understands their experiences. My basic premise is that we are all interrelated and we all bring knowledge that can be used to create a holistic type of curriculum. Freire (1997) speaks to the same dynamic when he writes:

> What I have been proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of immigrant students – a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other, which implies the ability to stimulate creativity of the other. But these things take place in a social and historical context, and not in pure air. (p. 307-308)

Although all aspects that Freire (1997) notes are very important and will be, in some form or other, present in my study, it is this idea of all beings having something to share, a point that Gramsci (1982) popularized, that further prompts my work with the youth. The understanding that educators are also learners at various locations in the curriculum journey, allows me to engage the youth as both educators and learners and has implications for educators in the locations they find themselves inside or outside the classroom. It is this engagement that opened up the place in my study for a curriculum conversation that exemplified conscientization, praxis and ultimately, an engaged and critical pedagogy.

In my attempt to answer the age-old curriculum question, what knowledge is of most worth, and to whom? (Spencer, 1894), I have come to the understanding that it is the knowledge that results from shared experiences and perceptions, that is most relevant to the learner. Spencer (1894) emphasized the importance of shared life experiences as the basis of what was worth knowing. Learning was not just for learning's sake; ultimately curriculum had to have a purpose beyond itself, reaching others in ways that would change their lives. Spencer's understanding of knowledge also speaks to my role as researcher in PR, that of being a catalyst

that enables participants to derive deeper meanings from their shared experiences. In my study, I was involved enough to clarify certain issues for the youth, but removed enough to allow the participants to come into their own understandings throughout the research process. The ability to balance my role in being a consultant for the youth and giving them room for autonomy in their discussions adheres to the central tenets of PR.

This study came out of the ultimate question that the youth at the church conference grappled with, which was about naming their identity. Were they African, African-Canadian, or Canadian? Why would they even feel the need to pick just one? Such questioning is symptomatic of much deeper issues that would call to the fore thoughts about belonging, location, place and relationships in very distinct ways. Therefore their ability to verbalize these questions in a group setting indicated a subject that was germane to immigrant youth experiences, and as a consequence, one that might be of worth to them as individuals and collectively through participatory engagement with each other.

I believed that the continued engagement of the youth with one another through the research process would result in Pinar's (2012, p. 186) "curriculum as conversation," which is opposed to the "forms of ventriloquism, rather than intellectual exploration, wonder, awe" (p. 188) that are rife in learning communities across the world. Curriculum-as-conversation proved to be of most worth to the youth during that discussion session at the church conference and through the research and can simultaneously or subsequently, "become the site on which generations struggle to define themselves and the world" (Pinar, 1995, p. 847-848). The curriculum process in my study stemmed from valuing the knowledge already present in the lives of immigrant youth, one abundant in experiences, meanings, perceptions and various ways of articulating those perspectives (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Teske & Nelson, 1974;

Tienda & Haskins, 2011; Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000). Immigrant youth carry these significant experiences in ways that determine what they learn, and how they acquire new knowledge in liminal places.

The informal curriculum, in the case of my study, was one that presented itself through engaging with liminal experiences. Through a process of engagement, the insights that originated out of cooperative effort with the youth, helped them understand their experiences better, with the potential of showing others some of the lessons therefrom. Then, as Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995) univocally indicate, curriculum at that juncture,

> ceases to be a thing, and it is more than a process. It becomes a verb, an action, a social practise, a private meaning, and a public hope. Curriculum is not just the site of our labor; it becomes the product of our labor, changing as we are changed by it (p. 848).

My aim was to help immigrant youth understand themselves a little more through engaging with the matter of my study, and through this to successfully run a part of the course. Two main concepts were helpful in my understanding of the way youth interacted with the liminal life experiences that they identified: "the social construction of knowledge" and "engaged or public pedagogy," which I discuss below.

The "social construction of knowledge." The concept of the "social construction of knowledge" is useful in unpacking the relationships between educators and learners in various settings. The term finds its origins in the sociology of knowledge from the work of Karl Mannheim (2013). The term "social construction of knowledge" means that reality as we know it is manufactured, altered, and sustained by particular members of society. Bilić (2015) explains it this way: "What is common to all the different types of knowledge is that they are developed in social contexts and within different group and institutional dynamics" (p. 1260). People who

have the most power, respect, or those who can sway decisions have a predominant role in the reality that we know.

I recognize from my personal stories of liminality, which I presented in Chapter 1, that there was a dynamic at work that served to perpetuate the concept of different as "other," "deviant," or "negative." I understood this dynamic as the need by the status quo to preserve particular values, norms, with anything or anyone falling outside certain norms regarded as different. This led me on a quest to understand what I identified as liminality, through an exploration of the possibilities and complexities of being a liminar. I hoped one of the results of this search would be a recognition of the knowledge that makes us who we are as well as the construction of new knowledge as immigrants that would help negotiate life in the new country.

In my discussions with the youth, I was interested in how they understood and interpreted the concept of liminality. Their prior knowledge from the native country interfacing with the knowledge of the new country would create different perspectives of the world as they understood it. The process by which the youth uncovered and attached meanings to the phenomena of the host country might have resulted in what Freire (1971) terms "conscientization" – the state of awareness of context that is necessary for people to change their situations for the better. This concept bears some resemblance to Anzaldúa's (2010) mestiza consciousness as discussed later. The various educational/learning sites alluded to above include home, school, and community, and as Chapter 4 will show, my study touches on these sites in the discussions with the participants. As these are the physical spaces in which the youth found themselves, they are also the sites where liminal experiences took place, exposing competing values that caused varying degrees of discomfort. What the participants knew as their reality

both from home and in Canada was tested in various ways, through which new ways of knowing and understanding were created.

In summary, the "social construction of knowledge," as a concept, was useful in my discussion with youth about liminality in terms of its role in understanding the privileging of some and marginalization of others. Later, as youth talked about negotiating liminal spaces the concept was also useful in the process of reframing participants' positions in the different spaces in which they resided in Canada. Reframing liminality as a phenomenon that has its pitfalls as well as possibilities creates a place where we can envision and engage in alternative discourses other than the dominant "us" and "them." With the understanding that knowledge is a societal construct, the hope for this study was that the youth would begin to deconstruct some of these notions so they could recreate a reality that worked to their advantage.

Engaged pedagogy/public pedagogy. I see hooks's (1994) engaged pedagogy and Giroux's (1983) public pedagogy as interrelated. These concepts sum up what I think is paramount in my study regarding the engagement of immigrant Zimbabwean youth in a dialogue about liminality that will translate into a representation of their thoughts (in the form of a curriculum artefact) to help prospective immigrants learn more about the host country. On a broader scale the artefact also has some implications for the community at large.

Public pedagogy, as I read it, is practised in alternative public places. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) sum up Giroux's concept of a public pedagogy well. The authors note how public pedagogy "opens up much more opportunities for learning because critical educators reach beyond the boundaries of the classroom, into communities, workplaces, and public arenas where people congregate, reflect, and negotiate daily survival" (p. 18). Public pedagogy is a practical way to connect the academy and the community. My research is based in the host

country, and yet I acknowledge that the immigrant youth had allegiances to the native country which accorded them an interesting vantage point when it comes to the issue of liminality as lived experience within those two locations. There are different expectations in the host country, and as a result, the conflict about their place seems to come from their constant attempt to negotiate life *in-between* these two "worlds." Exploring pedagogy in both places blurs boundaries in a way that problematizes the very existence of these boundaries, in the same way that "liminality" problematizes rigid boundaries for individuals living in *in-between* worlds.

hooks's (1994) engaged pedagogy calls for educators to recognise that teaching is more than merely sharing information; it is sharing in the intellectual and spiritual growth of students. She also says that engaged pedagogy involves caring for the souls of students, and recognizing that education can be truly liberating when everyone claims knowledge "as a field in which we all labour" (p. 14). An engaged pedagogy therefore speaks to the importance of active involvement on the part of both the educator and the student, and to their recognition that they are both learners and educators at various points. In much the same dynamic my research study acknowledges that all the participants in the study and me are alternatively educators and learners as we traverse the liminal landscape. We expect collaboration as we learn from each other and this exemplifies the engaged pedagogy that hooks discusses.

My study therefore espoused the concept of the engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), one that takes into account the personal contexts of both students and educators. An engaged pedagogy in the context of my study values diaspora experiences among other experiences, and what immigrant youth bring to diverse learning communities. This study articulates the participatory notion that everyone is alternatively a teacher and learner in their lives (hooks, 1994). Understanding these shifting roles further validates the need for the ability to alternatively

speak and listen with the intent to teach and learn from one another. More focus is on the process than the final product because it is in the process that both students and teachers learn the most. As part of this valuing of diaspora experiences, the next section discusses a significant part of immigrants' curriculum, their journeying away from home.

Leaving the Motherland for Foreign Lands

Migration has become a crucial way of life for some Zimbabweans to diversify their survival strategies (Bloch, 2006). It is difficult to estimate how many Zimbabweans have left the motherland to settle in various parts of the world, but Canada has welcomed a considerable number over the years. It is estimated that at the end of 2010, approximately 16, 000 Zimbabweans had settled in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Apart from Zimbabweans leaving due to the downward spiraling economy and the politics of the country, Zimbabwe has also seen a significant number of young professionals leaving the country to pursue higher education abroad.

Zimbabwe, a colony of the British empire from the early 1800s to 1980, had always been a vibrant country. After Zimbabwe's independence from Great Britain in 1980, a great exodus of the white population of settlers ensued. It is estimated that 60,000 people left Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1984 (Bloch, 2006). From 1981 to 1986 the country's independence was overshadowed by the conflict in Zimbabwe's northern region, Matabeleland, which was the result of serious disagreements among the three major political parties in the country. The conflict eventually turned into a full-fledged civil war in which at least 20,000 people were killed. This event marked the first visible exodus of black Zimbabweans as they fled the country in fear for their lives, (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace & Legal Resources Foundation, 1999).

In the early 1990s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduced the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in Zimbabwe. The intent was to introduce new conditions for acquiring new loans from these organizations as well as obtaining lower interest rates on existing loans. Conditions were set so that money lent would be spent in accordance with the overall goals of the loan. Unfortunately in Zimbabwe, as in many African countries the program failed, plunging the country into economic decline and once again, a significant number of skilled workers left Zimbabwe in search of manageable economic situations. Coupled with the political instability in the country over the years as well as the continual decline of the economy, Zimbabweans have continued to immigrate to other countries in the world (Zinyama, 1990; Tevera & Zinyama, 2002). Hence, families have more often than not been separated, only to reunite several years later in the host country.

According to some reports (Statistics Canada, 2007; Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2007) statistics showed that there were approximately 6,186,950 foreign born people living in Canada. This number represented 19.8% of the total Canadian population (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2007, p. 7). The same report also showed that immigrants of Asian descent made up the biggest number of immigrants to Canada between the years 1971 and 2006. 21% of the total population of newcomers were children under 14 and 15.1% were youth aged 15-24 (p. 13). The number of immigrants born in Africa had been steadily rising over the years as well. The rise in the number of African immigrants to Canada has been attributed to specific modifications in Canadian immigration policies as Danso and Grant (2000) explain:

> The liberalization of Canadian immigration policies, accompanied by the removal of racist and discriminatory legislation and the consequent replacement with more objective

> selection criteria in the late 1960s, paved the way for the admission of a significant number of Africans. (p. 30)

The Immigration Act, and later Immigration and Refugee Protection Act created an opportunity for easing of the requirements for African nationals coming to Canada. The "family sponsorship" policy of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012) encourages immigration by allowing immigrants to sponsor a family member so they can obtain permanent residency in Canada.

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011) statistics, a significant number of Zimbabweans had settled in Canada by the end of the year 2010. Figure 1 shows the most current statistics on Zimbabwean nationals in Canada from 2001 to the end of 2010 (summarized from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2010/index.asp). The table below breaks the statistics down according to resident status (permanent and temporary), and further classifies the temporary resident group. My search into particular statistics on Zimbabwean youth, who are the specific group of interest in this study, did not yield any results. This lack of representation of the Zimbabwean youth in Canadian immigrant statistics is another reason for my focus on this population for my study. Although my study did not produce any statistical results, I felt it was necessary to add the immigration statistics here to call attention to a distinct community of people participating in the life of this country. Their presence in Canada and their experiences have implications for the extended community.

Literature foci Year	Permanent Residents	Temporary Residents				
		Foreign students	Foreign workers	Refugee Claimants	Humanitarian population	Total per year
2001	114	81	39	2733	2732	5699
2002	200	65	35	123	129	552
2003	687	48	14	58	54	861
2004	1456	51	18	90	90	1705
2005	639	63	18	685	394	1799
2006	449	59	23	581	402	1514
2007	650	77	29	226	175	1157
2008	597	61	26	100	238	1022
2009	527	109	20	36	177	869
2010	478	95	15	24	42	464
Total per category for 10 years	5797	709	237	4656	4433	15642

Figure 1: Zimbabwean Nationals in Canada, Statistics for 2001-2010
(Summarized from Citizenship and Immigration Canada

http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2010/index.asp)

The table above shows that a significant number of Zimbabweans (15,642) had been granted entry into Canada by the end of 2010. More made their way to Canada through various routes, congruent with the significant political and economic changes in the native country. In 2001 Zimbabwe was in the midst of preparing for the next presidential elections and as a result there was much political unrest as opposition party efforts were thwarted by the government

(Cauvin, 2001). The presidency of the country was under world scrutiny because of its methods of land allocation. The stated purpose of land redistribution was to take land away from rich, white commercial farmers and reallocate it to middle and low class black Zimbabweans who were struggling without access to land for farming. The whole reallocation process, which many believe was necessary, but not executed properly, resulted in a myriad of human rights violations documented mainly by Human Rights Watch (2002). Countries such as the UK and USA refused to grant funding for the resettlement program, citing that the intended resettlement process was not well-planned and violated property and human rights (Moyo, Helliker, Murisa, 2008; Mdhlongwa, 1998).

The local currency was in danger of crashing completely because of a major dip in the tourism industry and significant income reductions in tobacco and gold, the country's key exports. A number of people feeling the pressure left the country then. The same scenario was seen again in 2007 as the country prepared for yet another presidential election in 2008; the violence surrounding the run up to the election could be a possible explanation for the increase in refugee claimants around those years. Travel to and settlement in Canada or elsewhere around the globe has its emergent issues. The next section provides a more detailed description of the Zimbabwean community in Alberta.

The Zimbabwean Community in Alberta

To provide a better understanding of the youth group that I worked with over the summer of 2014; I provide a description of the Zimbabwean community in Canada, and in an urban Alberta community more specifically. A recent study by Crush, Chikanda and Maswikano (2012) indicate that generally Zimbabweans settle in the urban centres. Though Ontario has

tended to be the most popular destination area for Zimbabweans, other provinces, such as Alberta, have welcomed a significant Zimbabwean population as well.

Zimbabweans in Canada maintain ties with each other through their different religious affiliations. Statistics on Zimbabwe's religious demography are difficult to verify but according to RELZIM (2012) about 84 percent of the population in Zimbabwe is Christian. Churches in Zimbabwe include Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian, Apostolic groups. There are a significant number of independent Pentecostal and syncretic African churches. The constitution of Zimbabwe protects religious freedom and allows private or public manifestations of religion through worship, teaching, practice, and observance. It follows then that with such an overwhelming Christian population in Zimbabwe, those who move to Canada still adhere to their beliefs even after immigration. Though I could not find any formal statistics to this end, I know that a significant number of Zimbabweans in Edmonton are affiliated with a local Christian fellowship and we regularly meet as different denominations to fellowship. Since Christianity is a significant part of life for many Zimbabweans, it is safe to say that the study participants' perspectives would be similar to those of other Zimbabwean immigrant youth since they share both Zimbabwean cultural values and Christian values.

Zimbabweans also connect through local organizations that share a Zimbabwean heritage and ethos. In Alberta, for example, the Zimbabwe Cultural Society of Alberta's (ZCUSA) (2015) mandate is to promote the social, recreational and cultural needs of members and friends through participation in various community programs, and to establish and maintain educational, cultural and information resources on Zimbabwe. ZCUSA also helps with fundraising activities for bereaved and disadvantaged families and individuals in Alberta. Many families who have faced bereavement locally have benefited from the spiritual and emotional comfort provided by

religious ministers and other Zimbabweans as they gather together to mourn the deceased. Through the same organization, sporting events such as soccer leagues have been created and are active both in the summer and winter months. In summertime ZCUSA organizes family oriented gatherings and sports matches with other immigrant and local communities.

The Zimbabwean community also participates in local multicultural efforts. The annual Heritage Days Festival sees the Zimbabwean community come together to set up a pavilion showcasing Zimbabwean food, traditional wares, music from the motherland and other things Zimbabwean. Such opportunities allow the community to socialize with fellow countrymen/women and also interact with other cultures. One thing is for certain, as Zimbabweans we always seek each other out. In recent years, because of the scarcity of jobs in Toronto, many Zimbabweans from other provinces and from Zimbabwe have moved to Alberta, commonly known as "oil country." Friends and family beckon each other over with promises of better employment and the lure of reunification (Canadian Immigrant, 2012). As families move to Alberta, they start making connections with church groups or through chatting with fellow countrymen/women that they meet while grocery shopping, job or apartment hunting, and they in turn connect with other Zimbabwean immigrants in Alberta.

The rapport within the community of Zimbabweans is endearing because we realize that with the busyness of life in the diaspora, as we labour not only for our immediate families here, but also for our extended families back home, we always have each other. I have marvelled at how quickly news spreads by word of mouth in the event of good news that warrants celebration, or grave news, such as the death of a community member or their relative. Scores of people, often people I have not met before, show up for community events during which connections are made that form lasting relationships. It is this community that provides a kind of home-away-

from-home for the youth who participated in the study and many other Zimbabweans residing in Alberta. The next section addresses some of the issues that have proven to be major discourses in diaspora literature.

Major Discourses in Diaspora Literature

Diaspora, migration and postcolonial literature includes several major themes engaging authors in these areas of study. According to the Oh and Cooc (2011) immigration literature tends to focus on adaptation, educational outcomes, social processes, and the ecological factors that mediate developmental pathways in immigrant populations. Literature focusing specifically on African immigrants has also focused on and revealed some of the complexities that are the context of life for these immigrants. Creese and Kambere (2003), Adjibolosoo and Mensah (1998), Danso and Grant (2000), and Elabor-Idemudia (2000) identify poor socio-economic status, lack of appropriate housing, experiences of racial discrimination and low employment rates as some of the complexities of immigrants' lives. Other literature (Buster & Baffoe, 2015; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Knight & Watson, 2014;) lists invisibility, differences in experiences of learning and civic action, academic disparities with mainstream students, and challenges with identity as additional concerns in immigrant contexts. Such foci are important, but from a review of these and other sources it is clear to me that less is documented concerning personal accounts of how immigrant youth experience liminality in their daily lives and how they subsequently negotiate the host landscape, considering some of the barriers that they encounter. It is with this realization and immigrant experiences in mind that my study seeks to add to the limited documentation of Zimbabwean immigrant experiences by focusing on the notion of liminality.

Negotiating the host landscape seems to take on various forms, most of which are perfected over time as immigrants come to understand not only their location in the host country

and their relationship with the motherland, but also some of the themes common to most of their stories. Some authors (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Teske & Nelson, 1974) in exploring immigrant experiences focus on assimilation, acculturation and adaptation as ways to negotiate liminal places. Others, (Tienda & Haskins, 2011; Mather, 2009; Passel, 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995) focus more on the future as they ponder what can be done to ensure that immigrants' skills can be utilized in ways that are beneficial to themselves and members of the receiving country. The following paragraphs focus on some of the themes common amongst literature on immigrant populations, themes that are relevant in my study as it seeks to understand liminality. McLeod (2010, p. 250) outlines seven major themes, which I have quoted below, and rearranged in order of significance based on my own experiences as an immigrant:

1. Migrancy can expose the migrant and his or her children to displacement, fragmentation and discontinuity.
2. Migrants and their children occupy different positions due to generational differences, but they can have similar experiences of feeling rootless and displaced.
3. Home is a problematic concept, both in the past and in the present.
4. The dominant narratives of belonging and identity cannot accommodate those who live "in-between" or are "of, but not of" a singular location of belonging.
5. Living "*in-between*" can be painful, perilous, and marginalizing.
6. New, transnational models of identity and belonging are possible.
7. Migrancy constructs modes of existence and ways of seeing that last beyond the actual journey between countries.

The themes outlined above informed the conversations with the youth in my study, as we tried to pin down the various liminal places they inhabit every day. From my own experiences as an immigrant the first two themes strike a major chord as I recall various incidents: a word, a look, a comment made supposedly out of earshot about me or to my daughter in school, all pointing to one thing, the fact that we are not "from here." Bannerji's (2000a) experience of being asked upon her arrival in Canada if she was going to apply for resident status speaks to this same idea of "not belonging." She was in Canada on a student visa and was not thinking about staying in Canada. She notes that that query about whether she would apply for residency strengthened her resolve against becoming a permanent resident. What was apparent in the statement by the immigration officer was the fact that he had expected that because she was not from Canada, she would surely want to find a way to stay. For Bannerji, the query set up the assumption that the host country was superior to her native country. Later on, after she got her residency and subsequently got her citizenship, Banerji still struggled with the idea of belonging. Based on that statement by the officer, her work has focused on whether immigrants ever stop carrying the label "immigrant," even if they do become citizens of the host country.

The third of McLeod's (2010) themes that postulates home as a problematic concept resonated with me and the youths in my study because of questions about why we still consider Zimbabwe home, even though we have lived overseas for periods of between two years to a decade and have not been back home since. In relation to this McLeod writes,

> Migrants may well live in new places, but they can be deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home. Instead their home is seen as elsewhere, back across the border. How easy is it to make a new place into your home, if

you are perpetually told that you don't belong and if your right to call a new place "home" is aggressively challenged? (p. 244).

Over the years, I have marvelled at the number of times I have been asked where I am from. I wonder then if my insistence on Zimbabwe as home is a way of defending myself from people who think I do not belong by showing that I do have a place to call home, hence a place of belonging. Or is it just because Zimbabwe is really home for me? Is it just the hyper awareness that comes with experiences that more or less allude to the fact that at some point I should be going back to where I came from? How does an understanding of belonging enhance the various curriculum journeys that are the focus of my study? I also realize now, more than ever, the limitations of language as I try to explain concepts across cultures – another liminal place that could be explored further. More so, I see how generational gaps positioned the study participants differently than their parents and some of the complications that arose for them as a result.

Back in Zimbabwe when we moved to a different part of the country, if the question about home was asked, it did not seem to have the same nuances as when it is asked in the host country. When someone asked where one was from back in Zimbabwe, they were looking for the location of the ancestral home. In Shona, the term for ancestral home is *kumusha,* literally meaning the place our forefathers set up a homestead; this place would be distinguishable usually by being a location in the rural areas, mostly with no electricity or running water. It was also characterized by warm fires, stacks of chopped firewood, an array of domesticated animal sounds, chickens pecking in the yard, fishing, sprawling fields of a variety of crops, elders sitting around fires or chatting under the shade of a tree, boreholes, rivers, and in the case of my rural home, lots of mountains. The Shona term *kumba* would then be used in reference to the place

where we resided in our younger years, more often than not in the city, with electricity, running water and most of the other modern conveniences, otherwise known as a city home in many other cultures.

Authors such as Ledgister (2001) define home as wherever they are at the time. Born to a Jamaican father and a Spanish mother, Ledgister not only had a mixed genealogy, he had also lived in various places: in England, where he was born, in Jamaica, and in the US. According to him, home is wherever he happened to be. Since Ledgister himself was the common denominator in all the places he stayed it made sense that a particular place became home to him. Ledgister's example suggests that an individual defines home differently than others looking at his/her life. In England and Jamaica, two of his self-defined homes, the community did not share his definition of home. On the contrary, he notes:

> In England I was a "second-generation immigrant," an outsider even though born in the country. Throughout my childhood I had received a thousand messages telling me that this was not my place that I did not belong there, that I ought to go back whence I came. In my teens in Jamaica, a country where black consciousness was emerging in the wake of independence, I was also an outsider, the child of a race traitor. During my late teens and early twenties I engaged in a futile effort to forget half of who I was. I sought to define myself as "black" rather than "brown" and felt uncomfortable about having a white mother. (p. 2)

Ledgister's definition of home had him, at the core, interacting with his environment. For those around him, home had to do with his looks, his accent, and other predefined indicators of where home likely was for a person who looked and sounded a particular way. The way the public defines who we are by our physical and other indicators could be the reason why I never used to

(or needed to?) question what home meant for me; I never had to define it until I had actually left my native country. After that point of separation I had to redefine what home meant for me, perhaps as a form of self-preservation. Bannerji (2000a, 2000b, 2013) went through the same redefinition as she faced an immigration officer who was challenging the idea of whether she "belonged" in Canada, and in ensuing works discussed how this exclusionary discourse has worked against immigrant populations across the world. She decided then that she was not excited about the prospect of being naturalized in Canada, and even upon naturalization felt that she was not " Canadian" enough – that she would always be seen as an immigrant, therefore Canada would never be wholly her home.

Just recently I spoke to my father concerning his nearing retirement. He told me that he had decided to sell our childhood home so he could build another one closer to our ancestral home. What stuck with me after that conversation was a feeling of being deeply unsettled by the idea of him selling this home I had grown so attached to over the years. The thought of visiting Zimbabwe after a long time and seeing my parents at a different location felt quite strange and unnerving. I realized that home is not just about the people; it is also very much tied to place. Beck (2011) succinctly explains the importance of place,

> But in spite of everything – in spite of the mobility, the individualism, and the economy – on some level we do recognize the importance of place. The first thing we ask someone when we meet them, after their name, is where they are from, or the much more interestingly-phrased "where's home for you?" We ask, not just to place a pushpin for them in our mental map of acquaintances, but because we recognize that the answer tells us something important about them. (p. 3)

For me, what was important was the idea of returning to the home of my childhood and sharing it with my own children; this idea of home was so profound I did not want to lose it. That experience of sharing my childhood home with my children would reinforce for me the life that seemed so far out of reach now, while simultaneously acquainting my children with the life that they only knew from the stories. This issue of where we come from was also relevant in my study because during our discussions the study participants expressed that they saw themselves as others saw them. This made for some interesting conversations around the use of the English language as will be discussed in a later section.

Why do these differences in conceptions of home exist? Possible answers to this question stem from the different conversations I have had with various people. The resounding truth seems to be that home has different connotations to different people. I see Zimbabwe primarily as home. My oldest daughter who was born in Texas and moved to Canada when she was 19 months old, sees Canada as home, as does my youngest daughter who was born in Canada. My husband and I are, as Anzaldúa (1987) says, "torn between ways" because we also realize the complexity of the concept especially for us as immigrants who have had children in host countries. Anzaldúa further explains the complexities of being *in-between* as, "a dynamic zone of mutual transaction, confluence, unstable and diffuse identity, and transformation" (p. 16). By raising a family in Canada we have created a home for our family, and by doing so, are in effect tied to more places and people now than before. The same applies to the youth in my study. Those who came to Canada to rejoin their immediate family units did so at the expense of the familial relationships that they had back in Zimbabwe. They left the place that they had known for so long, where they felt incomplete because their immediate families were away. By creating a new home in Canada, they had left their home in Zimbabwe to which they still had ties and

relationships that were significant. Whether, as immigrants, the new context troubles our former concepts of home or makes them clearer is uncertain. The complex conundrum that is the concept of home is encompassed in McLeod's (2010) fourth and fifth themes that speak to the painful and contradictory nature of the middle place, as well as the fact that this place is not clearly defined because it has such varying permutations based on where people have been and the people they have met (or in most immigrants' cases, birthed!) along the way.

Iyer (2011) speaks of the same conundrum when he says of the modern world, "home is not just divided, but scattered, and in the absence of any centre at all, people find themselves at sea" (p. 32). Iyer alludes to the idea that with the increased movement of people around the globe, we may not even be able to see a clear picture of home anymore, because that concept has been diluted in so many ways over time. It used to be, simply put, the place where relations resided. Then, for some, it became the place where an individual was located at a given time. Then there was the concept of home away from home – an idea that an individual could reproduce their definition of home elsewhere. McLeod (2010) speaks of home as an idea of what "was" for immigrants who yearned for "home." In other words, for McLeod home was a concept of "the ways things were," a yearning by those in the diaspora to return to that which they left, but which in the present bore little or no resemblance to the original. Iyer offers the concept of the global soul as an answer to this dilemma of home by showing how people have been recast as beings who are products of many cultures at once, and have lived *in-between* those cultures as well. For the youth in my study, home was primarily Zimbabwe, and was basically determined by the fact that Zimbabwe is where they were born, and had lived for a longer period. For the youth, home also had to do with the extended family that was there. Home was therefore a combination of place and people.

The last four themes as laid out by McLeod are also significant to my study in two ways. First, they acknowledge the pain and contradictions of living *in-between* and how the narratives of belonging in different places tend to categorize people as either/or. This divide makes it difficult for people to align themselves to a particular identity or belong to a particular place or group. Second, the themes go beyond acknowledging the limiting factors engendered by living *in-between* by suggesting possible ways of extending the discourse to focus on what can be done to negotiate these places. Inasmuch as my study is primarily about articulating liminal experiences for immigrant youth, the methods of negotiation used by immigrant youth to engage with these experiences is also relevant to my study. McLeod notes that there are people who embrace what he calls "transnational models of identity" (p. 250). These models allow people to be part of two or more cultures and still live a satisfying life. These transnational models give way to a form of seeing and being that transcends pre-set boundaries (Koshy, 2011). In transnationalism people are not only defined by where they originate from, but also by the places they have been and the people they have encountered. Different people have addressed this transnational model and its various permutations (McLeod, 2010; Iyer, 2011: Anzaldúa, 2001: Koshy, 2011).

Drawing on discourses, which highlight the liminal nature of migrant experiences, the next section traces the term liminality from its origins through some of the ways it has been used by various authors. This section serves three purposes; first, to help define the theory of liminality and clarify why I think it is useful in understanding immigrant experiences. Second, the theory of liminality shows how the concept has been understood across various disciplines. Third, this section exemplifies the idea of crossing boundaries between disciplines, which in turn

illustrates a type of engagement across borders; a necessity as people work towards coexistence in this shared place we call home.

Liminality

Arnold van Gennep. Arnold van Gennep (1960) was a French ethnographer and folklorist acclaimed for his study of rituals. He coined the term liminality in 1909 and used the term specifically within the context of rituals in small societies. The purpose of the rituals was to change the status of some of its members, for example, youth transitioning to adulthood. He also used the term to talk about rituals that signified transitions in the passage of time. van Gennep talked about pre-liminality, liminality and post-liminality as the tripartite ritual phases that he believed signified every ritual to varying degrees (1960). The first phase, pre-liminality, also known as the "rite of separation involved "a metaphoric death of sorts, characterized by separation from one's safety net." In my own immigration story, this phase was definitely marked by the initial emotional sense of loss at the airport as I realized that there was no going back. I was leaving my family for an indeterminate timeframe. Thereafter, this phase included the physical act of flying out of Zimbabwe.

van Gennep's (1960) next stage is liminality, also known as "transition rites," which involves the creation of a clean slate – one that removes preconceived beliefs and ideas about what one should be, how one should act, and carry oneself in society. van Gennep noted that for this particular stage to be executed properly, there needed to be set codes of conduct and operation as well a master of ceremonies, who would essentially be the authority in the ritual. For the new immigrant, the code of conduct would be the overwhelming recognition of "the way things are done around here," relayed either indirectly through seeing how people behave in the host country, or directly by communicating with others. The master of ceremonies for me was

the immigration system; I needed to do everything by the book, so as not to jeopardize my stay in the new community.

The creation of a clean slate was considered necessary for the construction of the initiand's new identity, and it is in this changeover that van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality took place. The idea of the blank state was probably feasible in the context of the actual ritual processes with which van Gennep was preoccupied. However, I do not see that the same idea can translate into the context of immigration, since, in the liminal, or transitional phase, unlike that defined by as van Gennep, immigrants carry the baggage (norms, values, and expectations) from both the home and host contexts. Dominant culture tends to expect that the immigrant clean their slate through such processes as acculturation and assimilation. However, it is hard to let go of pre-existing values; rather, the negotiation between old values and new values and expectations is what creates the problem of liminality for immigrants. The negotiation of this baggage is what should define the transitional phase that van Gennep addresses. As a result, van Gennep's stage of transition within the ritual process would classify immigrants as a group whose ritual is incomplete because he presupposes the creation of a clean slate. Immigrants do not have that clean slate, and therefore they would not be able to move forward and complete the ritual. Nevertheless, with their baggage, immigrants manage to move forward. How they negotiate their negotiations will also be articulated as part of this study.

The final stage in van Gennep's (1960) process is post-liminality, also known as "rites of incorporation," which involves readmitting the "new" being into society. van Gennep's stages of the ritual process provide insight into my discussion of liminality. First, understanding the importance of the rites of passage in every culture is important in that it frames a context in which we understand that there are expectations to transition in every culture. The immigration

process is no different; in fact, I would venture to say that immigration can be considered a rite of passage where the initiands, who in my study are the youth, are sandwiched between the home culture and the host culture. The passage in this case starts when the immigrant makes the decision to leave home and start a new life in Canada. The rituals involved in this rite of passage include the preliminary stage of separation that the youth and I had to go through, the actual journey to the host country, and the process of entry to the host country (even though one has been granted a visa there is no guarantee up to the point of entry that the immigrant will be granted passage into the new country). After going through customs and answering various questions, the immigrant is granted entry into the new life. At this point the physical journey is complete, but the immigration ritual has just begun.

Learning how things are done in Canada is an experience that takes more than just reading about it in travel brochures. The initiand goes through many learning experiences, some of them liminal as those discussed in my study. That liminal stage is supposed to be the stage that propels the initiand towards post-liminality. I still wonder whether post-liminality is a state immigrants can claim to have achieved completely. To speak of post-liminality as an achievement is almost a contradiction since it assumes a definite end to liminal experiences. I doubt that an immigrant would ever get to this stage, but that is not to be mistaken as a lack of achievement. I have mentioned earlier that I tend to see liminality as happening in separate, identifiable instances, therefore if one is an immigrant these incidents will likely occur, frequently or in isolation. I therefore choose to see immigration ultimately as a rite of passage, made up of many individual rituals that an immigrant engages with at isolated points on the immigration continuum. As such the success of the ritual is in negotiation process employed with every liminal experience. As such my study focus, as also emphasized in my discussion on

curriculum, is to identify and articulate these liminal experiences and also discuss some acts of negotiation that are possible or have already been undertaken by the youth in my study.

Victor Turner. Turner (1970) was a British cultural anthropologist who, like van Gennep (1960) made the study of rituals his life's work. His in-depth study of the aspects of the *Ndembu* tribe of Zambia (Turner, 1970) allowed him to explore van Gennep's tripartite process of the rites of passage. Turner extended van Gennep's idea of ritual processes outside of small-scale communities. Turner (1975) introduced the concept of social drama, which was a term used to describe the processes that took place when a society was in conflict and subsequently attempted to resolve that conflict. According to Turner (1975), social drama is characterized by four stages: breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration.

It is important to note that Turner's (1975) social drama process fits into van Gennep's phases of the rites of passage as well. The breach and crisis stages are the same as Gennep's separation stage, redressive action corresponds to the transition phase, and reintergration is the same as the incorporation phase in Gennep's theory. Though Turner acknowledges that the crisis phase has some liminal qualities because of its instability, the redressive action phase is one that he deems the most liminal as it is located between the crisis mode and the resolution of conflict. In his discussion of the redressive phase (liminality), Turner notes that "the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (1967 p. 94), pointing to the uncertainty and lack of structure that exists in liminal places. His indication that liminality carries few or none of attributes of the past or future is somewhat similar to van Gennep's view of the clean slate, though he seems to acknowledge the baggage that van Gennep vehemently denies. Turner's discussion of past attributes still does not align with immigrant experiences. My view that

immigrants carry past attributes conforms with my experience, because whether it is positive or negative baggage it is there; there is no clean slate.

