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L1 LITERACY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LESLLA IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA

by

Theresa Wall

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My work over the past 10 plus years has largely been with adult English learners who are also learning to read and write for the first time. In my early days teaching adult newcomers in Canada, working with one learner in particular helped to shift my awareness of the interplay between first language (L1) literacy and language and literacy acquisition in the target language of an adopted country. While other learners were writing paragraphs, writing seemed to be overly laborious for this learner. What I didn't realize at the time was that there were many learners just like him in our programs: learners who carried along in class quite well, until they were asked to engage in a reading or writing activity. Learners like him found reading and writing tasks laborious because these types of tasks were unpracticed and unfamiliar. As children, their schooling had been interrupted or they had been excluded from schooling altogether. Reasons, countries of origin, and gender may have varied, but no doubt their placement into a hyper-literate society exacerbated adjustments to a new land, culture, and language.

Over the years, I dove into learning more about adult literacy learning for people also learning a new language. I had been fortunate to take some basic reading diagnostic and development coursework in my bachelor of education program. I soon moved into teaching classes designed for adult ELL literacy learners, where I learned that every moment in class counts, not simply because we are held accountable to our funders to show progress, but because literacy and power are inextricably bound to one another in a culture where literacy is assumed.

While we can logically talk about the ways in which intelligence and literacy are not one and the same, our culture's values do not reflect this reality. The target language and literacy combined are important tools to navigating this new life, and ELL literacy teachers become liaises working with learners to increase access to knowledge about and access to cultural systems and services. A group of researchers and teachers known as LESLLA has been most influential in my growth as a teacher. LESLLA, which represents Literacy Education and Language Learning for Adults, is an international consortium dedicated to research, teaching practice, and policy related to adults developing print literacy skills for the first time, and in the target language of receiving countries. My introduction to LESLLA came at a time when I recognized limitations in my own professional training as I began to work with learners whose needs differed from those of learners I had worked with before. LESLLA offered new ways of thinking about SLA and literacy, and has enriched my knowledge and skills immensely.

Work with numerous organizations has informed my view of literacy's role in access to services. My experience is perhaps similar to many other teachers: during my time as a classroom teacher, learners' often brought me documents to decipher, shared concerns about how to raise their children in a different culture, spoke of difficulty finding employment without literacy skills, and shared the desire to make a better life for their families. One learner came to me month after month when her monthly financial assistance (not a large sum of money) was cut for various reasons. One month, the person who had helped her file her monthly report made a simple mistake, making it appear to caseworkers that she was no longer eligible for financial assistance. An ongoing issue for her was the broken mailbox her landlord refused to repair. This resulted in mail being returned to the government department overseeing her financial assistance, and led them to believe she no longer lived at that address, and that her claim for income support

was fraudulent. When a new caseworker took over the learner's file, questions that had been resolved became barriers again. Because there were gaps in her basic income support, the learner's rent was frequently late, and her landlord threatened to evict her from the apartment. She began sleeping at friends' places to avoid her landlord. This learner had little mental energy available for learning, and eventually decided she would quit language classes to take employment training and look for employment during an economic downturn. This all occurred when her daughter should have been starting kindergarten and, because scheduling conflicted, the learner felt she would be unable to transport her child to and from school while taking the employment training program. Eventually, with the support of an employment counselor and a settlement counselor, the learner enrolled her child in school and in after-school daycare. Without a great deal of support and intervention, however, the learner's daughter would have missed a year of schooling. The essence of this learner's experience is, unfortunately, not uncommon.

Literacy skills are required to access all sorts of programs and services. These include the monthly online reports income support recipients are expected to complete to continue receiving financial support, and the paperwork required to access programs for persons with lower incomes (e.g. sports programs for children). Children's school updates, notices from the landlord and employment applications all require some kind of print-text literacy and, increasingly, technological literacy. I began to see that service providers unwittingly require clients to use literacy skills to access services.

While there has been some headway reducing barriers created by these expectations and the adopting of plain language practice, in many places print-text still serves as a barrier to newcomers and born-and-raised Canadians alike. This expectation unnecessarily puts persons

who are new to the English language and new to literacy in a position where they are dependent on others to access those services, exacerbating an already uneven balance of power. So, while much of society is thinking about literacy as a way to catch up with friends on social media, read the daily news online and further education, for persons who have not developed skills to access print or technological media in such a culture, literacy seems to be about something else: meeting basic needs and bettering life for themselves and their families.

During the course of my work on this study, I also became aware of an area called information science and its relevance to the topic of L1 literacy and the settlement process. An Australian study involving resettled members of a Dinka South Sudanese community (Richards, 2015) has led to questions about ways that societies interact with not only print-text, but with information generally. When traditional ways of gathering and vetting information are inconsistent with practices in the receiving culture, a gap occurs between the information that exists and that which is fully accessed and utilized.

As I continue to work with adult L2 (second language) learners, many of whom are learning to read and write for the first time alongside learning the English language, I am interested in the implications of adult newcomers' L1 literacy for life in a highly literate post-industrialized country. While language acquisition is considered part of successful settlement and integration (the terminology used in Canada by the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC]), there is little research overtly examining connections between L1 literacy and settlement and integration. Some early research has begun to explore this issue (see Geronimo, Folinsbee, & Goveas 2001, for instance). I am also interested in how L2 language and literacy interact with LESLLA newcomers' daily lives in Canada. What does language and literacy acquisition mean to adult newcomers? What is the interplay between

second language and literacy acquisition and settlement and integration? As we expand to think about multiple literacies, of which reading, writing and technology are just parts, we also recognize many contexts where literacies are used (see volumes by Purcell-Gates, 2006 and Street, 1995 for more on multiple literacies). How do LESLLA participants access services despite service providers' assumption of print literacy (and even technological literacy) and participants' contrasting limited schooling in L1?

This qualitative study aims to learn about participants' perspectives in two key areas. First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services? To address these questions, I have undertaken a qualitative study, conducting interviews with four women who have had 0-3 years of L1 schooling and a fifth who reported 5 years of part-time schooling. A LESLLA teacher and a settlement counselor who works with LESLLA clients were also interviewed.

Perhaps the answers to these questions might help teachers think about ways to make the best use of learners' time in language training programs. Further, it might inform the way social service providers make their services accessible. We have seen a push towards the use of plain (or clear) language by many service providers. There may be additional means of making services more readily accessible to adult newcomers who are learning to read and write for the first time.

Summary

LESLLA teachers may find themselves acting as brokers between service providers and learners, as access to services often requires a certain level of L2 and literacy skills in addition to the ability to navigate a variety of systems. This study aims to gather information that can inform

classroom instruction in ESL literacy programs or other programs where LESLLA learners may enroll. It may also serve to encourage social service agencies to examine service provision design for this client-base. As noted above, a previous study involving adults with low L1 literacy found that learners reported difficulty accessing services that were largely designed for a literate population. If we are aware of both the barriers to services (e.g. assumed print literacy) and how clients work around the barriers, we may be able to better design programs and services with accessibility in mind. With a growing awareness of ways in which service providers might unintentionally create barriers for a marginalized group of adults, the current research can also be used to inform service provision.

The current inquiry explores the interplay between language, literacy and settlement in a western Canadian urban centre. The following chapters delve into the interaction between women who are LESLLA learners, their perspectives on target language and literacy skills, and access to services and literacy skills. Chapter Two begins with a brief synopsis of the topic of L1 literacy with adult newcomers to post-industrialized nations. An investigation into studies concerning access to services for adults with limited L1 literacy is followed by a summary of work considering overlap between refugee studies and information literacy, with an emphasis on refugees with a highly oral cultural background. Previous studies connecting newcomers' experiences, adult literacy programming, and service provision are then explored. As most of the LESLLA participants in this study arrived to Canada as refugees and all participants are women, the literature review also touches on these demographical factors.

Chapter Three describes the participants, the context, and the methodology of this study. Data is presented and prior research and participants' perspectives are synthesized in Chapter

Four. Chapter Five concludes with implications for both the adult second language and literacy education and settlement and integration sectors.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

L1 literacy and its implications for persons rebuilding their lives in a post-industrialized society is not to be ignored. Levels of L1 literacy affect the way that L2 literacy, and possibly even oral language, is acquired. Early research into effects of L1 literacy on settlement and integration processes suggests that accessing services becomes difficult for LESLLA newcomers. Access to services and successful settlement and integration processes demand information literacy - the ability to access, make sense of and utilize information - and the ability to navigate, or 'successfully operate within' (ATLAS, 2016) complex systems. However, despite additional barriers facing adult newcomers who have not accessed formal education, policy surrounding adult LESLLA programming has not adjusted to the needs of the clients who participate in those classes. Receiving nations would do well to have a clear understanding of the interplay between L1 literacy, target language and literacy development, and settlement outcomes.

Research Questions

The following literature review looks into available research related to the subject matter of the present study. This paper aims to answer two questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

This literature review takes a multidisciplinary approach, beginning with a general description of the resettlement context for government assisted refugees in Canada, to better understand the experiences of LESLLA participants in this study. This is followed by a review of research pertaining to perspectives on adult literacies, connections between literacy and access to services, and information literacy with refugee populations. Possible implications for teaching practice and for building bridges between classroom practice and social services follow. The chapter then reviews available studies involving interviews with adult newcomers with limited formal schooling. Chapter Two concludes by identifying a gap in current research which the present study endeavors to address.

Refugee Resettlement in Canada

The Canadian government has created various avenues to refugee resettlement in Canada. Refugees may be government sponsored, privately sponsored by family members or members of the public, or part of an agreement where resettlement responsibility is shared by the federal government and a private group. The latter is a newer arrangement. For Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in the Canadian context, secondary migration is a frequent occurrence where, once landed, they move from their destined community to another location within Canada (Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003). Simich et al. argue that secondary migration adversely affects the resettlement process for many GARs. The researchers interviewed settlement service providers, immigration officials, and 47 resettled GARs who were also secondary migrants, to learn more about secondary migration and how refugees seek out information and support. They note that while IRCC's aim is to destine GARs close to family and friends where possible, provinces' and regions' refugee resettlement targets often take precedence, and GARs land in

places where they are isolated from family and friends. Most participants interviewed in this study who had a preferred destination were, in the end, destined elsewhere.

Upon arrival, GARs are provided with housing for a period of time after their arrival to Canada. For the first year, they are entitled to financial support in the equivalent to social assistance. The amount varies by province, but is expected to cover basic expenses like housing, utilities and food. Many refugees decide to move to other locations in their first year of arrival. This phenomenon is called secondary migration. GARs are also provided a transportation loan to cover the costs of their journey to Canada. Repayments on this loan, sometimes dubbed the ‘refugee loan’, are expected to begin soon after arrival.

Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) are also eligible for LINC programming and other settlement services (e.g. settlement counseling), but sponsoring families or groups are responsible for connecting the sponsored refugee with service providers such as doctors and dentists, and are expected to support them financially for several years (Immigrants, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017). For this reason, PSRs are ineligible for services such as subsidized housing during this time.

Many people who arrive to Canada as refugees are literate or even highly educated in their first language. For the purposes of this study, however, the focus will remain on those newcomers who have had limited access to formal schooling and literacy in the first language. The remainder of this chapter looks at the role(s) of literacies in settlement and integration processes.

The Meaning of Literacies for Adult Newcomers: Previous Studies

The literature review that follows gives weight to perspectives from multiple disciplines. Research is included from academic fields including LESLLA, information science and refugee

studies. The current understanding of second language acquisition and language teaching methodology is based on research carried out largely with middle-class, post-secondary level students (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). However, as adult L2 literacy research grows, there is increasing awareness that learning to read and write in an additional language is quite different for adults who are learning to read and write for the first time in any language than it is for those who have already developed print-text literacy skills. Adults who have *no* prior print-text literacy face a unique set of challenges as they develop literacy skills for the first time (Young-Scholten & Naeb, 2009). The limited existing research points to some similarities between the way children and adults acquire print-text literacy for the first time, though researchers are quick to point out that generalizing research findings from studies involving children for understanding adult L2 literacy learners would be ill advised (Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011). A recent investigation into the emergent writing practices of LESLLA learners examines stages of orthographic development, from differentiation between pictures and print-like shapes to recognizing that writing represents speech, and eventually connecting letters and sounds (Kurvers & Ketelaars, 2010). Early research indicates that even L2 oral skills acquisition may be affected by L1 literacy (Bigelow, Delmas, Hansen, & Tarone, 2006; Strube, van de Craats, & van Hout, 2013; Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). Current research, growing yet still limited, serves as a foundation from which we can begin to ask questions about the effectiveness of teaching practices and programs.

L1 Print Text Literacy and Access to Social Services

As the development of L2 and literacy acquisition are unique for adults with no to limited prior formal schooling, this fact directly affects the potential settlement needs of the same

population. Early qualitative studies draw on the perspectives of adult newcomers or migrants who did not have access to schooling in the country of origin.

The first Toronto area study included focus groups consisting of adult migrants with less than a grade nine education from four community associations as well as interviews with staff at the organizations (Geronimo, Folinsbee, & Goveas, 2001). Researchers sought to find out settlement needs specific to this population, focusing on newcomers who had been in Canada 5 years or less. Focus groups with the target group and interviews with service providers working closely with these groups highlighted gaps in services for the target population. Common challenges to the settlement process were aggravated by the need for literacy to accomplish tasks. Where concerns mutual to many newcomers existed, such as access to suitable language training programs or finding employment, literacy served as an additional barrier in the target group's attempts to access local services, since services and their access paths assume a certain level of literacy.

And while there are indications that L1 literacy and L2 literacy acquisition may play a part in settlement and integration, a second discussion paper, prepared for the Movement for Canadian Literacy (Folinsbee, 2007), suggests that LESLLA learners also face barriers to opportunities to develop language and literacy skills effectively. Folinsbee draws on the experiences of language professionals in the ESL, literacy, and ESL literacy programs across Canada. Informants noted a need for awareness about ESL literacy amongst policy makers, clearer policy on services for adults with no to limited L1 literacy, and professional development for ESL, literacy and ESL literacy practitioners working with adult ESL literacy learners. This lack of understanding and clear policy led to inadequate language training programs designated for adults with limited L1 literacy, and lack of specific literacy programs for adults who had

developed stronger oral skills, had timed out of LINC programming (federally funded language training available to refugees and immigrants across the country), or live in rural areas: These learners tended to enroll in literacy programs for English L1 learners, where teachers may not have had background in SLA. Informants identified numerous barriers to enrolment and attendance in existing classes; childcare, tuition, and transportation costs all need to be factored in to ESL literacy program development. At the time of this study, the very programming that would be expected to mitigate the unique needs of this group of newcomers was lacking.

Information Literacy and Refugee Populations

Information science offers a lens into how services are accessed. Information literacy can be defined as “those practices, beliefs and skills which enable engagement with information needed for productive social agency” (Richards, 2015, p. 14). A review of the literature pertaining to immigrant access to healthcare in Canada (Ahmed, Shommu, Rumana, Barron, Wicklum, & Turin, 2016) highlights the particular challenges faced by refugees. The study suggests that access to health information is the biggest barrier to healthcare for newcomers. Notably, authors of this particular article opted to omit literature on access to healthcare for groups for whom access to healthcare is more complex, including refugees. Access to information is critical to successful settlement, regardless of background. For example, participants in a Toronto area study involving South Asian women identified information as their biggest need (George & Chaze, 2009).

In her qualitative study, Richards (2015) examines current research into studies that have to do with displacement, migration and settlement of refugees and their experiences pre- and post- migration, as well as information science to inform her inquiry into resettlement experiences of Bor Dinka South Sudanese in Queensland, Australia. Her study was born out of

the perception that ways of engaging with information play a significant role in settlement processes, as do differences between oral cultures such as that of Bor Dinka and print-text oriented cultures which are now receiving large numbers of persons from oral cultures.

Richards describes vast differences in what is called the ‘information infrastructure’ between receiving states and the contexts in which Bor Dinka participants were previously situated. In refugee camps for instance, information was primarily controlled by aid agencies, which would have used print text, oral communication, and technology to share information. Refugees in the camps, on the other hand, did not have access to the same technology and would rely on the few persons who were literate to help to fill out paperwork required by the Red Cross to search for missing relatives, for example. Participants described limited access to a phone, for which they would stand in line if family was resettled abroad. Participants described South Sudanese information practices as reliant on oral communication via networks of family and clan. Knowledge was also gained from observation. Effective information infrastructure for participants, even after migrating to Australia, emphasized face-to-face oral communication. Information presented in a text-print format, such as an email or flyer, was considered to be less credible than information presented over the phone or face-to-face.

The value of the collective arises in another study exploring health literacy for refugees in rural Australia (Lloyd, 2014). The author investigates the development of health literacy with persons who do not have the language and literacy skills to make use of available health information. A theme across the 20 participants was what is termed ‘pooling’, where members of a community (e.g. a church group) share the fragmented information they have with each other to create a full picture. Health information is accessed non-textually. (Note that health literacy encompasses more than the language and literacy skills required to receive health information: a

review by the Goodling Institute for Adult and Family Literacy (Mooney & Prins, 2013) discusses health literacy from the vantage point of socio-economic and contextual factors, such as the quality of communication by the healthcare provider.)

The effects of information literacy are not limited to healthcare access. In a study by MacKinnon, Stephens, and Salah (2007), refugee women living in inner city Winnipeg noted that many times people are unaware of available services. Participants indicated that hiring members of refugee communities to work in community-based organizations would increase the organization's outreach and capacity to address the needs of refugee women.

Murdie's (2008) study on refugee housing in Toronto suggests that refugees who seek out support to acquire housing have better housing outcomes than those who gather information from members of their communities. While he notes that refugee claimants, who apply for refugee status at the Canadian border or when within Canada, experience a much more difficult time securing housing than sponsored refugees, the process is not easy for any arriving to Canada as refugees: meeting landlords' requirements for employment was a common barrier for participants. Participants in the Winnipeg study indicated that the inability to obtain affordable housing in safe neighbourhoods was one of multiple barriers to settlement (MacKinnon et al., 2007). Participants cited being pressured by social assistance caseworkers, who take a work-first stance, to find full-time jobs even when they were unqualified for employment opportunities. Lack of access to employment training served as an additional barrier, and for women who were primary caregivers, attending language or employment training programs was out of reach as childcare was unavailable.

The Voices of LESLLA Women

Access to L2 language and literacy acquisition and to settlement and integration may be complicated by the likely challenge that girls and women face greater barriers to education. Women represent two-thirds of the non-literate population worldwide (UIS, 2010, as cited in Stromquist, 2014): Stromquist notes that girls in schools in industrialized countries tend to have slightly stronger reading outcomes than boys, and yet two-thirds of women worldwide have not developed literacy skills. She suggests that existing barriers to education for girls, including limited infrastructure and tasks such as fetching water or cooking that keep women at home, are reasons for an overrepresentation of women in the non-literate population relate to challenges girls face accessing L1 literacy as children. Stromquist (2014) expands on Freire's discussion on literacy's role in engagement in the public sphere, noting that patriarchal gender definitions of girls' and women's roles in the private sphere are so demanding that engagement in the public sphere is limited. While lack of print literacy may hinder adult newcomers' access to services, traditional gender roles limit women's focus to the private sphere and may create further challenge in access to schooling, even in the host country, as exemplified in the Winnipeg study where women's role as primary caregivers made access to language training in difficult for participants (MacKinnon et al., 2007). When traditional gender roles carry over to life in a new culture, women may not experience support with family obligations when they pursue education and employment opportunities in Canada.

Three studies involving women with limited L1 literacy in second language and / or L2 literacy classes (Gonzalves, 2012; Love & Kotai, 2015; Pothier, 2011) are of interest in relationship to the present study as they share the closest similarities between groups of participants and draw on the voices of learners themselves. A thread running through each study

is the desire for autonomy, where participants wish to be able to manage more day-to-day tasks without reliance on spouses and children. While not addressed specifically in these studies, one might hypothesize that this wish for independence is partially fueled by barriers to access that are particularly difficult to overcome for women who are learning a new language, have not yet developed literacy skills, and are dealing with unfamiliar systems.

In Gonzalves' (2012) interviews with female Yemeni LESLLA learners in the United States, the women talked about the importance of literacy use for independence. An Italian study involving women who were L2 literacy learners found language and literacy class attendance was driven by a similar desire for autonomy (Love & Kotai, 2015).

A third study (Pothier, 2011) involved four Somali newcomers to Canada in a Toronto-area LINC program, three of whom had limited access to literacy in their first language. Pothier describes the increase in refugee migration to Canada from countries that are either primarily oral cultures or where people were unable to access schooling as a result of conflict. However, there is a lack of research and understanding of these populations, and she highlights the importance of understanding literacy practices and access to literacy for these groups if we are to offer adequate services, including language training programs, for this group.

Social and Cultural Capital

While gaps in language and literacy are important to supporting learners' needs, this awareness must be counterbalanced with a view to the strengths LESLLA learners bring to the classroom (Bigelow, 2007). In a case study involving a Somali youth, Bigelow identifies the social and cultural capital of the participant. *Social capital* relates to the reciprocal relationships a person draws on to accomplish goals (Coleman, 1990, as cited in Bigelow), while *cultural*

capital includes the knowledge of ‘how things work’ in a particular system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, as cited in Bigelow, p.2).

Bourdieu (1986) proposed the idea of cultural capital as an alternative way to understand varied academic achievement in children where he had noted correlations between children’s reading success and social class. The hypothesis of cultural capital challenged dominant discourse, which held that children’s success in school was related to individual abilities or aptitude. It refers to “the symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action” (Cultural capital, 2014), that are passed down from generation to generation. In this definition, knowledge, beliefs and behaviours are a form of currency that can be accumulated and converted for things like social mobility.

Social capital can be defined in different ways. Bourdieu discusses social capital as membership in groups, such as social class, families, schools, or associations, that acts as a multiplier of an individual’s capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In other definitions, social capital is seen as a network of relationships that provide mutual benefit to members. The Oxford Dictionary defines it this way:

The processes and conditions among people and organizations that lead to their accomplishing a goal of mutual social benefit, usually characterized by interrelated constructs of trust, cooperation, civic engagement, and reciprocity, reinforced by networking (Social capital, 2014).