Both Turner (1970, 1975) and van Gennep (1960) are in agreement about the undefined, ambiguous, and transient nature of the liminal stage. To further qualify this point Turner writes, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions, assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremony" (1967, p. 95). In another work, Turner also alludes to the positive side of liminality, calling it, "the realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (1967, p. 97). Turner also notes that the liminal phase is also a phase of deep reflection (p. 105), where new ideas and perspectives are constructed and deconstructed.

In Chapter 1, I relayed two scenarios that I defined as liminal. In each case a binary (me/you or her/their was clear. These binary notions set the stage for the series of events that followed. In the school registration vignette I realized that I was an immigrant trying to register my child at a school in an area in which, it was assumed, I was not supposed to be living. That, I suspect, was the assumption, though not overtly demonstrated. I was literally caught between the worlds of registration and non-registration. When I proved that I indeed resided in the neighbourhood, and had more cultural currency than was assumed because of my education, then registration went well. My education, in that case, seemed to close the liminal space determining whether I could register or not. My second vignette saw a woman caught between the worlds of two languages. The binary in that example was between English/non-English speaking. I closed that gap by intervening when no one else would. Turner (1970) characterizes liminality as a space of deep reflection. I believe my ability to recognize and negotiate the apparent disdain for difference that I encountered is an example of that deep reflection. In the second vignette, deep

reflection and new perspectives were demonstrated by my realization that empathy across difference was necessary, that exemplifying human interconnectedness through building solidarity is a requirement for better relationships.

Like van Gennep (1960), Turner (1970) worked specifically within the ritual context, van Gennep's idea of the tripartite phases made sense within that ritual context. Looking at my study however, I need to clarify that though I believe that immigration qualifies as a rite of passage, much like the rituals that both van Gennep and Turner address, the last phase, which is the post-liminal phase would look very different from what they conclude in their work. In both their endeavors, liminality is seen as a state that has a definitive end, hence the very conclusive reintegration (Turner) and incorporation (van Gennep) into a pre-set structure in both their work. In the immigrant experience, I do not see a definite end; rather I see the process of negotiating particular experiences as the focus of the immigration ritual. Turner and van Gennep' use of the concept of liminality, for my study, has its limitations; one of them clearly is this idea of liminality having a definite end. Applying this term to the immigrant experience does not exhaust other considerations. As a result I use this term cautiously in this study, acknowledging its usefulness in the context within which it was originally developed, as well as to my understanding of my own location in life, and so, as a reasonable starting point for naming immigrant experiences in my study. My study however aims at expanding or renegotiating this concept to align it with the immigrant experiences.

Turner (1967) is also known to have gradually evolved in his thinking about liminality. Initially in his work on rituals, Turner presented liminality as ambiguous. He also pointed out that communities formed by liminality were chiefly characterized by the ideal to continue cultural norms and values. Turner's (1975) later distinctions between the terms liminality,

outsiderhood and marginal are of interest to me. Liminars, those who dwell in liminal places, are "neither here nor there" (p. 95). Outsiders, in Turner's view are those who have temporarily been set apart, or set themselves apart from the structural arrangement of any given system, and he gives shamans, hoboes and gypsies as examples. Then he moves on to those he calls marginals, whom he describes as being simultaneously of two or more groups whose norms are distinct and even opposed to one another (1975, p. 232-233).

In my view all these groups are disenfranchised in one way or the other, and they are more similar than distinctly different as Turner (1975) implies. What is more interesting is the distinction he makes when he writes, "marginals like liminars are also betwixt and between, but unlike ritual liminars they have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity" (p. 233). This statement seems to emphasize conclusion to the liminal phase as the ideal state, while simultaneously positing ambiguity, which in earlier statements he seemed to view as positive, as something undesirable. Ambiguity would be especially undesirable in light of the cultural (group) assurance that seems to be such a determining factor in the desirable fate of the ritual liminar.

I see in my work that post-liminality (the final stable resolution) for the immigrant communities may not be achieved in the total sense because there will forever be that tricky and shifty domain that involves constant negotiation of competing worldviews. So in a sense, according to Turner's (1975) classifications, and my own belief concerning post-liminality, immigrants would actually be "marginals" because there would be no culminating sense of closure. In the specific ritual of coming into adulthood, for example, the boundaries seem clear. Pre-liminality is marked by childhood, and the transient phase would be marked by the teenage years when one is neither a child nor an adult. The post-liminal phase would then be achieved at

whatever the age of adulthood is deemed to be in that particular culture, complete with attendant ritual processes that determine the acquisition of that post-liminal identity.

With immigration however, post-liminality presents in particular events, or circumstances. In my case, I would say that I am post-liminal in some aspects, but not in others. I am aware that the very idea of a post-liminal phase validates and provides summation to the transient nature of the liminal phase, but in my own experience these phases are blurred; they do not occur sequentially as presented by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1970). As mentioned earlier, I can clearly point to the pre-liminal stage in my own immigration process, but from there I feel that liminality and post-liminality tend to be conflated as they happen concurrently in specific situations. I do maintain, however, the usefulness of the term of liminality within the scope of my study as the literature related to the term speaks specifically about its characteristics. These characteristics have helped the youth in my study give voice to their own experiences.

This brings me to the conclusion that perhaps the liminal place itself can become a sort of "permanent" place that is characterized by fluidity. This seems a paradox, speaking of transience as a form of permanence. I see it this way: when we talk about culture, we can name its specific attributes, such as language, dress, music, religion, politics and food. However, all these attributes have changed over time, so that most are not the same as they were at any one point. Culture itself has permanency in that one can identify its attributes, and yet is dynamic in nature, constantly shifting due to various contextual factors. This is exactly how I see liminality: transient, yet somehow permanent as well. This seeming paradox need not be resolved. In their work on the possibility of using the theory of simultaneity[8] as a means of understanding immigrant incorporation into the new county, Levitt and Schiller (2008) show that negotiating

[8] The theory of simultaneity refers to, "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally" (Levitt & Schiller, 2008, p. 182).

the host context while maintaining transnational/home ties is increasingly becoming the norm for many immigrants.

Finally, my use of anthropological texts made sense to me in a study about immigrants because the driving force for anthropology is to understand humanity, which was the starting point for my study. More so, it provides a detailed understanding of the stages of the ritual process, which corresponds, to some extent, to phases in the immigration process as well.

Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa was a scholar of Chicano cultural theory, feminist theory and queer theory. In her work she talks about her borderlands identity, the result of being born in Mexico and then relocating to the U.S where she felt that she was discriminated against because she did not speak English as her first language. She talks about life on the literal border of the U.S. and Mexico. Language is one of the borders she addresses in her writing; she consciously interweaves English and Spanish as a way of encouraging the reader to make sense of her work by engaging with both languages. People, especially mainstream readers, have voiced irritation and frustration when reading a language that they do not understand (Anzaldúa, 1987). This effectively relays the way Anzaldúa felt all her life as one living in the borderlands, in that threshold place.

Anzaldúa (2009) also extends her version of liminality or the borderlands using the term *nepantla,* a Nahuatl word meaning torn between ways. Anzaldúa says of this liminal place:

> Transformations occur in this in-between place, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition place lacking clear boundaries. *Nepantla* is *tierra desconocida* (an unknown shore) and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement - an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in *nepantla* so much of the time it's become a sort of "home." The state links us to other ideas, people

and worlds, we feel threatened by these new connections, and the change they engender. (2009, p. 243)

Although this interpretation of *nepantla* indicates the rigor that is required to be able to survive, and heralds the potential for new perspectives, Anzaldúa (2010) does not end there. In her essay, *"La conciencia de la mestiza": Towards a new consciousness*, Anzaldúa introduces the concept *mestiza* that extends the concept of *nepantla* to show the type of worldview that can result from living as a liminar or a *nepantlera*. This consciousness is also termed the consciousness of the borderlands.

A *mestiza* is defined as, "one who continually walks out of one culture into another, . . . [one who is] in all cultures at the same time" (2010, p. 254). When we consider the fact that culturally, politically, and geographically people are located differently, and yet have so many fundamental things in common, we get a sense of our interconnectedness. Hence Anzaldúa sees herself as one who alternately walks in and out of cultures. I see this *mestiza* consciousness at work in my own experience, especially as I switch languages depending on my context; I mostly use English in academic and professional settings and my native language at home with my family.

I always chuckle to myself when people watch me interact with my children in public places. My daughters understand our native tongue but they do not speak it fully. When I speak to them in *Shona* they respond usually by mixing English and *Shona,* or respond just in English. People are taken aback when they can hear and partly understand one side of the conversation and have to piece together from my children's answers what we are talking about. Though it is inadvertent that we speak that way, because my children were born here, and have not fully grasped speech in the mother tongue, it does not cease to amuse me that a conversation can be

carried out in two totally different languages and still flow seamlessly. In terms of raising awareness about immigrant liminality, the example of my bilingual conversations with my children could also be a useful metaphor for understanding that this is in fact a viable way for immigrants to be, this ability to effortlessly dwell in two cultures simultaneously or in rapid succession. Code-switching (Milroy & Muysken, 1995) with my children is my example of the type of *mestiza* identity proposed by Anzaldúa (2010) as it manifests in my own home. For Anzaldúa the consciousness is reflected in her code-switching when she writes or speaks in both English and Spanish.

The *mestiza* consciousness has a number of characteristics that are worthy of note. First it indicates an unwavering tolerance for ambiguity and contradictions (Anzaldúa, 2010). The numerous possibilities presented by living as liminars, activate the psyche and this leads the *mestiza* to a realization that concepts and ideas cannot be held within rigid boundaries because rigidity takes away the ability to transcend those boundaries. The *mestiza* consciousness also emphasizes the ability to act and not react to struggles within liminal places since people living *in-between* have to constantly "shift out of habitual formations" (Anzaldúa, 2010, p.255). In her own creative way, Anzaldúa portrays what actually happens within the liminal place (nepantla) where the liminar (*nepantlera* turned *mestiza*) acquires the type of consciousness that she heralds:

> That focal point or fulcrum, the juncture where the *mestiza* stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separate pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element, which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is the

> new consciousness – a *mestiza* consciousness – and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from the continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (2010, p. 256)

In a sense, the sort of ambiguity that van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1970) discuss is also articulated by Anzaldúa (1987, 2000). The factor that stands out in her work is that whereas the other authors talk about being in a liminal place as ambiguous and uncertain, and loaded with possibility, she sees the *mestiza* consciousness as something that is attained in the state of liminality. It is this consciousness that gives rise to ambiguity, uncertainty and possibility. This type of consciousness is created not through the merging of different standpoints, but rather as an addition to the mix already there, resulting in an individual who has the ability to deeply reflect on issues taking place within liminal places. Anzaldúa's summative statement of how the *mestiza* consciousness comes about in liminal places reads: "by creating a new mythos – that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave – *la mestiza* creates a new consciousness" (2010, p. 256). It is this new consciousness that ultimately allows the liminar to engage with issues within the *in-between* place. By creating a deeper understanding of who we are, how we think, and how we act, we begin to affect how other people see us, think about us and behave, hopefully for the better. This is what my study is promoting, the ability to see each other with the same measure of intensity and depth that we see ourselves, the starting point being a deeper understanding of the self.

Himani Bannerji. As a professor in Women's Studies, and immigrant to Canada, Bannerji (2013) provides an interesting view into life *in-between.* She muses about the assumptions that immigrants will go home at some point – a fact which she says totally negates the reality that some immigrants plan to make Canada home, and some were even born here;

they just look different from the nationally accepted conceptions of who is "Canadian." Her conception of being *in-between* is interesting because it calls into question the very labels that most immigrants take for granted; permanent residency, for example, is considered a stable status for immigrants who have the intention to stay, yet they remain immigrants nonetheless.

For Bannerji (2000a), her first conceptions of outsiderhood and liminality became clear, as mentioned earlier, upon her arrival to Canada when she was asked if she was planning on applying for residency. At the time she thought she would never apply, but years later when she became a citizen, she gained a clarity concerning the already existing set of complications surrounding her identity. She writes:

> Even after years of being an "immigrant" and upon swearing allegiance to the same Queen of England from whom India had parted, I was not to be a "Canadian." Regardless of my official status as a Canadian citizen, I, like many others remained an immigrant (p. 64).

Later as a Women's Studies professor of immigrant origins, these were the very labels that served to exclude her from the feminist discourse, bringing her to the stunning realization that she was teaching feminist studies, and yet she was inadequately represented in the course content that she was teaching. Banerjee (1987) comments:

> The great bulk of Canadian literature on women and what passes as Women's Studies leaves the reader with the impression that women from the Third World and Southern Europe are a very negligible part of the living and laboring population of Canada. (p. 3)

Though she is an educated woman, the labels attached to her seemed to render her professionalism inadequate. So she is simultaneously and insider and an outsider. Being in this *in-between* space, she dares to ask a greater question: "Did this story of mine begin with my

arrival, or was I just a tiny episode in a pre-existing historical narrative?" (2000a, p. 65). Understanding the larger picture, Bannerji (2000a) offers a window into negotiating liminality by suggesting that even though the immigrant narrative is much more complex than it is at the point at which many immigrants come into Canada, there are ways to work the spaces that we have so we can be "in" Canada in a real sense. Her work (2000a, 2000b, 2013) is a testament to her quest to understand the Canadian national imaginary around conceptions of home, belonging, labelling, the pervasive presence of the state, and how these affect immigrants' lives in the host country, as well as the hosts' conceptions of who they are in light of the existence of newcomers. The questioning was a great part of the negotiation process and the youth who participated in my study started doing this concerning their own existence. This was a great first step to the collaborative process I undertook with them.

F. S. J Ledgister. F. S. J. Ledgister (2001), a professor in Political Science also has ideas that are of interest to my study. His discussion of living *between two elsewheres* is relevant to my study because it addresses liminality. Right at the beginning of his 2001 essay Ledgister addresses an idea that I have grappled with over the years. His conclusion that home is wherever he is at the time differs from my own conception of home, which is my primary home where I was born and I grew up. In Cohen's (2008) discussion of diasporic communities and their ties to their homelands, his understanding of home is closely tied to my own, and contradicts Ledgister, in that he understands that the "old" country — a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore — always has some claim on people's loyalty and emotions. That particular claim on the emotions is one that ties me to my motherland.

I have come to accept that Canada is another permutation of home, in the sense that this is where I am raising my own children, but it is not my primary home. I live here, yes, and have

made a home for my children, but for me home will always be Zimbabwe. I think that it is precisely because I regard Zimbabwe as home that I find myself in this liminal place between cultures trying to reconcile what I knew before with what I know now, and also acknowledge the knowledge that has been created between my past and the present. In a sense, I live in the present, but my ties are with home, as I knew it before I left. Ledgister (2001) finds himself in an *in-between* place as he fields questions about where he is from. In his case, he feels that his "accent, and perhaps appearance, seems to violate the categories they use to classify people" (2001, para. 3). More so, the idea that he is living *between two elsewheres* brings out a point yet untouched by the authors whom I have read.

Ledgister (2001) dwells in a place between two thoroughly unspecified elsewheres, meaning that though he obviously knew where he was living, he did not regard either place as home. He had been born to a white mother and a black father, but the two places that were closest to being home for him; England (because he was born there), and Jamaica (because he lived there) turned out to be the places that despised him the most. In England he was considered a second-generation black immigrant and in Jamaica he was considered brown, because his father was labelled a traitor for marrying a white woman. It seems to me that all the other authors I reviewed and I live *in-between* some well-defined places, one of which seems to lay more claim to us than the other, hence bringing about the liminality that is a challenge to negotiate. Ledgister does not feel that he belonged to either of the cultures, hence his definition of home differs from mine. This also further complicates (or does it simplify?) his negotiation of liminal places because of the absence of a firm foundation in either culture. Ledgister's (2001) contribution to living *in-between* is that liminality does not need to create definite roots or fixity, a point at which he converges with Anzaldúa (2010) and Bannerji (2000a). Ledgister writes:

> I believe now that I should not slight any part of my heritage, but that provides me with neither a clear identity nor a sense of place. I have spent my whole life living "elsewhere" and have not found a lack of roots or of a fixed place of my own crippling. (2001, para. 28)

He admits, though, that living life with a permanently attached label that he does not belong, is uncomfortable for him. So Ledgister, in a sense, has accepted liminality as his fate and does not consider it a disabling factor. Rather, he sees his life as one that allows him to engage with questions of identity and his place in the world, all of his cultural ethnic heritage taken into account. Ledgister (2001) ends his article with the statement that he "lives across, rather than in boundaries" (para. 31) and this seems to be working for him as he continues living in the U.S.

Reconciling Perspectives

Perhaps the point that all the authors are alluding to or explicitly articulating is that most people dwelling in liminal places have the uncanny ability, conscious or otherwise, to transcend boundaries and survive, rather than stay boxed-in, which would ultimately be more limiting than liberating. Even for those immigrants who really have a difficult time adjusting to the host country, the fact that they still manage to somehow navigate day-to-day life, some facing major language barriers, is testament to this resilience. A negotiation strategy in this liminal space is the tendency for immigrants to locate one another and band together with those who have come before them, so they can get help. There is active choice involved in what happens in this liminal place, though it takes a while, as it did for me, to be able to name what one is going through, to begin to engage with this place. People may not have a chance to verbalize what they are doing to negotiate life, but that may be because they cannot name their situations, or they are too busy surviving. The struggles that many immigrants face, to varying degrees in this liminal place,

seem to act as the impetus for negotiation and the beginnings of deepened realizations of themselves and world around them.

Spivak (2002) emphasizes that liminality or the threshold is not just ideological; it is also spatial – that is, the threshold manifests in people's material realities. Before emigrating and en-route to the host country, I experienced a different type of liminality that had more to do with my fear of the unknown (ideological) and this gave over to what I would like to call "liminality in daily life" which explains particular encounters where liminality manifests in real time and place. As much as I concede that liminality is an ideological construct, its connection to our physical reality is unmistakable.

Das and Singh (2013) state, "liminality is both physical and psychological for the immigrants who often feel and suffer homesickness and ambivalence because of their two faced location" (p. 5). Once, as an immigrant youth to North America, and now as an adult, I realize that I am who I am in public places because of the way I am defined there, not the way I define myself. I am defined as an immigrant, who speaks differently, who looks different and that has in turn determined how I access various things, jobs being one of these. I find that I am second-guessed until I do/say something that proves that I am up to a task at which most people around me are expected to excel. As one of my friends once said, "we have to work three times as hard to get half the credit." Taylor (1997) calls it the problem of misrecognition which can "inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted or reduced mode of being" (p. 98).

Liminality, is a term that I discovered long after I knew that my reality was predetermined, in most ways, by who I was seen to be, or more accurately, by the fact that I am not "from here." So, does the experience of liminality only rest within the one who experiences

it? Primarily, I think yes, because the one who experiences it is most affected by it. We have a Shona proverb that speaks to this idea: *Chinokanganwa idemo, muti wakatemwa haukanganwi.* Its direct translation is: the axe that cut the tree forgets, but the tree that was cut never does. In my experience, the youth at the church conference (discussed in my introduction, p. 5-6) who raised concerns about identity had underlying reasons, such as feelings and/or experiences of confusion, exclusion, and alienation that prompted them to ask questions about whether they were African, Canadian, or both. Perhaps those underlying reasons are the very ones that speak to liminal existences that are the focus of my study.

Aoki (2005) clearly shows that living in *in-between* places is also "living in the midst of differences, where . . . multiplicity grows as lines of movement" (p. 42). Aoki understood that the only common denominator in the life of one living between worlds was the fact that people went through marginalizing experiences to some extent. The nature, frequency, and interpretation of these events would be entirely different for each individual. All the same, he was aware that though commonality was present, the course that everyone ran would be entirely one's own, hence the need to hear a variety of experiences in order to understand – as with the immigrant youth in my study. Listening to the varied realities meant growth for the youth who participated in this study as they related to each other. Growth would also be possible for the immediate Zimbabwean community and others who may take the time to listen to the participants recount their experiences of working on this study. Growth can also be anticipated amongst educators and within the larger community as people engage with the work of the youth in various ways, including reading my study. Ultimately, growth may occur through an understanding and hopefully an acceptance of multiple realities and interpretations of the experiences discussed – such that these varied meanings would serve to enhance individuals'

running of the course of life (or curriculum) to become a kind of "running in relation to" rather than "running contrary to." The curriculum that is characterized by running in relation to acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and being, shared through a common reality that is liminality.

My understanding of liminality

Liminality is a term that I happened to come across and it resonated with what I had been feeling all along, but could not name in a way that did my experience justice. As a consequence it became a term that had the potential to be shared with the youth who were also searching for answers. Their experiences had thrust them into a place of confusion that left them needing to know who they were amongst the many conflicting identities. Liminality is chiefly an embodied experience within an individual, but once we have a collective of individuals who resonate with the same concept, it is no longer only one person's experience; it becomes a collective's experience(s). At a point I believe liminality shifts from being an abstract concept to a material reality whose characteristics are clearly identifiable.

Having read and examined various authors' ideas of liminality and drawing from my own understanding of my life experiences as an immigrant, I offer this section as a summary of the characteristics of liminality. This section serves two purposes; the first is to enunciate for the reader different aspects of liminality as demonstrated by the literature I reviewed on liminality. Secondly, this section provides a summative definition that I used with the study participants so they understood what liminality meant to me. Based on this explanation they were able to distinguish liminal experiences from general life experiences for the purposes of this study.
I see liminality as a double-edged sword because of the ambiguity it presents. One edge represents the negative experiences that are characteristic of the immigrant experience.

Liminality as seen from this edge involves: exclusion, separation, alienation, decreased feelings of safety and security, not fully belonging in either culture, fear, feeling belittled, shame, anger, isolation, exhaustion, loneliness.

On the other edge of liminality we find the more positive characteristics, the ones that help as liminars attempt to negotiate their circumstances. Liminality is: an opportunity for deep reflection, strength, an opportunity for solidarity, a vantage point that enables one to see new perspectives, action inducing questioning. Based on these characteristics I will venture to formulate a definition of liminality that is specific to the immigrant experience.

The aforementioned characteristics could apply to anyone's experiences. For the immigrant, however, liminality is defined as a single or multiple immigration related experience(s) that trigger complexity, ambiguity, and possibility in the life of the individual. The underlying premise for the liminar based on these experiences is a realization of themselves as the perceived "other," who is not a member of those considered the mainstream collective in the host country. Additionally, the liminal experiences, as a reality in immigrants' lives, are a result of competing worldviews between the values and perspectives of their old country and the new country. In Chapter 4 I discuss how the youth in my study identified and explained their experiences with this definition as a guide. The next section addresses some of the strategies that have been used to negotiate liminality.

Negotiating Liminal Places

It would be amiss to talk about liminality without highlighting some of the ways that people have negotiated their lives in these places. Various means of negotiation are central to my study as it seeks to better equip youth inhabiting liminal places, as well as provide information for parents, teachers and communities and practical tools to engage the issue of liminality.

Liminal places have been used as vantage points that accord a certain kind of knowing – the insider-outsider concept that hooks (1994) talks about, and the creation of a new focal point, which is ultimately a mix of varying identities (Anzaldúa, 1987), not the center as defined by the mainstream or dominant western hegemony. The next section outlines five key concepts presented by various authors that address negotiating life in liminal places. I conclude this chapter with some final rumination.

The Bridge. The metaphor of the bridge has become a very useful one for many people living in liminal places (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2009; Koshy, 2007; Keating, 2007). The bridge conjures up images of a continual process of walking back and forth out of one culture into another, because it is necessary that we do so. A bridge always comes from someplace and leads to another place. Anzaldúa says: "Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives" (2009, p. 243). Like liminal places, there is a starting point. The end point is unclear most of the time, but it is this unpredictability that is part of the process of living in a liminal place.

The bridge represents the transformation, conscious or unconscious, that takes place as the status quo is shaken by various events, in my case immigration. Bridges were built in my vignettes in Chapter 1 (see p. 12-13); first when I went through the process of registering my child for school and second, when I intervened at the doctor's office. As soon as I (the "other") step out of my house, I become the immigrant, "resident alien" as Spivak (2002) describes it. I cross bridges every day when I code switch linguistically, psychologically and physically to adapt to daily life in the host country, while simultaneously trying to hold on to the culture from the motherland that I try to preserve within my own house. The act of bridging allows for

engagement with other members of the community, while also allowing me to maintain my sense of identity. As Aoki (1991) aptly indicates, "any true bridge is more than merely a physical bridge; it is a clearing – a site – into which the earth, sky, mortals, and divinities are admitted. Indeed, it is a dwelling place for humans who, in their longing to be together, belong together" (p. 438). Inadvertently, the longing we have to be together, part of which entails understanding each other, connects us as we seek out ways, sometimes even unconsciously, to make those connections that are necessary for the well-being of society.

Towards a new consciousness. The land of "*in-between*" calls for a type of understanding, not only of the other, but also of self. It focuses on the reconceptualization of self into a form we ourselves understand and one that is open to listening to others. Bambara (1981) refers to this as the "habit of listening to each other and learning each other's ways of seeing" (xlii). According to Anzaldúa, we can only acknowledge other people's ways of seeing if we have "the knowledge that we are in symbiotic relationship to all that exists and co-creators of ideologies – attitudes, beliefs and cultural values – motivates us to act collaboratively" (2009, p. 244). Acknowledging the inextricable relationships that we have with each other allows us to look at each other differently, like co-authors instead of rivals.

With the realization that we are *nepantleras* (Anzaldúa, 2009), we break with dualities because we realize we will be forced to pick sides. Instead we accept that our experiences have recast us into a hybrid species, one that is insider, outsider, and more all at once. We also accept that our current lives are not the same as the various identities our liminality/hybridity stems from. In an essay in Rutherford (1990), Bhabha notes that the ever-fluid identities in the third space are rethought, extended and pre-existing principles are translated anew. The concept of insider-outsider is echoed by Ledgister (2001), who realizes that the only way he could be

comfortable in any place was by making each place home. Home was wherever he happened to be and this process was foregrounded by his uncanny ability to "slip into different milieux with a considerable amount of inside knowledge, but without being an insider" (para. 1). At the conclusion of the essay, Ledgister articulates that he believes that the way he has lived his life is as important, if not more important, than where he has lived. I can see the value of focusing on how, rather than where one has lived for people who have no physical place to call their own. However, for people such as me, whose sense of home is tied to the relationship with the homeland, and particular lands at that, Ledgister's resolution becomes problematic. The life lived and the physical location where that life plays out are intertwined, which is why I refer to Zimbabwe as my primary home. In my culture, the place where your umbilical cord dropped and reintegrated back into the earth is home. My physical ties are to the motherland.

Recognizing the sub-text. The idea of the sub-text has been a preoccupation of mine since I took graduate courses in Women's Studies. The context of the sub-text I refer to is the classroom since this is where I have mostly observed this phenomenon. Part of the subject matter in feminist, postcolonial and other classrooms is naming dominant power structures as well as finding ways to negotiate engagement between different groups of people (Keating, 2007; hooks, 1994; Anzaldúa, 1981; Lorde, 1984; Spivak, 2002). Feminist and postcolonial authors acknowledge that power structures privilege some and disadvantage others. As a result I have noticed a peculiar thing over the years, especially in university classrooms, which are diverse in nature. Sadly, most of the factors discussed below spill over to discussions outside the classroom, which makes this section relevant for a study such as this one, based primarily in the community.

For my purposes here, in discussing the classroom context, I use the term "text" to refer to the conventionally accepted/mandated curriculum that we engage with in the classroom. I am intrigued, however by the subtext, which I define as the interactions, actions, verbalized comments, unspoken understandings, silent/obvious camaraderie and banding together (or not) among the people discussing the text within the classroom. In curriculum studies, this phenomenon has been termed the hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1970; Giroux & Penna, 1983). One of my favourite definitions of the hidden curriculum is by Sambell and McDowell (1998): "the shadowy, ill-defined and amorphous nature of that which is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction" (p. 391-392). The hidden curriculum defines mainstream unspoken rules about decorum in the classroom.

I have noticed that though classmates engage with the formalized curriculum in ways that are profound, the subtext tends to mimic very much the power structures or the status quo that we are critiquing. Some examples of classroom sub-text include, total negation of students' comments by other students or by teachers, or mainstream students belittling minority students' comments or attempting to speak for them during conversation without affirming the speaker's intent or the relevance of their statement. Such inattention within a classroom is problematic. If change is going to start in the classroom, then there is a need to engage with issues of power or relational dynamics within the classroom, so they do not replicate the problems that we are trying to overcome.

Silences in classrooms can also point to the operation of the subtext to which I refer. In their discussion of pedagogical frameworks for social justice, some authors (e.g. Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997; Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000) note how students from both dominant and

marginalized groups maintain silence out of fear of polarizing the class, out of anger, anxiety, and the perceived ignorance of each other's life experiences. All the given explanations for silence are triggered by the idea of difference. The silence becomes a part of the subtext that may not receive much attention, but is just as important as the text itself. In immigrant populations, Igoa (1995) identifies the root of immigrant youth silence in classrooms as consistent with the "phenomenon of uprooting" from their home countries and their introduction to "the way things are done here" (p. 37), which in most cases serves to malign them as inferior. As a result they are silenced as they try to figure out ways to "be" in a context different from what they know. Implications of this subtext for communities and schools, as Igoa states, are quite profound because by understanding such nuances, educators are better equipped to cater to the immigrant youths' needs.

Reconceptualizing difference, not as deviance or negativity, but as a source of endless possibility, can be the ethos that guides people to negotiate liminality, as well as guiding members of society at large to engage productively with one another. Lorde (2002) says difference is not something to be tolerated, as is touted in most multicultural discourses, but rather, to "be seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (p. 107). Anzaldúa complements this statement by saying, "diversity of perspectives expands and alters the dialogue, not in an add-on fashion, but through a multiplicity that's transformational, such as in mestiza consciousness" (2009, p. 246-247). In other words, both authors see difference as a positive thing that can lead to enriching conversations.

Using the master's tools. Lorde's (1984) famous essay *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house* has been cited as relevant work in understanding the impact of mainstream epistemologies in colonized peoples' endeavors to change the status quo for

disenfranchised groups of people. Language has always been a major player in the discourse of colonization. The use of the English language, for example, was imposed by the colonizer, but after a while, with the need to create "mimic men" (Bhabha, 1994) – those who were like the imperial master, but not quite, English became the mark that separated the uncivilized "savage" from the mimic man.

During the colonial era and after colonial powers had physically moved from their colonies, more colonized natives started learning English and the "etiquette" that went along with it. Through this process today, I can sit in a graduate class in North America and converse, as well as write in English. It is also the reason why, in the vignettes I provided in Chapter 1, I could talk to the receptionist at the school, and intervene at the doctor's office. I am still actively using the English language as I go through graduate school and at work; the "white mask" (Fanon, 2008), which for me is not primarily a sign of being upwardly mobile as Fanon indicates, but rather a survival strategy in a land where my own language has become secondary in public spaces. For me, the use of English is negotiation because it allows me to function in a culture that could be totally closed to me if I did not have some command of the language. Crystal (2012) explains the way I also see my use of the English language as, "a resource which presents us with unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding, and thus enable us to find fresh opportunities for international co-operation" (p. xiii).

On the negative side, I have watched how even though I speak English, it is considered sub-standard based on the fact that I do not sound like native English speakers. The perpetual divide between "us" and "them" endures because even though I speak English and people understand, I am still different because I am almost always asked where I am from in the next sentence. So even with some command of the language, challenges still exist. One can only

imagine what people who do not speak the language go though in trying to negotiate the new cultural landscape; in their case, the English language becomes a yardstick that they are measured by.

After decades of colonization, the notion of "us-them" or the divide between "us and them" is ever slowly being blurred because of globalization and the continued interchange between those who were the colonizers and the colonized. The result of this blurring of boundaries, due to processes such as technology, migration, and immigration, is such that we are neither us nor them, but a combination of both in different circumstances. This alone shows that colonizers and colonized are inextricably intertwined, or as Anzaldúa (2009) would say, "we are implicated in each other's lives" (p. 243). Though Lorde (1984) would argue that the master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house, they can chip away at the old house in ways that can benefit those who dwell in liminal places.

Transculturalism. According to Hoerder, Herbert and Schmitt (2006), transculturalism is, "the process of individuals and societies changing themselves by integrating diverse cultural life-ways into dynamic new ones" (p. 12). The term "transculturalism" was coined by Fernando Ortiz (1940) to discuss the Spanish colonial rule in Cuba. Transculturalism helped illuminate possible alliances that could take place after the colonial era. I think the process of transculturalism is one that immigrant youth unknowingly use daily to survive in the host community. In essence, transculturalism becomes a form of survival, as, according to Hoerder, Herbert and Schmitt, it allows people to "re-conceptualize difference and diversity as negotiable, as intersectorial, as strategic, and as capital" (p.15). This indicates that the authors see the negotiation of difference as a process that promises positive change within society. Oh (2011)

has also embraced the idea of transculturalism, showing its benefits in an era where more people from different places are living together within the same societies than at any previous time.

Summary

Liminality, in all its permutations represents, for me, a powerful vantage point that modifies, negotiates, creates, and recreates psychological, spiritual, emotional and physical perspectives. These actions translate into a transformative process that is continually evolving. By referring to the place of liminality as a strong vantage point, I am by no means suggesting that the knowledge it engenders is superior. Rather, my interpretation of "strong" is the ability of individuals in liminal places to analyze circumstances differently, allowing alternative views to come into being. Superior would suggest the notion of a monolithic right way, on which all the other worldviews are judged. It would also connote rigidity whereas the term "strong" for me implies flexibility. According to McLeod (2010): "To live as a migrant may well evoke the pain of loss and of not being firmly rooted in a secure place, but it is also to live in a world of immense possibility with the realization that new knowledges and ways of seeing can be constructed out of myriad combinations of knowledges which challenge the old ideas of rootedness and fixity" (p. 249). Understanding the liminal places created by immigrant experiences, the mixture of feelings they engender and the strength to survive that they bring, can be the key to creating stronger but fluid, constantly evolving communities in which people can live fully.

This chapter began by outlining some of the reasons that have led Zimbabwean immigrants to Canada. I presented some statistics on the numbers of Zimbabwean immigrants to Canada then moved on to discuss some major discourses in diaspora literature. Then I looked in detail at the term liminality as discussed by various authors who have developed their own

concepts based on what liminality meant to them. This section provided the progression of the term and appended meanings over time, across disciplines, and how it was used specifically as it relates to: particular rituals (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1970, 1967); living on physical geographical borders (Anzaldúa, 1981, 1987, 2000a, 2009, 2010); as well as some immigrant experiences (Ledgister, 2001). The overarching use of the term "liminality," not only shows the breadth of its applications, but also points to a significant gap in the discussion of the subject with immigrant youth in particular. The section is also a liminal place in its own right, mixing thoughts from different disciplines and presenting a collage on the similar, divergent, and competing views of some of the most influential authors on the subject of liminality. Then I presented a section that lists characteristics of liminality, after which I discussed some negotiation strategies that have been discussed to engage with liminality. In the following chapter I discuss the methodology and research design employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

Purpose of the Study

Chapter 2 introduced and reviewed literature focusing on liminality from its origins in the 19th century, highlighting key authors who have used the same concept. I concluded the literature review by forging points of agreement and contention arising from these authors' writings and offered my definition of liminality, which the youth used to identify their own liminal experiences. In the final part of the second chapter, I address possible ways of being and engaging with each other, to add to the discourse on fostering better communities within the diverse Canadian context.

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in my study by providing a brief synopsis of the origins and progression of Participatory Research (PR) and its philosophic influences. I will also discuss central concepts of and key practices in PR. The research design, with details on the techniques used, a consideration of the biases I bring into my study, and some ethical considerations are included in this section. I also discuss the framework I used to interpret my findings.The purpose of my study was to better understand liminal experiences in the lives of Zimbabwean immigrant youth in Alberta, including how the youth negotiated those experiences. As such, PR provided a conversational platform for the youth to talk about their experiences.