Bigelow notes a connection exists between strong co-ethnic social capital and the development of cultural capital.

In Bigelow’s study, ‘Fadumo’, an 18-year-old high achieving high school student, is found to have a strong source of social capital in her family. Her family works together to ensure

school comes first. Children help each other with homework and their mother relies on her network within the Somali community, who help her navigate services. These sources of social capital are converted to high levels of academic achievement for Fadumo, thereby increasing an aspect of cultural capital.

Worthy of note here is Fadumo and her family's source of social capital, which is grounded primarily within the Somali community and in the Somali language. Sources of cultural capital are found in the form of Fadumo's quickly growing English language skills which are required to navigate systems. Cultural capital was also noted in terms of Fadumo's ardent student behaviour.

While Fadumo clearly exhibits strong areas of social and cultural capital, there are gaps in her cultural capital; she has difficulty understanding how to apply for college, taking standardized tests, and filling out financial aid applications. Bigelow observes that Fadumo's academic literacy skills were not well enough developed to transition to the nursing program she was interested in. Bigelow recommends that schools provide services to help with the transition challenges Fadumo faced and offer more time and rigor to meet the academic demands that make it possible for learners like her to continue to work toward their goals.

Settlement and Integration: Whose Job is It?

While language programs are responsible for providing quality language and literacy instruction, thereby supporting the settlement and integration process, the question remains, who is responsible for ensuring that other factors in successful integration are being met? In immigrant-serving agencies, "there is little in the way of information or services that settlement workers do not provide for refugees" (Wood, McGrath, & Young, 2012, p. 33). Settlement counselors are a trusted source of information who liaise between clients and other service

providers, even accompanying clients to appointments. As in the case of a Karen woman in Wood, et al.'s Calgary study, a settlement counselor may be the only advocate for a refugee. Neoliberalism, the move to shift responsibility from federal to municipal levels is a trend across urban centers in Canada. This shift in responsibility often lands on the shoulders of settlement workers who are under-resourced and overworked. In view of challenges faced by newcomers to Canada and barriers specific to LESLLA newcomers, what is the role of language training programs in supporting settlement and integration processes? Is there space for supporting these processes in the classroom? The present section looks at teaching practice that includes or is amenable to the inclusion of settlement and integration issues.

Language Training and Social Services: Meeting in the Middle?

As established in research to date, print-text-based information sources are problematic for people who are new to the target language and to print literacy, and the background of newcomers can affect their ability to use information and navigate systems. In the aforementioned studies, participants found workarounds for gathering and sharing information, but researchers maintain that barriers continue to exist and decrease refugees' well-being. Further, while print-text and language serve as barriers to information access, the knowledge required to navigate systems in a new context can create further difficulties (Lloyd, 2014).

Language training for ESL literacy learners in Canada tends to incorporate a focus on settlement and integration, even for non-LINC classes. While these programs are designed to address learners' goals, language teaching practice is still largely informed by research involving participants who are highly educated. If successful settlement also depends on the ability to navigate complex systems, as noted in the information science studies discussed earlier, perhaps

teaching the language and literacy skills required to complete real-life tasks is not enough to ensure learners have the necessary tools to complete day-to-day tasks.

Further, while language and literacy programs can address some of the barriers experienced by persons with limited literacy, immigrant-serving agencies, government offices or community organizations may be inadvertently creating additional barriers to adults with limited literacy. It may be of interest to address systemic barriers to create more effective supports for clients, such as those identified in the Geronimo et al. (2001) study. That study on settlement for adults with limited L1 literacy ended in a report describing existing barriers to settlement in general and outlining numerous recommendations. One of those recommendations proposes that IRCC recognize L1 literacy as a basic human right, and include LINC-funded programs that include L1 literacy instruction as bridging programs to ESL literacy classes. The authors also urge organizations to implement policy regarding accessible language and using more effective dissemination means than print-text materials. Additionally, service providers are encouraged to address literacy barriers inadvertently created by service providers, and ensure that basic needs (housing, childcare, food, transportation) are addressed.

Settlement in the Classroom

Classes where LESLLA learners study require skillful teachers with a base of relating to emergent literacy in adult learners (Vinogradov & Liden, 2009). In addition to this, Vinogradov (2013) calls for a knowledge base including these areas: teaching, the immigrant and refugee experience, language and language acquisition, and adult learning. Of particular interest here are the inclusion of the immigrant and refugee experience and adult learning, as settlement and integration experiences may overlap with both of these areas.

In a volume entitled *Cultural Practices of Literacy* (Purcell-Gates, 2010), literacy researchers describe literacy practices in contexts from primary schools to adult education settings. Threads from the research are drawn together in the concluding chapter, where Purcell-Gates notes the dichotomy of in-class and out-of-school literacy practices. What she terms *school-only literacy practices* include the use of materials such as flashcards and worksheets, the use of reading strategies, and spelling lists. Uptake in literacy practice outside of school is substantially increased when authentic texts are brought into the classroom. Evidence of this was also found in the wide scale *What Works* study involving adult ESL literacy learners in the United States (Condelli & Wrigley, 2008). *Authentic texts* refers to genres of texts such as a flyers, bills or notices. These types of texts, though authentic in nature, can be used to perform school-only tasks (Purcell-Gates, 2010). Reder's large-scale study (2013) evaluates increases in literacy practice and literacy proficiency in LESLLA adults over the span of 8 years. Results show that, in programs using a Practice Engagement Theory (PET) model, LESLLA learners' literacy proficiency increases minimally while they are enrolled in programs. Increases in proficiency are, however, visible over time, long after learners exit programs. Literacy practice outside the classroom, however, does increase while LESLLA learners attend programs and afterwards, and notably, Reder identifies an interplay between literacy practice in LESLLA lives and increases in literacy proficiency. This has implications for the ways in which programs are delivered and what is deemed valuable enough to teach and measure in classes LESLLA learners attend, as well as for places where literacy development might be implemented. Reder proposes a "busy intersection" model of policy and programming that recognizes ways that language and literacy acquisition occur over time and in a variety of settings for LESLLA learners, rather than

what he terms the “parking lot” model of instruction, where programs aim to fill seats, retain learners, and show progress over short periods of time.

While the correlation between authentic literacy tasks in class and increased literacy practice is clear, alignment between classroom tasks and learners’ authentic language and literacy needs may fall outside of individual classroom or schools’ jurisdictions. Editors Simpson and Whiteside note that the gulf between language policy and learner needs is a theme found in their volume of articles relating to migration policy and language education (2015).

Teachers in Benseman’s (2014) New Zealand study speak of the importance of learners’ gaining skills they could use in the community in addition to increasing language and literacy skills. Teacher participants felt LESLLA learners experienced success as learners when they became more confident accessing services such as health care independently. An ELL program in California took a more assertive approach to engaging learners in learning about and sharing health information (Handley, Santos, & McClelland, 2009). Learners engaged with information about lead poisoning, a relevant issue for some Mexican immigrants, then developed related role-plays to share with community members.

LESLLA teachers hold diverse viewpoints of what their role encompasses. Fleming (2015) surveys LESLLA classroom instruction from the perspective of developing citizenship. Most of the Ontario and British Columbia teacher-participants discussed the value of teaching skills to navigate life in Canada or deal with settlement issues that arise. Some also saw their role as engaging learners in justice-oriented citizenship, which involves looking at systems with a critical lens (Westheimer & Kahne, [2004], as cited in Fleming, 2015).

In the literature reviewed here, literacy practitioners and researchers value connecting literacy instruction to learners' lives. The extent to which they see themselves engaged in issues of settlement and integration or in issues of power, however, varies.

Literacy in Social Services

Recognition of the cross-over between adult literacy and social work is exemplified in a commentary written by an adult literacy program director and a program coordinator, drawing attention to the importance of recognizing clients' literacy skills, or lack thereof, in social work (Greenberg & Lackney, 2006). They describe ways in which clients' lack of or limited literacy might present in interactions and the barrier it can become for achieving goals and completing tasks. They note that clients who may appear to be lazy or uncooperative may be, in fact, hiding their inability to read or write. Social workers are advised to take note of behaviours that would point to an avoidance of reading or writing tasks (e.g. completing paperwork), and are offered suggestions for ways to support clients with limited literacy. A social worker can, for example, mention to a client how difficult a particular form is, and offer to help out if needed.

Research explored above has identified several factors affecting settlement and integration processes. When multiple factors co-exist, there is an increase to barriers to successful settlement and integration. Since GARs are eligible to access both language training and settlement services, both sectors are well-positioned to support these processes. Once Canadian citizenship is obtained, access to settlement services is greatly reduced, as citizenship renders individuals ineligible for much IRCC-funded services. 'Mainstream' social service providers, such as subsidized housing companies or medical institutions can also reduce barriers to LESLLA clients.

Gap in Research

In light of the literature examined in Chapter Two, further research into the relationship between L1 literacy, access to social services, and settlement processes is needed. There appear to be unique factors affecting settlement processes for adults who have not developed the language and literacy skills required to gather and weigh information, and whose information practices may be different from those of the receiving nations. Several studies point to a desire for autonomy underlying female LESLLA learners' commitment to L2 literacy classes. What is unknown is how literacy is experienced by women who have not previously participated in formal education, and what means they have to access services despite their current language and literacy proficiency. Literature looking into connections between settlement and integration processes for specific groups tend to look at one or two specific characteristics. That is, studies focus on refugee women, or adult newcomers in general with limited schooling. The current study, however, focuses on the intersection of these factors.

Pothier (2011), Gonzalves (2012) and Love and Kotai (2015) all note the limited number of studies that include voices of adult newcomers with limited L1 literacy. Very little is known about experiences and goals of adult L2 literacy learners in their new communities. Further, even less is known about the ways in which non-literate adult newcomers get things done in a highly literate society without the use of print literacy. Language training programs and settlement services may do their utmost to provide adequate services to all clients, but have limited systematic research from which they can draw when it comes to engaging adults who have limited language and literacy skills.

Learning about how clients access services such as financial assistance, subsidized housing, and medical services, and which services might be easier or more difficult to access,

offers the potential to help us think about the ways in which those services are delivered and how the community might more effectively respond to these clients' needs. A recognition of where demands for print-literacy, L2 and information literacy and navigation skills serve as barriers can inform classroom instruction and program design. Further, an understanding of strategies clients with low literacy use to work around service design can shift educators' often 'deficit-focused' thinking about adult learners with limited L1 literacy. Increased awareness in social service, settlement, and language training sectors has the potential to improve settlement outcomes for LESLLA adults.

Summary

Research studies involving non-literate and low-literate adult immigrants and refugees indicate a connection between literacy and self-efficacy, and between accessing services and language and literacy goals. They also provide us with useful information about the nature of L2 literacy programming. The present study endeavors to address the following questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

The present study adds to the corpus of work where LESLLA adults' voices are represented and, more specifically, this work addresses the under-explored interplay between L1 literacy and settlement and integration processes for LESLLA women who arrived to Canada as refugees, residing in Canada from approximately 3 to 17 years.

The next chapter will outline methods used in the present study. Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the research design. Next, participants and the research setting are described. A description of data collection and data analysis procedures utilized in the present study and ethical considerations follow.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

My prior experience and interactions with LESLLA learners, LESLLA teachers, settlement agencies and other social services providers have all informed the current topic of interest and the research design. Literature to date seems to support the notion that successful settlement and integration is impeded by various factors, such as L1 literacy, information literacy, gender, status at the time of arrival, and social and cultural capital.

The present study endeavors to understand the interplay between L1 literacy for LESLLA adults in an urban center in western Canada and participants' experiences with second language, literacy and settlement. Qualitative methods are employed to answer these questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

Chapter Three provides an overview of research methods used in this study. This chapter begins with an outline of the research design, followed by a description of the participants and setting. Next, methods undertaken to collect and analyze data are specified. Chapter Three concludes with measures taken to ensure an ethical study.

Researcher Bias

Working with LESLLA learners has shaped this researcher's understanding of possible barriers that are experienced when navigating new systems and completing day-to-day tasks without the print literacy expected in a society that relies heavily on print text. Experience with

LESLLA learners over time has taught me that settlement and integration issues frequently arise in the classroom, and led to my belief that, in addition to providing high-quality research-informed language and literacy instruction, LESLLA programs are also ideally suited to facilitate access to services. Facilitating access to services can occur in different ways: teachers can share information about community services and programs, invite guest speakers, include language and literacy skills practice that support access to services, and support learners to make the connection to service providers by making a phone call or accompanying a learner to a settlement agency.

Research Design

As this study aims to learn about participants' experiences with literacy and accessing services, a qualitative approach is preferred for this particular study. In the field of SLA, qualitative research is utilized when the primary interest lies in the sociolinguistic aspects of a topic (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Qualitative research is *emic* in nature; that is, it is intent on participants' own experiences and perspectives on an issue, and therefore involves a limited number of participants. Further, unlike quantitative research, which aims for an objective stance, qualitative research may be intended as a means for social and political change. An additional benefit of a qualitative approach is its plasticity. Research questions are not fixed; rather, they continue to be informed and to evolve over the course of a project. They are interpretive in nature, and enable the researcher to focus on discovery and processes (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

In qualitative research, data can be gathered in multiple ways, such as ethnographies, observations, or journals and diaries or case studies. An interview format was ascertained to align most clearly with the purpose of compiling and apprising multiple, though limited, perspectives on the topic at hand. Mackey and Gass (2005) note the value of semi-structured

interviews, in which a previously designed questionnaire guides but does not limit dialogue to the specific queries. The semi-structured interview protocol employed in this study allowed for exploration of points of interest or themes as they emerged.

Participants and Setting

This study intends to learn from women in western Canada who are students in a literacy program for LESLLA learners that is situated within the broader mission of an immigrant-serving agency. The program is based on a participatory model, which focuses on learning in connection with social change. The primary aims of the model are to involve adult learners in addressing social inequities and increasing social justice by building on their existing skills and knowledge. This is achieved by increasing learners' communication skills in order to strengthen their power and voice. This longstanding program was designed for adult L2 literacy learners with up to 7 years of prior schooling. The multi-level LESLLA classes run two mornings, afternoons or evenings a week in various churches and community centers in the western Canadian city that is the location of this study. Learners in the program come from countries including Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Nepal / Bhutan (self-identification varies), Myanmar, Pakistan, Syria, and so on.

These classes are provided by an immigrant-serving agency that offers language training, employment training, family services, and settlement and integration programs and services. To increase awareness of various programs and services, presentations are offered within learners' classes. Representatives of employment training programs designed for clients with limited L1 literacy visit classes regularly. Settlement counsellors may also share information about services they provide. Where possible, L1 interpretation is organized for these presentations.

To narrow the field of research, the researcher aimed to include LESLLA participants with 0 to 3 years of prior schooling, with the prediction that there may be the most to learn from presently-enrolled learners who have had less interaction with print text and no prior formal schooling. While four participants fell within this range, one participant reported 5 years of interrupted education, as outlined in the section below. A teacher in the program and a settlement counselor were also interviewed to create a rounded view of the research topic.

Table 1

LESLLA Participants: Demographic Information

Participant	Prior schooling	Country of origin	Languages	Length of residency
Abrehet	0 years	Eritrea	Tigrinya, Amharic, some Arabic	3 years
Ibsituu	0 years	Ethiopia	Oromo, Swahili	3 years
Nyadir	5 years interrupted	South Sudan	Nuer	17 years
Akuol	1 year	South Sudan	Dinka, Arabic	14 years
Tenneh	0 years	Sierra Leone	Vai, Mende, Krio, Temne	13 years

As noted in Table 1, learner-participants' prior schooling experience range from 0 to 5 years of L1 schooling. Their reported countries of origin are Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan (2) and Sierra Leone. First languages are Tigrinya, Oromo, Nuer, Dinka and Vai. Two participants reported arriving in Canada approximately three years ago, while three have lived in Canada over 10 years.

Four of the five LESLLA participants described their initial settlement processes in line with government resettlement process for GARs as described by Simich et al. (2003). Three of the five participants were assigned to their current city of residence by the Canadian government. Abrehet and Tenneh both arrived at different locales; Abrehet moved soon after her arrival,

perhaps negatively influencing the level of support she received at the early stages of her resettlement. Tenneh stayed in her destined city years before moving to her current city, and therefore would have been present when the most comprehensive services are made available to GARs in the first year.

All learner participants in this study could be referred to as LESLLA learners. Nyadir's 5 years of schooling, from the ages of 10 to 15 lies outside of this target, even though classes ran only three times a week. As research indicates, even a small amount of L1 schooling may influence L2 literacy development (Young-Scholten & Naeb, 2009). Nyadir's L1 schooling began later in childhood and was structured differently than schooling in Canada would be; however, her early experiences with Nuer print-text literacy are likely to have had an influence on her current use of L1 literacy and her ability to develop L2 literacy.

Procedure

Individual interviews with LESLLA participants were arranged at participants' classes or at the immigrant-serving agency in various locations throughout the city and took place for approximately an hour each. Every effort was made to organize support of a volunteer interpreter where needed. Learner interviews are common practice within the program in the context of accessing learning support services. The researcher aimed to create as little disruption as possible from learners' regular routine. In exchange for their time participating in the interview, LESLLA participants were offered a tutoring session at a local library outside of class hours or during the noon hour if space was available. LESLLA participant interviews were recorded using a laptop and stored safely for the duration of the study, while the teacher interview was audio recorded. Recordings were then transcribed for the purpose of this study. As the settlement counselor participating in this study preferred not to be audio recorded, notes were taken during her

interview. A summary of the interview was provided to the participant to check for accuracy, who confirmed the content.

Interview Questions

The interview questions (Appendix A) draw both on the researcher's previous experience working with adults who are developing print literacy skills for the first time as adults and from research outlined in the literature review. Readings of the current research have informed questions that go beyond language and literacy in terms of access to information and getting things done. Guiding questions developed for LESLLA participants began with demographic information, followed with questions about experiences with language, literacy and settlement. The teacher and settlement counselor were asked similar questions relating to how they perceive language, literacy and settlement to interact in their work as a teacher and settlement counselor. The additional question of *What advice do you have for teachers?* was added during the first interview and included in all of the following interviews, except for the interview with the settlement counselor, who was asked, *What advice do you have for settlement counselors?*

Data Analysis

Recordings were transcribed after each interview. After several transcriptions were available, the researcher began reading them through for emerging themes. Themes along the lines of types of services accessed and supports or barriers to access were highlighted. Interviews were then coded into subcategories using Dedoose. After a rereading of Bigelow's (2007) study on social and cultural capital for a Somali high school student, further consideration was given to the existing codes' relationship to social and cultural capital for each of the services accessed and ways in which they were accessed, and adjustments were made to existing codes. Themes emerging from LESLLA participant interviews were triangulated with data found in interviews

with the teacher and settlement counselor. Finally, relevant literature was compared with the interview data. Richards (2015) noted using quotes in an effort to “allow [participants] experiences and lives to speak for themselves” (p. 51). The present study aimed to mirror this practice.

Ethics

The research methods involved in this study went through several steps to ensure the research was carried out ethically. The study was approved by Hamline University’s Human Subjects Committee. Permission was then sought from the agency providing the LESLLA classes in which the participants were enrolled. Participants were provided with information about the study orally and with interpreter support if needed. After expressing initial interest in participating in the present study, requests for interpreter support were made for two learners with beginning English oral skills. For three LESLLA participants with stronger oral language skills as well as the teacher and settlement counselor, interview appointments were made without interpreter support. At the outset of each LESLLA participant interview, the researcher described the information provided to them in an informed consent letter (Appendix B). Participants were made aware that participation in the study was optional and would in no way determine eligibility for services. Participants were told that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions to their language and literacy training or any other services rendered at the agency. Interviews were recorded on a protected laptop. All participants signed the consent letter.

When conducting research with adult newcomers with limited schooling in L1, researchers must consider ways in which this group of participants differs from traditional SLA participants (Vinogradov, Pettitt, & Bigelow, 2015). The following recommendations for

research with LESLLA were taken into account for this study. First, research is an exchange, where both parties, participants and researchers gain something of value to them. The present project aimed to create a foundation of reciprocity, ensuring that involved learners received something of value to themselves in exchange for their participation in the research. LESLLA participants were offered a tutorial session at a local library in exchange for their participation in this project.

As well, there is room for concern over the lens literacy practitioners and researchers wear as we approach our work. Historically, literacy instruction has taken place in relationships where there has been unequal distribution of power (Street, 1995). Literacy has been used as a means to colonize or convert persons to enlightenment. While practitioners and researchers now may abhor such practice, Street believes that we are still susceptible to similar beliefs where literacy is viewed as a sort of salvation for non-literate learners. This present study aims to challenge these types of assumptions by including discussion about way in which learners are functioning, regardless of their literacy status.

While LESLLA learners are not all refugees, participants in this particular study arrived to Canada on humanitarian grounds, and so ethical considerations about conducting research with refugees will also be relevant to the present study. As Richards (2015) writes, refugee lives are by nature insecure, and this “poses concerns for personal safety, privacy and confidentiality, both for researchers and for the communities they study” (p. 38). Keeping this in mind, all names in the present study are pseudonyms, and identifying factors have been removed.