Overview of the Study

Following a participatory approach to research and its three core tenets; people, power, and praxis, (Freire, 1997; Conrad & Campbell, 1991) my qualitative study employed critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1993; Mallott, 2011) as a guiding research paradigm for my work with the youth and my discussion of the study findings. The research methods in the study comprised of individual interviews and focus groups (Kitzinger, 1994) the latter geared towards discussion

and, ultimately, the creation of a curriculum artefact. I also presented my own life story from the time I left home. This type of personal storytelling is consistent with PR because it allows the participants and the reader to enter into my world (McIntyre, 2000) thereby shattering any misconceptions about where I stand in this study, which is right beside the participants and not over them. By sharing my story I am allowing myself to be vulnerable with the participants and also allowing the reader to see my investment in the work as it stems from a personal place. As the study stemmed from my vested interest as an immigrant as well, I was aware that my own assumptions and ideas about liminality were opened up to exploration.

My research study with Zimbabwean immigrant youth took place over a period of five months in the province of Alberta. A group of youth were invited to participate in a number of focus groups, which comprised the collaborative aspect of the study. Individual interviews were also conducted with each participant. The final collaborative project was an artefact which represented their collaborative process. The study brought together 6 immigrant youth ranging in ages 20 to 25. During the summer of 2014 (April-August) we met at an agreed upon location, which turned out to be home office for 7 focus groups and 1 individual interview session with each participant.

Participatory Research: Origins

Participatory Research was articulated by groups working in Tanzania in the 1970s and simultaneously in other "developing" countries. It gradually gained momentum all over the world as its ethos resonated with more and more people. The term PR was used to describe a variety of community-based approaches to the creation of knowledge (Hall, 2005), where people, with the help of researchers, identified problems and inequalities in their communities and worked together to resolve those issues (Park, 1994). Some literature also indicates that PR had

its early roots in South America (Fals Borda, 2001). The most useful definition I have found of PR is offered by Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson (1993) who write: "Participatory research puts people in charge of both knowing and doing, knowledge generation and knowledge utilization, and that is how it differs from traditional research" (p. 4). PR acknowledges people and their pre-existing knowledge and involves them in a process and foregrounds that knowledge by the community, for the benefit of the community.

Participatory research has its philosophical foundations in social psychology through the work of authors such as Kurt Lewin, who coined the term "action research" (Lewin, 1944). He is also known for developing models for action research and group dynamics in the early to mid-1900s, which have been used as resources when dealing with research and organizational groups (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Lewin was also associated with the Frankfurt School which involved Marxists whose aim was to point out omissions in, and to broaden, traditional Marxist thought (Marx, 1992). The focus on the dialectics of class struggle and social change started with Marx. Marx also influenced Gramsci (1982), who is also important in PR because of his belief that all men are intellectuals, thereby confirming that everyone has pre-existing knowledge.

PR is also heavily influenced by the work of Freire (1970, 1973), who developed the notion of critical pedagogy. In his discussion of popular education, Freire (1973) identified three transformational properties of PR, which are: improving communities, creating equitable societies and empowering communities marginalised by dominant groups. His transformative ideas also came through in his critique of traditional learning methods, in which the teacher was the only reservoir of information that would then be imparted to the learner. Freire's alternative was a vision of an ideal learning environment that was participatory, evidenced by his declaration:

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. (1970, p. 54)

This statement emphasized the relevance of individual participation of people as stakeholders in their own liberation through education. It also speaks to the location of participants in research as active, not idly standing by as spectators in their own destiny.

PR also emerged as a challenge to positivist research paradigms as carried out largely by university-based researchers (Maguire, 1987). The positivist paradigm assumes an objective world that can be understood and explained using the scientific method. Part of the critique of this paradigm is that in the process of creating quantifiable measures of phenomena, contextual meaning was stripped away (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The resulting need to create more embodied forms of social research saw the popularizing of two other paradigms: interpretive and critical. The former emphasizes member meanings and the latter in-depth critical social analysis of the information collected.

PAR, an offshoot of PR, is a term that was first used by Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) who used the "A" to emphasize action as an outcome in PR. Their starting point, like a number of their predecessors, was the unequal distribution of power in the everyday lives of people. Fals-Borda (2001) in another work refers to PAR as "people science" (p. 7), one that ultimately serves the interests of disenfranchised groups through the knowledge and action created by the process. He speaks to the transformative power of PAR and its potential to foreground marginalized groups.

PR and PAR form central parts of community development projects (e.g. Conrad, Hogeveen, Minaker, Masimira & Crosby, 2015; Fals Borda, 1985), health development (e.g. Plaut, Landis & Trevor, 1992) and health promotion programs (e.g. Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007). This type of research emerged from the community and it is especially gratifying for researchers such as me that it has maintained its links with the community and extended into university-based research, where it is gradually being accepted as a valid and, I believe, an inherently ethical method of research. The importance of dialogue with participants about concerns germane to them marks a point of differentiation with conventional research (Park, 1999). As such, I have come to the conclusion that PR is "inherently ethical" because PR puts the participants' front-and-center in terms of thinking about their well-being before, during and after the research process. The focus is on how the research process benefits them in the long run, which was my commitment in my research and the reason PR became the methodology I chose for my study. Pulmann (2009) succinctly speaks to the ethical aspects of participatory work in his summary of the literature:

> PAR links research findings with the community, increases the relevance of research in the community, increases the rigor of research, increases the longitudinal involvement of families in the research, decreases logistical problems with working in the community, increases utilization of the research, and empowers the community. In practice, PAR research represents shared power between the community and researchers. (p. 45)

For an understanding of this shared power between community and research, I will present three concepts that I see as central to participatory work. These are people, power, and praxis. The next section discusses these concepts.

Central Concepts in Participatory Research

People/participants. The core objective that PR strives towards is research for the people, by the people (Conrad & Campbell, 1991). PR is premised on the notion that everyone has knowledge, which can be tapped and shared with others. This is distinct from the markedly top-down positivist paradigm, which perceives research "subjects" as reservoirs of data that needs to be extracted. PR acknowledges that participants can actively engage their thoughts, perceptions, meaning and attitudes about the world to create change in their own lives, which is what Park (1994) refers to when he talks about, "local problems requiring local solutions" (p. 141). PR is premised on the idea that particular groups can analyze issues that are pertinent to them, decide what they desire to change, and express ideas about how to effect change in their own lives (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009). As such, in PR the researcher works with information generated from the affected people. PR seeks to bring this knowledge to the fore through collaborative engagement with participants, in an effort to channel it for social change. The Gramscian (1982) notion that all humans are intellectuals then concurs with the Freirean (1970) belief that no one is an empty receptacle. In the PR process, it is anticipated that through interactions between researcher and participants, new views will emerge that will enrich and expand the knowledge base.

Related to the concept of "people" is the idea of a "collective," understood in African philosophy as Ubuntu (Tutu, 1999). The concept of a collective is important because it espouses the value of working together for a cause that affects and benefits everyone concerned, with the final objective being social transformation. The idea of a collective is also important because emergent knowledge or knowledge co-created in the process of the research should be utilized communally (Reason, 1994). PR acknowledges that a group may be a collective, but that does

not mean that the members form a homogenous group. A useful definition by Navarro (1984) suggests that a community should be seen as a set of power relations within which people are grouped. Navarro seeks to extend the long accepted idea that community is made up of people who share the same geographical area, goals, and work towards those same goals. Though this is true to an extent, the concept of sharing tends to ignore the contrasts that may exists within that seemingly homogenous group. It is important to note the varying levels of power that exist in the same community and this can become apparent as people consider how decisions are made on a daily basis. Particular goals, struggles and aspirations also differentiate members in communities. Feminist theorists (Johnson-Odim, 1991; Mohanty, 1988) echo the danger of focusing intently on similarities, while simultaneously ignoring differences. Ultimately, this means that even within a community, there are differences that determine, for example, contrasting information collected in the same study.

Power differentials are evident, even within the same community, and as such, information collaboratively acquired during a study would reflect ideas of those people who have the power to voice their ideas. That differences can exist within a community is further acknowledged by Maguire (1987), a PR researcher with a feminist perspective, who explains how early PR writings spoke in terms of a "community," totally ignoring issues of race and gender. The idea of community in this case meant that issues concerning men, would be identified as representing the community when in fact they were not reflective of the whole community – not reflective of women, or if they did include women's voices, not reflective of all women. This led to a turn towards an informed use of the term "community;" hence the acknowledgement of these differences by authors such as Navarro (1984). My study acknowledges the power dynamics at work; I understand that the jointly created information

specific to some Zimbabwean immigrant youth will not represent the thoughts of all Zimbabwean immigrant youth. This study will create knowledge with just those youth who choose to participate, which may (or may not) be relevant in relation to other Zimbabwean youth or to other immigrant youth.

Power. Freire (1970) has long articulated how agency and power lie at the core of any oppressor /oppressed relationships. I believe PR attempts to interrogate this type of agency and power in relation to its participants. Agency is seen in the people's involvement in issues that affect them or in which they have a stake. Freire states,

> Every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it. (p. 32)

Freire (1970) believes that people have the strength to change their situations once they have the consciousness that allows them to see negativity or weaknesses in their current situations. Consciousness then allows them to seek out ways to effect change in their life circumstances. Freire shows the power of critically taking charge of one's situation: "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming" (1970, p. 88). Subsequently, the process of finding ways to change their lives empowers those individuals involved. To this effect, Freire writes: "To surmount the situation of oppression, men [sic] must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (p. 47). So the naming and changing

process becomes a cyclical one, which requires that namers grow in their critical consciousness and engage with the world in a manner that makes it a better place for them to live in.

Reflecting on the naming and changing process in research, Conrad and Campbell (2008) and Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) discuss the ability of research participants to "determine" the course of the research situation. The act of naming is embedded in the research participants' identification of issues of concern to them and in the subsequent process of reflection with the intent of understanding the complexities of those issues. Change happens as people consciously and actively work together in creating solutions. This process seeks more than just information gathering; it goes deeper in my study through joint efforts by immigrant youth seeking to find their place in the world. Issues of power are central to PR in the expectation that the researcher will relinquish power to varying degrees depending on the stage of the study (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995), so that the individuals involved in the study can help navigate the course of the research, thereby empowering them. It is also this relinquishing of power that creates the understanding that participants are in fact the subjects, not the objects in PR.

Praxis. Freire (1970) defined praxis as, "reflection and action upon the world to transform it" (p. 87-88). This suggests that praxis is a means towards a transformation of society. With this aim in mind, Heron and Reason (1997) clarify the action part of research:

> Within a participative worldview the primary purpose of human inquiry is practical: our inquiry is our action in the service of human flourishing. Our knowing of the world is consummated as our action in the world and participatory research is thus essentially transformative. (p. 288)

I believe that even though reflection and action differ in that the former is more conceptual and the latter is more embodied, the terms are connected and they function in concert

to produce transformation. Though others might disagree, I am of the opinion that reflection can be a form of mental action that translates into physical action. Freire (1970) also explains the act of "conscientization" is the result of a continuous cycle of reflection and action (praxis). The beauty of conscientization, according to Freire, is that it develops both the consciousness and the conscience, making for an ethical project overall. Consciousness is developed through the ability to identify and "name" inconsistencies and injustices in the world in which we live, which propels individuals to action. The conscience is developed though the process of conscientization; as one is able to name what is wrong with the world and strives to change it, then one becomes aware of how she/he can in turn be capable of oppression or of perpetuating oppressive/unjust behaviors in other people's lives. The conscience is then activated in the sense that there is an awareness that particular actions can result in harming another. This awareness of the potential to cause harm or good through action, speaks to the intricately interwoven nature of our lives. We are interconnected to each other in spite of the ways we choose to live those lives. This is another reason why I believe PR is inherently ethical; it calls to the fore questions that allow us to think about the impact of our own actions on others and ourselves.

Key Practices in Participatory Research

There are a number of common practices within PR, which I have identified. The first is the idea of participation which is central to the engagement between researcher and research participants. Participation can be broken down into four types: contractual, consultative, collaborative and collegiate (Biggs, 1989). The ideal level of participation would be the last one, in which researchers and local people work together as colleagues with different skills to offer. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) have leveled some critique over the fact that much PR tends to fall within the first three categories only, which do not relinquish enough power to the participants.

Though this is a fair assessment, it is also not amiss to note that at different stages during any research process the researcher and participants may move between the different participatory classifications.

Another PR practice is the active recovery of history where research takes into consideration the historical contexts of the participants (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991) and how that will impact the research. Participants also consider their history as they come into the research, since it has a bearing on the type of information they will choose to share or exclude. Historical context is congruent with the valuing of indigenous knowledge, which is also an important practice in PR, to reveal the actual experiences of the participants (Brown & Strega, 2005; Smith, 1999). Lastly, attention to the process, with less focus on the outcome, is another practice of PR. The process involves the creation of interactive knowledge (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993), which comes as a result of sharing a life-world. Interactive knowledge is predicated on connectedness and inclusion. Critical knowledge is also created from the process of praxis, making it possible to engage with knowledge concerning what is just (consciousness) and what is right (conscience). Ideally, the interplay between consciousness and conscience allows humanity to have a system of checks and balances allowing each one to critique his/her decisions with the aim of creating communities in which everyone thrives.

Implications for My Work

At the heart of PR are three issues that are close to my heart: education/knowledge, working with communities, and social transformation. PR is suitable for my study because it positions Zimbabwean immigrant youth as the focus of the research. PR focuses on groups that share particular concerns, which was the case with my group of immigrant youth participants. It was at a church conference that the youth who would become my participants first raised

concerns about displacement and living *in-between*. As a result, an identifier for this community slowly emerged. Their rallying around each other in relation to these issues exemplified a community centered on similar concerns, although in keeping with Navarro's (1984) understanding of community, one that need not be regarded as homogenous. In the case of my study, I explored the thoughts, perceptions, and meanings attached to liminality by immigrant youth. Ideas articulated by the youth paved the way for thinking together about what they considered an ideal curriculum based on their experiences with liminality. Curriculum for my purposes was defined broadly as the interchange of life experiences in the home, at school and in the community at large.

I am also aware of a critique of PR in the academy (Hall, 2005; Lather, 1986). The critique questions how participatory practices such as those used by social movements can be integrated into a research project in a university setting without distorting the purpose and ethos of PR. From an academic perspective, PR was originally thought to lack academic rigor (Lather, 1986). Nevertheless, I do find that there is place for such research in the academy. It is valued by people like me, whose prior work has been steeped in the community. As an individual scholar, I am also exploring what the academy has to offer that can be useful in community-based work, to ultimately create more of a bridge between the academy and the community. Much like Heron and Reason (1997), the notion that we are all interrelated is the premise from which I operate, so by involving a specific community in the research, my hope was that the process and outcomes would reflect a combined effort that illuminates ideas, perceptions, meanings and attitudes of the people with a stake in the subject under study.

Summary

PR is gaining momentum in research circles and it is valuable to understand its history and tenets so that its mission can be accomplished within research activities. PR strives to maintain Freire's (1970) stance that research should be understood as engaged practice, not a neutral dispassionate act, but an act of solidarity and active support (Hall, 2005). Freire (1973) notes that, "it is not our role to speak to people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (p. 98). This is the ultimate type of engagement that PR seeks to foreground and extend towards social transformation.

Research Design

I espouse an advocacy and emancipatory worldview based on my focus on marginalised populations and an activist agenda (Park et al., 1993). I also appreciate PR's focus on co-creativity (subject-subject relationships) instead of the subject-object relationships (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). The questions that concern my study are personal in that they elicit particular life experiences from each person involved in the study, and yet in a collaborative platform, these ideas can be discussed and relayed to others in the community in a manner that allows the community to gain a better understanding about liminality in order to better serve the youth and the community at large. Freire's (1971) notion of "naming and changing" indicates a crucial component of PR, which is reflection upon complex issues with the aim of finding practical solutions. In my study the reflective knowledge produced helped people name various structures at work in their lives, through which they may consequently be empowered to change or improve their lives. The Freirean concept of conscientization is part of this naming process, which helped the immigrant youth unpack their lives in-between worlds.

My study stems from the felt and articulated concerns of the Zimbabwe immigrant youth. After hearing their concerns articulated and subsequent recognition of the need to engage with those concerns, the study acting as a catalyst, making it possible for the youth to talk about their concerns in an engaged and organized manner. The collaborative process involved youth to actively and consciously identify possible ways to move forward with the study, through reflection and an understanding of the complexities of the subject.

The Participatory Process with the Study Participants

In my research study, I utilized two main techniques: interviews and focus groups. For both the interviews and the focus group meetings, we made use of a similar set of questions (see Appendix C). In addition, my observation of the process, as well as my reflections upon the changes in my own thought trajectories provided more information, which was useful in the interpretation of my research findings. The research sessions for my study took place between the months of May and August, 2014. The prospective participants were identified through a local church to which I also belong, specifically at a church conference where they were having a discussion on identity issues as immigrants. After the conference I chatted with individual youths about their interest level in participating in a study that had to do with immigration and a number of them indicated that they would want to hear more. After obtaining ethics approval from my university Research Ethics Board, I convened an initial face-to-face information session with interested youth to communicate the purpose of the study, as well as the expectations and the level of engagement that would be required.

At the end of this information session, some of the youth decided that they wanted to participate in the study and they signed the consent forms. In total six Zimbabwean youth ranging in ages 20 to 25 committed to undertake this participatory journey with me. Of the six

participants, two were male and four were female. After the information session, I created a group forum through a widely used phone app called WhatsApp. This forum was used for reminders about group meetings and any other information that needed to be relayed between group sessions.

Interviews. I conducted individual interviews with each participant after the first focus group meeting. The rationale was twofold: Firstly, I wanted to have in-depth interactions with each member of the group (Creswell, 2009). Secondly, participants could identify issues that they wanted to be brought anonymously to the subsequent focus groups for discussion. The interviews functioned as a follow-up to the first focus group to draw out some personal thoughts to guide the study that participants were not comfortable sharing in a group setting. The interviews ran for about an hour each and were scheduled according to each participant's availability. The interviews were semi-structured (Creswell, 2009) with prompting questions to guide our conversations and allow participants more leeway with their responses. The questions prompted discussions about the participants, which focused on three broad areas: their lives before Canada, their decision to immigrate, and their actual journeys to and settling in Canada. Questions central to the concept of liminality and life-journey in Canada teased out the participants' understanding of their identities, their experiences of life in-between, how they negotiated these experiences and what they would tell fellow immigrants who were looking to move to Canada.

All my interviews with the participants were audio-taped and transcribed (Creswell, 2007) and transcripts were sent to the participants for their review and edits. I then read, highlighted and recorded the themes in all the individual transcripts. I reread the transcripts again to find quotes that would support these themes. Finally, I compiled the themes that most

aligned with the concept of liminality as articulated by the youth, and took these to inform our discussions in the focus groups.

Focus Groups. The participants and I engaged in a total of seven focus groups over the summer of 2014. Kitzinger (1994) says, if focus groups work well then they function as a good compliment to interviews by "taking the research into new and often unexpected directions, and engaging in interactions which are both complimentary (such as sharing common experiences) and argumentative (questioning, challenging and disagreeing with each other)" (p. 107). The added advantage of the interactions that took place in the focus groups also accorded me the opportunity to watch the group dynamics and what they added to the overall conversation. The downside of focus groups, as articulated by Kitzinger (1994) are, "the group may censor any deviation from the group standards – inhibiting people talking about certain things" (p. 110). This was a concern I mitigated by having individual interviews. All in all the interactions in our focus groups were productive.

In the initial focus group prior to the individual interviews, I discussed the intent of the research study, defined liminality and brainstormed youth experiences that could be categorized as existing within this place. I also helped facilitate the discussion on how we would move forward as a group. This was consistent with the tenet that participant input is central in PR (Fournier, Mill, Kipp, & Walusimbi, 2007). The group agreed that would meet once every week for as long as was needed for the process to be a fruitful one. We would do focus groups every week with the exception of the week that we had individual interviews. We were also heading into summer and it was going to be a busy time with two community weddings that all the youth were actively participating in, so time was of the essence. We wanted to get a lot of work done before the summer activities were well underway.

We all agreed that my home study would be the most appropriate location for this work as the youth cited concerns about parking charges at the university. All of them work full-time as well, so my house was a good location en route to their homes. They did not have to go out of their ways too much to come and participate in the work we agreed upon. The opportunity for a home cooked meal was appreciated and was in keeping with our Zimbabwean cultural norms concerning food as a gateway to building of rapport in our community and interesting discussions. Another important aspect of the first group meeting was the selection of pseudonymns that the youth would use in the study. All the youth picked a name they liked and selected "Mother M" for me. We agreed that we would conclude every focus group with a tentative agenda for the next group meeting, so we could be thinking about ideas we would be discussing ahead of time. After the first focus group, I scheduled individual interview sessions with each participant. The interviews were completed before the second focus group.

The second and third focus groups were intended for participants to explore the issues raised in the first group in more detail. The same set of questions that was used in the interviews guided the group conversation about life in Canada generally, and life between worlds specifically. In these groups, I anonymously brought up the questions that came from the individual interviews for further discussion. With this technique, I noticed that the participant who had raised the question enjoyed a two-fold advantage: First, they received direct feedback from the group without being identified as originator of the question, and second, they had the opportunity to actively participate in a discussion that they deemed important.

These sessions were productive because they resulted in candid discussions around topical issues that had a bearing on the concept of liminality and their life journeys. My observations were that beginning with these group sessions, the youth became more comfortable.

They directed the conversation and exchanged ideas back and forth. Moreover, since the youth already knew each other well, the focus groups became locales for the "collective remembering" of experiences (Middleton & Edwards, 1990).

The final four group sessions were dedicated to work on the curriculum artefact. In these groups we determined what the youth wanted to relay through the artefact, the audience for the artefact, what form it would take, its content, and how the artefact would be disseminated. In total we had seven focus group meetings of approximately 1 to 3 hours in length each. The questions always foregrounded our discussions, so they were focused on the issues central to the study. All the focus group sessions were audio-taped and transcribed (Creswell, 2007) and transcripts were sent to the participants for their review and edits. I used these transcripts, along with the transcripts from the individual interviews, and my personal reflections, as the "data source" for my interpretations.

Curriculum artefact. The last four focus group sessions with participants were geared towards the creation of a resource document, deemed the "action" part in participatory research process. This resource is referred to herein as the curriculum artefact. The artefact is the product of a communal effort by the youth and a tangible representation of the work that we did together. Understanding of curriculum as a learning journey and an artefact as meaning-oriented, the curriculum artefact produced in my study should be understood as the result of a journey of learning about immigrant experiences, replete with meaning. The artefact is also the culmination of the youths' participatory research process. The audience for this artefact is prospective Zimbabwean immigrant youth. The completed artefact will be distributed as an electronic document to the National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO), a Zimbabwean organization, which serves as an umbrella body of youth organizations working in Zimbabwe.

NAYO's (2015) mission is to "redress the challenges that youth are facing and contribute towards their active participation in developmental processes through advocacy, capacity building and information sharing initiatives" (p. 1). It serves well as a distribution point for our artefact because it is an information hub, to which youth from around the country have access and use frequently.

After thinking through various forms the youth decided that the artefact would take the form of an e-handbook. The e-handbook would be a written document that was intended to accomplish two main functions. First, the handbook would relay information particular to living well in a foreign land. The youth in my study realized that it was essential to provide such information because they were aware that other youth back in Zimbabwe were asking specific questions about living in Canada. The handbook in this sense would be something they would access, a document written for them by fellow Zimbabwean youth who had already gone through the immigration experience. Ultimately, the e-handbook would be instrumental in their decision to move to Canada. Second, the handbook was intended to mitigate some of the likely liminal situations that youth would experience after immigration.

The study participants also decided that the content of the e-handbook would not relay personal experiences. The youth realized that the research process itself dug deep into their personal experiences which were sites of painful and mostly negative experiences. As a result they did not want to focus on those experiences, important as they were to their own self-understanding of the questions that preoccupied them coming into this study. Rather, they felt it was necessary to focus on the factors that would propel the audience of the handbook towards action for or against immigration, and better life choices in Canada thereafter. The participants agreed the experiences they shared with each other were different. They presumed the same for

those who would choose to immigrate. As a consequence, the participants agreed that finding core themes would be the best way to attend to the purpose of the handbook. The participants wanted prospective immigrants to get concise and pertinent information, and they believed the thematic content drawn from their group discussions and interviews would achieve this purpose.

After initial discussions on audience, form, and distribution, we went on to create the specific content for the e-handbook. I asked the participants to select topics from our discussions that they considered pertinent for prospective immigrant youth. They wrote notes and brought them to the larger group for consideration and feedback. The topics included immigration, family and culture, education, careers, language, weather, religion, and a few more. We took time to refine the content, then Gaudencia, the designated scribe, started crafting the e-handbook. She brought the e-handbook back for group edits and the group agreed that it looked good. I looked it over, edited it further then sent it back to the participants for a final read through. Snapshots from the e-handbook have been integrated into Chapter 4 to show the end result and the progression of participants' thoughts.

Reflection and Interpretation of the Participatory Process

My reflection and interpretation of the research process was done through a review of the transcripts of the individual interviews and focus groups. To start the process, I reviewed the transcripts specifically for information that youth regarded as pertinent to their lives in Canada. From there I looked for information relating to liminal experiences and made notes. I went through my written notes a second time to identify themes that stood out based on their frequency of occurrence in the individual interviews and in the focus groups. I then collected quotes that substantiated these themes and that allowed participant voices to come through in the

text. Finally, I compiled all the themes into a concept map (Appendix D), which I used as a guide to write Chapters 4 and 5.

Reflexivity

Going into the study, I had reason to believe that the youth would feel comfortable talking with me about their experiences of liminality in their new homeland. This was based on the fact that I had worked with youth groups from the church before and the youth had always been comfortable around me. I have also experienced liminality firsthand as an immigrant. I realized that though we come from the same country, our experiences might vary considerably. My exposure to what I identified as liminality, both in my personal and professional life, ultimately led me to the conclusion that in some shape or form the study participants had encountered similar experiences and given the right context would not regard the topic as too difficult to discuss. My assumption proved correct.

My personal experiences informed the line of questioning I took during the interviews and focus group sessions, but also left room for participants' issues to come through. My experiences helped me to achieve a degree of sensitivity to their articulated experiences. My experiences also informed the way I interpreted the research. I made every effort to represent my interactions with participants in a respectful manner.

Ethical Considerations

I am aware that my work was with immigrant youth, who are considered a vulnerable population. The fact that my study is related to their personal experiences added to this vulnerability. I believe the youth in my study were vulnerable in the sense that they found themselves as outsiders in a host context that they were still in the process of understanding. Also, the label of immigrant was one that they carried wherever they went and that added to their

vulnerability. During the course of this study though, I believe some of the vulnerability dissipated as they began to understand the agency that they brought in negotiating their experiences. Prior to data collection, my ethics application to work with human participants was approved (Appendix A). The ethics application explained potential harm to the research participants, as well as matters of access and consent. The participants signed consent forms outlining issues such as their ability to discontinue or not participate in the study.

I mitigated the potential risk of sharing of sensitive details by enlisting the help of a community elder to be available to chat with the youth one-on-one as well as the group if that need arose. Realizing the possibility of discussing sensitive material, I concluded that having an elder available would be consistent with the tenets of PR. The elder would ensure that the participants were cared for if the need arose. As it turned out, the elder's intervention was not required in the case of this study. I paid close attention to questions around how the participatory process would benefit the youth and the community, how participants would help chart the course of the research and how perceptions created from the results of the study (Brown &Vega, 2003) would be presented so as to maintain ethical conduct in my study. Privacy and safety were considered significant areas in my research study. To this end, youth chose pseudonyms for the study to protect their privacy.

Chapter 4: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings of my study. My hope is that this chapter honours the process of PR by presenting individual and communal voices on the concept of liminality in the participating immigrant youths' experiences. I begin by offering a brief discussion on my relationship with the youth, taking positionality and power into account. I will also include a section on working with older youth in my study, and more details on the demographics of the participants. Then I provide a contextual narrative of one of our focus group sessions, in an attempt to familiarize the reader with the setting of my study. Following this I introduce the research participants, setting the tone of each participant's life before immigration, their decisions to leave for Canada, as well as their journeys to Canada.

The subsequent section covers issues of settlement in Canada, presenting findings on the discussions youth had with me in their individual interviews and with each other and me in the focus groups as they addressed experiences related to liminality in more detail. I will draw extensively from the actual words of the participants so that their voices come through strongly. I will also include images from the curriculum artefact in an effort to bring the reader to a better understanding of the final product of the study and to create a premise on which to forge connections between the participants' words and their process of producing the artefact.

To understand the connections that we made as a group, I reiterate that the curriculum artefact produced should be understood as the result of a journey of communal learning about the immigrant youths' experiences, replete with meaning for each individual involved in the study. In addition, bearing in mind that in PR the journey itself takes precedence over the destination (Greenwood, Whyte, & Harkavy, 1993; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995), it follows that the interaction within the research group provides contextual evidence to clarify or justify the form of the final

product. Also, as the audience for the e-handbook is prospective immigrant youth, the document is simple, to the point, and addresses issues and topics of which they may not be completely aware. The information in the e-handbook should serve them well, since, their being embedded in the pre-immigrant context; they are likely to have unanswered questions concerning the topics addressed in the artefact. Hence, when viewed in isolation by a Canadian reader, the artefact may look and read as simplistic, as it provides information that Canadian readers likely already know or take for granted. Understood as part of the content that emerged from our focus groups and interviews, the reader may get a more complete picture. The more detailed sections of the artefact represent the more in-depth themes of our focus group discussions and interviews, while the less-detailed ones contain more straightforward information that needs little or no clarification.

The e-handbook, as the youth indicated, serves as a map that identifies topics and provides content. Inasmuch as we could not encapsulate all the information we discussed in the e-handbook, we also realized that our experiences were by no means homogenous to the minute detail. Each youth shared liminal experiences that resonated in some shape or form with some or the other youth. One factor remained clear: their experiences were uniquely theirs in that they did not play out in the exact same fashion for others. Ultimately, the youth felt that rather than present their actual experiences, they would extrapolate shared meanings from those experiences and then devise a list of major topics that would point to some key challenges that prospective immigrant youth would likely encounter in various formations.

A total of six major topics were selected to be developed into particular sections of the e-handbook. The first topic was immigration and in this section the youth wanted to focus on some of the issues that were pertinent for immigration decisions. Different visa classifications,

especially for those who want to study in Canada have restrictions that outsiders to the system may not understand. Study participants wanted to alert those who would need to find alternative options to the ones they had initially chosen. This particular topic was important for the study participants because they recognized from their own experiences with trying to get back into school how their immigration status had directly affected their ability to do so at the time they wanted. The second topic was family and culture and in this section the participants focused on the family as an important support system, and also highlighted the inevitable clash of the cultures as home values started to contradict with host country values. Education was the third topic and was deemed necessary for inclusion in the handbook because most young adults come to Canada with aspirations of going to school at some point and the information would help them start to plan ahead.

Topic four had to do with careers, based on the liminal experiences articulated by the youth around job choices, and related factors such as finances, passion, family expectations and equivalencies needed for jobs. The youth felt that this addition would benefit prospective youth by providing information about lucrative careers as well as accessibility of these careers based on foreign earned credentials. Experiences with liminality in the area of language permeated almost every other topic in the study hence it was also added to the e-handbook. The participants felt the nuances of language including frequency of English use, accent, pronunciation, different verbiage and comments about language difference were topical hence necessary for prospective youth to know. The final topic covered a variety of sections that were considered important because of information that would be useful for day-to-day living.

Ultimately, the artefact was created as a representation of the major topics that emerged in our discussions, topics that were attached to specific liminal experiences in the youths'

journey of settlement in Canada. For the youth, the use of liminality as a guiding concept to name their experiences resulted in a clearer understanding of their experiences. Subsequently, the creation of the artefact was a way of expressing that understanding in a form that they considered simple, but useful for youth who were making decisions to immigrate. The artefact would also, by extension, point to areas that the youth considered important enough to warrant prospective immigrant youth asking more direct questions or doing more research, in which cases they included website addresses.

The notion of "forewarned is forearmed" was significant for the youth as they indicated that it would be better for prospective immigrant youth to know some things beforehand rather than blindly walking into potentially uncomfortable and unsuccessful situations, such as those they had experienced. The artefact is their way of conversing with prospective immigrant youth "in advance" about their experiences of liminality. The process of this research helped the youth participants identify and articulate liminality in their own lives, and to better understand how it had worked to hinder some of their decision-making, and how it complicated their relationships. The participants' decided to frontload information as a way to help avoid or lessen the intensity of similar experiences for other immigrant youth. For the intended audience, the artefact is a much-needed map, which I believe will make sense when they read it, even in the absence of concrete examples. The e-handbook was not meant to discuss actual liminal experiences. It was meant to try to help prospective immigrant youth circumvent or navigate them, if possible by providing information on potentially problematic areas of immigrant youths' settlement experiences.

In the section that follows, I provide a "thick description" (Ryle, 1971; Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989) of a typical focus group session to give the reader a sense of the context of our

work together. The narrative is a composite created from my field notes of actual focus group sessions.

The Group Context

It's early on a Thursday evening in August and the participants start filing in at the agreed upon time. It's really hot outside and I feel tired. The heat in kitchen is not helping. Dinner is ready and as the youth come in they head straight for the kitchen counter to get something to eat. Kujo and Sam arrive first. They don't seem to be affected by the heat at all, as a matter of fact, I can hear them jovially talking as they walk up to the door. As soon as they see the food, Kujo jokes about how the two of them will eat all the food, then the others will do the research work while they sleep. My two children are sitting on a blanket, eating their dinner, and trying to bribe me into letting them watch their favorite show on TV during the meal. Gaudencia is the next one to come in. Usually, once the first participant arrives for a meeting we leave the door unlocked, sometimes even open a little so people do not keep ringing the doorbell. Gaudencia joins the guys already serving themselves at the kitchen counter. The three participants then head downstairs to my office to eat. It is not unusual for us to eat while we work.

I follow them, plate in hand and I find them sprawled on the study floor. Gaudencia starts prepping the recorder. The elected scribe for the group, she has also assumed the role of the "tech," ensuring that recorders are in working order before and throughout our sessions. It feels much cooler down here, hopefully Kujo will not start dozing off, when he is full. Sam asks if the others are on their way, and at that precise moment we hear the door burst open. It is Ursula. My house has an open-concept design so sound travels quite easily. Though we are downstairs we can hear the ongoing conversation upstairs. Ursula is undoubtedly the most vivacious of the group and sure enough the noise level becomes markedly higher as she gets food and joins us,

amidst guffaws about her not having enough to eat. She mutters something about her relationship with food and how messing with that relationship can get folk in trouble. Everyone bursts out laughing because we do understand that she loves her food. Afro calls my cellphone to say she cannot make it because of work and so she will join the discussion by phone in about an hour. Sally, by far the quietest of the bunch, is the last to arrive. She enters the office without a plate. I ask her why she didn't get one and she says she has already eaten. She takes a seat at the desk, beside a book filled wall cabinet and waits for the session to start. I go back upstairs and tell my children not to answer the house phone or the door while we are downstairs. I flip the TV channel to *Liv & Maddy* and they settle on the couch and are immediately oblivious to the fact that I am still in the room. The wonders of television… it actually babysits at times. I smile to myself as I go back downstairs to present the agenda of the evening. Our work begins.

In this focus group we discuss experiences soon after immigration. I ask the participants to write down one word that describes their settlement process in Canada. From there each participant explains why she/he picked that particular word. After the short presentations we then open up the discussion to the larger group so they can talk about each other's settlement experiences. We use questions such as why they think settlement was difficult for some and not so much for others to further guide the discussion.

My Relationship with the Youth

My relationship with the youth in my study has taken on different forms over the years. My first encounter with them was at the church where we all worship. I always knew that for my doctoral research I wanted to work with the youth in some capacity, because most of my church leadership roles in Zimbabwe had been with the youth. I always felt drawn to youth because I felt they had interesting insights to offer about life. During the first year of my engagement with

the church youth, our relationship was more of an elder[9]-youth relationship, because we did not know each other well. Our discussions did not go deeper than the usual pleasantries exchanged before or after church services. In that same year, though, I experienced that at community gatherings outside of church services, such as weddings, parties and outings, they began to interact with me more. At first, I attributed this to the fact that, of the elders who were present, I was usually one of the youngest parents, and was therefore closer in age to them than most of their parents. At this time, one of the youth mentioned that the reason many of them wanted to chat with me was because I was easy to talk to and offered them advice that they found useful.