Summary

This qualitative study proposes to answer questions about L1 literacy and its interaction with settlement processes with the aim of finding themes that can inform both classroom practice

and service provision. Five LESLLA participants who are women were interviewed to learn about their current use of literacy, their values surrounding literacy, existing barriers to services, and how services are accessed or how day-to-day tasks are accomplished despite these barriers. Interviews were also held with a LESLLA teacher and a settlement counselor who has a great deal of experience working with LESLLA clients to corroborate data shared by LESLLA participants. Chapter Four outlines research findings, describes completed interviews and discusses emerging themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Chapter Four includes two main sections: the first section includes a profile of each participant, created by synthesizing the interview data, followed by a cross-case analysis in the second part of the chapter. The data includes interviews with each of the seven participants. The first five interviews consist of conversations with learners in the ELL literacy program. These are followed by interviews with one of the teachers in the program and a settlement counselor who works largely with a similar population of clients. Interview questions aimed to address the following questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

The second section of Chapter Four consists of a cross-case analysis of the data. It is organized with sections on learner background, social capital, cultural capital, organizational supports, language, literacy and numeracy, and learners' recommendations to teachers. Each heading includes a cross analysis of data from interviews with five learners where learner participants' responses are held up to interviews with an ELL literacy teacher and a settlement counselor. Where possible, references to literature are also included under each subsection.

Content of the interviews and readings included in the literature review shaped the organization of data. Each section begins with a description of the participant's background. An exemplar of participants' experience accessing services is included from each interview.

Getting Things Done: Participants' Stories

Abrehet

Background. Abrehet left Eritrea during the Badme war, a battle for the Badme region's independence from Ethiopia between 1998 and 2000. Abrehet spent 14 or 15 years in a refugee camp in Sudan before arriving in Canada in 2014. Abrehet's first language is Tigrinya. She also speaks Amharic and understands Arabic. She lives with her adult son, who studies at a local college.

The interview took place with the support of a community interpreter who speaks Tigrinya. Abrehet talked about differences between her life in the refugee camp and life in Canada and changes to her ability to manage life here over the past 3 to 4 years. At times during the interview, she opted not to talk about experiences, stating that she did not want to think about how her life was before, and at one point mentioning that life was so difficult that she used to cry.

Abrehet did not attend school in her village in Eritrea. Abrehet's father died while her mother was pregnant with her, and her mother passed away when Abrehet was just a year old. She describes her life in the village as difficult. As she said, "The first time that I held a pen and put it on paper was here in Canada." Abrehet's son, however, attended school in Sudan where education was delivered in Arabic.

Arriving to Canada with GAR status, Abrehet and her son's destination was Vancouver. The pair moved soon after landing, when Abrehet heard she would be able to find a cleaning job in her current location. As such, she may have missed orientations that would have been provided her, as noted in the literature review. Abrehet notes that she did not know where to find a settlement counselor until she began attending school.

Abrehet currently attends LESLLA classes four mornings a week. She attends religious education classes on Saturdays and church on Sundays. Much of her time is spent on household chores, and on her doctor's recommendation, she goes for walks regularly. Abrehet lives in government-subsidized housing where she says there are many people from diverse backgrounds, but not Habesha people, those who originate from Ethiopia and Ethiopia.

Taking the bus. Abrehet's transition to life in Canada has not been an easy one. Abrehet tells a striking story about the challenges of taking public transportation:

[My son is] like 18. With the bus, he used help me, like uh, which bus goes where.

Because like before I used to get into bus number 3 thinking it's 4, or I'll get into bus number 4 thinking it's 3, so I used to get lost...It was difficult for my son before. It was very, very difficult, but he's okay now...I do everything by myself. I'm becoming like a native person now...I go to church by myself...I'm like independent now.

Later in the interview, Abrehet talked about an experience on public transportation that left her lost and unable to get home until the next day:

Yeah, this was when I was like, new like in Canada, that happened to me. Like I went in a bus and like I went, like I went all the way [to the end of the line], and I got lost in there, so I like spent a whole night there, and like the whole night. And, uh, and I was like, I was uh, lost in [the grocery store parking lot] so I saw people pressing [the button

on the bus] and then like getting off. And when I saw that I, I like did the same thing, pressed it and then get off...So the next morning, I got on on the bus and then I went back [home]. And when I saw people pressing [the button] to get off, I had no idea like that's how you get off from the bus. So, when I saw them press it, and then getting off, I did the same thing and then I got off. Even like the next stop, the next day, I was like circling around the streets, and my son was doing the same thing. Just by some accident, we just met at four, at 4:00.

Abrehet returns to her narrative of being lost at the end of the interview:

In that time I was lost, I thought...the system was like my country, where like, if you raise your hand, the bus driver normally stops. That's... the bus system back home. But that's not how it is. So I just...went along, or the bus just kept on taking me. That's why I kind of got lost. And that time it was summer, so I thought, I will just go out and buy some things and come back. [And that way] there is no way you can just get lost. There is a bus and you just get on the bus and then get off. But like I thought I raise my hand and that's how I end up getting lost. Then when I get off, like nobody can see me. Like the, uh, people don't, they didn't notice I was there.

Abrehet contrasts her experience accessing services now to when she first arrived:

Now like I would ask if I have a problem. Uh, like, I would carry a paper and then I would just like ask, uh, "Give me a direction," and...hard time...where to going, like my paper. Or, like, if my son is not in school, then I would also ask him to take me.

Abrehet's advice to teachers includes teaching practical information like how to use the public transportation system.

Ibsituu

Background. Ibsituu came to Canada from Ethiopia via Kakuma, a large refugee camp in Kenya, in 2014. While her first language is Oromo, we were unable to organize an interview with Oromo interpreter support. Instead the interview took place in Swahili, which the participant learned in Kakuma.

The fact that I was unable to obtain Oromo interpreter support complicated the interview to some degree. The interview involved a great deal of code-switching and clarification. Nonetheless, Ibsituu shared a fair amount about her own literacy practice and her experience with getting things done in the community.

Ibsituu did not attend school in Ethiopia or Kakuma, and reported she did not learn to read or write by other means until she began attending school in Canada. Her older children attended school in Kakuma and learned to read and write in Swahili there. They do not, however, continue to read and write in Swahili now that they are in Canada. When asked how she uses English literacy practices at home, Ibsituu noted that she reads books with her youngest children at home, and practices “ABCD” and “123”.

While the language program Ibsituu is enrolled in runs two mornings or afternoons a week at various locations, Ibsituu attends two different classes in the program, meaning she attends four mornings a week. Her after-class routine varies. Sometimes Ibsituu reads. Other times she takes her youngest children to the park or watches television while the eldest are in school. On weekends, she studies the Koran. Ibsituu talks about juggling her family and working on her own literacy skills:

Sometime, sometime reading, sometime reading. Sometime no time, teacher. Yeah, cooking, clean house, yeah. Laundry, dishwasher. Yeah, very busy.

Her older children are nearly finished with high school, and they do not have the time to help Ibsituu at home with the competing demands of homework.

Ibsituu speaks English frequently outside of class time. She speaks English at the grocery store, at the doctor's office, and at the bank. She talks about how it's "not scary" like before, and she goes out to these places by herself. Ibsituu demonstrates how she asks where to find items in the grocery store and how she talks to the teller to withdraw money at the bank.

Who helps. When asked if friends help her to find information, Ibsituu says that her friends live in a community too far away to help her. Ibsituu's primary sources of social capital are her immediate family. Her husband mediates between her and others who have information that will help her. It was her husband, for instance, who learned from another person about the program Ibsituu is currently enrolled in. Through interpreter support, Ibsituu says, "My husband knows everything. I don't know anything." Her children, too, are a valuable source of information.

When asked about the people who help her, Ibsituu mentioned mainly formal or organizational support people. When she first came to Canada, she stayed at a reception centre with her husband and children. There, somebody helped her family to register for school and generally helped the family settle in, though she was unsure of whether this person worked with the reception centre or not. This helper spoke Amharic, but not Oromo. Because Ibsituu's husband speaks Amharic, he appears to have handled the interactions with the helper. When asked for details on how he helped them at the early stages, Ibsituu said her husband knew, but she was not sure of the details. Ibsituu recalls the person talking with them and filling out some paperwork to obtain housing. The person connected the family with additional service

providers, for instance, the program where Ibsituu currently attends class and another agency that offers free income tax clinics.

Current sources of external supports Ibsituu describes are connected to her children's school and her own program. A worker in her children's school, who speaks Swahili, is her main point of contact for any communications. The worker explains report cards and liaises for parent-teacher conferences. If one of the children does not attend school, the worker calls Ibsituu to ask where the child is. Ibsituu notes that then she can explain to the worker if her child is sick or whatever reason the child is away from school that day.

Nyadir

Background. Nyadir came to Canada from what is now South Sudan in 2000. Her first language is Nuer. Nyadir's educational experience is somewhat different from the other participants included in this study: she went to school in the local church from age 10 to 15. Anywhere between 15 to 40 children studied reading, writing, grammar and math three times a week.

Three of Nyadir's children were born in Canada. Her first child was born in South Sudan, and studied Nuer in Canada until the teacher moved to another city. She describes his Nuer literacy as "grade one".

Nyadir attends LESLLA classes twice a week. She works weekends and volunteers with a childcare program once a week. She speaks both Nuer and English at home.

Public education. Nyadir plays an active role in her children's education. At the beginning, she relied on her husband to communicate with teachers. Now, though, Nyadir pops in to talk with her children's teachers to make sure her children are performing well in school.

The teachers understand that Nyadir is not always able to make scheduled parent-teacher interview dates, and encourage her to stop by whenever she needs.

[In the beginning], my husband do all the thing because I can't speak English. When they call for me, "Are you [Simon's] Mom?, Are you [Nyanaath's] Mom?" Then I say, "Yes." ... I don't understand [what they were saying]. Then when my husband come, I said, "The teacher call. I don't know what [he's calling about]." I said, "Okay, you call them." ... Then, they told him. They don't know me because I'm not good.¹ Right now, *all* (smiling). Sometime I don't make appointment. Because they told me, "No, I know, Mom, you busy. Come, have to talk." (laughing)... When I go there, "Oh, I know you busy." I said, "Yeah, I'm a student, because I need to spell English, too. Right now, I need to ask you guys, what's my daughter do it right now. You do it good, or you do it bad?" "Okay, come." I don't make appointment. (laughing). I said, "Maybe I'm crazy, you guys." They said, "No, no, no! You're not crazy, no. But doing your job. No problem." Yeah.

Describing the difference between her experience with her children's school system now and when she first arrived, Nyadir says:

But before, when he call me, "Your daughter is sick right now. We need you to pick up her." Then my heart [pounding gesture with hand]. 'Cause I don't know what they talking about. Or, when I go to school, the reception, and then, they said, "Can I help you?", I was scared because I, I don't know what I'm saying. I'm confused, and then I'm shy... I call my husband, and then he have to go to school because I'm scared. But right now, I'm

¹ It is unclear whether Nyadir means her language skills are not good, or whether she is referring to other skills as well.

not scared because when I say what I need to say it, I know. And the person repeat it again, I know what I go back to answer, the word correct. I'm not scared, than before.

Yeah. And dentist, too.

Akuol

Background. Originally from South Sudan, Akuol arrived in Canada via Egypt in 2003. Her first language is Dinka, and she learned to speak Arabic when she lived in Egypt. Akuol started school when she was 6 years old, and continued to attend school for 3 years. She attended school every day, but described school as similar to a daycare centre where children played a lot and learned through song, an activity she loved to participate in. Later, Akuol moved to Egypt, where she married her husband, who had moved to Egypt with the hope of attending university there.