After that first year, the same group of youth selected me to be their youth advisor at church and in this role I got to know more about them personally. I established relationships with all of them during my tenure as their youth leader, relationships which continued long after I left that role. Coming into this study, I was quite confident that these relationships formed a good foundation for productive discussions. I was still regarded as an elder, a confidante, a mediator, and advisor – all roles, which incidentally placed me in a position of power relative to the youth. It was interesting to note, however, that though they realized that I occupied this position as their elder; they were also quite comfortable having open and honest discussions about what they really thought. Juxtaposed with the self-censorship they have told me they practice when it came to discussing certain issues with other elders in their lives, they were relatively comfortable sharing with me. I attributed this to my ability to be present with them in a way that allowed them to open up. As one of them said: "You have the uncanny ability to speak with authority and wisdom, but at the same time fit in with the younger group, such that they do not feel threatened in any way." Such was my relationship with the youth who participated in my study.

[9] I use this term in this paper to describe the age difference between the youth participants and myself. I am chronologically older than them and because I am married and have children, they would regard me generally as they would their own parents, seeking counsel and mentorship from me.

The fact that I am female also helped in my relationship with the youth, because in my culture, women are usually considered "a soft place to land," which means we are generally more approachable and easier to talk to. My personal relationship with the youth preceded my "researcher" identity with them. I was concerned that my prior relationship with the youth might unduly influence their decision to participate in the study, or make them feel like they could not refuse. In light of this, I clearly communicated to them that participation in the study was neither compulsory nor predicated on our relationship. They were all free to make independent decisions based on what I had presented in the information session. Consequently, as much as I might be considered a "power" figure as a researcher, in this study, the fact that I already had relationships with them meant that they did not really see me as such, but rather as the same elder who they knew and appreciated, wearing a different hat. That alone significantly decentralized the power in my research work with the youth. The power differential was also mitigated by the fact that we are the same race, and share the same country of origin, culture and language. We had an insider relationship and so we all "got" the nuances of the issues that we discussed during the course of our study.

Working with Older Youth

Six Zimbabwean immigrant youth (ages 20 to 25) from various urban Alberta neighbourhoods participated in my study. Although I had anticipated working with a mixed group of youth, including youth from the younger end of the age spectrum (e.g. 16 and up), it was the older youths who indicated interest in the study as they had already started talking through related issues at the church conference mentioned in Chapter 1, and subsequently at other church meetings. It is also important to note that most of the youth who participated in this study belonged to the same church group and therefore not only shared values as immigrant

Zimbabwean youth, but as Christian youth as well. Demonstration of their Christian values came up in our discussions, as shall be discussed.

A lack of younger youth in my study made it imperative for me to examine the implications of having only the older group as participants. There are differences in the use of the term "youth" by Canadian authors (Furstenberg, 2000; Galland, 2003) and in Zimbabwean circles, all of which confirm, for me, that the term "youth" is much-contested category. Its definition varies depending on one's lens. Some define "youth" based on psychological and biological processes, others by the social standards that mark age, such as symbolic rites, life events, laws, standards and social roles (Furstenberg, 2000; Galland, 2003; Gauthier, 2003). Bucholtz (2002) believes the term youth allows for flexibility because in some cases it "may be based on one's social circumstances rather than chronological age or cultural position" (p. 526). Doucette's (2010) extended age definition for youth suggests that the upper age limit for most government programs has been extended due to the realization that, "youth are taking longer to transition to adulthood" (p. 3). Non-profit organizations in Calgary, Alberta also acknowledge the delayed transition of youth to adulthood; most of their programs, therefore, are geared to youth up to thirty. One of their programs caters to newcomer youth, which attests to the relevance of delayed transition in newcomer communities as well.

All participants in my study were defined as youth; that is the designation that the church also assigned them for the purposes of bible study. As long as they were over thirteen and single with no children, they fell into this category for church study group purposes. For my study, the fact that youth from this upper age group chose to participate was also an indication that they were at a point in their lives when they were contemplating life changing decisions such as employment, marriage, vocational schooling and/or higher learning, among others. These life

topics would appeal to an older age group. These shared experiences and an interest in the study offered a chance for them to converse together about these transitions in their lives; it was fitting that they chose to participate in my study.

The lack of younger participants had a significant impact on the direction of my study. Originally, I had hoped to focus on curriculum with reference to home, school, and community experiences as well. However, due to the ages of the study participants, there was much less discussion about liminal school experiences. As it turned out, the youth who felt that they could benefit most from this type of work and chose to participate were the older ones. In keeping with PR sensitivities, a shift in the group makeup also meant a shift in the direction of the discussions to cater to the contexts in which they found themselves.

At the time of the study, all six participants were residing in Alberta and had been in the province for periods ranging from 2 to10 years. The youth, whose pseudonyms for the study were: Kujo, Samusoni, Gaudencia, Ursula, Afrolicious, and Sally, were all employed; one was also enrolled at a local university. Three of the participants moved to Canada to join their families; one came together with her parents; the other two came to Canada without their parents, but have some relatives in the country. All participants were born in Zimbabwe and spent a greater part of their childhood years in Zimbabwe. Four out of the six participants came to Canada as teenagers. Most had completed high school and had had a chance to work in Zimbabwe before they left. Altogether they made up a lively group and had active discussions around issues and questions raised in the interviews and in the focus groups.

They all identified as primarily Zimbabwean when I asked them how they identified themselves; some of them added “with Canadian tendencies” as a way of explaining the settlement effects on them as immigrants. One of them said: “I left Zimbabwe, but it’s still in me.

It hasn't left." Their statements spoke to the concept of home in that Zimbabwe was the primary home for them, yet because they were in Canada, Canada had become a second home. The next section introduces the participants in more detail.

Portraits of the Participants

Kujo. At the time of the study Kujo had been in Canada the shortest amount of time – two years. He came to Canada to reunite with family members who were already established here. Kujo was a young man, with an affable personality, who also indicated earlier on in the study his desire to go back to school. Before coming to Canada he was simultaneously pursuing diploma studies and working. He had been in Canada for two years and had aspirations of pursuing a career in the trades. He had some set beliefs about life in general. For example, though he had a deep respect for elders, he also noted that the way elders interact with youth should be respectful, not commanding. He noted that commanding behaviour incited fear and automaton-type responses, which ultimately did not serve relationships well. Kujo took his roles and responsibilities very seriously. Speaking of his life before Canada he said: "There was a time I was responsible for everyone. My dad was working out of the country, so I had to ensure all the siblings were taken care of." The same siblings later left for Canada while he stayed behind, to follow some years later. He spoke of the role reversal he felt when he immigrated:

> Coming this side now there is none of the major responsibilities for my siblings, since now the parents are there. I can focus on my own stuff and enjoy a closer relationship with my father because I never really had that. All the same I find myself still needing to be responsible so I find myself shifting that responsibility to things like church, work and thinking about continuing my education.

In relation to this reversal, Kujo also noted the changes in his siblings and alluded to the role a change of environment played in changes in behaviour,

> I saw a change in these guys… like the way they were handling things here was not the same as back home. I noted especially how they seemed to take advantage now that dad was right there. For example, I knew not to ask for things all the time because I was aware of the financial situation and did not want to stress my dad, but they just went straight ahead and asked. I think maybe they moved here when they were too young and were contaminated by the environment.

Kujo pointed towards the beginnings of tensions in the parent-child relationships, and added:

> I think that our parents have not changed at all, they still have that Zim [for Zimbabwe] mentality, but the environment…the playground here is different, with the "freedoms" enjoyed here some kids go too far and forget to respect their parents.

Kujo's emphasis seemed to be that though change was inevitable, sticking to one's predetermined values anchors one to make sensible life choices. He also credited immigration to Canada as an eye-opening experience noting: "When I was in a limited place, I had limited thoughts as well." His yearning to go back to school in Canada is revealed when he says:

> Because of financial hardships I could not finish my diploma at home, the only thing I knew to do was to ask one of the administrators to write a letter of reference, detailing what I had already achieved to that point, so that when I left the country I would have a starting point. And when I got here… I was like, regardless of how much I work or how much I make…I will go back to school.

In my interview with Kujo, I got the sense that though he appreciated the move to Canada overall, he, like the others, was still working through some transitional concerns.

Samusoni. Samusoni was a relatively quiet guy who was also one of the more recent immigrants of the group. At the time of the study he had been in Canada for two years. He introduced the phrase, "John come late," (a variation of the idiom "Johnny come lately") to the study group. The phrase is used in immigrant communities to refer to people who recently moved to countries other than their own. Samusoni proved to be an interesting addition to the group because when he did speak up, he almost always had a different opinion from the others, and that made for a lively discussion. Samusoni was very vocal about his lack of expectations when he found out his parents had had plans to emigrate for a while. He explained:

> Well…. now I set goals, before I did not. What if the whole Canada thing did not work out? I could not drop the business I was involved in with the expectation of something I had no knowledge about. After I got here, and did not really struggle to find work, then I began to think through what I needed to do next.

Samusoni would never raise his hopes too high, because of the possibility that immigration would not work out, reasoning: "some tried and failed." He chose to err on the side of caution by downplaying whatever excitement he may have felt at the time. In his mind, the whole immigration process was a far-fetched idea. He noted that he considered his attitude a good thing, because there would not be much disruption of the status quo if things did not end up panning out as planned. He also did not want to dream about things to come and be disappointed.

When I asked him about his journey to Canada he became animated and spoke of a layover in a foreign country the language of which he could not understand. He wanted to leave so badly. Samusoni also spoke about the feeling he got alighting from the plane to the sight of a very small town, smaller than the one in which he had lived in Zimbabwe. Thus had begun his comparisons with his mother country and questions about whether the right decisions had been

made. He noted that he had figured out at that moment that Canada was, "not all he saw on television back home" – no lights and other mind boggling gadgetry and people, seeing that he had landed in what he described as an almost rural community. When asked about whether he felt youth changed when they got to Canada, Samusoni concurred with Kujo, offering a different rationale: "The changes that I see are people trying to fit in to how life is here. Some of the things chosen are good and some are bad." While his scepticism had not been discarded, he anticipated a lot more at that time. He noted, "I want to go back to school, even start a business of my own here, since there are a lot more training resources available that I can use to gain skills in my area of interest." Samusoni was working and generally enjoying life in Canada.

Ursula. A vivacious character with lots of interesting things to share, Ursula proved to be the "life" of the group. Ursula had been in Canada for three years, also a fairly recent immigrant. She came to Canada by herself and she does not have any immediate family members in Canada. She had completed a diploma before she immigrated and wanted to pursue accounting in Canada. She was a joy to work with because she knew she had a lot to say and was not ashamed of it. She also knew that once she started talking she probably would not stop. It became her joke that whenever input was needed from all group members she preferred to be the last one to speak, otherwise she was afraid her peers would have no time to share their thoughts. Of her decision to immigrate, Ursula said that she always knew that at some point in her life she would leave the motherland. She may not have been sure where she would end up, but was convinced it would not be Zimbabwe. When the opportunity to immigrate presented itself she had taken it. As she revealed, "When I moved here, I was not really that afraid because I stayed by myself for quite a bit back home. What was difficult was just the fact that you are not in your country and

the culture is different." The negotiation of life in a different location as an immigrant youth was another issue that she had come across.

Ursula told of her trip to Canada as one filled with intrigue and the excitement of things to come. She explained, "You know me and this relationship I have with food. I ate quite a bit and got sick on the plane, then when I got here I got hooked on FatBurgers [a local fast food eatery]." In retrospect, she noted, that after she became aware of the health implications of the food she had been eating, she changed her habits. One of our interesting conversational moments was when we talked about changes in immigrant youth. She noted how others had said to her, "You have not been in Canada long enough. When you have been, you are going to leave all things Zimbabwean." This expectation to integrate made her question whether or not she would uphold the same values after having lived in Canada longer.

Ursula was also preoccupied with how language shaped her existence in Canada and spent some time during our interview talking about this. She revealed her struggle thus, "It really sucks. I think language for me is really stressful." She wanted to be able to converse fully; as she gave more examples, it became clear why she was frustrated. I will discuss more about her perspectives on the issue of language later. Her overarching sentiment throughout the focus groups was that even though there had been challenges, she knew that, "Zimbabwean people know how to adjust," and, "Zimbabweans can face any situation" – traits that she attributes to the resilience of the Zimbabwean populace as a whole. She alluded to the harsh economic years of 2007 and 2008 where people persevered despites the odds: "We had no jobs, but we survived. No food on the store shelves, but we ate."

All in all, she appreciated the enormity of the resource base in Canada, where information is available to those who know where to find it: "You just have to be in the system to access it."

Examples she cited included information for prospective students and people who wanted to specialize in different professions.

Afrolicious. Afrolicious, who I also referred to as the quiet force, speaking usually only in response to a direct question, was the only participant in the group enrolled in a full time post-secondary program. She had been in Canada for four years and immigrated to rejoin her family. By the time we started the study she had managed to enrol in a local university and was in her third year…She described her quick move to the school setting by noting, "I wanted to go to university…to pursue my career. So I knew people worked as well, and so I was expecting to work part time and be a student full time."

Asked to describe her settlement in Canada she said: "Challenging," as she had had to contend with competing desires about her career direction. She noted: "Before coming to Canada I had some very specific plans about what I wanted to do when I got to Canada. My priority was to go to university." Her settlement story was marred with tension as her parents had preferred that she join the family business. She had had to fight for her dream to go to college. When she had eventually enrolled, university life had proved daunting. She offered some insights on her experiences of post-secondary education:

> When I started school, I guess it was overwhelming for me because most of my classes were around 300 people, so the professor does not even know you, unlike in Zimbabwe, where your teachers knew you and your background and stuff. I felt like I was a ghost in some ways because you are just there, but it really didn't make a difference to the class or to the professor.

She had felt like a fish-out-of-water and noted that more interaction with her instructors would have helped her smoother transition in college. When she realized she could not change the class

set up, or the level of interaction she needed from her instructors, she attempted to form relationships with other students. She said that she had been shocked when she had perceived that, "other Africans seemed to be the ones making a concentrated effort to ignore her." She elaborated her point with this example:

> There is this girl that I took most of my courses with. I knew she was African, but for some reason she never spoke to me. We always seemed to regard each other with some degree of caution and apprehension. Then towards the end of our second year we were assigned to the same group for a project and that is when we started talking and both realized we wanted to speak to each other, but for some reason we kept holding back.

Afro believed opening up to this lady had also opened her up to seeing things differently. She had become more aware of other services that were geared towards international students to help make the transition easier. Thus, her main contribution in the discussion concerning what we should tell prospective immigrants about school and careers was: "Have a broad mind, explore, and know all the options, even if you think that's not what you want to do now." An expanded awareness after learning about various options, she felt would be important for prospective immigrant youth as they would be better prepared to make informed career and academic decisions before and after immigration.

Gaudencia. Having stayed in Canada for nine years at that time, Gaudencia also had some interesting experiences to share. A quiet young lady, she came to Canada with her sibling and has some experience with high school education in Canada. She spoke of the struggles of getting settled in Canada, a new place with different values from her former home. Asked to use some words to describe her settlement in Canada she responded with: "Depression; difficult". This was mainly because a number of people had promised to help her and her sibling before

they immigrated, but when they had arrived in Canada those people had disappeared. In clipped tones she revealed:

> Anyway, I thought people had schedules so whatever. I don't care…I thought when I got here life would be easy, but to get here and realize I had no one and I knew nothing about the new country, yet I was supposed to figure out stuff by myself…It was hard.

The feeling of isolation was one of the hardest emotions she had had to contend with. She also talked about her conception of home saying: "I live here but I won't call it *home home* [emphasis hers]." Her loyalties to her country of origin and the fact that home was very closely tied to the people whom she valued the most were unmistakable.

Gaudencia also talked about her experiences of high school in Canada: "When I came here I had finished high school in Zimbabwe, but then I was not up to par as far as high school credits, so I had to go to grade 10 to12 to fulfill those requirements." She recognized that even for those who have graduated high school elsewhere, there was still a high chance that they would need to take some courses before choosing career paths. She thought this would be good to share with others who would benefit from this information. To complete her education Gaudencia chose a co-op option and adult schooling, something that mature immigrant youth may be more open to than full-time regular schooling. The co-op option of upgrading allowed a student to go to school part-time and work the remainder of the time. So, a student could get credits from classes and also from employment. This was useful information for the youth participants themselves and also, they felt, a vital addition to the e-handbook.

During her co-op experience, an opportunity arose for Gaudencia to acquire permanent employment, but she was passed over, because she had not been vocal. She had felt she could not measure up to her workmates when it came to speaking English, even though she had come from

a country where English was taught the moment a child started formal schooling. That experience, coupled with incidents in which people kept saying "huh?" because they had not understood her, had silenced her even more. She noted that since that time she had become much more vocal and less worried about not speaking English well. Looking back with some regret, she revealed, "I have learned to speak up – it cost me a job once."

Sally. Sally described her move to Canada as long awaited. She had moved to Canada to reconcile with her mother. She is one of the participants who had been in Canada the longest, a total of nine-and-a-half years. She noted right at the outset: "I think my life is better now that we moved." Out of all those in the study group, she seemed to have had the most positive experiences in Canada exclaiming: "This is an opportunity to grab what is good and ditch what is bad." She was quick to add a comment concerning the air of superiority she had felt from some of her Canadian counterparts: "They judge Africans because they think we come from the bush, so they think we can't speak English or that their stuff is more superior."

She applauded the amalgamation of cultures in Canada and how that served to create an environment conducive to easily learning about other cultures. She said: "I never wanted to just hang out with and just know what Africans know. My mom encouraged me to know more." She believed that her desire to explore had come from her parents who wanted her to be world-wise – to know as much as she could about other people, because they believed that would open her mind. When asked about where home was for her, her response was:

> For me home is Canada. I can't see myself going back to Zimbabwe. I have been exposed to too much here and the reason why I left Zimbabwe for Canada is for a better life, so to me yah, home is here, Canada.

She was the only one of the six participants who said Canada was her primary home. Sally compared the clearly defined Zimbabwean gender roles to Canadian gender roles and explained why she appreciated the blurring of those gender roles in Canada. The example she gave was when she and a friend had visited a fellow Zimbabwean's home in Canada;

> When we walked in we noticed that the dad was cooking and the kids were upstairs. My friend was so shocked. They were like wow, you don't always see a father doing that with the kids playing video games. It's unheard of. To which I responded: That's what I like about Canada. It humbles everybody and makes us all somewhat equal, because we do have to respect our parents, but our dads can be more openly affectionate, more active in our lives, because in Zimbabwe it wasn't like that.

In our focus group discussion this example prompted a discussion around what was beneficial for immigrant youth to hang on to and what we needed to let go of, when we made the transition to the host country.

When I asked about her length of stay in Canada and whether she felt that had made her different, she noted:

> I think there may be differences here and there, but we come from the same place, so if I can go back to the dating thing, when I dated from other cultures, I felt like I had to fake it and be more white, whereas around people of my own culture I feel more at home.

She felt that her personal experiences had had more to do with her outlook on life, than with the length of time she had been in Canada. When I probed her about her comment about faking an identity she explained: "You try to fit in by wiping out your identity and trying to be different." The notion of fitting in had also been raised by Samusoni in an earlier conversation in relation to the way some youth were negotiating their feelings of ambiguity around identity.

Our Conversations

The following section covers, in detail, the conversations that took place in the individual interviews and the focus group sessions, including those that were focused on the creation of the e-handbook. This section is organized around our major discussion topics, which were immigration, identity and values, experiences of life in-between and information for daily living. Some of the major discussion topics emanated from the questions that I posed in the focus groups and some emerged during the discussions with the participants. Parts of the curriculum artefact are incorporated into my summary of the topics to complement and provide clarity to the progression of the participants' discussions as appropriate. The youth noted that in retrospect, they wished they had known some of this information we included in the e-handbook, or at least they wished they had researched these topics in more detail before they came to Canada. Hence, they felt these topics would be of use to youth as they made plans to immigrate. This section also addresses participants' understandings of liminality, and the various experiences they shared to demonstrate the manifestation of liminality in their day-to-day lives. In Chapter 2, after sifting through various authors' understanding of liminality, I defined liminality as a single or multiple immigration related experience(s) that trigger complexity, ambiguity, and possibility for the immigrant. The underlying premise for the liminar, based on these experiences, is a realization of themselves as the perceived "other," who is not a member of the generally accepted mainstream collective, which is made up of natives of the host country. Additionally, the liminal experiences, as a reality in immigrants' lives, are also a result of competing worldviews between the values and perspectives of their old country and the new country. This definition formed the basis of all the liminal experiences discussed in this chapter. Particular experiences that had all the elements outlined in this definition would distinguish liminal experiences discussed in this study from any

other experiences. The following addresses the youths' settlement in Canada, and some of the lessons they learned along the way.

Immigration. In our initial discussions, I asked the youth to share some photos that represented their early immigration experiences in Canada. To preserve the participants' anonymity, the photos, which in most cases included images of them, are not included in this document. Rather, I provide aspects of our discussions around the photos.

Kujo shared a picture of himself soon after moving to Edmonton. His words to describe his picture tied into his core cultural beliefs:

> That picture shows me and the outer change that has taken place. The inside has not changed – that is my values and core beliefs as I know them from Zimbabwe. Only the outer me has changed to match, sort of, the environment that I live in.

Samusoni shared pictures of himself in Banff, and of being in the snow for the first time:

> Back home I had never really seen mountain ranges because I never left the city I lived in, so when I got here it was quite fascinating to see whole mountain ranges. Then the other picture was taken the day after I got to Canada. That was my first time seeing snow. I went outside and I felt very cold. The sun was quite deceiving because I did not expect it to be that cold.

Gaudencia shared pictures of herself outside her place of work:

> I just thought, based on my experience of not talking much and what it cost me, I felt that would be a fitting picture to remind myself both about what I had missed and at the same time the vast possibilities that exist in this country.

Ursula's pictures represented her first experiences of Halloween and snow:

> I enjoyed celebrating Halloween. I really didn't think it had anything to do with the gory stuff that people talked about. For me it was the fun of dressing up in costume. As far as the snow, I loved seeing ice sculptures. Just the skill involved in making and displaying them.

Afro shared a picture she had seen that explained her experiences as a new immigrant in Canada. Her picture showed a man who was struggling up a stairway that disappeared into nothing. God was at the top of the ladder reaching down to grasp his hand. In her words: "I felt like that picture summed up my experiences in Canada, because at times when I felt like I had hit a wall, I felt that hand pulling me up and everything was ok." Only one participant, Sally did not share any photos because she did not make it to the group that day.

The pictures that the youth shared were reminiscent of a seemingly uncomplicated time for most of them. They were fairly new to Canada and were immersed in the experiences that the new country had to offer. Samusoni enjoyed the mountains and the snow. Kujo showed a picture that reinforced this idea of the inner person remaining unchanged even though the outer appearance had been altered to suit the cold environment. In his picture he was actually dressed in winter clothes, but he was quick to note that his values, which were important to him, had not changed. Gaudencia picked a picture that reminded her of her experiences of missing a great opportunity. It was a reminder for her to keep working so she could access better opportunities. Ursula, like Samusoni, loved her first experiences – of Halloween in particular.

I noted with interest that four participants, talking about their initial immigrant experiences, chose pictures, which included themselves. I thought that they might have chosen images of the landscape, or in the case of Gaudencia, the workplace, but it was important for them to be in those pictures. I asked about that and all four alluded to the fact that immigration

was a journey for them. The pictures they had chosen included them because they were in effect at the centre of their experiences. Based on their decisions to include themselves in the images that represented their initial experiences in Canada, it was evident that the participants considered themselves in relation to their surroundings. Their experiences were not removed from their immediate environment. Only one participant, Afro, did not share an image of herself. Based on the spiritual element of her selection, it made sense that she was not represented in the picture; rather it expressed that her strength came from a higher power. Her choice, therefore, was her representation of the spiritual element that encouraged her in those initial days.

These pictures presented a snapshot of the youths' collective identity as newcomers in Canada. Though they shared some of the experiences of their initial encounters in Canada, there was a more subtle side to these new experiences that they wanted to share. Simultaneous with the experiences represented in these pictures and other such pictures of themselves that they were sharing with family members back home, the participants were embroiled in making serious decisions about what direction their immigrant lives would take. As such, they realized the importance of sharing some factors upon which to base such decisions that other youth would have to make. This realization is what brought about the section on immigration in the e-handbook.

Figure 2 below shows the contents of the section on immigration. The youth felt that the first page needed to provide specific hints on some initial decisions that needed to be made around immigration categories, off campus work permits, access to healthcare and foreign credentials.

Figure 2: Immigration, from e-handbook

For most participants in the group, they had done little or no preparatory work around figuring out what life would be like in Canada prior to immigrating. Hence, a good part of their initial time in Canada was spent making decisions about which direction their lives needed to take. Samusoni noted that it was important, "for people to know the whole truth, good and bad, so that they would make informed decisions." For example, enrolling as an international student would mean that they would be assessed based on international student fees, which are significantly higher than fees for domestic students or permanent residents. This would be pertinent information for someone who had the option of becoming a resident first before enrolling as a student as that would save them money. Also, international students pay compulsory health coverage fees, which add to their already high tuition fees. Over and above educational fees, living expenses require additional income, which means a student may have to find work on or off campus. Maximum hours of employment on and off campus are stipulated by immigration. These details indicate the need for the prospective immigrant youth to find as much information as they can ahead of time, so they can be prepared. Lack of such information

on the part of the study participants manifested as delayed career decision making, indecision about whether to go to school or work first or to do both. Had the youth known about the tensions that existed between parents and children, they would have been better prepared to engage with these tensions. Knowledge about communicating in Canadian English would also have been priceless to avoid the ridicule they experienced.

Identity and values. Identity was one of the interesting topics that we discussed; it was, after all, one of the youths' primary questions at the church conference that generated interest for my study. All the participants identified primarily as Zimbabwean, but with some Canadian elements to their lifestyles. Their senses of identity were closely tied to their values and conceptions of home. Kujo for example was adamant about who he was:

> There is one thing I refuse to do, and that is to be changed by the environment. I prayed about that since I was back home. It's all about a person sticking to their goals and values. Here the playing field is different, it's hard to stick to your values with some of the freedoms here . . .

Kujo seemed intent on upholding the values that he was taught as he grew up in Zimbabwe, despite his change of environment in coming to Canada. Kujo spoke with pride about his father who had not lost his values:

> My father has very strong roots in his culture. Even if milk and honey were literally poured in Canada in a bid for him to stay that would not work. He eventually wants to return to the motherland because that is where he feels complete.

He revealed: "Some of the youth came here and were changed in no time by the environment," a phenomenon he attributed to the idea that, "maybe they moved here when they were much too young to resist the pull of the environment." Ursula concurred with this thought and shared a

pertinent concern when she noted: "I find that with immigrant youth, they are outspoken, which is okay to an extent, but I find a lot of disrespect as well, like talking rudely back to your parents." This statement alluded to a problem that occurs when old country culture engages with the new home culture. On being asked how she identified herself, Ursula quickly offered: "I would say a hundred percent Zimbabwean. I think that even after I have Canadian citizenship, I will find it weird to call myself Canadian. I left Zimbabwe, but Zimbabwe is still in me." Regardless of where she ended up staying, Ursula thought that her identity would not change.

Samusoni, also identifying as Zimbabwean, said his main concern about Zimbabwean immigrant youth was what he saw as youth trying to "fit in." He concluded that there was a certain degree of change that was acceptable: "Speaking English, for example, is a change, but a necessary one because that is how we communicate here, but there are some changes that make you wonder whether a person comes from the same country as yourself." Samusoni, like his fellow participants, also made close associations between his identity and the values that go with a Zimbabwean identity:

> So for example, people who have stayed here for a very long time, they sound very different from some of us when they speak to adults. The way they greet is different, and even some of the topics they discuss around adults are considered inappropriate in our culture. Even the tone that some of them use with grown-ups – it's not appropriate.

Samusoni reiterated that he wouldn't change but added: "With the younger immigrant kids that are here, we can be sure that there will be an 80/20 ratio of change in favour of adopting a more Canadian way of life." Kujo saw the erosion of the cultural values that parents were trying to instill in their children: "If we are not careful, our children will know nothing about the native culture." Sally, on the other hand, also identified as Zimbabwean, but added that she would be

staying in Canada permanently because she liked the country and her family was also here. Ursula felt the same way about home saying, "I think if I had *family-family* [emphasis hers] here, I would call Canada home, because I guess I value family more than place. Yah, even if my whole family came here – we are good – I really don't care where we are."

Afro talked a bit about how her identity as a Zimbabwean and the cultural values that went with it were compromised in particular situations:

> So most of the times depending on the type of people you are surrounded with, let's say maybe your friends at school, there are times when obviously I don't identify with my culture. I feel like I try to fit into their culture, at the same time though, I am still me. I still have my values and my own culture, but sometimes I feel I have to kinda change, or compromise – well not compromise me, but like negotiate my way around cultures.

Gaudencia acknowledged her identity as Zimbabwean and also alluded to some cultural identifiers of respect that she was compromising at times in particular situations:

> So every time I see an elder I have to say the customary: "How has your day been?" but the kneeling bit of it that my mom taught me, not so much, because some of the kids here do not do it, so now it feels awkward when you are the only one doing the kneeling and clapping. You don't want to upstage your peers, so I pass, but then it's forever at the back of my mind and sometimes I have to do it. I cannot even pass on things with my left hand because that is also considered disrespectful.

Kneeling and clapping is considered an added layer of respect when youth interact with their elders. When a young person encounters an elder in the home environment the expectation for the ladies is that they kneel with both knees on the ground or sit in a chair, and clap their hands in greeting as a sign of respect. Generally, the gentlemen will crouch (as in a frog position) or sit.

The ladies can also courtesy, which is basically bending at the knees for a short period while simultaneously clapping. Should a young person meet an elder on the street however, kneeling or sitting is not expected, clapping or placing the right hand over the left side of the chest will suffice for the gentlemen. For the ladies, curtseying and clapping is considered respectful enough. Having been taught to act that way with the elders in our community, Gaudencia would have felt very uneasy in instances where she knew what was expected of her culturally, but did not do it.

Gaudencia's identity as a Zimbabwean, much like all the other participants in my study, meant she was forever tied to the culture of the home country, the stories that she was told growing up and the experiences that shaped her worldview. For Ursula, after migration, there was a shift as reflected in her words: "I think people now choose when to be traditional and when they do not want to be." Her statement sums up what her peers also noted – an active selection concerning when to follow Zimbabwean culture and when to adopt more Canadian behaviour. An interesting addition to our conversation around identity came about when Samusoni posed a question about how culture was being defined in our conversations. He voiced his concern this way:

> What are we calling Zimbabwean culture? Because most of the things we see here [in Canadian culture] are being imitated back home and have become a part of our lives. If you go back home now, you will note that some people are living the North American lifestyle there.

The question helped bring clarity to the group as they worked through what culture meant in the context of this conversation.

Gaudencia had already alluded to some of the cultural values in an earlier conversation saying: “My mom will expect you to greet anyone you pass by on the street, even if you don’t know them. Coming up I was taught that acknowledging others, in or near my physical space, was respectful.” The other participants added that culture was defined by those things that were germane to our Zimbabwean existence before foreign influences had had a significant bearing on our lifestyles. Tenets such as basic respect for all human beings, for elders, a sense of community, working together for the common good and the ability to empathize, were all given as examples. All these basic values were reinforced by tangible identifiers of Shona culture such as “*kuombera* and *kutyora muzura*” (clapping and courtesying) when greeting elders, “*kuroora*” traditional marriages, and other rites and ceremonies specific to Shona culture. Western influence in Zimbabwe, as they understood it, manifested in the form of dress, the material-oriented lifestyle that came as a result of travel, and western media, and the subsequent erosion of the cultural understandings of community.

Experiences of life in-between. Our discussion of identity led to a focus on the concept of “liminality” and what the youth understood that to mean. For all of the youth the term liminality was new. It took some time for me to explain what I meant. I also shared with the participants my experiences of being *in-between* as shared in my vignettes in Chapter 1. My examples showed the complexities that they were also negotiating as new immigrants. In response to my vignette concerning registering my daughter for school, Ursula responded, “I bet if you did not have an accent, things would have gone more smoothly.” To my vignette at the doctor’s office helping the immigrant woman find her way, the responses were more intense, varying from, “Oh, I wish I was there I would have told that nurse to have the decency to lower her voice,” to “poor lady, eish, immigrants have it hard in countries that are not our own. You

would think we were here illegally." Participants were aware of the cultural nuances at play in both of these scenarios, so the part of my definition of liminality, which referred to them as "other," did resonate with them.

During individual interviews and in the focus group meetings the participants specified that liminality, for them, was not exemplified by any single experience, but that it manifested in a number of different incidents where they felt like they did not fit in with their families' values. These are discussed in the sections below. The first part of the discussion focused on liminal experiences around family and culture, and was summarized in the e-handbook (see Figures 3 and 4).

Family and culture. Figures 3 and 4 of the e-handbook show the various topics of interest that emerged from a discussion of family and culture in our focus groups. These include rights[10], change, friends, balancing competing values, and family support systems.

[10] Generally rights are believed at some level to erode some of the cultural norms that have sustained relationships for a long time. So understanding the right to privacy, for example, would be as simple as a teenager in North America putting up a sign on their bedroom door that reads "stay out." In my country that would be considered disrespectful. If it is the parents' house, then parents do have access to the room. A "keep out" sign would not be acceptable. Since most youth in Zimbabwe watch a lot of American TV, they would understand what this statement means.

Figure 3: Family and Culture, from e-handbook

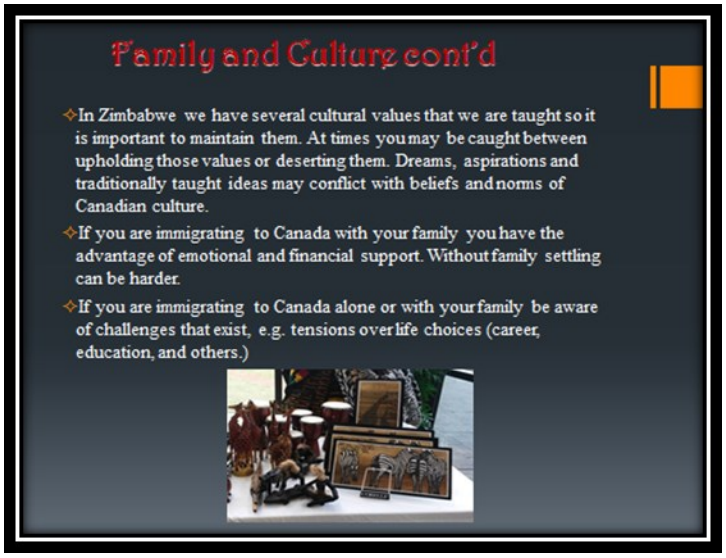

Figure 4: Family and Culture cont'd, from e-handbook

The youth described experiences that they identified as liminal having occurred during family conversations. These experiences with family were deeply rooted in the cultural background of their native country, and the specific cultural fabric they had brought to Canada. Our discussions about family were differentiated by those participants who came to Canada with their parents and those who did not have parents in Canada, and their perceptions about the ease or complexities of life depending on these situations.

The conversation started with an overwhelming emphasis on individual freedoms in Canada. This freedom accorded the participants opportunities to venture out on their own and try new things. Samusoni indicated: "We are a group of youth that are excited about searching out new opportunities and experiences." Sally echoed his sentiments: "You learn quickly that in this system you can prosper." The awareness of freedom was also encapsulated in Kujo's statement: "Here we have decent paying jobs and it's easy to get a car. Once you have a car the options

around where to go are limitless because you can drive yourself." The beginnings of an awareness of liminality, in relation to family, were clear when Kujo stated:

> So after moving this side, and getting a job and a paycheck, minds get opened up more and some kids tend to overdo it, they forget who their parents are and the clash of values begins. The parent tells you to do one thing a certain way and the child says no I want to do it this way…and tensions begin.