Life in Canada was a stark contrast to the life she knew in Egypt or South Sudan. When she landed in Toronto, however, the care of reception staff put her at ease:

I came from Egypt to Toronto, just 1 day in the way, yeah?... And they took us in the hotel. You know reception, in Toronto... We sleep there 1 day. And that day, I feel happy. Because the way... they use act for, you know, when we come? You see the people, they see you like somebody's know you before... You know what? This one can give me the very good feeling. I feel, oh, oh before I'm worried by myself, but now, I cannot be worried. See, those people, they are nice people. How they caring the people. Yeah. And then we moved from there to reception here. Everything is very well. Everything is go well.

After her layover in Toronto, Akuol and her husband continued their journey west, where they initially stayed with a cousin before space was arranged for them at the reception centre for

GARs. As their cousin was driving them to the reception, Akuol became ill and was hospitalized for 3 days as soon as they arrived there. As a result of her ongoing illness, Akuol has learned how to navigate the medical system here in Canada. She has had numerous hospital stays and surgeries.

The welcoming centre. In the initial stage of her immigration, support provided by the reception centre and the government was an invaluable resource to Akuol. At the reception centre, she was provided with short-term accommodation and meals. Akuol spoke about a counselor at the reception centre who spoke Dinka and offered information and support:

Because when I came, I came in summer time. June. It's a summer time. But after June what is be happen, is become a snow. For snow, if you not understand anything by English, you can die it, you know what? That why they help us, they give you the counselor...[who] can go to help you... they show you the store for you can find the, the clothes. They show you the, the store can, you find the food, like Superstore...Safeway, Co-op. Everywhere for the food. And everywhere for the clothes. They show you everything.

The counselor also offered information about foods that were new to Akuol:

You be knows before, if you knows before. Like, I told you this one is example. We have the, the, what this? The favourite food we have in my back home, I think we have the, like, what's it called? I don't know. Okra...Yeah. The okra, when you find it you know this one is okra, because I know it's in my back home...Some vegetable, the counselor can teach you, this one is for this, if you don't know that one...He show you this one is good for health, body.

The counselor showed them where to find the best prices for shopping and second-hand goods at local stores. Akuol came back to the importance of information about winters in Canada, whether it be winter clothes or discussions about what winters in Canada would be like. He also explained local street signs, like the stop light and pedestrian signals.

The counselor continued with home visits after Akuol moved out of the reception centre and into her first apartment. The counselor helped her access a bus pass and explained the subsidized bus pass. Akuol underscores the value of the support she received from the counselor and having that support available in her first language. Additionally, GARs are provided with basic income support for 1 year, something Akuol said gave them time to settle into their new life and find their way.

Akuol's time in ELL classes and her ESL literacy class have also been helpful in developing cultural capital. During her time in LINC ELL classes, Akuol learned the role of personal information in accessing services, such as emergency medical services.

Tenneh

Background. Originally from Sierra Leone, Tenneh spent 10 years in a refugee camp in Liberia before arriving in Winnipeg in 2004. There she stayed 7 years before eventually moving to her current city of residence. Tenneh reports her mother tongue is Vai, a language she says is “hard to find” here. She also speaks Krio, Mende, a little Temne, and English. She speaks Krio and Mende with her children.

Tenneh described school as expensive and inaccessible to most children in her village. If one child in a family was sent to school, it was usually a son. In her family's case, Tenneh's older brother attended school.

Tenneh's first experience with formal schooling was in Canada, where she first learned to write the alphabet. Her teacher encouraged her to practice outside of school:

The time I start reading, I, the teacher starts to show me how to write ABCD, and he told me if I come, I have to keep practicing. And one time I was having a friend called Adam, go to the store, go buy a toy for my daughter, Lucy, and this store here, he have ABC, if he click, he repeat the sentence, so I will play with my, with my daughter (laughing)...You know the thing was very funny. I buy for the child and I was playing with it. So if he repeat, I will repeat the same thing. So I was writing, I start practicing writing.

A typical day involves bringing her children to school en route to her ELL literacy classes, which she attends four times a week. When everyone is back at home, Tenneh prepares dinner and gets her children ready for bed. It is important to get the children to bed early, she says, if they are going to learn at school.

Family services. Tenneh spoke about challenges with cultural capital at length. Some of the challenges she laughed at, like a first experience on public transit in her current city of residence. At other times, lack of information has created serious difficulties. Differences in cultural practices and her unawareness of these differences have created unfavourable situations in her life; situations that she could have avoided had she had knowledge of cultural expectations and how systems work. She spoke of this in the concluding interview question about any advice she had for teachers when asked if there was any further information newcomers should know.

Tenneh came to know of differences in childrearing practices when she was told by a social worker that Child and Family Services was removing her children from their home. The situation leading up to this encounter left her in fear for her child's safety:

Yeah, I said because, I was sleeping, you know, summer time. I go to bed early. I told him, "Let's go to bed. Everybody go to bed." I was sleeping. And, [my son] open the door, he come outside our place. And that time we just moved in...I don't know nobody...It's was outside, at 10:00. And my younger one wake, he said, "Where is he?" I wake up. I said, "He is sleeping." He said, "No, out." So I wake up. I come out, I was looking who I'm gonna ask. I don't know nobody in complex. I go find him in the back of our place. Myself, I beat him good. If they ask me, I say, "Yes, I beat."...I beat him. And, the school send, the lady came, "I'm gonna take your child." And this guy was talking. I said, "Why? Why are you taking?" He said, "Because this country you can't beat child." I said, "Africa it's normal." He said, "No." And I talk, they were talking, then they go out, and it's was two lady, came in, and then they go out, and they come back and say, "Okay." And the other lady said, "Oh, you have to go for parent [parenting course]."...I say, "What that mean?"...They say, "Oh, they will show you the rule here in Canada." I say, "Why before your guy don't show me?"

Tenneh has learned valuable skills through the course for newcomer parents. She now turns off the television or takes something valuable from her children for a period (like a cell phone) as a disciplinary measure rather than punishing the children physically. She finds this approach to discipline successful. While the outcome of the parenting course has been positive, her own experience and a friend's less successful experience with the child welfare system have left an indelible mark.

Tenneh was able to advocate for herself and landed with a positive outcome. Her friend, however, was less fortunate. Tenneh tells of a friend, living in the city where she first arrived, whose children were removed 7 years ago. While Tenneh prefaces the story by saying Tenneh

was not there to witness the interaction with Child and Family Services, she goes on to describe how her friend, who spoke very little English and was unable to read and write, was told by Child and Family Services that her husband, who spoke more English, had agreed to her children's removal. Years later, and in a different relationship, Tenneh's friend later had another baby removed from her care at birth. This time, Tenneh's friend said she had been assured that her baby would be going home with her.

Tenneh calls on the government to ensure newcomers know about accepted cultural practices before such crises arise:

[T]he government need to teach people, how you come to this country, how you be like this. You're like, that time I was watching TV, like the lady was going Africa. She go for school. She was in the school. They were playing in the TV. How you, how Africa like this, this food in Africa, Africa different.... everybody here if they going for Africa, they can teach you. Why when we coming they can't teach their culture?...The lady, they were teaching, because they say, "...You going Africa. Africa, go like this..." If you go to Africa, you can't say insult people...You can't say something like that. Africa like this. The lady, they teach her, explain...in the, like movie.

Wealthy adventurers are privy to vast amounts of information about parts of the world they wish to travel to. People who land in Canada as refugees however, are impoverished of vital information. Tenneh continues to discuss what she observed on television:

So, if you go Africa, this the rule, this is rule, you can't do this one...because the teacher was saying, they say if you go to Africa, if somebody say "Hi" to you, you have to say "Hi". Don't insult somebody in Africa....Where Canada, we came, they don't teach me the rule. Now we go in trouble.

The issue of parenting law dominated Tenneh's recommendations to teachers, highlighting how critical this type of information is to successful settlement and integration in Canada.

Natalie

Natalie is an experienced English language and ELL literacy facilitator who has been teaching in the LESLLA program in the immigrant-serving agency for several years. As with all teachers in this program, Natalie facilitates three different classes, each one scheduled either two mornings or two afternoons a week.

Natalie is intentional about creating connections between learners and services at the agency she works with. She schedules regular field trips to the immigrant-serving agency and liaises between learners and service providers, communicating with counselors directly, relaying appointment details on to learners, and then following up with the learner after the appointment.

Learners bring concerns and questions to Natalie, who then connects them with counsellors at her agency or other community services. An integral part of her role as teacher is helping learners to make that initial contact with a counselor who can speak their language.

When asked what teachers and programs can do to support adult learners who have not accessed print literacy skills before, she discusses relating classroom instruction to learners' most pertinent needs. Thematic content is relevant to survival skills, but this does not mean learners are not working on language and literacy skills. Learners work on language and literacy skills within the context of themes like how to access emergency services, using public transportation, and going to the bank. Language and literacy skills development are deliberately tied to performing tasks in everyday life.

Natalie argues that integrating time in class to support learners accessing services is imperative in LESLLA programs. When learners are concerned with immediate needs like stable shelter or food, language and literacy learning will be affected. While the agency Natalie works with has many supports embedded into its structure, she talks about ways she might incorporate that level of support if she were to teach with an agency that provides wrap-around services.

This supported approach to learners' accessing services may be time consuming for teachers in the beginning, as they familiarize themselves with social services available in their community. In the end, however, teacher and learner both develop knowledge about services and how they are accessed.

Linda

Linda is a respected settlement counselor who meets with many learners in the LESLLA program discussed. Linda is multilingual, speaking three additional languages to English and, like many settlement counselors in the agency, comes from an immigrant background. A large part of her work is to refer clients to additional internal and external services. Clients come to Linda with many questions and concerns pertaining to settlement, including questions about employment and financial assistance and legal issues related to immigration and family law, and often see her for help with filling out application forms. Settlement counseling services are available to clients with permanent residency status, including immigrants and Convention refugees.

Most clients hear about the agency's services by word of mouth, from either a sponsor or a member of their ethno-cultural community. Many are members of Linda's ethno-cultural community and arrange to meet with her specifically.

Linda finds that new arrivals may have an expectation that they will be taken care of once they arrive. This perception, often developed at orientations in the secondary country, leaves people surprised when Linda explains how systems work. A large part of her work is teaching clients how systems work in Canada.

Refugees qualify for different levels of support, depending on how they were sponsored. GARs receive government assistance for 1 year, which includes basic income that is intended to cover rent and food costs and health care benefits. Contrarily, refugee sponsors sign a contract with the Canadian government agreeing to support the new arrival for a certain length of time. The sponsor's financial responsibility typically lasts for 1 year, but a spousal agreement involves a 3-year responsibility, and a person sponsoring a sibling or children is held financially responsible for 10 years.

Because refugee sponsorship agreements are vastly different from each other, newcomers sharing information about available resources may inadvertently provide information that is not applicable to someone else. Sponsored clients may not understand the differences between types of sponsorship agreements or services available to GARs versus those available to sponsored refugees, and come to Linda frustrated in their eligibility / efforts to access services. Clients may question the settlement counselor, wondering, "Why aren't you getting this done for us?"