Afro emphasized an awareness of liminality more precisely when she talked about tensions in her family when she came to Canada, "My dad wanted me to join the family business, but I was sure I wanted to go to university instead. I was sad because I always valued my education, but at the same time I felt conflicted about disappointing my dad if I did not take up his proposition." Afro's statement and feelings explained what Kujo meant when he said parents would often have different expectations from their children. Parents' articulation of wishes and the children's seeming rebellion, as in Afro's case, complicated family relationships. The desire to please their parents and show respect was closely equated with being a good child, whereas their seeming deviation connoted disrespect and an element of disdain for instruction.

From our conversations I summarized that these tensions were indicative of a shift from the immigrant youths' ways of life back home where it had not been unusual for children to live with their parents without any tensions until they were much older – some leaving home only for schooling opportunities, jobs outside the cities they grew up in, or marriage. The newfound freedom to become independent sooner in Canada came with a sense of unease for parents, who perhaps thought their children were making major decisions too hastily, without giving due consideration to the whole context. The children themselves seemed to want the opportunity to be able to carve out their own paths, without undue pressures from their parents.

There were other ways that the participants described having found themselves or having seen others they knew in liminal circumstances that required some type of negotiation. Ursula gave an example of a friend who had been constantly compared to a neighbours' daughter, who had seemed to succeed at everything. Ursula's friend's mother would always ask her daughter: "What are you doing with your life?" which made this girl worry and wonder whether whatever she tried to do with her life would be good enough for her parents. The influence of parents' cultural and Christian values, such as the expectation that children respectfully submit to their parents, coupled with parents' desires for success for their children, were never far from the participants' minds.

When we consider the youths' experiences of family tensions within the context of the perceptions and values in Zimbabwean culture it becomes a liminal experience specific to Zimbabwean youth. When people immigrate the overarching hope is that they will achieve better lives. Better in this sense, depending on one's location, may mean a variety of things. For most Zimbabwean immigrants, better is characterized by the ability to sustain a livelihood that surpasses the livelihood that we had back home, in terms of material resources that allow us to better family situations back home. When an individual or a family migrates to a location overseas, the unspoken understanding or expectation is that one will be able to support the family left behind in a variety of ways. For some, their immigration is actually a family endeavour, with members pulling resources together to get representatives of their families abroad. This approach is guided by the concept of Ubuntu (Tutu, 1999) that I referred to in Chapter 1, where the idea of the collective is stronger than that of an individual. In Africa, a child is raised by the community, so what could be a better way to honour that community, than by giving back. This is the responsibility that immigrants shoulder when they travel abroad. It is the conviction that if

I am better off, then my family will be better off as well. There are expectations from the extended family that produce a burden of responsibility for the immigrant – whose situation is already complex. The pressure is compounded in that if one's son gets a job post-immigration and is "doing well" then word trickles back home. If one does not achieve much, in a time that is deemed long enough, then word of that trickles back home as well. One does not travel thousands of miles away from home to achieve nothing. The stakes are high and Kujo echoed this when he said:

> I didn't want to be a burden to my parents. Looking at how old I am – my parents were looking for something better from me. Our cultural values dictate that as a grown man I should be well on my way to a bright future.

The youth indicated that they had constantly been caught between exercising the freedom to make decisions as they had seen fit for their lives, and their family's ideas of what they had felt would be best for them. Even though most of the advice that families had given them was well intentioned, the participants had found it harder to balance those viewpoints with their newfound abilities to make sound decisions for themselves.

The participants' Christian values also came through in this discussion as they light-heartedly queried whether they and their parents had been reading the same Bible. This was because the participants felt that though the verses about respecting elders were good, they had not always been understood in their contemporary context. For example, the verse from Ephesians 6:1, which talks about honouring parents, also speaks to parents about not aggravating one's children. The participants felt parents had not put much emphasis on the latter part, and as such it had become a source of tension. Another verse they referred to was Jeremiah 29:11, which talks about God knowing the plans that are set for each one. Kujo explained:

> I am not sure how our parents are reading the Bible because I believe that God has a plan for each individual, children included. Therefore sometimes I feel like it's not about the greater plan that the creator has for me, but my parents' own plans, maybe even plans that they did not achieve in their own lives.

Differences in expectations and the daily application of cultural and Christian values therefore had resulted in liminal spaces that the youth had had to consistently negotiate.

Adapting to change. Participants also talked about adapting to change in personal associations as a consequence of immigration. An important aspect of change that the participants thought to include in the artefact was the need for a new wariness of relationships in the host country. Unlike the notion of "friends for life" that is a stalwart of Shona culture, referred to as "*chisahwira*," Ursula cautioned prospective immigrant youth to choose friends wisely, because the wrong friends had the potential to land them in trouble. A Shona proverb that the youth alluded to is: "*Zino irema rinosekerera newarisingade*." The literal translation is "not everyone who smiles at you is genuine."

In my portrait of Gaudencia, I noted that she spoke of people who made promises one minute, but then were gone the next – those who had made false promises to her. This warns of a strong possibility that immigrant youth would have to fend for themselves, even if, at some point, promises of help were professed. The choice and creation of good relationships would assure that the newcomer youth would have a chance at normal, rather than destructive relationships, which might lead to undesirable outcomes, such as the ones cited in the artefact (involving violence, drugs, etc.). Following this advice, the youth felt, would decrease instances of negative experiences they might have to face around relationships, such as the rejection that

Gaudencia had faced from those who professed their support and then abandoned her leaving her to fend for herself.

Sally had hoped for a different type of relationship with her father when her family had relocated to Canada:

> It was a tough adjustment for my dad to make and as a result I find he is still learning, but he will never be the kind of dad who is there for me emotionally. I still crave and miss my dad, especially when I see some fathers taking their daughters out for a meal or something like that. I have adjusted to the way they do things here and maybe my expectations are now higher.

Sally's father probably had been the same way all his life, but because Sally had experienced a different life, with actively emotionally involved relationships between fathers and daughters, she had begun to feel that her relationship with her father fell short of the ideal for which she hoped. This created a liminal space for her as she tried to understand her relationship with her father within the Canadian context. In a new environment, where the father-daughter dynamic is considered a delicate and special relationship, Sally had a tough time reconciling why her father was not becoming like the fathers that she saw when she visited with her Canadian friends. The ambiguity of this experience for Sally lay in the fact that she knew the relationship that she had with her dad was loving. She loved him and she knew he loved her, but it was not overtly demonstrated in the same ways as with her new friends. To miss her dad when he was physically present was one thing, to draw enough courage to talk to him about what she hoped for was something that was really hard for her to do. She understood that her relationship with her dad was not likely to change, drawing this conclusion based on how things had been back in Zimbabwe. She explained:

> Back home, children were sort of just seen and not heard, and as such, we never really did communicate freely with parents, particularly fathers…now that we are here I would like to be able to bring my boyfriend home so that my dad or brothers can check him out, but that is just not acceptable where we come from. You bring a boy home when you are absolutely serious, not just casually dating.

Sally was hopeful, though, that the new environment would at least shift her dad's way of looking at issues such as boyfriends. She felt relieved that her father was learning to "relax somewhat" and be in this new environment. At the time of the study, she seemed to have partly dealt with the challenge of the relationship with her father by accepting that he would never be emotionally available to her in the way in which she had hoped. This stance was complex for her because she wanted more, but she did not dare to hope for too much.

Communication. Related to the idea of change was the issue of communication. The youth felt that the lines of dialogue between parents and children were less than open than they wanted and they wished that this could change. The lack of communication presented as a liminal space where the youth felt that they could not genuinely speak to their parents, because the communication would not be well received. The complexity lies in that the people from whom the youth yearn for approval are the same people with whom they feel the most uncomfortable talking. This may sound like a typical household anywhere in the world, but what sets my study participants apart is that the cultural designates with whom they would typically have had these kinds of discussions were unavailable in the diaspora as default. As a result they might seek out counsel from people who may operate from different value systems, thereby complicating their views of the world even further. To illustrate this liminal space involving communication, Sally noted:

> I talked about wanting to introduce my boyfriend to my dad. That's not to say I am marrying him right away, but I would like my family to get a chance to check him out, see if they approve. Their approval is important to me.

In Sally's case the parents would likely regard the "audacity" of wanting to bring a boy home too much of a stretch from acceptable norms, whereas for Sally that would be the very thing that would demonstrate her trust in her parents' judgement. This shows the ambiguity of communication between parents and their children. If handled properly such a situation could present the possibility of improving their communication. When asked whether he would freely talk about his girlfriend to his father, Kujo quickly responded: "No, because the parent already has set goals for the child, so why talk about things that I know for sure he does not want to hear about, to me it seems like a waste of time." In addition he emphasized:

> I have realized that parents hold the "keys" to the conversations that happen with their children. They can decide to open a door by talking about certain things, or they can lock a door to another topic and throw away the key. It's disappointing when you really want to talk about things that excite you.

With this lack of discussion about things pertinent to the youths' lives, and the parents' seeming monopoly over conversation, the youth suggested the idea of a shut-down, which the youth described as a way of negotiating the lack of productive conversation that existed between them and their parents. Kujo explained:

> If my parents won't address issues important to me, I will shut down and just not talk to them about it. But they can't assume that because I have shut down I am not talking to someone else. I will find another elder who will attend to my need for conversation, and

then by the time they come around, I am far gone and the relationship between me and my parents will be somewhat strained.

Samusoni asked if the shut-down would apply to people actually living with their parents and Gaudencia responded affirmatively. She was of the opinion that a shut-down in communication between parents and youth living in the same house was likely to yield results because:

> The parent will realize that I am quiet and they can try and open up the conversation because they will start backtracking to figure out what we were discussing when I shut down. So maybe in that case we can restart the conversation and this time they will be more open to listening to my viewpoint. It's not advisable, but sometimes it's necessary.

Afro, addressing the tension with her father about joining the family business and the subsequent breakdown in communication noted:

> I realized that both sides had to compromise. I feel on my part I matured more. I kinda see things, not as black and white, there are some grey areas – my religion has been helpful in me being more accepting, letting things go and moving on.

The power of negotiation and her faith were portrayed as the main strategies Afro had used when confronted with the tenuous relationship with her father.

There was a sombre moment when I asked the participants what would happen if their parents were to step into the room unannounced and sit down in our group meeting. A resounding response was that it would become deathly quiet. The reasons presented for such a sudden silence included varying degrees of unease concerning how this conversation would continue at their homes. To exemplify some of the tensions that existed, Samusoni and Kujo relayed an incident where parents and youth had been convened to discuss issues around career and education in a community forum. Samusoni said:

> It was quite a heated debate, with parents taking a stance and youth doing the same. At some point in the discussion, the youth started to draw back, because we began to clue in on the fact that some of these conversations would continue at home, and we would literally be on the spot with no support from the other youth. Likely questions at home would include, "so you wanted to embarrass me in front of the other adults?"

Some participants also thought that it was possible that they might continue talking, but that they would intentionally exhibit restraint, because of parents' physical presence. Gaudencia indicated: "I would tell them what they want to hear, find an easy way out of a potential clash." Kujo added: "I would formulate a safe explanation on the spot, to get out of a potentially sticky situation."

Interactions with parents were measured depending on the subject of discussion. When asked how they would like their parents to respond, Ursula said: "I would like parents to exercise their authority without being too demanding." Kujo explained it this way: "I know my father. Some things are a no-no, but I would like him to step into my shoes when I face a situation. He just may be able to understand it better." Gaudencia still had hope, pronouncing: "I hope when I address issues that are important to me, they will understand where I am coming from and where I am going." Ursula added: "I will find someone else to talk to even if that means going over their head. They should understand that I am respectfully doing it." She had just finished recounting an incident where she and her mother had not seen eye-to-eye on an issue, and as a way of negotiating she had opted to call her grandfather, with the hope that he could talk to his own daughter. She pointed out, "I could not get through to her and I called and told my grandpa in the hope that as her dad, he would be able to."

The youth then specifically addressed the lack of the extended family support systems in Canada. Kujo explained how the physical divide between relatives back home and families here made communication and mediation between family members complex:

> Back home, aunts, uncles, grandparents and other elders were within reach and it was easier to convene meetings and try to get issues resolved. Here it's harder and that is why youth have such a tough time with complex issues if their traditionally designated supports are not in place.

Language. The discussion shifted to liminal experiences around language. The participants observed that though English was actually an official language in their country of origin, it was one of the areas that caused challenges and complexities as the youth settled into Canadian culture. To elaborate their concerns the participants discussed language using five related concepts: speaking the language, accents, compliments, English word use, and pronunciation. That discussion is represented in the e-handbook (see Figure 5).

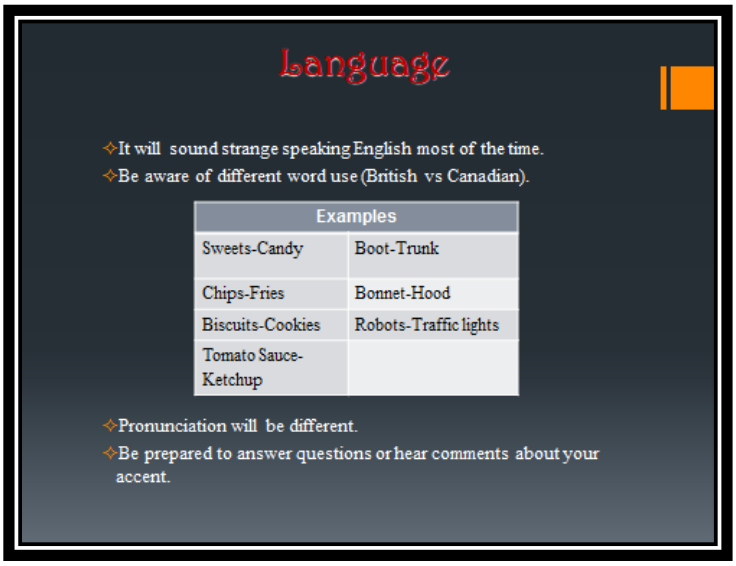

Figure 5: Language, from e-handbook

A number of their liminal experiences the youth discussed were centred on the use of the English language as a medium of communication in their host country. Though the youth spoke English fluently, because they had been taught to speak it from the time they had started elementary school, they had some experiences to share that showed the challenges of using English-as-a-second-language. Ursula was initially uncomfortable using the English language so extensively in daily life. Gaudencia told a story about a workmate who had always said "Huh?" or cupped her palm against her ear [a sign indicating that she had not understood her] whenever Gaudencia had said something. She registered frustration at not being understood. Gaudencia also clarified her lack of confidence in the English language: "When we were in Zimbabwe, even though English is not our first language, speaking broken English was not tolerated. So, I carried that here and I was scared. I knew that I did not speak English very well." Her insecurities had resulted in her shying away from speaking, so that she had not had to go through that frustration consistently. Ultimately, she had found her voice again. She declared: "This time around I am more assertive in the way I handle workmates who do not understand me. I am more open to repeating myself and maybe speaking a little slower so my workmates understand me."

In contrast to the difficulty of using English in public spaces was the experience of receiving "compliments" from Canadians surprised at the youths' abilities to speak English so well. This was an example that resonated with me, because I have experienced this as well. Though some of the participants were somewhat offended by this because they assumed that the locals knew that they had started speaking English at an early age, others chalked it up to lack of knowledge and took it as an opportunity to explain their relationship with the English language as a result of the process of colonization, in Zimbabwe's case, by the British empire.

The youth then discussed the differences between words used in Canada and Zimbabwe. The participants and I knew different terms for the same item or object – following British usage. Ursula remarked that the words she had used were a problem at first. She felt that her mainstream Canadian friends needed to:

> …understand that there is British English and American English. The two are different, and they should not expect me to speak like they do. I had said the word tortoise and no one knew what that was. I was actually told I was making up words, until a native born British guy actually verified that those were real words.

Her experience seemed to resonate with the rest of the group; they started listing words that they had found to be different when they had arrived in Canada. All participants were quick to share words that fell into this category. Examples given were: trunk/boot, hood/bonnet, cookies/biscuits, candy/sweets, fries/chips, traffic lights/robots, and the list went on. The participants noted that this was something that they wanted to include in the artefact because it would be useful information for prospective immigrant youth.

Another facet of language that the youth talked about was pronunciation. Ursula shared some conversations she had had around pronunciation of particular words with workmates who had constantly corrected the way she spoke: "Once I said the name Dana (pronounced D-a-n-a) and everybody was wondering to whom I was referring. They pronounce it as D-a-y-n-a, but I didn't know that." She indicated that in that instance she had felt as if she was outside the "circle," because she had sounded differently from the rest of her workmates. Her exact words were:

> It really sucks when you are the only one who says it differently, and I think language for me is a very stressful thing. And the strange thing is I never really used to care or be

> self-conscious about the way I speak, until I met people who keep reminding me about the way I say stuff. So now, with that confusion, I find that I think first about how I should be pronouncing a word before I actually sound it out.

Her self-consciousness had extended to other areas of her work as well. The following lengthy explanation she gave was illustrative of her awareness of her liminal experiences around language and their effects on her daily life:

> Because I am so worried about how I sound, I am not even comfortable being on the phone. I share an office with others so sometimes someone will be like can you follow up with a phone call, but I choose to use email instead. Why? Because the person who receives the mail does not have a physical marker of the sender – like my voice or accent, when I write something you will read it the way you understand it. My first days in Canada it was worse because I would even ask someone to check an email before I sent it, because I am also aware that a text can be interpreted the wrong way.

For Ursula, liminality manifested in the complexity of self-doubt based on the reactions that she got from her Canadian workmates. The fact that she was not "from here" was something that she wanted to keep people from knowing about, because, based on her first-hand experience, that brought scrutiny from her workmates. Her biggest challenge was to hone the ability to use the "right" terminology or be prepared to explain why she saying specific words. In her example of pronouncing the name Dana, ambiguity was also present because the term could have several pronunciations, depending on who was saying it. In this case, because she was a perceived "other," speaking from a location that was not the same as "theirs," the onus was on Ursula to pronounce it the way that was generally accepted in that environment.

It was simultaneously fascinating and heart-wrenching to note how the language that

some people totally took for granted, could bring about such *in-between* experiences. Another twist on terminology came in the example of the current slang use of the word "hey," as a greeting in Canada, which is very different from how it is used in Zimbabwe. Ursula noted: "Where we come from the word "hey" is used to draw someone's attention, and mostly it is an indicator that one has done something wrong." Paying attention to the nuances of the English language, as it is used in Canada, was something that the participants in my study found very important.

Participants discussed the issue of foreign accents, which they saw as another identifier that marked the youth as "not from here." Kujo speaking of the intricacies of language use remarked: "Some people may be uncomfortable speaking English because they are afraid of people laughing at them. Places like elementary or high school can be rough for kids with accents." Sally shared that some Zimbabweans actually tried to conceal their accents:

> …because if you speak in your African accent they do look down on you and it's different, for example, with someone speaking French and they have an accent, they also treat that person differently. Europeans are treated differently. A person from Africa is viewed as ignorant or uneducated, so in order to fit in you try to act more like mainstream white Canadians.

Sally also added that the more you sounded "Canadian" the fewer pointed questions you would receive about identity, place of origin and other similar questions. Ursula shared her experience about a friend who was from a different country in Africa: "My friend has what is called here a 'thick' accent. I hear the way they correct her at work all the time and I fear because I have an accent too." Seeing the way her friend was treated resulted in her self-censoring in workspaces because she did not want to draw attention to herself.

The participants noted that negotiations around language, especially in their early days in Canada, had become necessary, otherwise people would not understand what they were saying. These negotiations had included participants' constantly checking people's verbal cues or facial expressions when they spoke, so that they could tell when something was off. The verbal or physical cues allowed them to regroup before they would be corrected. So, in essence, hypervigilance around language had become a distinctive negotiation strategy for some of the youth. According to the youths, their negotiations around language had been necessary since they had arrived in Canada to the point that they no longer recognized them; they had become part of the fabric of their existence here, which allowed them to maintain relationships within work and school environments.

Another aspect of language that was not identified by participants, but rather was my observation as our conversations continued, was the practice of code-switching – a constant changing back and forth between their two languages. When I listened to the recordings during the transcription process, I realized the participants were actively switching from English to the vernacular Shona as they got more animated about the issues they were discussing. Our focus groups were certainly not the first times that participants had switched from one language to another. I found the code-switching within our group interesting. We all shared the mother language, and so we realized that we could code switch and still be able to understand each other well. I pointed out my observation to participants and asked why they had used the vernacular so much in our group conversations, but not as much in the individual interviews. Gaudencia's response was:

> I feel we have more words to express in our mother language that we have in English. In the group discussions I found that it was easy to speak in Shona because . . . more people

> seem to feel more comfortable saying more in Shona than they would English. Lastly, I really think that its force of habit, we are together most times at different functions and we just default to Shona.

Kujo explained: "Shona is my native language, and as we were having discussions with other Zimbabweans, then Shona seemed like the natural option." It was clear how comfortable they were speaking the mother language when they tried to convey thoughts that they were really passionate about. Ursula explained further,

> Some of the challenging experiences we have had as immigrant youth have been the result of using English in public spaces, with mainstream Canadians. This is our opportunity to relax and just be, without worrying about scrutiny from anyone. It's freeing to be able to do this together.

Inasmuch as English was the language of living in Canada, which the youth had to use, it was also the source of some of their liminal experiences. They welcomed the opportunity to escape to their mother language where they felt unthreatened.

Education and careers. Upon further inquiry, another pertinent subject for the participants and also a trigger for tensions between parents and children were discussions about career and education choices. The participants determined that these topics needed to be included in the artefact because this information would be useful for prospective immigrants in considering and weighing immigration categories i.e. pursuing visa classification as a student or a worker. Figure 6 from the e-handbook gave pointers about different aspects of education. Specifically, our discussion represented in this section of the e-handbook included career paths, the way jobs are valued here versus back home, and academic upgrading. Also in this discussion

the participants addressed financial planning for post-secondary education, university class sizes, various schooling options and volunteerism.

Figure 6: Education, from e-handbook

It was clear to all the participants that education in Canada had its advantages in terms of providing credentials that prove Canadian training. Gaudencia explained her process of getting into a Canadian high school. She had had to make up some of her credits and then had later selected a co-op option where she would get credits for working and going to school at the same time. Because most of the participants were planning to go back to school at some point, they chatted a bit about the different options for schooling, and the fact that most youths who come to Canada will have already gone through high school in their own countries, but would still need to do some sort of upgrading here in order to qualify to apply for college or other post-secondary training. Canadian upgrading also meant immigrant students would be more eligible for post-secondary grants and scholarships. In most cases, re-taking high school courses meant immigrant

youth would have to go to high school with youth younger than them. From this discussion the co-op option seemed most popular because as Gaudencia explained: "At least you don't feel like the old one in the class because you are actually working as well."

Afro could speak most comprehensively about post-secondary experience, since she was the only one, at the time of the study, who was in post-secondary education. As she had experienced the large classes and the fact that relationships with professors were not as close as those back home, she noted the importance of including that information in the e-handbook. For someone who is not used to the Canadian postsecondary context, Afro recognized, studies could be seriously derailed if she/he was a student who needed closer attention from colleagues and instructors. Afro also noted:

> In the first year or two I was lost because the educational system was so different. Whereas back home people would follow up to make sure your work was done, here it's a different ballgame. If I don't push through school, nobody is really going to push me through.

The participant felt that this point was important for the education of immigrant youth. If students from other countries realized this beforehand, they could prepare themselves to be more independent throughout their post-secondary experience, or seek out available resources if they required more attention in the school environment. Afro found herself needing to navigate larger classes than she was accustomed to while also trying to understand the kinds of relationships that existed between students and their professors. She also had to adjust to relationships with other students, yet the school process did not stop to give her time to adjust. She had to deal with those uncomfortable spaces and try to keep up with her schoolwork as well. When asked what would have made the school experience better for her during those first years she revealed:

> If I had more interface with the teachers and with most of the students, it would have been better. I found in most cases you only made one friend, and it was not as personal. I definitely would have used a bit more support at the school.

The participants who had wanted to go to school right after immigration cited financial limitations as a barrier to pursuing post-secondary education. The youth felt it was important to reiterate the financial implications and costs of international study.

Closely tied to the choice of career paths was our discussion around conceptions about certain professions in Canada that were different from conceptions at home, which the youth felt prospective immigrant youths needed to be aware of. Afro remarked:

> The whole workforce in Africa is very different. It's important to have a broad mind and learn all the options available, even if they think it's not what they want to do now. You may not know for a while, until you actually see that being a nurse is not so bad.

The participants felt that if immigrant youth understood all these nuances, then they would be better prepared to make the journey across borders. Should they decide to go to school right away, they would be aware of the educational routes to the careers they wanted. In keeping with their idea of the e-handbook as a map, they added the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website as a handy resource for prospective immigrant youth to research different education and career paths. This was mentioned as a key website in learning more about the post-secondary environment, work environments, funding sources in Canada, and more. Gaudencia spoke to this when she said:

> I know one thing is that there are a lot of resources here – be it for school, work, anything, and you always get help. Me without the resources, I could have been

somewhere else, but the YMCA center, for example, really helped me out when I was looking for a career.

The participants noted the importance of resources, but also the fact that most immigrants only got to know about these after immigration. They wanted to give others a head start by frontloading requisite information. The lack of information upfront, as was the case for many of the participants, resulted in having to negotiate liminal spaces causing delayed career choices, exemplified by Afro deciding that she actually wanted to be a nurse after initially embarking on a different, but thankfully related, academic path.

Participants also noted the importance of volunteerism in Canada and how rewarding it was to give back by helping others. Simultaneously, volunteering helped them acquire Canadian work experience and possibly actual future jobs. They felt that in as much as volunteering was working and helping, the volunteer experience was also an "education" of sorts in that it helped new immigrants acclimatize to the Canadian workforce and pick up skills and competencies necessary for the Canadian workforce. So, being a volunteer, in a sense, also mitigated the liminal spaces of unfamiliarity with the culture of the Canadian workforce, something that could be detrimental to other immigrant youths' work experiences. Our conversation then turned to careers and monetary remuneration. Figure 7 outlines the related issues, which included technology and jobs, work hours, and the relevance of Canadian work experience.

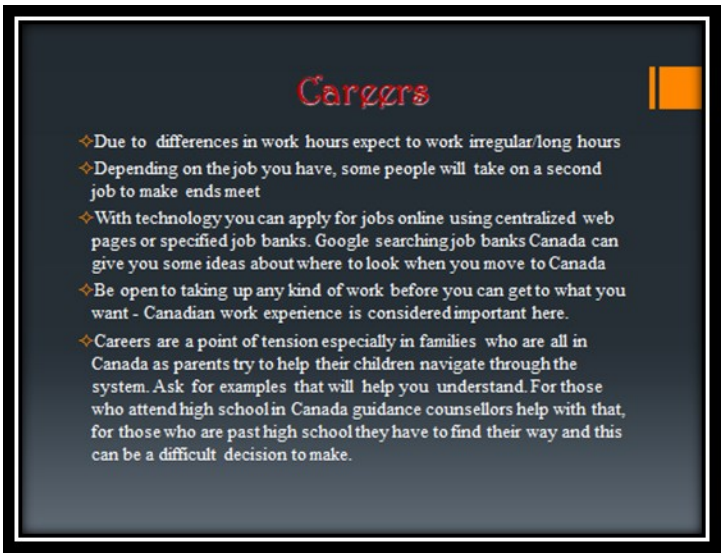

Figure 7: Careers, from e-handbook

The participants had a lot to say concerning careers in Canada. The first four pointers in the Careers section of the e-handbook provided information relevant for prospective immigrant youth with regards to the possibility of long work hours, multiple jobs, the power of technology in sourcing job opportunities, the importance of Canadian work experience, and the need for openness towards taking on any available job to gain initial work experience. The last point spoke to the liminal space that youth inhabited with respect to careers. In our conversations, most of the participants noted that they were making ends meet with the same jobs they had had back home, and that their first impressions of Canada had been that for a young person jobs were easy to find. None of them indicated struggling to get a job. They agreed that with the multitude of resources, one could work hard to achieve one's dreams.

The liminal space they discussed was around the complexity of negotiating which line of work to pursue, as there was a vast selection to choose from. The possibilities were endless. The already complex context of choices was compounded by their families' conceptions of a "good job." Samusoni said, when he came to Canada, his family had wanted him to become a

paramedic. Samusoni had not fought this decision, but instead had gone and done his research about what the job prospects were like, how much being a paramedic paid, and other specifics relevant to the job. He explained:

> I figured out what program I wanted to get into, then researched that and realized in terms of money it paid at least sixty thousand dollars more than the profession my parents had suggested. So I took both my research sheets and showed them and they told me to do what I wanted to do. So, sometimes, as children we need to take the discussion to a higher level. Instead of staying in the struggle of words, research and present your facts.

Sally's career struggle had been different because she had tried to establish her own business, but had faced some hurdles. She revealed:

> We know that people learn differently and not everybody is going to be a PhD. So you have to find what suits you. I chose to start my own business, but being in a community where school is considered important, nobody would really help me out. They would actually be like: I won't help you because I want you to go to school. People would come up to me and say they were accountants. One of my friends is actually a doctor, but I had nothing in the way of post-secondary education, so no one would really listen.

Sally wanted a career, a self-made one, but she struggled with the lack of support because of her perceived lack of credibility that came with not having a college education. Ursula echoed the idea that not everyone needed to be in school:

> Education is good, but if you are not academically gifted, don't waste your time. You waste money that you don't have doing something you don't love, instead of channelling that money to a different type of education, one that leads to trades, or cosmetology.

The participants who had come to Canada without family had felt the pressing need to get jobs, because they had needed the money. For some, it had not really mattered what they would do, especially with their first jobs, because what they had needed was money to pay the bills. Those with family had had a bit more leeway, but had faced tensions of their own as they had ventured into careers they wanted. Others had struggled with the careers their parents had been guiding them into. Afro, for example, said:

> I was really not happy about nursing. I used to be like…What? People come to Canada to do nursing? And now I am like, oh my God, I want to get into nursing. Everything is so different here. The trades are popular, but when you are coming from Zimbabwe being a carpenter is not really considered a career, not a prestigious one that is. But here it is a major money-maker, so people need to listen to the advice of those who have been here longer.

Though she had not seen the advantages of nursing in the beginning, Afro had grown to love it, and appreciate the fact that her parents had suggested it right at the beginning. Her only regret was that she had not been receptive to their advice sooner.

Gaudencia talked about a friend of hers whose parents had wanted him to be a doctor, but he had known that that was not where he had wanted to be. She explained:

> He found himself caught between what he wanted and what his parents wanted for him. Instead of putting up a fight he just indicated that he would go and shadow some staff at the hospital and then decide after that. He never even went there and just came back a couple of days later and told his parents he could not handle it, and after that he went on to do what he wanted.

The issue for our discussion then became whether it was wiser to pursue one's dream job or a job that was practical and paid more money. Ursula thought it could be either depending on the timing. She said: "Trades are good because they pay well;" but she was quick to add:

> Doing what you love is even better because you are passionate about it and as a result you work hard at it and it can pay off. But you also want to look at the market, right? If it's money you want then find out what job can give you money, if it's what you love then go on doing what you love. If it pays it pays. If it does not, well you still have job satisfaction, because it would not be defined in monetary terms.

Samusoni on the other hand thought it was much better to look at what paid:

> I have noticed that there are a few people who actually follow their dreams. The passion is there, but your actual life situation determines what you choose for work. Maybe you already have a family, or are planning to have one, and you conclude that if you take a low paying job your family will not be able to afford the basic necessities. So, in that case, you decide to forgo your dreams and you choose the job that comes with the quality of life you expect.

Gaudencia believed in the importance of getting an education, especially for people who worked risky jobs like the trades, where people might be injured. She reasoned thus:

> I think I would say school is important no matter what. In our discussions people are like you can come here and do trades and get your money, but then I'm like ok what if you get hurt, what are you going to do? Regardless, you need education to fall back on.

The last session of our conversation was focused on what else participants thought prospective immigrant youth should know prior to immigration to help them avoid dwelling in some of the liminal spaces that they had experienced. Samusoni responded:

> I would first ask them why they are coming to Canada, what they want to accomplish. Then I would tell them about the career choices available, the money that you can get so you can live comfortably. Some careers do not allow this and so they would need to know where to look to get good jobs.

The processes of making educational and career choices were seen as different for participants who came to Canada either with or without their parents. Gaudencia who came to Canada without her parents indicated:

> Being separated from my parents, I was kinda excited about the newfound "freedom," but at times I would be like, especially when preparing for school, I always had my mom to do that. So I think I have learnt that I can do things by myself. I just had to find the right people and the right resources to hold myself up.

About her perception of the life of her peers with parents in Canada, she explained:

> I think if you have your parents here it's much easier because you have the parents doing everything for you. Well…I don't know if they are actually doing everything, but if you do have them here then they would help with school. If not school, then they would help with accommodation. There is always a fallback plan.

Ursula added to this by noting that:

> With family you kinda depend a bit more on other people, and maybe you won't work as hard. That may be a weakness. I find that youth who are here by themselves, are more resilient, much like the single mother who has learnt to navigate life by taking on both parental roles for her kids.

Kujo offered a different side by giving an example of a friend, who after immigration to the U.S. felt that: "He was free to make independent decisions that did not have the undue influence of his

parents. He was tired of the tensions at home and needed space to do things on his own." The importance of parental support was acknowledged by all participants; the extent of the support needed was the one factor that all participants called into question. They felt upon arriving in Canada they had needed some leeway so as not to feel coerced into decisions.

Information for daily living. The discussions with the youth also brought to the fore some issues that the youth felt Canadians tended to take for granted. For a person new to Canada these same issues could prove overwhelming, frustrating, and sometimes confusing. To this end the e-handbook included a section titled Information for Daily Living (see Appendix E).

In the daily living section the youth addressed various topics. Winter weather was seen as an important addition to the e-handbook considering the extreme Canadian winters. Particular attention was given to the type of clothing that people wear in winter to clarify for those not accustomed to extremely cold weather. Getting sick, for an immigrant, who had not figured out how the health system worked could be difficult; worse still if he/she were not covered under the provincial health program. The costs associated with medication and/or hospitalization can be insurmountable. So, weather, though included in the e-handbook primarily for information purposes, also could also lead to liminality if the newcomer's health was compromised due to not knowing how to care for her/himself accordingly. The challenge of loneliness (potential mental illness) because of a lack of a strong support system, and the complexity around having to miss work as a new employee in a new country, also had the potential to trigger the state of being *in-between*. The far-reaching ripple effects of illness for an immigrant affect more than just themselves; as such they are thrust into positions where somehow they have to negotiate it all.

Religion is a mainstay for many of the Zimbabwean people; hence, the participants felt that it would be important to talk about religion in Canada. The participants also noted the

availability of familiar religious experiences in Canada in the form of small Zimbabwean community churches. When they had come to Canada, participants had noticed that in school it was not a given that students would pray before classes. Christianity, though the predominant religion in Canada, was not the only widely recognized type of spirituality. In contrast, in Zimbabwean schools, Christianity was acknowledged through morning prayers. Additionally, it was not unusual to see public evangelism in Zimbabwe, whereas in Canada people rarely preached in the open, except for well-orchestrated crusades. So, knowing to whom and when to talk about openly about their beliefs would be important for new immigrant youth to Canada.

The participants also included a section on technology as they differentiated between dial-up Internet, which was common in Zimbabwe, which unfortunately posed problems with communication across borders, and high speed Wi-Fi, which made for much faster communications around the globe. They also wanted to convey the general pervasiveness of technology in Canadian society, pervasive even in mundane daily experiences such as riding a bus, where all the participants agreed, people rarely ever spoke to each other since everyone was preoccupied with their own electronic gadgets. Participants also called attention to some serious negative outcomes of the widespread use of technology, such as hacking, surveillance, and cyber-bullying, which were not as prevalent in Zimbabwe.

Our discussion also covered transit where the youth talked about the confusion that can result when one is not used to the way public transit works. They included pointers on bus numbers and routes, tickets and transit passes. The participants all had had to learn how to use the transit system and felt it was important that this information be included in the e-handbook. Again, the list of pointers was not meant to be exhaustive in the e-handbook, but provided a hint of things that newcomers could look for and ask about.