Clients are also referred by social workers, especially when first language support is required. They are another important source of information to clients, but not all social workers are aware of the complexities of sponsorship agreements and their implications for service eligibility. Based on the social worker's needs assessment of the client, the client may be eligible for subsidized housing or income support, but when a person's sponsorship agreement is taken

into consideration, that same client is ineligible. This leaves settlement counselors with the task of explaining Canada's refugee sponsorship system and the implications for eligibility.

When settlement counselors provide information to clients that does not match with what they learned from their social networks, clients will often visit multiple agencies to ask for the same support. Often over time, clients come back to her and say other service providers said the same thing she did. They eventually come to accept the information is different from what they initially believed.

Understanding the client's situation holistically helps Linda to address the client's immediate needs as well as to provide accurate information to clients who are learning how the systems work.

Linda's first piece of advice to settlement counselors is to "[r]efer, refer, refer." She talked about the process that works for her as: 1) inform; 2) refer; 3) connect. Linda has found her approach to informing clients about processes as described above has greatly improved her ability to serve clients effectively.

Linda refers clients to services internally and externally. Most frequently, Linda refers clients to LINC and employment training programs. She also helps clients with applications for child tax benefit and childcare subsidies. With increasing frequency, she refers clients to family services within the agency for support in abusive domestic situations. Most critical to her work with refugee clients are her holistic approach to needs assessment and explaining to clients how systems work.

Summary

Interviews with seven participants were undertaken to address the following questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement?

Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services? Five learners, a LESLLA teacher, and a settlement counselor shared their perspectives on how systems are navigated by adult newcomers who accessed no to limited schooling in the country of origin.

The remainder of Chapter Four is dedicated to a cross-case analysis of participants' interviews. Data will then be reviewed in light of prior research detailed in the literature review.

Table 2

Summary of Interviews

Participant	Background	Social capital	Cultural capital / Knowledge and skills	External supports	Language, literacy and numeracy
Abrehet	Schooling: 0 years Country of origin: Eritrea Languages: Tigrinya, Amharic, some Arabic LOR: 3 years	Family: son Ethno-cultural community	Public transportation Medical appointments	Settlement counselor Medical interpretation Income tax clinics	English language necessary to access services
Ibsituu	Schooling: 0 years Country of origin: Ethiopia Languages: Oromo, Swahili LOR: 3 years	Family: children, husband	Banking Medical appointments	Unknown social service agencies	Uses English to access services Print-text remains a barrier
Nyadir	Schooling: 5 years, with interruptions Country of origin: South Sudan Languages: Nuer LOR: 17 years	Family: daughter, husband	Describes how systems work: education, subsidized housing, food bank, medical and dental	Subsidized housing Social service agency in housing complex: women's group, camping, help reading important documents Boys and Girls Clubs Medical interpretation Income tax clinics Immigrant-serving agency ELL literacy program	Nuer: writes letters and uses social media (with support) English: Accesses most services independently initially but requires support to read and complete important documents; completes social assistance reports online;
Akuol	Schooling: 1 year	Family: extended	Medical system	Reception centre	Oral language important

	Country of origin: South Sudan Languages: Dinka, Arabic LOR: 14 years	family, husband's cousin Ethno-cultural community	Social systems (i.e. taxes contributing to society; employment's role in health of economy)	Settlement counselor LINC program ELL literacy program	to accessing services Print-text literacy important for recording, remembering and sharing information Fills out simple forms independently
Tenneh	Schooling: 0 years Country of origin: Sierra Leone Languages: Vai, Mende, Krio, Temne LOR: 13 years	Family: children Friends	Public transportation and navigating the city Understanding directions How to ask for help Parenting in a Canadian context Self-advocacy Inequity in access to critical information	Parenting course ELL literacy program Social service agency in housing complex: social worker, settlement counselor, help reading important documents, referrals to additional services like income tax clinics	L1 not readily available Uses English to access services and ask for help, including filing her social assistance report over the phone Can fill out a few fields on a form by herself Life is easier with print-text literacy

Cross-case Analysis

A cross-case analysis of data is included in this section, beginning with learner-participant data, which is then compared with ideas of the teacher and settlement counselor. Where possible, comparisons with current literature are also made. A brief overview is provided in Table 2, followed by discussion of each section: barriers to accessing services, participant background, social capital, cultural capital, external supports, language, literacy and numeracy practice. The cross-case analysis concludes with a discussion of participants' recommendations to teachers.

Barriers to Accessing Services

Participants noted a variety of barriers to accessing services. During the coding process, it became evident that themes in barriers were also noted as enablers to accessing services. For instance, L2 was posed as a barrier by participants, however those with stronger oral language skills also talked about how their increased proficiency enabled them to communicate with medical staff, transit drivers or their children's teachers.

As expected, barriers noted included language and literacy as well as technology skills. Language skills made it possible or difficult to ask questions and get information. When asked about the value of literacy skills, Abrehet replied, "What can you do without it?", denoting the central place of literacy to day-to-day life in Canada. Filling out forms and reading letters from the government or their children's schools were common concerns among participants and areas that the teacher and social counselor were actively engaged in supporting. Reports for financial assistance now also require some sort of technological literacy, either by phone or internet, adding another level of complexity to LESLLA participants' documentation-heavy lives. When Tenneh described a friend's experience with Child and Family Services, she spoke of the

difference between her friend's language and literacy levels and that of her friend's husband, who purportedly agreed that the agency could remove their children from their care. Knowledge of cultural expectations and how systems work was another factor described in this scenario. Similarly, a lack of information left Abrehet unable to exit the bus at her stop, leaving her lost overnight. Lack of information and the ability to navigate systems are issues that Natalie sees arise with learners in her classes. Linda has found that providing accurate information about services and eligibility (perhaps we could also call this *how systems work*) to be an important part of her job as a settlement counselor.

LESLLA participants also spoke of difficulty building or utilizing social capital outside of immediate family. Abrehet described a lack of network, while Tenneh talked about friends who have helped her and have offered to help her, but, like Akuol, states that the lifestyle in Canada is busy and that she does not want to bother friends with her questions.

These common factors identified as barriers to accessing services, including language, literacy and technology, support Richards' (2015) findings that in a society where getting things done is predominantly a print-based practice poses challenges for persons from backgrounds where access to services is less paper- and technology-based. Similar to conclusions drawn from health literacy (George & Chaze, 2009) and refugee women's discussion of available community services (MacKinnon et al., 2007), knowledge or lack of information were all reported to be barriers to access to services.

Social Capital

Social capital, for the purposes of this study, refers to the reciprocal relationships drawn on to accomplish goals (Coleman, 1990, as cited in Bigelow, 2007). For all learner-participants, family was a primary source of social capital. Those with children talked about their children's

connection to their own L2 language and literacy practice or their support to access services, while Akuol felt that her English language skills would be improved if she had children. Older children encouraged a parent to fill out a form on her own or accompanied a parent on public transit. Ibsituu and Nyadir both talked about their husbands as liaises who shared information passed on by service providers. Though not directly expressed as a source of support, Akuol notes the combined efforts of her husband and herself to support their family members in South Sudan and save money for a house here in Canada. Her husband's cousin and her own extended family have served as a source of support as well.

Several learner participants talked about their ethno-cultural communities as sources of support. Abrehet routinely asks Habesha people for help, whether that be at a service provider's office or out in the community. Nyadir spoke to the immense value of newcomers being connected to their ethno-cultural communities. In addition, she experienced support from her community at the birth of one of her children. Ibsituu and Tenneh, however, do not experience their ethno-cultural communities as sources of support. Ibsituu's housing is far removed from where other members of the Oromo community live, while Tenneh does not know Vai nationals here. Despite Tenneh's lack of ethno-cultural connection, she speaks of several friends who have helped her over the years. A common concern amongst respondents, however, was the way in which the busy lifestyle in Canada combined with lack of familiar supports. Nyadir, Akuol, Tenneh, who have all lived in Canada more than a decade, spoke of how busy friends and members of their communities are, and their hesitation to "bother" them, as Tenneh put it.

Both Natalie, the teacher, and Linda, the settlement counselor spoke of the difference refugee sponsors can make to privately sponsored newcomers' ability to navigate systems in Canada. During her interview, Abrehet spoke of how alone she was and believed that others who

had family members present also had support unavailable to her. In Natalie's experience, for the few learners in her class who are privately sponsored, refugee sponsors bring newcomers to class on their first day of school and ask Natalie to communicate any needs to them. In her settlement work, Linda finds that clients who are privately sponsored often have some foundational knowledge of what they need to do in order to access services.

Natalie finds that learners who are successful at accessing services have sources of social capital with English language skills, print literacy skills, and knowledge of how to navigate the system. While children may have stronger language and literacy skills, they have not yet necessarily developed the knowledge of how to navigate systems. Linda's clients usually learn about her settlement services through word-of-mouth from members of their ethno-cultural community. While community members as a source of social capital can be positive (e.g. they are referred for settlement services by community members), information shared within the community is not always accurate, leading to frustration.

Natalie and Linda's comments about the important role of clients' ethno-cultural community as a source of information are reflected in Bigelow's (2007) study drawing a correlation between a strong ethno-cultural capital and the development of cultural capital. Trusted sources were important to participants' information-seeking practice in Richards' (2015) and Wood et al.'s (2012) studies where settlement workers became the primary source of support for refugees. Richards' study goes a step further, highlighting the importance of face-to-face, orally-transmitted information sharing within clans in South Sudan.

Cultural Capital

As discussed in the literature review, cultural capital refers to knowledge, beliefs and behaviours (Bourdieu, 1986) and includes the knowledge of ‘how things work’ in a particular system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, as cited in Bigelow, 2007, p.2). Knowledge shared within ethno-cultural communities can be invaluable. Times when crucial information was not known to participants sometimes left them in vulnerable circumstances. At the time of the study, participants had been in Canada from 3 to 17 years. Cultural capital does not develop all at once, rather it evolves over time.

Medical services. All participants reported that they access medical services mostly independently now, though at the early stages of their arrival, all required help to make and attend appointments. In the beginning, Abrehet’s son brought her to medical appointments. Now she attends appointments by herself and accesses interpretation services available to her there. She is aware of the types of documentation required to medical appointments and where to pick up prescription medications.

Interestingly, perceptions of whether they needed help with interpretation varied. Abrehet noted her use of interpretation services while Ibsituu, who has been in Canada for a short time, does not use interpretation services that are available free of charge. To Akuol and Nyadir, who have strong English skills, first language support has been invaluable to communicate with medical professionals about complex healthcare needs and attend specialist appointments. Nyadir books and attends medical and dental appointments on her own, even leaving a telephone message if needed. With her daughter’s support, she also completed a form required for an appointment. Ibsituu and Tenneh also described attending medical appointments independently, asking for help to fill out forms.

Accessing medical services is a topic covered thoroughly in Natalie's classes. She includes lessons on how to make appointments and how to record the appointment details on a calendar. She also teaches basic language to describe the body and how to access interpretation support at an appointment. When learners have appointments where interpreter services are not available, Natalie refers learners to settlement counselors who can arrange for volunteer interpreter services. Natalie invites guest speakers, like paramedics, to her classes and develops lessons that focus on skills such as calling 9-1-1 and requesting help.