Health and fitness was another topic that was deemed relevant because Canada is touted as a health conscious society, but has its share of problems such as obesity and general ill health, because of the availability of so much refined and fast food. In contrast, food in Zimbabwe is less refined and results in fewer negative health implications. The health and fitness section was deemed important for two reasons: First, to provide information on some of the sports activities that happen year round in Canada for those who were sports enthusiasts. Second, the section hinted at the need to be intentional about staying healthy through active lifestyles to avoid health complications.

In conclusion, the youth indicated the need to add a few other notes that they thought newcomers needed to know including, the rampant use of swear words and gestures in public spaces, and some of the revealing attire worn during summer months. To some extent, all these topics in this section had the potential to produce some level of liminality, in the form of complications such as the inability to navigate the transit system, or challenges that came with the inability to dress appropriately for cold weather and the illness that could result. All in all, the participants thought that this last section included some useful gems of information that they did not want to omit.

Conclusion

The data for this participatory action research study were presented through the lived experiences of the study participants. The primary research techniques of interviews, and focus group discussions, along with my participant observations, were used to engage with the research questions. Youth who participated in this study were initially asked to describe their lives prior to immigrating, their identities, and their conceptions of home. In their individual interviews, the youth showed strong ties to their native home, primarily because of the people

that they had left behind. For some, it was necessary to have those people present in order for them to consider Canada home. For others, their loyalty lay with the place that they had left, hence they still considered Zimbabwe home. All of them identified as Zimbabweans who had immigrated for various reasons, among them family reunification, hopes for a better life, and school.

In the focus groups, I presented the concept of liminality and its major elements: complexity, ambiguity and possibility. These elements were present to varying degrees in the experiences shared by the youth throughout the group discussions. The additional characteristics of liminality, namely: exclusion, separation, alienation, decreased feelings of safety and security, not fully belonging in either culture, fear, feeling belittled, shame, anger, isolation, exhaustion, loneliness, an opportunity for deep reflection, strength, an opportunity for solidarity, a strong vantage point and action inducing were summarized in Chapter 2. These characteristics were important because they clarified some of the feelings and emotions connected with what I defined as the three major elements of liminality. The term subsequently resonated with the youth. In the focus groups, youth indicated that liminality was present in their lives. I asked them to talk about the various experiences of liminality that they had encountered since their move to Canada.

Their responses to the question of liminality touched on experiences ranging from parent-child tensions, language issues, education and careers, among other topics such as immigration and some information for daily living that they thought would be necessary for prospective immigrant youth to know. The various topics that the youth presented showed the enthusiasm that the youth had for telling their stories, especially with an audience that they considered safe with which to share their vulnerable moments. The topics also showed some of the pitfalls of

their experiences, which became the impetus for the e-handbook designed for prospective youth – to give them a sense of what life was really like in Canada.

This chapter covered some topics that participants thought were crucial for new immigrant youth to know. The focus groups and interview sessions focused on those topics that may be of value for wide distribution to immigrant audiences. They included some hints as to what new immigrants should expect in their daily lives as part of the population of Canada. The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the findings presented here in Chapter 4. My discussion is approached through revisiting the research questions posed in this study and engaging with them in light of these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Revisiting the Research Questions

My study with Zimbabwean immigrant youth was rooted in the notion of liminality as it relates to immigrant youth experiences, towards gaining a deeper understanding of the youths' curriculum journey. In Chapter 2, drawing on literature by various authors (Anzaldúa 1987; Bannerji, 2000a, 2000b; Ledgister, 2001; McLeod, 2010), I defined liminality as a single or multiple post-immigration experience(s) that trigger complexity, ambiguity, and possibility in the individual. The underlying premise of these experiences for the liminar is a realization of themselves as the perceived "other," who is not considered a member of the mainstream collective. Additionally, the liminal experiences are a result of competing worldviews between the values and perspectives of the old country and the new country as a reality in immigrants' lives.

With this definition as a guide, my group of Zimbabwean immigrant youth participants set out to explore immigrant youth experiences. The participants agreed that they identified with this concept of being *in-between.* Chapter 4 summarized those conversations. The participants also revealed that they felt they had not been constantly in this state the entire time they had been in Canada. Instead, for them, liminality was best explained through specific and sometimes isolated incidents that they encountered. They also believed that when people congregate around a common theme such as liminality, the way that the theme manifests in individual's lives can be vastly different from one person to the next. This impacted our discussion as a whole. As we engaged in our participatory process, we were attuned to this fact and sought to honour and be attentive to each experience as it was articulated. The polarities of thought expressed in the focus groups and the interviews created healthy discussions because we heard views from varied

vantage points. Part of our work for the curriculum artefact was to find ways to best represent those varied perspectives. By conceptualizing immigrant youths' experiences as liminal and taking on Pinar's (1995) understanding of curriculum as "conversation" the research group started the communal work, which was intended to address the following main question:

> *What implications does conceptualizing Zimbabwean immigrant youth experiences as liminal, through the collaborative creation of a curriculum artefact, have for understanding immigrant youth experiences and how can this process contribute to the youths' ongoing negotiation of their experiences?*

To better attend to the main question the following sub-questions were also taken into consideration:

1. *Will the youth understand their experiences as liminal?*
2. *What curriculum artefact will the youth create with me?*
3. *How do youth negotiate their experiences and how has the participatory research process aided in their curriculum journeys?*

This chapter responds to these sub-questions through a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4 that emerged through the participatory process with the youth. This chapter also pays attention to the e-handbook that was created and some of ways in which this participatory process ensured continued negotiation by the youth in their day-to-day lives. The following is a discussion of the themes that emerged in my conversations with the participants. I emphasize that all these themes were noted by participants as sites of liminal experiences, so the reader should understand them as such.

Sub-question 1 will be answered on two fronts. First by presenting the core themes on liminality that emerged from the study, and then by showing how liminality was a useful concept

in the general understanding of the curriculum journeys for immigrant youth. The themes in effect describe the learning that was derived from "running the course" of the study. The participant discussions in the groups and their representations in the e-handbook are the participants' specific contributions to each other and subsequently to prospective immigrant youth, with implications for the education of the larger community on immigrant youth experiences. I reiterate the point I made in Chapter 2 about liminality not being a be-all and end-all. In this study, it served to illuminate experiences and how they impacted immigrant youth. My discussion around sub-question 2 will examine the artefact in detail, specifically around youths' decisions to create it, the process of creation, and the function for which it was intended. Finally, in response to sub-question 3, I will articulate the specific ways in which the participatory process employed in this study was useful in providing tools that helped youths' continued negotiation of their experiences. To further understand liminality and to illustrate the negotiating prowess of the study participants, in this section I make connections with some of the literature presented in Chapter 2.

Addressing the Research Questions & Other Thematic Discussion

Response to sub-question 1: Will the youth understand their experiences as liminal? The premise of talking about youth experiences in my study was through the use of the concept of liminality. Based on my own encounters, I believe that when experiences are accurately named, they can be appropriately discussed. I introduced the concept of liminality at the beginning of our collaboration, as a way of naming my experiences, and allowing the participants the opportunity to name their experiences for themselves. I introduced the term early on in the focus groups as a way of decentralizing that power that comes with naming. I know that liminality is not an everyday concept. Instead of just using it, I defined it and explained the way I

was using it, so that as we engaged collaboratively the participants would understand it better. Initially the youth registered confusion because they had not heard of the term before. I also wondered at the time if the confusion was because the term was in a language that they did not understand fully. If I had replaced the term liminality with a Shona equivalent, would they have understood it better? I considered what Shona word I would use, but after many attempts I could not find an equivalent. Some of the characteristics that I used to qualify the term liminality have Shona equivalents, so these helped the youth to better understand the term.

van Gennep (1970) talks about liminality as involving, in part, the tensions around letting go of pre-existing values. Turner (1975) described liminality as an *in-between* place characterized by transiency, ambiguity and possibility. For Anzaldúa (2009), liminality is a threshold, a borderland where various transformations occur. For her, liminality is characterized by unpredictability, precariousness, transience, displacement and instability. Anzaldúa is also the one who defined liminality as a place of endless possibility. Bannerji (2000a) conceptualized liminality as an insider-outsider state of existence, in which one did not fit in either culture. Ledgister (2001) understood liminality as a state of not fitting in either place of residence and the culture thereof. I summed up liminality as a state that induced three main elements: complexity, ambiguity, and possibility, as well the other characteristics enumerated by the authors cited above.

Though I used the concept of liminality in specific ways, my intention was to provide a common springboard for my discussions with the immigrant youth concerning their experiences. In using the term liminality, I was also mindful of McIntyre's (2000) statement that, "developing a predetermined program for working with participants within a PAR project runs the risk of constraining the emergence of participants' experiences" (p. 128). With this understanding, I

embarked on this study accepting that the term either would or would not be acceptable or relevant to the youth. I left room for the participants to come up with different ways of enunciating their own experiences. I respected their process and communicated the flexibility they had to explore these experiences further. Liminality as a concept helped me name my experiences, and as it turned out was useful for the participants to do the same.

Once the participants understood how liminality was being defined in my study they began to consider their various immigration related experiences. They identified and articulated some of these experiences. Using my definition of liminality, participants engaged with each other about what they thought was liminal or not throughout their discussions. In this interactive process, I witnessed the clarity the participants gained from sharing their own and listening to others' experiences. According to Lesage (2002),

> If it is through narration that one can construct oneself, the location of one's self at the same time always occurs in relation to others. Usually we only make sense of our experience by telling it to our circle of friends; this reciprocal reflecting on the experience is the way we learn to understand ourselves, others, and our milieu. (p. 109)

It was a process of narration that the participants went through, bringing about the "equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing" qualities that Koch, Selim and Kralik (2002) identified in their PR work. The study participants then used the knowledge they acquired from their interactions to create a handbook to educate other prospective immigrant youth about life in Canada.

Three themes, all examples of liminality that emerged from my interactions with the youth echo McLeod's (2010) discussion on migrant populations. I will reference our discussions using examples to show the significance of these to my study. The themes as discussed in the following section, which demonstrate how the youth understood the concept of liminality, were:

parent-child tensions, language, and foreign credentials/professional upgrades. Another emergent theme explored the negotiation of these experiences. My discussion of this theme highlights the ways in which the youth have negotiated and continue to negotiate liminality in their lives.

Parent-child tensions. It is important to note that though parent-child tensions were quite important as a theme for this study, this phenomenon is by no means exclusive only to the Zimbabwean community. Research shows that tensions are quite normative in parent-child relationships. Fingerman (2001) concluded that parent-child tensions stemmed from differences in developmental needs. Fingerman cited the concepts of independence, defined as self-care, which was also enunciated by the youth in my study, and the level of investment in the relationship by either party, as some causes of parent-child conflict. Birditt, Miller, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2009) developed Fingerman's ideas to show that tensions tended to vary in intensity depending on the situation, ranging from minor irritations to overt conflict. Their rationale for why tensions occur is noteworthy: "parents are more emotionally invested in the relationship than are adult children and this generational difference remains consistent across the lifespan" (p. 287). These ideas help explain the tensions that the youth in my study faced and they also echo some of the ideas the youth themselves raised. Considering the normative nature of parent-child tensions, what complicated such tensions for youth in my study were attachment and adjustment difficulties that came as a result of separation from their native home environment, and reunification in a foreign land for some of the participants (Lashley, 2000; Artico, 2003).

The study participants expressed their need to have more relevant discussions with their parents and guardians. This parent-child domain was defined by the youth as a place of liminality evidenced by the complexities and challenges around conversations with their parents on

pertinent subjects. Subjects they identified as important included relationships with the opposite sex, decisions on leaving the family home and decisions about careers or school. From the youths' points-of-view, parents considered these important, but only when the youth agreed with their parents' views on the topics. The youth felt trapped between Zimbabwean values and parents' hopes and wishes for them and the expectations to "fit in" to their new environment. Tensions around the values they wanted to uphold and the decisions they wanted to make in the host country created challenges in familial relationships especially when the participants preferred values of the new country over their parents' values.

Some of the reasons for the friction cited by youth, either precipitated or compounded by their immigration, were generational differences, parents' lack of understanding of their children's hopes and dreams, as well as a stoic adherence to home values. Ferber and Wong (cited in Lesage, 2002) explain this liminal space as, "pressure with parents over lifestyle and goals as a result of *cultural* differences" (p. 185). McLeod (2010) touches on these participants' concerns in three of his themes on migrancy (as outlined in Chapter 2); they focus on some complexities and ambiguities migrants would contend with consistent with notions of liminality:

> 1. Migrancy can expose the migrant and his or her children to displacement, fragmentation and discontinuity.
>
> 2. Migrants and their children occupy different positions due to generational differences, but they can have similar experiences of feeling rootless and displaced.
>
> 5. Living "in- between" can be painful, perilous, and marginalizing. (p. 250)

Of the three themes listed above, the first and fifth of McLeod's (2010) themes address the brokenness of life as the immigrant youth experienced it, as well as the attendant feelings of displacement, pain and marginalization. Samusoni talked about this as the fear of the unknown.

Kujo's studies were disrupted as a result of immigration. When they got to Canada, nothing was the same. It was their new home, so they had to learn how things were done here, which often interrupted and conflicted with the way they had done things back home. The extended family unit had changed; a transnational family constellation (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2010) taking its place. In Canada it was just the core family unit for some, and no one for the others.

Responsibilities had shifted as well. Where Kujo had been responsible for his brothers back home, when the family reunified he had to relinquish that role to his father. As a result, he felt some level of exasperation by the lack of respect exhibited by his brothers to their father who had cared for them financially, though in absentia for a number of years. Foner (2009) and Zhou (2009) also address parents' views in relation to what Kujo regarded as disrespect. They noted that parents whose children immigrated after them often reported struggles with asserting their authority and frustration in that their financial and emotional sacrifices were not fully appreciated by their children. To worsen the situation, extended families were out of reach, with no grandparents, uncles or others to mediate when tensions arose. In such instances, the immigrant families had to grapple with the pain of their extended family's absence and attempt to resolve emergent concerns themselves. Discontinuity in family systems was tough on those whose whole value system was built on the idea of community.

A lesson learned by Zimbabwean immigrants, due to the lack of immediate family supports, was that as a family of immigrants, we owe it to each other to be responsible to one another. Our connection as immigrants is not based on meeting our selfish needs, but based on the need for creating an extension of the families we left back in Zimbabwe, the people we longed for when we needed help in trying times. In the study, as immigrants in Canada, the youth and I found ourselves sharing the same space and similar liminal experiences and began creating

structures of relationships much like the ones we left in the motherland. This type of support network closely mirrors the responsibilities of the cultural designates. The relationships provided the much-needed reprieve for youth in difficult times, especially when those difficult times were a result of the conversations with immediate family members. The youth just needed opportunities to talk through their experiences with a neutral, but caring, individual. It was evident that participants had learned to care for themselves by asking others to help in difficult situations. They knew to consult others because they realized how dangerous silence could be to their emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical well-being. The liminal space created through tensions with parents allowed the youth to start forming alternative support systems.

McLeod's (2010) second theme speaks to the idea of generational differences and the different emphases on values. For the older generation, as seen in some examples given in Chapter 4, parents were more likely to hold on to the values of the home country because their identity was embedded in those values. After participating in several discussions focusing on life and parenting in the diaspora, it was evident that when parents moved to a different location, they wanted something to identify with, since everything around them had shifted significantly. By extension, they wanted the same for their children. Parents understood that the context had changed; they thought if they kept their values they retained the capacity to help their children stick to those values. If, however, they lost their values, they felt that the respect they deserved as elders would dissipate, which was uncharted territory. What would parents do with a generation of children who had taken up values of the new country, that they did not quite understand themselves? How could they possibly see eye-to-eye with their children when operating from a different value system?

As immigrants, the youth found themselves in a host country with parents who stuck to their beliefs and continued to impart these to their children. The children understood what was expected of them, with one major caveat, when they stepped into public space they were almost required to be a different persona in order to fit in. The "pressures between their traditional cultural values and modernity" (Bucholtz 2002, p. 529) emerged as youth befriended people from all over the world and at some point started questioning what they had been taught. These pressures resulted in a phenomenon Anzaldúa (1987) terms *un choque*, a cultural collision, characterized by "the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference" (p. 100), causing ambiguity and complexity. According to Tamis-LeMonda, Way, Hughes, Yoshikawa, Kalman and Niwa (2009) a further bifurcation between the individual/autonomous and the collective/relational precedes the resulting dynamics in parent-child relationships, with the parents emphasizing the relational aspects of their culture as they helped youth with decision making. The youth focused more on the independent, self-caring attitudes (Fingerman, 2001) that they understood as a crucial part of growing up in a foreign context. The questioning and the tension that arose from these polarities created in the youth in my study emotional dissonance as well as great distractions as they tried to make important life choices. The participants wondered if it was of any value to pick and choose aspects of the new culture that would benefit them and their future families. They concluded that balancing the two cultures was possible. In asking these questions, the participants' identities were already changing. Neethling (2008) explains, "identity is a journey, not a destination. It is continuously constructed anew as the social context changes" (p. 32). Sally exemplified what Neethling was referring to when she talked about learning to appreciate the arts, like going to watch opera, something that she never would have done back home. She talked about her mother emphasizing

the importance of opening up to new experiences and learning to live differently as a way to grow as a person. She emphasized how new life experiences were not necessarily better, but different and worth experiencing.

The youth struggled with negotiating values that were different in the new context. For the youth, complexity occurred in trying to shed some of the old values so they could fit in, and yet maintain some of those old values to prove to their parents they had not forgotten where they came from. For the parents, the youth felt, the complexity arose in trying to maintain those values so they could have a lifeline to support their children if the need arose. Both groups were outside their comfort zones and found themselves needing answers. The participants in this study emphasized the need for parents to open lines of communication because they seemed to hold the decision making power. Kujo's input concerning the symbolic "keys" that parents hold to the areas of their children's lives was one of his most insightful contributions to the focus groups.

As a parent, the youths' insights taught me to open my eyes and ears and to be attuned to the concerns of the youth. McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) explain that youth are an important asset to the community, which means that their concerns and views count in discussions that build the capacity of a given community. I learned the importance of stepping fully into my role as a parent with an understanding of the new context and how that impacted youth in various ways. The youth participants needed parents to understand that youth also face various struggles. Minimizing, dismissing, or ridiculing their struggles was not the way to engage with the liminal space of communication that existed. On the contrary, parents needed to listen with raw openness (Anzaldúa, 2009; Bambara, 1981; Keating 2007) and be ready and willing to actively take part in discussions that concern youth.

Overall, the study discussions indicated that youth wanted to have open and honest relationships with their parents, but feared parents would not understand them and would measure them against their own values and expectations. The youths revealed they would stop talking if their parents walked into our study groups because some of the material would be read as a slight to parents' well-intended efforts to help them make good life decisions in a foreign country. This example was indicative of the boundaries that participants were not prepared to cross in conversations with parents or guardians. It also was clear that more work still needed to be done to get parents and youth to a place where the latter felt their contributions to discussions would be considered without the negative consequences.

Our parent-child conversations also turned to career choices. Some youth considered the possibility that parents were projecting onto them the dreams they were not able to accomplish for themselves. The notion that parents wanted better lives for their children was not, in itself, regarded as negative. However, participants had reservations in instances where parents were suggesting careers in which the youth had absolutely no interest. They also hoped parents would understand that it was challenging to make career decisions; parents needed to be flexible enough to encourage youths in their chosen profession. It did not matter what career the youth chose, as long as they worked hard. Research corroborates that the chances for immigrants to excel in chosen jobs are quite high. Carliner (1980) cites motivation, ambition, and the ability to work long and hard as some of the strengths immigrants have.

The youth also admitted that parents were not always wrong with their suggestions. For example, Afrolicious's father had suggested nursing as a stable career, but she did not want to pursue it because of the negative preconceptions about nursing she had from home. Research suggests a variety of reasons why nursing is considered an undesirable profession in

"developing" countries. Stilwell, Diallo, Zurn, Vujicic, Adams and Dal Poz (2004) cite low pay, poor working conditions, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of promotion opportunities, non-involvement in decision making, and lack of support from supervisors as reasons. These reasons also spur the decisions to migrate in search of better livelihoods. Afro's initial surprise with the fact that people actually left Zimbabwe to be nurses in Canada gave over to a genuine affinity for the profession after understanding that the profession is viewed positively in Canada. In fact, her major contribution in the parents/career discussion was that youth with parents who emigrated before them needed to be open-minded, because parents actually had knowledge that would help youth make sound career decisions.

Money was another consideration that was important in the discussions. The youth indicated that they have families to support here and back home. In Chapter 4, I briefly addressed the burden of responsibility that immigrants have when they leave home for foreign lands. Regardless of immigration status at the port of entry to Canada: as refugees fleeing a war-torn country; as economic immigrants seeking better job opportunities; or as in the case of some participants in this study, seeking re-unification with family; one common denominator binds all these people. It is the belief that by moving to another place life will be more bearable and will allow them to offer financial assistance to the families left behind. Immigrants have been remitting money home for years (Abrego, 2009; Menjivar, DaVanzo, Greenwell & Burciaga Valdez, 1998) and families' lives have significantly improved as a result. Such remittance process also creates tensions. Al-Sharmani (2007) explains that:

> Remitters also feel pressure from juggling various economic obligations towards immediate and extended family members. Thus, relatives frequently debate and sometimes get into conflicts about how much money is to be remitted, who remits it, who

receives it, what the money is spent on, and how often and how long the remittance process should be. (p. 5)

Al Sharmani speaks of the high value placed on foreign remittances, and the pressure that is felt by the immigrants sending the money home. Thus the burden of responsibility remains. The decisions youths make about careers in Canada directly affects their ability to care for families back home. Consequently, finances always become a priority in relation to fulfilling the responsibility of care for the extended family. In this context finances often taken precedence over youths' individual passions concerning particular careers. Alberta, for example, is oil country and immigrants are inclined to go into the oil fields to work or into the trades because they pay well (Pyper, 2008). Samusoni, the most recent immigrant youth of the group, reasoned that it made sense to focus on the job that was available and paid well. He did not agree with the idea of someone struggling financially for the sake of pursuing a dream.

If the immigrant struggles in the host country, by extension, the family back home suffers as well. That would not be acceptable based on the expectations of the immediate and extended families. Ultimately, this would determine the difference between honour and disgrace in the eyes of the people in the mother country. For Zimbabweans, the idea of the collective is so ingrained that for an immigrant who struggles, a greater source of shame and inadequacy is the inability to help others, than financial lack in his/her own life. The expectation to support family back home could be a source of parent-child tension, as indicated by parents consistently measuring their children's progress against other immigrant youths' perceived successes and the speed at which news of such "successes" is relayed back home.

Other participants had different views. Gaudencia and Ursula considered school important regardless of how much money one might make. In light of past and recent job losses

with oil companies in Alberta (Krugel, 2015), the youths' discussions the previous year become more poignant. They worried about the potential impact of changes in the economy on employees. They had lingering thoughts and concerns about the occurrence of an economic recession and its effect on employees who had no transferrable skills that they could use to apply for other jobs. If people were injured on the job and could not work the oilfields anymore what would happen? The participants concluded that it would be best to have some education and transferable skills as an alternate plan. The undesirable possibilities of an otherwise lucrative career path were starkly clear to all the youth present. They proceeded to teach each other the importance of creating back-up plans. Thus in that particular instance, the discussion led to a kind of self-education where the participants created knowledge in the process of their discussion. Based on the discussions, my conclusion regarding our exploration of parent-child tensions was that the youth understood those relational dynamics to be liminal.

Language. The issue of language was also central to my study. The youth took on a bi-faceted approach to language. One they were aware of as they actively discussed their experiences of the use of English-as-a-second-language with Canadian counterparts. The other was more unconscious in nature – one the participants demonstrated during the interviews and focus groups that became more apparent to me as I started the transcription process. In our one-on-one interviews, when I asked the guiding questions, the youth predominantly used English to respond. In the focus groups, the predominant language of communication was Shona. I noted that when the group discussions got animated, the tendency was to use more of the vernacular. This interchange of languages is called code-switching, defined as an individual's use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange (Woolard, 2004).

In this study, the participants used two types of code-switching: Inter-sentential and intra-sentential (Auer, 2013). Inter-sentential code-switching was exhibited when changing from one language to the next at sentence level, such when the participants made references to a proverb in their native tongue. They spoke the proverb all in the vernacular and then the next sentence would be in English. With intra-sentential code-switching, the speaker used two languages in the same sentence, exemplified at various points in my study when a participant could not find the English equivalent of the vernacular or simply opted to use the vernacular because it articulated their thoughts better than the English term. In the case of the study participants, the two languages came through, with the native language being the most predominant in the focus groups.

I attributed the use of English in the interviews to the semi-formal, controlled environment where the focus was on the individual being interviewed. I also set a precedent by using English to ask the questions. I assumed the interviewees followed my lead. In the focus groups, the participants exhibited much less inhibition. As they relaxed and registered a high comfort level with the other group participants, it was not unusual for them to revert to the mother tongue. I wondered if this could be attributed to what Xing (2001) calls "ethnolinguistic vitality," which describes "group members who maintain their cultural or ethnic diversity by demonstrating loyalty to their language" (p. 205). The participants were more comfortable using their native tongue to explain their experiences. Xing's concept of ethnolinguistic vitality is useful in this study in the sense that it shows how the participants' native language allowed them to be their authentic selves with each other. The act of reverting to Shona validated the capacity for survival of their mother tongue, and subsequently the maintenance of their ethnicity in a

country where the use of English could potentially erode their first language, or relegate it to second place. This is the vitality that Xing addresses.

It was clear from the group discussions that there were varying degrees of comfort with the second language, which they learned to speak long before they came to Canada. When they had stepped onto Canadian soil it seemed as if the language they knew had become something different. They were acutely aware of the fact that they did not "meet the standards" of Canadian English as some of them faced correction from colleagues when they spoke. Nonetheless, the participants' general conclusion that immigrants had perfected the "art of getting up" was validated. Though they struggled with the language for a while, they realized that they also needed to find ways of negotiating that language barrier. Examples of their negotiations included resorting to written English to avoid direct verbal communication, attuning to nuances around language by paying attention to their pronunciation (their "accents"), and using Canadian English terms for items they knew by different words. It also meant they had to be sensitive to both the feigned and genuine compliments about their ability to speak the English language "well."

These difficulties with the English language in public spaces could also explain their total abandon when code-switching (Milroy & Muysken, 1995) to their native tongue in private spaces. It was almost an unconscious release from the limitations of speaking another language that often did not get to the core of what they wanted to say. The code-switching that took place, especially in the group setting, made me recognize the importance of one's native language and its ability to convey the deepest meaning, whereas, for them English could not. Ursula and Gaudencia confirmed these experiences as they both struggled with self-consciousness around the use of English in public spaces.

Language in my study was seen as closely linked to the youth's professed identities, which were overwhelmingly Zimbabwean, with Canadian tendencies they were picking up in the host country. It was unlikely that the participants could ever totally denounce their primary cultural identity, yet they were able to negotiate the current landscape in ways that ensured that they acculturated to it, but not assimilated into it (Gans, 1997). They welcomed the opportunity for a hybrid identity, and the use of the English language in public spaces allowed that to happen. In private spaces though, or in places where they were chatting as a group of immigrants, they wanted their heritage to come through so they could explicitly address pertinent issues. The ethnolinguistic vitality that Xing (2001) identified came through in these instances where consciously or unconsciously the youth were claiming/reclaiming their identity through their native language use. Code-switching for the group was a marker of group membership and solidarity (Bullock & Toribio, 2009), an overall effort to endorse their primary identity.

Responding to the question of youths' understanding of their experiences with language as liminal, I concluded that their code-switching was the youths' way of negotiating the difficulties, challenges and the pervasiveness of their second language – through switching to communicating in a language with which they were confident. So, even though they knew the English language already, what they were still working through was needing to use the language consistently in the host country, whereas in Zimbabwe it was used selectively depending on where they were in public spaces.

Favouring the mother language whenever they were in the company of fellow Zimbabwean youth confirmed the fact that it was possible to remain in a foreign country, but retain certain aspects of your individual identity, such as language. The use of their own language gave them a more defined sense of control and ownership of the conversations because

they were sure about themselves. They also had a full understanding of what was expected of them, knew exactly what they wanted to say and were able to articulate it in their own language. The initial confusion around my definition of the term liminality seems a fitting example to illustrate my point.

According to Fanon (2008), a person who has a language consequently possesses a world expressed and implied by that language. Their freedom to use their own language gave the youth a renewed sense of pride in the multiplicity of their identities and moved them forward to own those identities with a genuine sense of pride. In the same way, an understanding of English allowed them to function in the new country. This multiplicity in identity was discussed by McLeod (2010) in another three of his themes (as initially detailed in Chapter 2):

> 4. The dominant narratives of belonging and identity cannot accommodate those who live "in-between" or are "of, but not of" a singular location of belonging.
>
> 6. New, transnational models of identity and belonging are possible.
>
> 7. Migrancy constructs modes of existence and ways of seeing that last beyond the actual journey between countries. (p. 250)

McLeod (2010), as well as Anzaldúa (2001), Iyer, (2011) and Koshy (2011) discuss transnational identities, which bring to the fore the reality that immigrant youth cannot be relegated into neat packages of identity. Being immigrants, they frequently engage with dualities that in turn give them the ability to acculturate in places other than their own. Because of the multiplicity of their identities, the youth in my study could neither exclusively use one language nor another, nor pick one national identity as better than the other. The youth became *mestizas*, a transcultural population, acculturated adequately in the host culture, and becoming conversant in the cues of the host country.

Acculturation takes many different forms. One such form is biculturalism. The participants noted that they were constantly selecting parts of the native and host cultures that would work for them in different circumstances. This process is in keeping with Xing's (2001) and Stroink and Lalonde's (2009) findings, which consider biculturalism a combination of adopted and native cultural values and practices. Jambunathan, Burts and Pierce (2000) focus on the ability of a person to function effectively in more than one culture and also to switch roles depending on context. As noted in our focus group discussions, immigrants have perfected the art of "getting up," meaning that they are resilient and consistently reinventing themselves. Prior to this study, this was not something of which they were aware, or had not explicitly articulated. As they began to engage with their experiences and how they had dealt with them, they realized that with each experience, they had changed a little more. Sodhi (2008) describes this type of change as a dynamic, evolving process that is revealed as significant milestones of life are achieved and integrated.

Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder (2006) list the various sites of change that they saw in the process of their work with youth, which were also prevalent in my work with youth. The authors refer to preferences (or acculturation attitudes) resembling those parts of the new culture that the youth in my study chose to embrace, and cultural identities (both ethnic and national), which, in my study, had to do with loyalty to the mother-land and the mother culture. What they called language behaviour (ethnic and national language knowledge and use) was demonstrated by the code-switching during the research process. Berry, et al.'s social engagements (with both ethnic and national peers) were seen as sites of liminality as participants tried to fit in with peers. Lastly, relationships with parents and within their families (including acceptance of both

obligations and rights) were explored; my youth participants discovered the dialectic relationship between the individual and the relational that became salient with immigration.

It was evident from this study, that for the youth, the actual journey to Canada was just the beginning of their experiences of immigration. Their experiences after immigration created new ways of seeing as the youth negotiated their way through their experiences. They knew that they were no longer in the comfort of the homes that they had known for a long time and as such were exposed to the experiences of the new country. They understood that if they were to make it in a new country, they had to be strong and start to do things differently. The ability to see differently will be explored in more detail as a possibility that comes from liminality.

Foreign credentials and educational/professional upgrades. Further exploration of whether the youth in this study understood their experiences as liminal led us to a discussion of the lack of acceptance of foreign credentials in Canada and the possible need for upgrading. It was evident that all the youth had considered or participated in some training back home for the work that they aspired to do. For Kujo and Ursula the training was in business and Sam had dabbled in technology, and Gaudencia was interested in finance. The youth were certain that it was hard for foreign-credentialed nationals to get accreditation in Canada in a variety of occupations (Cho, 2013; Boyd, 2013). Thus foreign credentials created a liminal space for immigrant youth.

Banerjee's (1987) experiences involving tensions around foreign credentials and her identity as Indo-Canadian were enunciated in Chapter 2. Her race and foreign earned credentials were barriers to her career for a long time. Though women of colour contribute to the Canadian economy, are subject to its laws, and members of its civil society, Banerjee says they are not

considered Canadian because they were not born here. As a result, opportunities for work remain limited; when they do get work opportunities for advancement are very slim (Yesufu, 2005).

Some of my participants articulated experiences much like Bannerji's (1987). They had watched their parents enter Canada as professionals in their own right, but fail to continue in their line of work – a classic case of downward occupational mobility as described by Creese and Wiebe (2012). The liminal space of credentials and upgrades was significant for the immigrant youth who came to Canada, expecting things to flow smoothly. A study by Creeese and Wiebe (2012) shows that most immigrants find that their credentials are not recognized within the Canadian system. For those credentials that are recognized, upgrades are often required, with attendant fees. For most new immigrants with inadequate financial resources, fulfilling these requirements proves difficult. As a result, to sustain their families they end up taking any available jobs. According to Creese and Wiebe (2012) the jobs immigrants take are characterized as low-skill, low wage, insecure forms of survival employment. It has been documented that many immigrants across Canada take jobs as cab drivers (Globe and Mail, 2012; Xu, 2012). For most immigrants these jobs were meant to be temporary; a desperate attempt to save enough money to get credential evaluations and certifications done. Unfortunately, for most of them the savings did not materialize, hence they were forced to keep the same low-paying jobs. If they were successful in amassing a substantial amount, but then encountered a pressing family concern, it was not unusual for them to abandon their professional dreams for the more immediate familial responsibilities (Xu, 2012).

With some of these and other experiences in mind, a number of youth changed their career directions when they came to Canada, either because they had been advised against their preferred career choice or because they decided to pursue other more lucrative professions. For

the youth who came right after high school from Zimbabwe, some still needed educational upgrades to be able to apply to post-secondary institutions. Gaudencia ventured into a co-op school option, and Afro went into college so that by the time they completed their programs they would have similar credentials as their Canadian counterparts. The topic of credentialing created a platform for the education of study participants about the realities they might be faced with requiring further evidence of their demonstrated ability to work in specific careers in the host country. This was the case even if they wanted to pursue areas of work at which that they had worked or for which they had trained in the mother country. The particularities pertaining to challenges of foreign credentials discussed in this section support the idea that the study participants regarded their experiences as liminal.

Possibilities. In my earlier definition of liminality, I pointed out three key elements that we used to help us determine whether an experience was liminal or not. These elements were complexity, ambiguity, and possibility. The sections above, which directly address my first sub-question, explored whether the youth identified with the term liminality, and the conclusion was that they did. This section addresses three possibilities that were evident in liminal experiences shared in this study. I define possibilities here as opportunities for hope, strength, and new ways of knowing and understanding the world within the context of the immigrant experiences.

The first possibility that we discovered in liminality was the ability to question. At the beginning of this document I quoted Fanon (2008), who indicated that he wanted always to be able to question circumstances that occurred in his life. When I first read the quote, I asked myself why he felt it was so important to question our life circumstances. Through the course of this study I have come to realize that had the participants not questioned their identities, their places in Canada, this study may never have come to be. More importantly, the participants

would not have grown in their knowledge of themselves, the immigrant life journey, and their relationship to the host context. Freire (1970) taught the importance of naming our situations, but even before the naming, he indicated that one had to be dissatisfied with the status quo. To see liminality for what it is requires questioning the status quo, then naming the actual experiences as we did in this study. Freire (1970) explains,

> For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p. 88)

The participants in this study questioned the status quo, which was the beginning of a process of learning anew about the new context with which they were contending. When exploring the experiences that the youth described as liminal in this study, one considers the questions they must have been asking themselves and others: Why aren't my parents agreeing with me? Why am I here? Who am I really? What career/education path am I taking? All these questions are induced by a feeling of otherness, of not fitting in or of being misunderstood. Ursula in her liminal space of language had to come to terms with her difference as perceived by her workmates, questioned why she was in that position, and then started working towards negotiating that space.

Another possibility in liminality is heightened self-awareness. Coming into this study, most of the youth wanted to delve deeper into what they were questioning, into what was unsettling them. During the course of their interactions, they discovered that they were indeed dwelling *in-between* based on their experiences. Having been taken from the security of their native homes, they had to find ways of being present in the current context. This brought with it

the understanding that they had an identity – that of liminars. They became aware that at some point they needed to refrain from picking one cultural identity over another. It was not about whether they were Zimbabwean, Canadian, or Afro-Canadian. Rather, their ability to embrace their dual identity gave them their identity. Their identity was neither one nor the other, but rather they had created an identity that had an interesting mix of the old and the new. In his explanation of the resultant cultural identity of African youth in Canada, Ibrahim (2008) explains:

> The third space is organic…an indissoluble mixture of two, or more, linguistic, ideological, cultural, and belief systems…found in the inter-geographies, cultures, languages, and memories of both Canada and Africa…where the "first" and the "second" are produced in the same sentence. (p. 240)

The awareness that came through for the youth in this study was that they could stop seeking who they thought they were, or who they were perceived to be, and actually embrace who they were becoming, in reality, with each new experience that they encountered. The participants encountered what Maffie (2007) referred to as "a dynamic zone of mutual transaction, confluence, unstable, and diffuse identity, and transformation" (p. 16). As they began to identify liminal spaces in their lives, they started to come to terms with their *in-betweenness*, breaking with dualities so that they could fully be in those various moments, some of them uncomfortably. I would conjecture that the awareness that they gained from their liminal experiences might be similar what Freire (1998) termed conscientization. For him conscientization stemmed from what he called generative themes much like the ones that emerged from this study.

Discussion of the themes created the space for youth to engage with them and find solutions. Anzaldúa (2002), describing a person in *nepantla* or liminality, wrote of how they are, "exposed, open to other perspectives, more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events, and to 'see through' them with a mindful, holistic awareness" (p. 544). The theme of self-awareness is apparent in Anzaldúa' words, but more importantly aligns with Aoki's (2005) seminal idea of education as openness and attentiveness to others' experiences. Liminality therefore finds its location as a relevant education topic because it engenders much of the same characteristics that Aoki hoped a good education would bring to individuals. The ability to access new information was demonstrated in my study as youth learned from each other.

Another possibility that we see in liminality is self-confidence. Once the youth achieved the awareness about the reality of their situations and had opportunities to chat with their peers, they then began exhibiting confidence in the way they negotiated the various experiences they encountered. By speaking more confidently in instances where they would routinely have been silenced, Ursula and Gaudencia demonstrated the confidence to stand up for themselves. Ursula was having challenges with English in her work setting, Gaudencia had been passed up for a job opportunity because she was too quiet when the job required her to be vocal. Afro found her confidence in standing up for her preference in education, other than the family business. Sally, with her newfound confidence, ventured out as an entrepreneur journalist, to experience things not typically considered the norm in our culture. As their confidence grew, and the participants started transforming their own lives, it evolved into the need to help transform others' lives.

Referring back to McLeod's (2010) point about migrancy constructing modes of existence and ways of seeing that last beyond the actual journey between countries, it follows

that another possibility that comes from experiencing liminality as an immigrant is the ability to see beyond the journey of immigration itself. After the actual immigration journey, the settlement journey begins. To run this course well, immigrants need to have foresight, resilience, the flexibility to see things differently and to live life differently from what they were accustomed to. In a sense, the possibilities mentioned above: questioning, self-awareness and self-confidence, are all modes of existence and ways of seeing that are possible in experiencing liminality.

Negotiation of daily living. This section focuses on negotiation as an essential aspect of the lives of immigrant youth. It was clear that negotiating liminal spaces was a daily process for these youth. The study allowed the youth to name their experiences (Freire, 1970) and begin to discuss their questions about their identities. The naming process pointed to deeper issues and the youth came to own the concept of liminality as a valid way of understanding an experience or set of experiences in an immigrant's life. This acknowledgement then created the platform from which to start the conversation about how they negotiated their liminal experiences.

As we progressed through our discussion one thing became apparent: The youth had been negotiating circumstances since they came to Canada. These circumstances that I termed liminal had existed for them to varying degrees. The words that they used to describe their settlement experiences in Canada and our discussions of their liminal experiences were indicative of this fact. In Chapter 2, I noted that it was important to focus also on the triumphs of immigrant youth, so that the methods they are using to navigate life in Canada are acknowledged. Their catch phrase, "*Muzimba anoadapta,*" meaning "Zimbabweans adapt," attests to this negotiating power they possess. Samusoni referred to it as, "immigrants have perfected the art of 'getting up'," to show the resilience with which Zimbabweans handle challenging circumstances. These

circumstances called into question the values they knew before and carried with them to the host country, in light of the new perspectives with which they were coming into contact. I marvel at these youth, considering the amount of work it takes to settle in Canada, or any foreign country.

For the youth who came here to re-join their families, life was perceived as easier in the sense that they had a readily available support system, a factor that Aroian, Spitzer and Bell (1996) consider important in the resettlement of immigrants. When they arrived in Canada they had places to stay, they had someone to walk them through the system and provide them with the information they needed for settlement in a new place. They learned how to find jobs and could depend on their parents to support them until they had settled. However, because they were living in close proximity, negotiating the paradoxical relationships within their families was also a source of distress. The ability to handle shifts in family dynamics, while simultaneously working through tensions with families as they arise, required strong negotiation skills. For Afrolicious, negotiation was evidenced in her ability to stand her ground about not joining the family business, but rather pursuing her own dreams; for Kujo and Samusoni it was in making decisions around the jobs they wanted, making plans for the future and convincingly presenting those to their parents to prove they had a plan for their lives. Sally's openness to experiencing new things was her way of negotiating.

For those participants who came to Canada by themselves, I venture to say that they needed an additional set of negotiating skills. Support was not guaranteed, as seen in Gaudencia's case, wherein promises that she would be taken care of were made to her by friends and relatives, but when she got to Canada no one was available to help. She had to find her way on her own; as a result and to her credit, she has become an independent decision maker because of it. Ursula also holds her own, working full-time and renting her own place. For someone who

has never had to make decisions on their own, or for someone Ursula's age who finds her/himself in a foreign land, seemingly simple decisions can be challenging.

Yvonne Hébert (2006) in her piece, *Transculturalism among Canadian Youth: Focus on Strategic Competence and Social Capital,* says immigrant youth make social connections so that they can, "cope with the difficulties in new settings…to ease anxiety and isolation" (p. 125). Hébert argues that these social networks are formed through negotiating strategies, with the intent to increase immigrant youths' social status. I concur with her statement to some extent. In the context of my study, though, for those youth who re-joined their families, the family was the initial point of contact for issues such as dealing with isolation and anxiety. For those who came to Canada by themselves, Hébert's argument has some validity.

From my discussions with the youth in this participatory study, I came to realize that the concept of social capital as a means to gaining social status is, applicable to Zimbabwean youth only to an extent. I trace this back to a very community oriented value system where friendships are valued not as "status-giving arrangements," but rather are crucial for relationship maintenance, for support and for a sense of belonging with like-minded people. Friendship as status-giving is perhaps a more Western concept. The immigrant youth may have seen themselves as different, but not lacking status. In the Canadian context, where social capital is part of peer relations for youth (and others), the participants' interactions with Canadian youth and trying to "fit in" shows that there is some vying for social capital present, but, in the case of the youth in my study, at least, this need was mitigated by their families and/or cultural community's support and/or their religious beliefs. Social capital is important to the extent that, as Sally suggested, it allows immigrant youth to learn new things from engaging with people who have different life experiences.

The participants in my study took everything that they had experienced in stride, appreciating help when it was offered and moving on when it was not offered. I am proud of youth, who recognize in each other and in themselves, their strengths and capabilities. In their own ways they have become trailblazers. Not only have they noted their negotiations of everyday life but they have identified and acted on the anticipated needs of other youth who may want to take a chance at immigration.

Response to sub-question 2: What curriculum artefact will the youth create with me? In Chapter 2 I talked about my study as a life journey. When my study began, the youth and I were, in different ways, already negotiating our varied life situations as indicated by our discussions. At the conclusion of the study, the youth had found ways to articulate their concerns, work through them and generate solutions. The e-handbook represented a curriculum journey that came full circle in my participatory work with the youth. To create the e-handbook participants converted stories of the situations they faced as new immigrants into topics for a PowerPoint presentation. They chose PowerPoint because the program was readily available to them and they knew how to use it effectively. The primary idea for the e-handbook was to relay to prospective immigrant youth information from instances in their lives that they confirmed as liminal as well as those that could potentially lead to liminal experiences. The overall purpose of the handbook was to point out pertinent topics of discussion for prospective immigrant youth as they contemplated a move to Canada.

To the regular Canadian reader, some of this content might seem simplistic, mundane or information that could simply be sourced online. The mundane fact that "Canada is cold," is generally understood by people in Zimbabwe. However, the extent of the cold is something that they cannot fathom, since they have never been in Canada. Explanations the youth deemed

practical, and which they added to the e-handbook, included things such as clothing requirements, the dangers of not layering winter clothing properly, and the warning about the bright sunlight being deceptive. The focus, as explained by the participants, was that the e-handbook would be a sourcebook of information about life in Canada. A recurring insight from the youth was that, had they known most of the things they knew now as insiders, before they had come to Canada, they would have charted their educational, career and general life paths differently. Their ability to create the e-handbook to answer questions prospective immigrants might not know to ask, by providing specific "insider" details, they believed would encourage prospective immigrant youth to ask further questions relevant to life in Canada. If a potential question was not addressed in the e-handbook, at the very least participants aimed to plant some ideas in the prospective immigrant youths' minds, so they knew what questions to ask, or to provide information about where to find answers. As indicated in Chapter 4, participants reiterated that they were constantly negotiating liminal spaces. They agreed that the e-handbook would answer one very specific question that people generally did not answer well or truthfully: What is life like there, and more importantly, will I be able to adjust?

A study by Stewart, Anderson, Beiser, Makwarimba, Neufeld, Simich and Spitzer (2008) revealed, "most newcomers viewed immigrants who came to Canada before them (i. e., peers) as an important source of support because they had firsthand knowledge of Canadian society, customs, and the settlement process" (p. 137) The creation of the e-handbook was shrouded in the collective need to prevent or mitigate the liminality that we knew was inevitable for new immigrants. The e-handbook then became a form of negotiation in advance, instead of waiting to support new immigrants when they arrived in Canada as explained by Stewart, et al. (2008).

The participants also ensured that the language used in the handbook was accessible to their intended audience. They were aware that terminology was different depending on where one was located in the world. The idea of frontloading information, by succinctly outlining particular areas of interest, so as to provide cues about what to research pre-immigration, was appealing to the youth. The e-handbook addressed prospective immigrant youth in keeping with the relational tenets of Ubuntu and PR (Tutu, 1999; Reason, 1994; Bradbury, 2001). This communal "running together" was an important aspect employed in the creation of this e-handbook. The artefact reiterates not only the communal process within the context of my study, but also the running together as demonstrated by a communal "thinking" of the other, in this case other youth contemplating immigration.

Though the e-handbook does not relay direct experiences of the study participants, it represents, in its content, information that originated from the personal struggles that they went through. Participants learned various life lessons through their own experiences and engaged their communities by discussing those experiences and answering specific questions. An example from my work with the youth was their handling of language challenges where some youth "schooled" their workmates to help them understand immigrants' relationships with the English language and its use in public spaces. In creating this curriculum artefact, participants stayed true to the tenets of PR that encourage sensitivity to process and the co-creation of a tangible representation of that process. After identifying our experiences, triumphs, shortcomings, regrets, and learnings, we went on to predict potentially similar liminal experiences for fellow prospective immigrant youth. We envisioned a simple tool that would help other youth. By doing so this e-handbook became, "not just a site of our labour, but the

product of our labour" in the participants' curriculum journey (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 848).

As a result of this collaborative process, Spencer's (1949) age old question concerning what knowledge is of most worth to whom got its response. The knowledge about liminal experiences was of the utmost importance to the youth as they continued to negotiate life as immigrants. To prospective immigrants this knowledge would be pertinent to their decision-making processes concerning immigration. In essence, the process that the participating youth went through was an example of *currere*, which Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, (1995) described as a "focus on the educational experience of the individual as reported by the individual…currere seeks to describe what the individual subject him or herself makes of these [experiences]" (p. 414). The recognition of their experiences as the locus of exploration and the potential power they wielded to alter the outcomes of liminal events became the impetus in the creation of the artefact. An understanding of why this particular artefact was created, then, responds to what I posed as my second research question: *What curriculum artefact will the youth create with me?*

Ultimately, I believe that the e-handbook, though not directly speaking to educators as I initially intended, is proof that participants came to better understand their experiences through our interactions, which warranted their need to use their new understandings as the basis for the creation of the artefact for the benefit of prospective immigrant youth. By the time we concluded the study, proof that the information in the e-handbook would be useful was based on feedback from participants that they felt better equipped to answer questions from friends back home because of their experiential information and information from the study. Ursula for example said, "I am glad I participated in the study because we got to talk about important things. I just

wish I knew more of this information before I came here...maybe my choices in general would have been a lot different."

The artefact in its final form did not directly reflect a better understanding of the participants' experience; however, the material presented was a synthesis of what arose in the focus groups and interviews. The audience of the artefact, initially intended to be educators and students, ended up being prospective immigrant youth. Adhering to the guiding tenets of PR, I respected the participating youths' desires for portraying their understandings of their experiences. PR calls for the yielding of power (Stringer, 1996) to the participants so they determine what they consider the necessary action resulting from the PR process. Freire (1973) identified three transformational properties of PR: improving communities, creating equitable societies and empowering communities marginalized by dominant groups. I believe the e-handbook the youth created reflected those three tenets, thereby mitigating possible marginalization of new immigrants which would induce inequity, stall communal growth and disempower new immigrants. Maguire (1987) speaks specifically about the role of the resulting action of PR saying it is, "a way for researchers and oppressed people to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term, for radical social change" (p. 29). Even with the change of audience, the artefact stayed true to the goal of PR in context of this study – prioritizing practical outcomes for the participants and the larger community, which in this case is the Zimbabwean immigrant community. The next section focuses on how youth negotiate liminal experiences and how our study interactions helped them to understand their life journeys.

Response to sub-question 3: How do youth negotiate their experiences and how has the participatory research process aided in their curriculum journeys? In my earlier discussion of the first research sub-question, negotiation was cited as an important theme that

emerged in the conversations with the youth. There are many ways that the immigrant youth negotiated liminal experiences. In Chapter 2, my assessment of literature was that immigrant literature generally did not focus on what immigrants were doing to negotiate their experiences. My study has provided some tangible examples of negotiating skills used by the participants to navigate their way through situations. Samusoni's statement that, "immigrants have perfected the art of getting up" showed that in spite of their liminal experiences, the participants had continued to devise ways to cope and participate as citizens in the host country.

Examples of negotiations discussed by participants included Gaudencia taking on a more active persona after losing an opportunity because of her silence, and Ursula learning not to take offence and rather taking opportunities to teach her workmates about her origins. Samusoni felt his lack of high expectations when he came to Canada safeguarded him from harm/failure. Afrolicious followed her instincts and started conversations with classmates that led to the re-evaluation of preconceived ideas about herself and others. All of these were specific negotiations of distinct experiences that the youth encountered.

Understanding subtext. Chapter 2 discussed some of the ways that immigrants in general negotiate various life experiences in the host country. The first negotiation strategy, described as understanding sub-text, also manifested in interesting ways in my study. The subtext in liminal experiences would be that which points to something much deeper, a symptom, if you will, of a much bigger issue. Gaudencia turned to silence because she was afraid to speak and be ridiculed about her English. Her perceived inadequacy became a barrier to her vocality. Similarly, Kujo advised a shutdown and redirection to a more attentive adult if participants saw no headway in their discussions with their parents. The negotiation tactic of a shutdown pointed to some distortion in communication between parent and child. The participants realized that their

experiences happened within the context of what it meant to be an immigrant in Canada (Bannerji, 2000a, 2013). They understood that their history placed them at odds with the values of the new place, and by extension at odds with their parents, new friends and colleagues. Smith (2008) understood the reading of sub-text as a precondition for a full life. The participants had to find a new way of reading their liminal life experiences, a different way of reading their world. The subtext had to be reconfigured as a non-dual understanding of the world, reflected in understanding multiple ways of seeing situations. In Smith's article titled The Farthest West is But the Farthest East, he discusses the illusion of the completeness of singular spiritual traditions: "no one tradition can say everything that needs to be said about the full expression of human experience in the world" (p. 26). In a similar way, no one experience and a subsequent reaction to it can perpetually define or wholly explain an immigrant's experience. A monolithic understanding of the world of liminality limits opportunities to learn from multiple views. Once the participants came to this realization, they could appreciate their different experiences and work towards positive ends despite the negative liminal encounters.

The full expression that Smith (2008) talks about only comes about when one understands that every situation can be a learning experience. To be aware of one's limited perspectives means that one begins to create ways to mitigate that poverty. Gaudencia was embarrassed into silence, but got to a point where she realized that the silence would only hurt her in the long run. She was willing to work through her limitations so she could be her authentic self at work again. Immigrant youth could choose to continue being defined by the baggage that comes with being an immigrant, or they could choose to rise above their liminal situations and carve out for themselves a new identity, a new direction for their lives. In this study, the youth chose to be the best they could be in the given context, talking through their past experiences, to

use them as a means of understanding more clearly what and who they were in order to more wisely build the future. Part of that work involved coming to terms with their dynamic identities, dispelling dominating social myths and actively working out how they could be dynamic and still "fit in" their new home environment – all requiring a subtle reading of sub-text.

An important element for reading subtext is a new consciousness, which entails the reconceptualization of the self into a form we ourselves understand (Anzaldúa, 2009). I believe that one cannot reach this stage of self-awareness without understanding subtext, that is, the underlying systems at work to produce a particular event. Self-awareness was exemplified in the interactions of the participants as they came to better understand themselves, their peers, and the context outside the group, as they began to make sense of their day-to-day experiences. Afro realized what was at stake in the relationship with her father and with her friend at school and initiated conversations with both to ease some of the tension that existed.

Building bridges. The Anzaldúan (1987; 2009) concept of building bridges is the second negotiating strategy, and is exemplified in my study by Gaudencia's determination to be more intentional about the way she speaks, adjusting her speed or pronunciation as needed, so she would not hear "huh's?" from her workmates. I believe that a person who wants to build bridges makes an effort to see other people's points-of-view. I see building bridges as striving to close gaps created by difference. Bridge builders attempt to locate themselves in relation to an experience. They aim to understand how they reacted in a particular situation and then weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their reaction. Having done that, they try to figure out how they can work at reaching the other person, to attempt another conversation. They focus intently on listening to others (Bambara, 1981).The ultimate goal of all these actions is relational existence, which involves connecting across difference and similarities.

In her essay *Now let us Shift…the Path of Conocimiento,* Anzaldúa (2002) discusses pain as a conduit for transformation and empowerment. With stories of separation from the security of the home country and settling in the new land, pain is certainly something with which migrants are conversant. Anzaldúa points to the redemptive power of pain when one moves from a focus on the individual to a focus on the community. In her own life, Anzaldúa was able to do just that. Keating (2000) says of her life and work:

> By incorporating her own life into her work, Anzaldúa transforms herself into a bridge and creates potential identifications with readers from diverse backgrounds. She models a process of self-disclosure which invites (and sometimes compels) us to take new risks as we reflect on our own experiences, penetrate the privacy of our own lives. (p. 2)

The liminal experiences they discussed were quite painful for the participants, but they worked through them with the understanding that the work needed to be done so they could settle in Canada. In much the same way, Anzaldúa uses her pain as a site of struggle for productive results. Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) talks about this type of working through: "If we are afraid to touch our suffering, we will not be able to realize the path of peace, joy and liberation" (p. 45). In my study, the youth demonstrated through their discussions much of the same work that Anzaldúa (2000) and Hanh (1998) address. The challenges and ambiguities of the participants' lives led them to an understanding of their life circumstances, and subsequently a concern for other youth. The artefact that was created then became their form of bridging as they made connections outside themselves. Engaging with the pain of their experiences was the only way they could derive their curriculum lessons. The final negotiating strategy identified in Chapter 2 was using the master's tools and it was exemplified in this study.

Using the master's tools. The masters' tools is a concept by Audre Lorde (1984) that refers to the various mechanisms used by oppressive elements to sustain particular groups' oppressed states. In the case of this study, the English language can be defined as an example of the master's tools. From its colonial beginnings, English was a language associated with hostile take-overs, a tool to erode native tongues in a bid to establish order within perceived "savage" populations. In the present postcolonial world as the *lingua franca* (bridge language) for immigrants in host countries, English is still a source of contention (Canagarajah, 1999; Regan, 2010).

In the case of this study, we discussed how English dictates an immigrant's daily life. It is the language of living in the host country and even prior to immigration; regulatory bodies require English either as a precondition for entry, or as an upgrade requirement post-immigration. As such, the unfavorable history of the language, and the more current complexities the participants faced as a result of its use, made it challenging for participants to gain confidence using English. However, once they understood how important it was for them to use the language for their benefit, it shifted from being an obstacle to being a subversive act. Whereas the youth had previously been corrected at every turn, they found other creative ways to use the English language. Writing instead of speaking was one way; creating opportunities to explain the different ways that English is used in different places was another. The participants also adjusted their use of English in public spaces by refining their accents and/or mannerisms to fit in with the mainstream.

By making these adjustments in their use of English, participants managed to better their lives within the public sphere. Subversive use of the English language allowed them to, in their own ways, carve out their life paths. This negotiation tactic therefore helped us as a research

group to understand that though "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house...they may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game" (Lorde, 1984, p. 114). Understanding the temporary nature of their simple subversive acts was an important step in their curriculum journeys because it ensured that they would always be vigilant and keep thinking about other more permanent ways to sustain themselves. Not only were they using English because it was a stipulated requirement for lives in the new country, but they manipulated it to achieve a degree of autonomy that allowed them to use the language to improve their own lives, while negotiating with the wider Canadian public. That was empowering for the participants.

Transculturation. At the end of our discussion, it was evident that part of our work in the study had to do with owning the idea that immigrants can become transcultural beings, seeing difference as strategic, as a complex form of capital (Hoerder, Herbert & Schmidt, 2006). In defining their identities, the participants owned up to this fact. They were primarily Zimbabwean, they said, but had unmistakably picked up traits from the host culture that they either needed to survive this culture, or that they liked because they saw some merit in them. This understanding echoes Ortiz's (1947) assertion that:

> Transculturation encompasses more than transition from one culture to another; it does not consist merely of acquiring another culture (acculturation) or of losing or uprooting a previous culture (deculturation). Rather, it merges these concepts and additionally carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena (neoculturation). (p. 102-103)

As the process of transculturation began to ascertain their hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1990), immigrant youth began the task of negotiating daily life in the host country. It was clear that negotiation was part of the immigrant youths' life courses. As such, I believe that this

participatory process with the youth will contribute to the youths' continued negotiation of their experiences in three distinct but interrelated ways.

First, the study process offers a site of remembrance for the participants, which will contribute to the ongoing re-evaluation of their life experiences. The participants openly talked about the challenges they faced and the ways in which they created solutions to address those challenges. The youth validated their own experiences by listening to others, such as when Afro validated for Ursula that her conception of nursing as "unimportant" was what she had thought too when she had first come to Canada. That confirmation marked a point of connection for the participants, which led to a discussion about why that was and how they now needed to shift their thinking to be able to accept suggestions about lucrative careers in Canada. To talk about their challenges in a public forum confirmed that the participants' experiences were not just their own, but were shared with the others. In that sense, the discussion dissolved thoughts they had about their own perceived weaknesses, which were not really weaknesses, but the visible results of trying to adjust to a new environment. As they continue with their life courses, the youth will always remember the study as the opportunity to converse about issues germane to their existences as immigrants in a host country. This communal remembering will help strengthen them as they move on in their individual journeys. Different as those journeys may be, each individual shares a number of commonalities with the other study participants.

Second, the participatory process created a space for the intentional working-through of individual life experiences, which can also be understood as a negotiating tactic. Participants offered each other ideas, such as how to "shut down" a conversation, how to find a good school, and what was important when looking for a job. In a sense, prior to the study, the youth were negotiating in a reactionary, rather than a thought through fashion, because they had had to deal

with the scenarios at hand. Within the context of the study, devoid of pressing situations, the participants had time to help each other focus on those scenarios, talk about the circumstances precipitating or surrounding those scenarios, and devise sensible ways of dealing with the scenarios. They also talked through negotiations that did not work so well. Their interactions helped hone their negotiating skills to become effective and practical.

Finally, the participatory process will continue to bring to the fore conceptions of the participants as transcultural beings, who are indeed of two worlds, and the negotiating skills that come with owning a transcultural identity. The youth were given an opportunity to own those skills as a necessary part of their lives, indeed, as positive skills that allowed them to navigate relationships in the host country. This participatory study confirmed the various ways of negotiating that the youth were employing in their daily lives. As a result, the participants both learnt new coping skills and introduced new skills to the group. For the participants, the study process confirmed that negotiations were part of the characteristics of being an immigrant, for without them it would be impossible to adjust to life away from home. An understanding of their existing ways of negotiating created room for newer and more refined ways of coping with life in Canada.

My Experience as the Facilitator of the PR Process

Overall my experiences as a facilitator in the participatory study were enriching. I had two assumptions going into this participatory work. The first was that my established rapport with the youth and theirs with one another meant that we could start our work at a level at which we were comfortable enough with each other to address issues. That was true to an extent. We were comfortable with each other, but responses, especially in the first and part of the second focus group session, were measured. Initially, I registered a level of hesitancy as we were discussing

personal experiences. The fact that we knew each other prior to the study did not automatically mean that youth would articulate their experiences without self-censoring.

My first lesson in undertaking participatory work became crystal clear; a prior relationship does not determine depth of conversation. A number of other variables are to be considered: the subject matter, feelings of safety and security, and trust that group participants will hold information discussed in strict confidence (Maguire, 1987). These variables were consistently at work in the group, of which, as the facilitator I had to be cognizant, and keep reiterating at the beginning of every session the basic ground rules of trust, to the extent that that was earned, respect for other people's views, and appreciation for their continued involvement.

Secondly, I assumed that the experiences of the participants in emigrating from Zimbabwe to Canada would be very similar to my own experiences of making the same move. I was wrong. A shared home background and the rapport we enjoyed were not preconditions for homogeneity in the liminal experiences we encountered in the host country. My conception that the youth would overwhelmingly share my experiences was corrected: they shared some, but even those were substantially different. The participants cited different reasons for different experiences. Personal characteristics such a being reserved or vivacious seemed to have a bearing on how participants experienced liminality. The length of time in Canada also determined how immigrant youth responded to my questions. Whereas, for example, I considered the question from Canadians: "Where are you from?" with criticism and disdain, most study participants were ambivalent, choosing instead to use the question as an opportunity to teach their peers more about them.

Aside from the assumptions I brought to my study as the facilitator, I also encountered challenges in coordinating the focus groups and interviews for the study. Because of the

busyness of the participants' schedules, I set up a private broadcast group using an application called WhatsApp and added all the participants' phone numbers. From then on, I could type a single message and broadcast it to the whole group. We used this application to coordinate meetings, put up reminders, summarize our focus group work, and communicate agendas for our upcoming group meetings.

One of the successes of my study was the ability of the group to produce the e-handbook that revealed some of the important discussions that took place. More than that, I was inspired by the sense of responsibility that participants conveyed towards their fellow countrymen and women who were making plans to make the trip across the world. By utilizing the different levels of participation cited by Biggs (1989), namely: contractual, consultative, collaborative and collegiate, the participants succeeded in creating a handbook that had relevance for them and for the larger community.

Another positive factor in the study was the understanding that ideally in PR problem identification is part of the PR process; in the case of university-based research, however, problem identification often precedes the participatory process. The youth in my study had already identified concerns and were already negotiating various situations in different ways. Their concerns had not yet been communicated in an intentional research setting. The approach I took in the context of graduate research began by identifying a community of interest that had already identified a concern. Then I formally articulated the problem for research purposes and subsequently created a platform for participants to communally engage with those issues. As the PR researcher in this case, I identified an existing problem and worked with the community to formally bring their concerns to the fore.

In my prior research and in my decision to conduct a participatory process with immigrant youth, I focused on three words that I discussed in Chapter 3: people, power and praxis. Those are the central tenets that drew me to PR, because I felt that philosophically participatory research valued factors that other forms of research did not consider primary (Hall, 2005; Park, 1994). In PR, for example, power distinctions between researcher/researched or investigator/participants are problematized. In some forms of research people are data sources, and the process is determined by the powers-that-be in a particular study. In my study, we stayed true to the central tenets of PR by paying attention to issues of respect for one another and hearing each other's points of view (people) (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall & Jackson 1993). We also created an atmosphere of equality where we consciously communicated, during each group session, that each viewpoint would be valued, not slighted. We agreed that we all had important things to say that would enhance the discussions we had together (power) (Elliot, 2013; Conrad & Campbell, 1991). During the research process we also emphasized the importance of reflecting on issues that had been brought up in the focus groups for further discussion and action, as exemplified by the making of the e-handbook (praxis).

Reardon (2000) talks about "true" PR work as work that equally involves all participants in the planning stages of the project, namely, problem identification, implementation, and evaluation. At the church conference where I first heard the youth express their concerns, which was the impetus for my study, I realized that the youth already had questions that had to do with understanding their lives in a foreign land and the ways they were negotiating their lives. In this way the youth took part in the identification phase informally. Following the church conference, I began thinking through the study, how it would be framed, and what research process I would employ. I put together the documents required: the proposal for the study, consent forms, and

guiding questions, which, at that point, did not include input from the youth. As the proposal was required before I could talk to the proposed participants about the research, this made the proposal writing challenging for me in trying to stay true to PRs crucial tenets of equal participation by all parties involved. I was, in effect, pre-empting the project components when I made plans for how the study would be implemented, without the input of the youth participants. This proved to be a limitation of the PR process as doctoral research. After necessary permissions were in place, the participants had a chance to revisit the implementation process with me.

In another sense, though, an awareness of the particularities of the PR process, in the context of a doctoral dissertation, helped me to consciously uphold its values as a research orientation. In my proposal writing and candidacy, I expressed that I would remain open to changes in the predetermined process once I started working with the youth. Truly engaging with the youth would involve allowing genuine conversations to emerge and then determining how they related with what I had envisioned the study to be. In that way I would remain true to the tenets of the PR orientation and at the same time fulfil the requirements of the doctoral program. This proved a tricky balance to maintain.

After candidacy, I started working with the youth, at which point I was able to be more flexible to make decisions within the study framework. I felt confident with the implementation phase. Once the youth agreed to work with me on the project, we dedicated a session to charting the course of the study in a way that worked for all the participants. I applauded the fact that the youth knew what they wanted to gain from these discussions and worked hard to achieve that. We dedicated our last session to evaluating the study in terms of its benefit to the various youth

involved. They offered their impressions of whether it had been a worthwhile endeavour. In that regard, I do feel that the participants had a chance to evaluate the study.

Beginning this research, I was very aware of the intended structure of a participatory study, how it was supposed to flow and what it was supposed to accomplish. I also was aware of the critique of PR as a weak research methodology. I wanted to prove that PR is in fact a worthwhile research method in that it has people's best intentions at its core. This was confirmed for me by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000):

> The criterion of success is not whether participants followed the steps faithfully, but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understanding of their practices, and the situations in which they practice. (p. 595)

Generally, I found, the participants were more concerned with the issues than with the research methodology. They understood that the method had their best intentions at its core and was intended to create a forum for them to share ideas. From doing this research, I learnt that though structure is important, to the extent that researchers must be able to explain their research processes clearly, in the final analysis, the fulfillment of the process should not take away from the process itself. It is important to be present in each research moment.

Limitations

According to Park (1994), PR is "a collective activity in which the participants address problems that affect the group as a whole, deliberate the cause, meaning and resolution of the problems in discursive communication, and come up with team action" (p. 154). As such, the goal of PR is for the collective to acquire knowledge and understanding of the systems that affect their material conditions, and find ways to ameliorate the negative effects they suffer as a result.

The intent of my study was to enhance understanding of immigrant youth experiences. To achieve this, while paying attention to the ethos of the PR project: people, power and praxis, was the distance that I needed to go in a limited amount of time. PR work is laborious when working within a community; within the academy it was doubly challenging because I had to balance the ethos of an emancipatory process with the participants, and the equally competing demands of satisfying graduate requirements within an academic program.

Time was also a limitation considering that I planned to collect data during the summer months. The participants indicated that they preferred that we complete our work during the summer. So, to maximize on the summer months we met every week. We spent upwards of the proposed one and half hours each time we met for discussions. The participants had very busy agendas, and yet they were willing to commit to longer periods of time that we spent together.

Also, since participation in the study was voluntary, I was not able to control for equality in gender representation of the participants involved in the research. I believe equal gender representation allows for particular experiences to be made more salient. The argument, for example, from feminist perspectives on PR (Maguire, 1987) is that a number of early participatory projects presented exclusive male perspectives as the perspectives of the whole community, thereby marginalizing women's perspectives. Aware of the critique around gender representation, I hoped for equal representation, but as it turned out the group was composed of 2 male and 4 female participants.

As immigrant youth, my participants were considered a vulnerable group, hence there was the possibility that they self-censored on subjects they considered sensitive. I used self-reported information in the interviews and focus groups and had no control over some biases that may have come with that information, i.e. selective reporting based on what the participants

wanted to divulge, and possible exaggeration of information. According to Park (1999), one of the tenets of PR is the ability to do the work in "mutual faith and good trust" (Park, 1999); in our discussions we proceeded with acknowledgement that these were ethos we all shared.

Lastly, I felt that experiences of liminality between respondents from different contexts, for example, Zimbabwean youth in South Africa and those in Edmonton, would have enriched the research process, but due to financial constraints this strategy was not employed. Research was conducted only in Canada.

Benefits of the Study for the Youth

Prior to beginning the participatory process with the youth, I postulated some intended benefits for the youth of my study. In most cases, the actual benefits exceeded my expectations. I anticipated that the group of participants with which I would work would have come to Canada to re-join their families, and that this commonality of circumstances would have served as a point of empathy for the experiences that they shared. As it turned out, some of the youth were in this situation, but others immigrated by themselves, and have no nuclear family in Canada, whereas still others had siblings in Canada but not their parents. As such, the discussion was even richer than anticipated as a result of the diversity in the circumstances under which the youth had immigrated. The diversity of experiences added to the richness of our curriculum journey, and also reinforced a commitment to explore the notion of liminality, which is characterised by variety and multiplicity.

The participants who immigrated by themselves voiced some nostalgia when it came to their parents as their support base. They knew that they could make their own decisions, but when they came across financial hurdles, their friends who have parents in Canada were less stressed because they always had a fall-back plan. Our discussion about support systems, albeit a

brief one, was one instance in which I believe the youth gained insights into each other's experiences in ways that augmented their appreciation for what they had in their parents, but sometimes took for granted, resulting in a greater awareness of their own and others experiences.

For those youth who came to re-join their parents, their transitions to the new environment were challenging in the sense that they had to contend with clashes with their parents over life choices. Through this study, however, there emerged a sense of appreciation for that which they had – a readily available family support system. They realized that much needed to be done in the way of improving family relations, but they also found merit in having them nearby. Youth participants who came to Canada by themselves learned through their interactions in this study that they had acquired a sense of independent decision-making that they attributed to the lack of a readily available support system in the form of their family. In their different ways the youth came to appreciate the uniqueness of their life experiences and how this study brought this to the fore.

Secondly, I initially postulated that immigrant youth, speaking in their own voices, would be able to name their circumstances and subsequently reveal their inner thoughts to one another. Our discussions in the focus groups were lively and the youth were vocal about their experiences, good and bad. They also openly discussed their values and perceptions on given topics. This interchange was very beneficial to the youth because they began to recognize experiences they had in common with the others. Participants also identified experiences that were unique to them, but added to the group's understanding of the immigrant youth experiences. They improved their abilities to engage with issues that concerned them and found ways to deal with those issues in productive ways. In summary, therefore, the discussions we had as a group benefited the youth in that they created a pedagogical forum of peers that allowed

them to identify their experiences, name them, and share those experiences, talk about them in-depth, and ultimately decide to do something about them.

Lastly, the youth in my study also identified their capacity to help others, both within the study group as they shared ideas, and as they prepared the e-handbook for distribution to prospective immigrants. They also discovered the ability to be factual without being too personal. Inasmuch as they wanted to produce material to help other youth make decisions about immigration, they did not want to be naysayers by focusing on the negativity of their personal experiences.

Implications for Education

Based on the discussions between the study participants, I discussed three benefits for the youth in the previous section which I believe have implications for immigrant education. The first was the space for immigrant youth to communally name their circumstances – which Freire (1970) believes is the first stage in any kind of change. Second, immigrant youth came together to intentionally, communally share and compare their experiences. Third, this communal exchange of information amongst immigrant youth helped them to articulate and learn strategies from each other to negotiate challenging situations. Immigrant youth, through learning about their experiences and the experiences of others' can be a resource to help them and support the settlement of other new immigrant youth.

The benefits outlined in this study contribute to the understanding of education for immigrant youth in that they offer a picture of lived experiences through the eyes of immigrants, clarifying the ways that immigrants negotiate issues in daily life. In working towards a better understanding of education of immigrant youth and how this study contributes to such educational discourses, I noted that the concept of liminality in my study used to define the

participants' lived experiences had two factors to offer. Firstly, this study is just one in a growing field of research which recognizes education outside of the traditional parameters of the classroom (Foley, 1999; Coffield, 2000; Pattison, Cohn & Kollman, 2013; Mills & Kraft, 2014). Education, understood in my study as learning that takes place not just for learning's sake, becomes the "practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Shaul cited in Freire, 1970), was a process that left the youth with a better understanding of themselves.

To begin the work of dealing critically with reality, therefore, education should provide a space for communal sharing (Aoki, 2005; Tutu 1999). Such sharing stems from an understanding that everyone brings with them a multiplicity of experiences, talents, and goals that can become an essential part of the total educational environment (Nieto, Bode, Kang & Raible, 2008). In my study this understanding formed the basis of my work with the youth. In their intentional sharing process youth learned about others' experiences and compared them to their own.

When the youth in my study spoke of their language challenges and tensions with families, it was clear that the conversations were made richer because of their willingness to share their life experiences. The desire to share sparked rich conversation, at times including polar opposite views, such as Kujo saying parents struggled with letting children make their own decisions, while Samusoni believed the problem was with the child who would not take the initiative to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. The participants encouraged disclosure as a way to also help other prospective immigrant youth to become aware of what their fellow countrymen had encountered when settling in the new country.

Education as a process influences all stakeholders who can benefit from it; Herbert Spencer (1894) believed that the great aim of education was not knowledge, but action. The

participants in my study achieved this by creating a resource to help the settlement of other new immigrant youth. After raising their self-awareness through learning about their own and others' experiences, the study encouraged a communal obligation for my participants to synthesize what they could from their experiences to enlighten others. During the study we noted that even though the study brought together individuals with similar backgrounds, there was a breadth of knowledge that came from individual experiences. As a result, participants modelled the obligation they felt towards each other and others when they decided to create an e-handbook.

I re-emphasize that the communal thread outlined above is by no means a claim of heterogeneity in thinking within the group. Though the youth agreed on some issues, they also had differences based on particular life experiences. Rather, the nature of the work they undertook for the study was communal. As the youth began to talk about their experiences of liminality, I believe that their horizons were expanded in terms of understanding themselves and others. Education took place as they engaged with one another, and by extension the discussions we had served as educational opportunities for prospective youth in the form of the e-handbook they created and for society at large through the reading of this written representation of the work that we did together. By creating the handbook, congruent with Freire (2004), education started to make sense because the youth realized, through the learning process, that they were capable of making and remaking themselves. The youth reinvented themselves from being learners of each other's' experiences to transmitters of the same to other youth through the e-handbook.

Though the artefact created as an outcome for this participatory study did not end up speaking directly to teachers, other educators, or students generally, I am convinced that our work has implications for education about immigration and settlement and for the education of

immigrant students. Overall, the study typifies education outside a formal school environment, and offers a curriculum journey that is beneficial for those who educate immigrant students.

From the experiences addressed in this study, it is evident that immigrant youths' public and private lives are intricately interwoven, which I consider another insight that understanding liminality achieved in this study. This means that to be able to work effectively with immigrants, teachers would have to be attuned to the private experiences of the students – experiences that they would not necessarily talk about unless prompted by someone who is genuinely interested in their welfare and understands how public and private persona are interrelated. A study such as this brings to light some of the daily struggles immigrant youth encounter. Knowledge of youths' experiences and knowledge of how youth negotiate them is instrumental for educators who are willing to help youth find ways to complement their existing negotiations, or to create new ways of interacting with the students.

For Zimbabwean youths', the understanding of Ubuntu, "I am because you are," has a direct bearing on the way they handle themselves in school affairs, reflected in their willingness to share experiences and support each other. An educator needs to understand Ubuntu juxtaposed with the values of an individual focused society, in which immigrant students find themselves. Immigrant students have to shift from sharing with the intent of a common end goal, or interdependency, to an understanding that here, the end goal is more often about the individual (Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Beattie, 1980). To understand sharing (or lack thereof) in an individual focused context is a learned skill that youth have to acquire, as they struggle with competing values from home that tell them that to be successful in a foreign country immigrants have to stick together and support one another. Our home grown values will not disappear in a melting pot of cultures that we find in Canada, but rather the complexity for Zimbabwean

immigrant youth is negotiated through the ability to find the balance – the *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldúa, 2002). This allows us to be in Canada, but retain the values that make us distinctly Zimbabwean.

For settlement educators, based in the community, this study would also be beneficial in working with new or prospective immigrants. It would be useful for prospective immigrants to get a sense of what Canada is like, written from the immigrant perspective. Because the content in the artefact produced in this study originated from discussions about liminal youth experiences, the information is concise text that any immigrant would want to know. It is succinct, but all the same presents an opportunity for prospective immigrant youth to ask further questions in areas that would most likely affect them in their initial settlement. For example, in relation to the complexities surrounding the daily use of the English language by immigrants, a non-immigrant would likely not pay attention to the nuances of English-as-a-second-language use, such as accent and pronunciation, because it is not part of her/his daily life experiences. From this study it is clear how using English-as-a-second-language impacted the youth in their life journeys in Canada. As a consequence, it is relevant for community educators to understand the impact of language if they are to help immigrants settle into their new lives.

For immigrant parents, this study would benefit those who were looking for better ways to parent in the diaspora. This study shows that inasmuch as parents' circumstances change significantly with immigration, their children's lives change as well. Parents have to, under the circumstances, learn to "parent in a new key;" they need to understand the context within which they are parenting from taking into account the youths' points-of-view. Only then will they be able to empathize, understand and find ways to parent that do not feel extremely authoritative to their children.

For the larger community of immigrants and other community members who may at some point need to offer advice about education, settlement and related immigrant issues, this study is beneficial in providing pertinent information. Moreover, the study can expand individuals' knowledge base about immigrants' experiences. In this way it is possible for non-immigrants to share in the life experiences of immigrants in beneficial ways. An immigrant friend of mine and I share our experiences about a professor of ours who "gets" the complexities of immigrant life. This shows that it is possible to get to that point of understanding. We feel that because of that professor we were able to persevere in our doctoral studies. If one professor can make such a difference in the lives of immigrant students, it is possible that others can. Individuals who understand have a quality about them, an intricate knowledge of the immigrant life journey that they have sought out, acquired and deeply understood. As they relate to students, the students know that they are genuinely cared for and that makes for a bearable student life experience for an immigrant student. This study shares information that has the potential to create similar relationships, not just with educators, but also with all people who call Canada home.

Additionally, this study highlights the need to bring awareness to cultural differences that define the immigrant experience. As was unveiled during this study, the youth adapt because they have to, but it is at some relational cost. Gaudencia explained this in her example of wanting to respectfully greet elders as she was taught, but struggled because friends accompanying her did not do the same. Would she honour her mother's training, though she was not physically present at the time, or risk showing the elders present that her culture was slowly eroding by defaulting to her friends' way of handling that situation? She did the latter in that instance. In our focus groups we discussed that complex *in-between* space in which she found herself.

Immigrant life journeys have been the subject of much research. This study aimed to explore these life journeys to see what knowledge about liminality would be produced, how it would be utilized by the youth themselves, as well its implications for a broader network of people interacting with immigrants. As was presented in this study, the participatory approach with immigrant youth was valuable for their well-being as they shared experiences. The study makes a contribution to the larger community as it attunes people to interacting in useful ways with the immigrant population.

Suggestions for Further Study

From the learning derived through the interactions of participants in this study, I conclude that this study suggests multiple possibilities for further research. The most sensitive liminal spaces that the participants talked about in this study were the tensions that existed between parents and children in the diaspora. The bulk of the discussions focused on reasons why these tensions existed and how they manifested in the participants' material realities. Some of the reasons identified were clashes in cultural and religious values, the idea that parents had a monopoly over knowledge and decision making, the fact that immigrant families were living in a different context where individual freedoms took precedence over communal gain. We also talked about some of the possible effects of the existing tensions, such as rebellion and silence. There is much to accomplish in this area. A study that engages both parents and youth to explore in more depth the areas that youth were wary to discuss would be useful in learning how to ease some of these tensions.

For future participatory studies, another area for exploration would be to find ways to represent the youth voices more prominently in the "action" outcome of the study. In my own study, this was a limitation, as youths' personal experiences were not expressed directly in the

final artefact. It would be beneficial, depending on the intended audience, to find ways to channel the creation of the end product in a way that articulated participants' voices in a more direct manner.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the liminal spaces that immigrant youth encounter in their daily lives and the ways in which they negotiate these experiences. The changes that resulted for youth from our conversations are significant. I believe that this study brought to the fore important findings about liminality in immigrant youth experiences, as well as proof that in talking about liminal experiences, learning took place in various ways. The PR approach undertaken in this study was meant to honour the process of the journey of self-discovery, through engagement with others. The study also aimed at affecting some type of change in the lives of the youth. By the end of our interactions, there was a definite difference in the way that youth viewed their own and others' experiences. The participants learned that by giving a name to their circumstances they could begin to effect particular changes that they wished to see in their own lives. Inasmuch as they shared their own unique experiences with liminality, they found an increased level of comfort in knowing that there were others who shared similar experiences. The participants were willing to talk about these experiences and to explore what that meant for them and for their realities as immigrants in Canada.

The participants realized their own power to enunciate experiences, to answer questions at the core of their multiple identities. Participants also became more intentional about giving themselves credit for the tremendous work they had been able to accomplish thus far in their immigration journeys. They struggled to survive and stay afloat in a community that correlated their difference with deviance, inferiority, or both, and was constantly referring to them as not

from here. This left participants feeling that they did not quite measure up to the mainstream identity. As a researcher, who is an immigrant as well, it was important for me, as I set out in my study, to ensure that at some point the participants were made to realize just how much power they possessed. I strongly believe that such positive reinforcement supports one's life journey through building self-esteem and confidence. A lack of such support breeds the feeling of being unsure and inadequate, exemplified in the liminal experiences enunciated by participants in my study. I believe that a sense of self-worth was applauded as an outcome of our work together. By creating communal and hopefully lasting relationships within the study group, the youth can continue supporting each other, crediting each other for negotiating the harsh realities of immigrant life. That boost of confidence and morale is a necessary ingredient that continues, I believe, to sustain their livelihoods here in Canada.

As a participatory action research study aimed at creating transformation (Brydon-Miller, 2001), the following are some of the some of the lessons learned. The study discussions contributed to acknowledging the lived experiences of participants as they interacted in the focus groups. Additionally, the youth participants focused on the possibility of helping other immigrant youth through the creation of the e-handbook. While all participants described their settlement in Canada as challenging because of their liminal experiences, their interactions with each other created an opportunity to do something about those struggles. Ursula noted,

> It's good to talk about these things because sometimes you think you are alone but after conversations like this you know there are others and that is comforting. Now we have shared ideas about how to make it better and that is worthwhile.

From the time they began acknowledging their lived experiences as liminal, to the creation of the artefact, and in our encounters *in-between,* the youth demonstrated transformation. To

acknowledge the existence of liminality, they had to come to the realization that their lives as they knew them back home had changed and that their location as immigrants brought complexities with it. The complexities did not debilitate them, but instead became the impetus to help each other and prospective immigrant youth with advice derived from their journeys. As far as change in the community is concerned, I believe my study document will provide new insights to the people who read it. As they encounter the experiences of the study participants they will come to understand the challenges that immigrants face, and the ways they are negotiating those challenges daily.

For educators such information is crucial because they can appreciate the multiplicity of issues that immigrant youth deal with, as well as the many facets of their identities. As such, educators can engage these youth in curriculum opportunities beneficial to them as students, and beneficial to citizens within a host space. As Hutzel (2005) noted, "we are learning from the community in order to discover where we can start our teaching, which translates into a reciprocal relationship" (p. 254). This is a powerful concept for curriculum anywhere; the idea of a symbiotic relationship between the learner and the teacher, the acknowledgement that one cannot exist, nor flourish, without the other. Certainly for curricula centred on liminality within immigration experiences, the journey of learning cannot be complete until the youth have spoken in their own words, and the rest of the community has paid attention to those voices.

For prospective youth, the e-handbook provides alerts to some of the pitfalls of immigration, and provides a map as they make decisions about moving to, and life in the host country. The e-handbook is also a source of strength and motivation. If others their age have made it in foreign lands, then the likelihood that they, as new immigrants, can also adjust is confirmed. Through the e-handbook they have more knowledge about settlement in Canada.

In my study, I have applied Freire's (1970) notion of "name it to change it," in the use of the term liminality. Study participants and I found this term useful to describe our lives as immigrants. Based on our discussion on liminality, youth can now identify specific situations for what they are, and then begin working through them. Through this research study, I have found that immigrant youth do identify with the notion of liminality to describe their immigration experiences. Understanding liminality and how it manifests in daily life became a key ingredient for the participants to gain better understandings of themselves, their identities and the society in which they currently live.

Despite the challenges of settling in Canada, one thing was certain, the participants did not regret coming to Canada. Some participants regretted some of the decisions they made here, because of a lack of understanding of the cultural context in which they found themselves. They were grateful for the opportunity to experience life differently. In many ways, they became more self-aware after being taken out of the comfort and cocooning of their home country. That self-awareness became an important milestone in their curriculum journey that began when they made the decision to leave Zimbabwe. The journey is ongoing, but now the youth can claim that they are seasoned travellers, who continue to traverse the new home, learn more and contribute to others' knowledge in the process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Human Subjects Approval Forms

Notification of Approval

Date:	April 14, 2014
Study ID:	Pro00046301
Principal Investigator:	Mildred Masimira
Study Supervisor:	Diane Conrad
Study Title:	Co-Creating Educational Strategies: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Youth in Alberta Negotiate Liminality in their experiences within a Diasporic Community
Approval Expiry Date:	April 13, 2015

Approved Consent Form:	Approval Date 14/04/2014	Approved Document Information Letter and Consent

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

William Dunn, PhD

Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Notification of Approval (Renewal)

Date:	May 21, 2015
Amendment ID:	Pro00046301_REN1
Principal Investigator:	Mildred Masimira
Study ID:	Pro00046301
Study Title:	Co-Creating Educational Strategies: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Youth in Alberta Negotiate Liminality in their experiences within a Diasporic Community
Supervisor:	Diane Conrad

Approved Consent Form:	Approval Date	Approved Document
	4/14/2014	Information Letter and Consent

Approval Expiry Date:	Friday, May 20, 2016

Thank you for submitting this renewal application. Your application has been reviewed and approved.

This re-approval is valid for one year. If your study continues past the expiration date as noted above, you will be required to complete another renewal request. Beginning at 30 days prior to the expiration date, you will receive notices that the study is about to expire. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Sincerely,

William Dunn, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix B: Research Letter

May 21, 2013

Dear Participant and Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

What is the study?

In a world where immigration has become the norm, it is important to engage in conversations that help us better understand immigrant youth's experiences and understanding of life in – between worlds. You are invited to participate in a research project about Zimbabwean Immigrant Youth. In order to learn more from you, you are asked to participate in two face-to-face interviews and two focus groups.

This project, entitled Co - Creating Educational Strategies: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Youth in Alberta Negotiate Liminality in their Experiences within a Diaspora Community, will gather feedback from youth aged 16-24 in three areas: 1) experiences with life in- between worlds 2) meanings of these experiences, and 3) what should be included in youth settlement information. The proposed study is supervised by my advisors, Dr. Diane H. Conrad and Dr. Dwayne Conrad, University of Alberta.

What will we be doing?

The study consists of two semi structured interviews with every participant and two focus groups with all the participants in the study. The interviews and focus groups will take approximately forty-five minutes to an hour each. The interviews will be scheduled at a time and place of your convenience. The focus groups will be at the University of Alberta main campus. After each interview the interviewee will write a summary of what you said and send it to you by email for verification. You are free to make any changes to the transcript.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time before August 31, 2013. If you so choose, any relevant information will be destroyed and will not be used in the research findings, related publications or presentations. Withdrawal from the study at any time will result in no repercussions. Choosing or not choosing to participate in the study is a personal and private matter. No other participant will know your decision and it will not influence our relationship.

The data from this project will be used to complete a thesis that will be submitted to the University of Alberta in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctoral Degree in

Education, and in research articles, publications and presentations. Your names will be completely anonymous in the analysis, presentation and papers that result from the study. Pseudonyms will be used to guarantee anonymity and any means of identifying you. All documents will be handled exclusively by the researcher and will be stored in a secure location.

The study is significant on two levels.

1. The study will enhance the youth's understanding of life in-between worlds from their own perspectives. The study will contribute overall to the existing body of information on immigrant youth in Canada.
2. You and your child will benefit by engaging with others who share the similar concerns and adding information to your own body of knowledge about life in- between worlds.

By reviewing and signing the attached form, you are giving informed consent to participate in this study. I will provide two copies of the letter and consent form, one to be signed and returned and one for your records.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at masimira@ualberta.ca or at 780-405-5242. You can also contact Dr. Conrad at dhconrad@ualberta.ca or Dr. Donald at ddonald@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for your help. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Mildred T. Masimira

University of Alberta

CONSENT STATEMENT

I, _____, have read and understood the information letter for the study *Co - Creating Educational Strategies: A Participatory Exploration of how Zimbabwean Youth in Alberta Negotiate Liminality in their Experiences within a Diaspora Community* and by signing below I consent to be a participant in the research project led by Mildred T. Masimira.

_____ _____

Name of participant Signature of participant

_____

Date signed

_____

Participant phone or email address for future contact.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

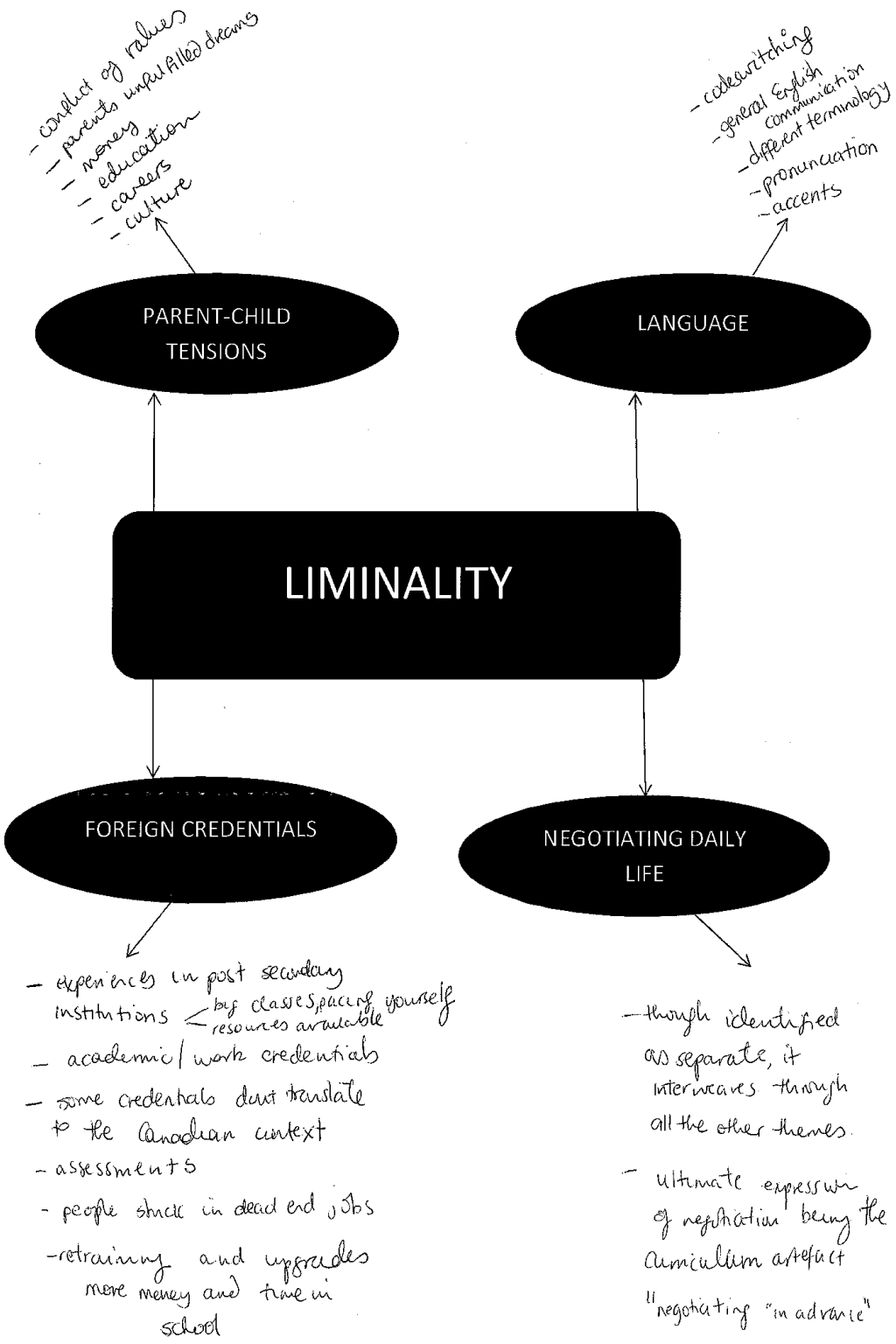
Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. **<u>Demographics</u>**
    a) First I will ask a few basic questions.
        i. How old are you now?
        ii. How old were you when you came to Canada?
        iii. When did you come to Canada?
        iv. Did you come with your parents or did you follow after they had already moved. If your answer is the latter, then how long was it before you saw your parents again?
2. **<u>Life experiences before and after coming to Canada</u>**
    a) To begin with, I'd like to hear more about your life before you came to Canada. What were some experiences that you would like to talk about?
    b) Can you tell me about your preparation to come to Canada and what that was like for you?
    c) You have heard me talk about my actual journey to Canada from Zimbabwe… what was yours like? Anything in particular that you would like to focus on concerning that journey?
    d) I would like to hear more about your experiences soon after you arrived in Canada. What was life like for you? What did you think, feel, and do?
    e) Now that you have lived in Canada for a number of years, what are some thoughts and feelings you would like to talk about. How has settling in Canada been for you?
    f) Based on your experiences of immigrating to Canada…
        i) What would you say to a young person about to leave Zimbabwe to come to Canada?
        ii) What would you tell a young person or a family with children & youth newly arrived in Canada?
        iii) What would you say to teachers in Canada who are teaching young people from Zimbabwe?
    g) Do you feel like you are more Canadian or more Zimbabwean?
    h) Do you have any concerns when you think about being an immigrant youth in Canada? Why do you think that particular concern is foremost in your mind?
    i) Do you have any other questions or comments that you would like discussed in the larger group?

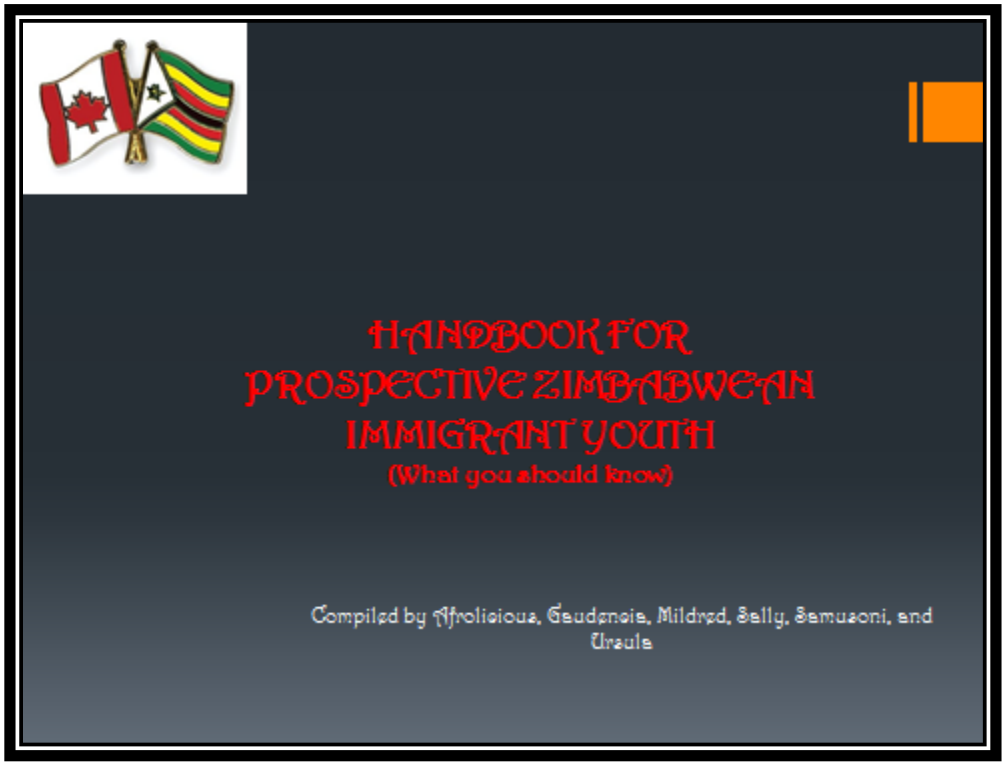
3. <u>Meanings of life experiences</u>
    a) What does the term I used to describe my experience "liminality" mean to you? Another term that is sometimes used is "living-in-between." Have you had any experiences that feel like that?
    b) What have you learned about yourself and others through all these experiences?

4. <u>Focus group follow up question</u>
    This section will cover any follow up questions that arise from the first focus group.

APPENDIX D: Theme Map


- conflict of values
- parents unfulfilled dreams
- money
- education
- careers
- culture
- codeswitching
- general English communication
- different terminology
- pronunciation
- accents
PARENT-CHILD TENSIONS
LANGUAGE
LIMINALITY
FOREIGN CREDENTIALS
NEGOTIATING DAILY LIFE
- experiences in post secondary institutions < by classes, pace of yourself resources available
- academic / work credentials
- some credentials don't translate to the Canadian context
- assessments
- people stuck in dead end jobs
- retraining and upgrades more money and time in school
- though identified as separate, it interweaves through all the other themes.
- ultimate expression of negotiation being the curriculum artefact
"negotiating "in advance"

Appendix E: Curriculum Artifact



PRELUDE

This handbook is the product of the work done by Zimbabwean immigrant youth in the summer of 2014. The purpose of this handbook is to provide a guide for prospective immigrant youth concerning the topical issues on life in-between cultures. The handbook originated from a felt need by the immigrant youth participants in this study as they examined various liminal experiences from their settlement journey in Canada. During our work in the focus groups, the study participants realized the various challenges of living in-between cultures and desired to alert other youth so they could better negotiate similar experiences.

CONTENTS

Immigration

- Get more information beforehand about the various immigration categories (cic.gc.ca)so you can make a decision that's appropriate for you because your immigration class will affect resources you can access in Canada
- If you are coming to Canada as a student find out whether you are allowed to work because you may need extra money to cover all your living expenses
- Also check to see if your immigration class will allow access to healthcare and income and other types of social support should you require it.
- The fact that you are a professional in your own country does not necessarily mean you can practice in the same field in Canada (with the exception of some specific categories like skilled worker for specific jobs). Your credentials go through a screening process so relevant credits are given. Based on the credits you are given you either go to school to upgrade or take an exam or courses to re-qualify.
- It is important to carry all your official transcripts and other work related documents from your country

Family and Culture

- In Canada there is an emphasis on rights which may conflict with our family values e.g. our understanding of freedom
- Be prepared for change and be open to adapting
- Chose friends wisely- *"zino irema rinosekerera newarisingade."* Adapting to a new society, friends or environment may have the following negative outcomes:
  - *Violence, risk (drugs, alcohol, suicide, prostitution, or various kinds of abuse*

Family and Culture cont'd

- In Zimbabwe we have several cultural values that we are taught so it is important to maintain them. At times you may be caught between upholding those values or deserting them. Dreams, aspirations and traditionally taught ideas may conflict with beliefs and norms of Canadian culture.
- If you are immigrating to Canada with your family you have the advantage of emotional and financial support. Without family settling can be harder.
- If you are immigrating to Canada alone or with your family be aware of challenges that exist, e.g. tensions over life choices (career, education, and others.)

Education

- If you come to Canada after high school in Zimbabwe to get into college/university you likely have to take some final year high school classes as prerequisites. Get more information before you start applying to university programs. Student advisors in various departments can help with this process.
- Education in various forms can lead to different career paths in Canada
- If you are going into undergraduate studies- expect big classes (over 80 students). Stay connected to student advisors. And make use of other facilities that help new students i.e. international students offices
- Make sure you understand the financial implications of higher education in Canada. Should you require to work off campus at any point during your period of study consult the immigration website and also career offices on campus .
- If you want to be a student be aware that the worth attached to professions back home is not the same here. If you want a well paying job then you need to consider careers like nursing and what they call trades here, which includes jobs like carpentry and welding.
- For more on how you can get into trades, university college and other career paths in Alberta for example, the ALIS website has plenty of information to help you decide where you want your education to take you.
- Volunteerism is very important in Canada because the Canadian that work experience will help you when looking for employment. When you are enrolled in school try to secure volunteer opportunities.
- Find out about coop and adult school options as alternatives to more formal schooling options

References

http://alis.alberta.ca/index.html(

http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit

Careers

- Due to differences in work hours expect to work irregular/long hours
- Depending on the job you have, some people will take on a second job to make ends meet
- With technology you can apply for jobs online using centralized web pages or specified job banks. Google searching job banks Canada can give you some ideas about where to look when you move to Canada
- Be open to taking up any kind of work before you can get to what you want - Canadian work experience is considered important here.
- Careers are a point of tension especially in families who are all in Canada as parents try to help their children navigate through the system. Ask for examples that will help you understand. For those who attend high school in Canada guidance counsellors help with that, for those who are past high school they have to find their way and this can be a difficult decision to make.

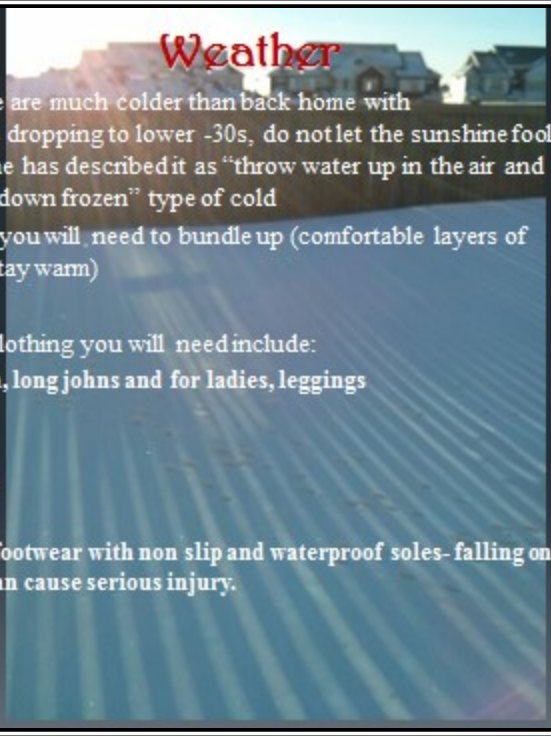
Language

- It will sound strange speaking English most of the time.
- Be aware of different word use (British vs Canadian).

Examples	
Sweets-Candy	Boot-Trunk
Chips-Fries	Bonnet-Hood
Biscuits-Cookies	Robots-Traffic lights
Tomato Sauce-Ketchup	

- Pronunciation will be different.
- Be prepared to answer questions or hear comments about your accent.

Weather



- Winters here are much colder than back home with temperatures dropping to lower -30s, do not let the sunshine fool you. Someone has described it as "throw water up in the air and it will come down frozen" type of cold
- That means you will need to bundle up (comfortable layers of clothing to stay warm)
  - Items of clothing you will need include:
    - **For men, long johns and for ladies, leggings**
    - **Hats**
    - **Gloves**
    - **Scarves**
    - **Socks**
    - **Proper footwear with non slip and waterproof soles- falling on the ice can cause serious injury.**

Religion

- There are many religions, and churches that resemble the ones we have back home
- When the opportunity presents itself you can speak boldly about your beliefs
- It is helpful to be strong in your beliefs, that is a great source of strength when going through new experiences
- Evangelism and outreach is not as public as it is back home
- We are encouraged to be sensitive about other religions
- Most store are open beyond 5pm so for Christians there is a danger of losing weekend fellowship

Technology

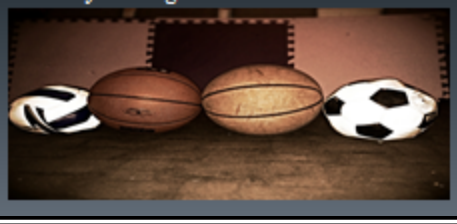
- Wi-Fi is more popular in Canada and dial-up is more common in Zimbabwe
- Wi-Fi access unlimited and there is a wider range of electronic gadgets for gamers such as iPads, Xbox, Wii, PlayStation
- Cyber bullying (online harassment) will sometimes have devastating results e.g. suicide
- Higher risk of hacking (unauthorized access to personal information)
- Technology can promote antisocial behaviors- not unusual for a bus ride to be extremely quiet everyone looking at their phone or some other electronic device.
- Extreme reliance on technology instead of natural abilities
- In some cases there is loss of privacy due to constant surveillance

Transit

- Trains and buses are faster and more efficient
- Depending on province buses and trains are the common transit
- A few pointers about buses
  - *Bus routes are numbered on the bus*
  - *They run on a schedule*
  - *Bus stops are numbered as well*
  - *You press the stop button to request a drop off*
  - *Daily passes, monthly passes, family passes, student passes are available to use and they are also a cheaper option*
  - *If you do not purchase a bus pass you can pay a single fare and get a transfer ticket that you can use for 45 minutes*
- Pedestrians have the right of way in Canada
- There may be delays so plan ahead of time e.g.
  - *After spring expect delays due to spring clean up*
  - *Road accidents especially in the winter season due to poor road conditions*

Health and Fitness

- Due to the availability of refined foods there is a high risk of excessive weight gain (obesity) and other health issues
- Drugs are readily available so there is a danger of drug dependency. There is a high prevalence of drugs e.g. *Medical marijuana, Tylenol and street drugs such as cocaine and meth*
- *Sports are very popular here as well, and most of them can be played indoors when the weather is bad*
- They are many different medical diagnoses especially when it comes to mental illness in Canada therefore
  - *You are more likely to get optimum care when diagnosed*
  - *There is a higher chance of misdiagnosis*



Other

Culture shock- things that you may not expect

- Use of swear words/gestures in public places
- Revealing attire especially in summer
- Kids as young as 15 are able to work and earn money
- Senior residences (elderly people's homes) are common in Canada
- Everyone is generally addressed using their first name, so its not unusual to call your supervisor at work by his/her first name