From the perspective of a settlement counselor, clients may not be aware of health resources available to them. Linda noted that newcomers are initially declined child health benefits when they have not applied for the prerequisite child tax credit. Many do not know that after they are approved for child tax benefits, they can re-apply for child health benefits. Linda informs clients of resources like these when they are eligible. She also helps clients with the paperwork required to apply for child health benefits.

While LESLLA participants' discussion surrounding healthcare focused primarily on paperwork and communication, Linda spoke mainly both about information regarding eligibility for services and support with paperwork, while Natalie addressed both information about how to access services as well as communication skills for use in specific settings. Linda's remarks corroborate Ahmed et al.'s (2016) conclusion that knowledge of how medical systems work may be the most pressing barrier for the immigrant (not refugee) population in Canada.

Public transportation. Abrehet and Tenneh discussed ways in which public transportation was challenging at the beginning stages of their settlement. As Tenneh described, a little English is helpful when asking for directions, as is spotting someone from the same ethno-cultural community, as Abrehet does.

Abrehet's story of getting lost after being unable to disembark from her bus is a striking picture of how lack of language and knowledge of the city and how things work can create vulnerable situations. Her prior experience with public transportation was limited to travel to funerals from Kakuma refugee camp, where waving her hand would have signaled her stop to the driver. By the time she observed that there were buttons to press for this purpose, she was past her stop and did not know how to get back home. For a time, she relied heavily on her young adult son to accompany her when she traveled. Now that she is confident to travel alone, she approaches members of her ethno-cultural community for directions if needed. Abrehet's experience is somewhat of a contrast to Tenneh's description of traveling in new cities. Without much English language at the beginning, Tenneh communicated with a bus driver effectively to arrive at the grocery store and then catch the right bus back home. Later, as she developed stronger English language skills, she was better able to ask for and follow directions given her by public transit officials, including the peace officer who showed her how to validate her transit ticket. Ibsituu has found that learning the transit stops and bus numbers has made commuting easier.

Several participants talked about accessing a subsidized transit pass. While they now know where to apply and what the process involves, several mentioned accessing support to complete the application form: the participants most recently arrived to Canada ask their teachers for help, while Akuol recalled her settlement counselor helping with her first application years ago. Natalie spoke of this as one of the issues learners in her classes frequently request help with, while public transportation was not discussed during Linda's interview. Literature relating to public transportation and settlement and integration was not obtained during the present study.

Housing. Finding housing or accessing subsidized housing was discussed by most learner-participants. Ibsituu, Akuol and Tenneh all spoke of receiving support to find housing when they first arrived to Canada. Ibsituu and Akuol accessed this support in the L1 of either the participant or her spouse. Tenneh's friend was the one who drove her to the subsidized housing office when she arrived to her secondary city and helped her complete the necessary documentation to apply.

In addition to applying for subsidized housing, Nyadir is now familiar with the process involved in not only accessing subsidized housing, but also in reporting changes in family size or requesting maintenance. Unlike other LESLLA participants, Akuol remarked that she has never lived in subsidized housing, noting that she and her husband worked long hours instead of attending school which enabled them to purchase their own home.

Both Natalie and Linda discussed housing as a common concern. Learners approach Natalie with questions about subsidized housing, both surrounding the application process and documentation required to prove continued eligibility. Linda notes that clients have sometimes been misinformed of their eligibility. To address these challenges, Linda completes a holistic needs assessment with the client, then provides them accurate information about their eligibility and supports the application process.

Support to access housing was an area discussed by all participants, perhaps supporting Murdie's (2008) study on refugee housing in Toronto highlighting the difficulty refugees face when seeking out housing and the value of such support.

Finances: Income tax returns and social assistance. All five learner-participants talked about accessing services to support the process of filing their income tax returns. Two learned of the services available through an organization run from their subsidized housing complexes.

Another accesses services available through the host organization. Ibsituu accesses such services through another organization. Monthly reports are also required to show continued eligibility for social assistance. Nyadir has learned to complete her report online without support and Tenneh completes her monthly report by phone, though she noted she might be able to learn how to complete the report online if she was shown how to do so.

Matters relating to finances were described as the majority of concerns brought to Linda by learners. As LESLLA participants noted, filing income tax returns and proving eligibility for services and resources require a great deal of paperwork and documentation. Linda noted paperwork and providing documentation was an area she assists clients with. The issue of paperwork noted by participants is consistent with settlement workers' and South Sudanese participants' discussion of the plethora of letters received and forms to be filled in Australia compared to South Sudan, as reported by Richards (2015). In Richards' study, settlement workers supported clients with deciphering mail and filling out forms.

Children's education, parenting and family conflict. At the time of the interviews, three of the five learner-participants had school-aged children. All reported receiving support to navigate their children's school systems initially. Ibsituu talked about a school liaison who calls her if a child is away from school, explains her children's report cards, and is present for parent-teacher interviews, while Nyadir relied on her husband to communicate with the school when they started school. She is now involved in her children's education and has developed positive parent-teacher relationships, even dropping in to talk with teachers to see how her children are doing. Tenneh's friend helped her find a school and register her children for school when she first arrived to Canada. Like Nyadir, Tenneh views herself as an active participant in her

children's education, stating that her role as a parent is to ensure her children are well-rested and ready for school, and noting that she sits down to practice writing alongside her 6-year-old son.

Issues surrounding parenting in a culture different from their country of origin also arose during the interviews. Ibsituu recommended that teachers explain acceptable child discipline practice in Canada and Tenneh contended that newcomers need this information, as the consequences of withholding such information are severe. Tenneh did eventually access a parenting course for newcomers, but only after a crisis situation that could have ended with her children being removed from her care.

The topic of family conflict was raised by both Natalie and Linda as an area where learners or clients frequently need support. Without knowledge of acceptable disciplinary norms, Natalie noted, parents are left without a means to set boundaries with their children. The consequences of this spill over into the education system, as children are ill-equipped to adjust to a structured setting. Both Linda and Natalie noted changes in expectations of how parents engage with their children and how this can lead to family conflict. Fathers are expected to be more involved in their children's upbringing in Canada than they may be accustomed to. Changes in gender roles concerning parenting, finances, and decision-making can lead to increased tension at home. Natalie and Linda refer clients to services like in-home family literacy programming and a parenting course for newcomers. When Linda suspects domestic violence is a concern in a client's home, she lets them know that domestic abuse is unacceptable and refers them to family counselors.

Participants' concerns around child-rearing practices and family violence are corroborated by a study involving a group of refugee women in Winnipeg who recommended

increased support with family matters and parenting courses to teach culturally acceptable disciplinary methods, as well as programs for youth. (MacKinnon, Stephens, & Salah, 2007).

Organizational Supports

Learner participants, whose lengths of residency range from 3 to 17 years, all spoke of resources that they have accessed, challenges they have faced, and changes to the level of support required. All shared stories of increasing independence.

Resettlement centres. A first point of contact for participants, who all arrived to Canada as GARs, was what is frequently referred to as the Welcome Centre or Reception Centre. These resettlement centres exist in cities across Canada. There, newly arrived GARs are provided with temporary housing and orientations to life in Canada. Ibsituu, Akuol and Tenneh all shared their experiences at the resettlement centres in their destined cities.

Ibsituu and her family were supported to register their children for school and secure housing, and were informed of additional services. In this case, Ibsituu was unable to communicate with the support person, and her husband passed on information from the support person to her. Akuol spoke highly of the resettlement centre and the support she received there. Even during her stopover in Toronto, Akuol felt welcomed and cared for. Once in her destination city, the kinds of information she gained were invaluable. There she learned about street signs and pedestrian signals, what kinds of clothing to buy for winter, where to go shopping and how to save money. All of this information was provided in Akuol's first language. Tenneh's experience with a resettlement centre was less positive when she did not receive the support she requested to enroll her child in school.

Abrehet, who left her destination city soon after her arrival, did not mention her experience with the resettlement centre there. How long she stayed in the resettlement centre in

Vancouver or the level of supports she access there is unknown. Nyadir also did not mention a resettlement centre as part of her early support.

While Natalie and Linda did not speak about resettlement centres' role in LESLLA adjustment to life in Canada, they noted the advantage privately sponsored refugees experience over GARs in terms of access to information and support accessing services. GARs are eligible for several services prior to, during, and after their arrival to Canada (Yu, Ouellet, & Warmington, 2007). They may attend orientation sessions to life in Canada prior to departure. They are usually greeted at the airport and provided with temporary or permanent housing and are eligible to receive settlement orientations and services after their arrival. When new arrivals continue on to secondary cities soon after landing, as Abrehet and her son did, they may miss out on valuable supports available to them (Simich et al., 2003).

Immigrant-services sector and settlement and integration counselors. The immigrant-services sector has played or continues to play an important role in the lives of several participants. Abrehet and Nyadir access a free income tax clinic through their agency and Abrehet met with a settlement counselor who connected her with an organization offering winter coats. When asked about whether she used second hand stores or a Good Food Box program, Abrehet said her settlement counselor had mentioned second hand stores, but she had not been. She then mentioned if she knew more about them, she might like to go there.

As described earlier, Ibsituu's family gained valuable information from someone who was likely a settlement counselor at the resettlement centre when they arrived. Akuol and her husband received invaluable support from a settlement counselor from the resettlement centre, even after moving into their own home. Support was delivered in the first language and in Akuol's home.

Tenneh's experience with a settlement counselor at the resettlement centre she stayed at was marginal at best. Tenneh was unaware that a counselor was assigned to her until a friend told her who her settlement counselor was. When she then asked her settlement counselor for assistance to enroll her children in school, she was told she was expected to do this on her own. Tenneh's friend, in effect, took over the role of her settlement counselor. Years later, Tenneh was referred to a parenting course for newcomers. Tenneh has learned useful skills and parenting techniques from this course and information which she believes should be shared with all newcomers.

Natalie routinely refers learners to programs and services at the immigrant-service agency where she works. During her time as an ELL literacy teacher, Natalie has found that the best way to ensure learners access such services is by providing a highly supported referral process, until learners are confident accessing the services independently. Barriers to accessing even the highly targeted services available at an immigrant service agency exist. These include getting through the organization's switchboard and not knowing how to check their phones' voice messages.

To increase learners' familiarity with the agency and how to get there, Natalie schedules monthly field trips to the main office, where many of the services are housed. She refers learners to services to support families in conflict, to a family literacy program and an in-home support program, in addition to settlement counselors. Where needed, Natalie supports this process by scheduling the appointments for the learner, and accompanying the learner to the organization. Over time, Natalie notes, learners require less support to book and attend appointments.

As a settlement counselor, Linda sees many clients who find out about her services through their ethno-cultural community. Social workers also refer clients, particularly if they

require first language support. Linda describes her job as a settlement counselor as providing information to the clients, referring clients to appropriate services and resources, and taking the additional step of connecting clients to those resources. When she first meets with clients, they have often been misinformed of the types of services available to them: Linda noted that clients will sometimes go from agency to agency, asking for the same information elsewhere. Sometimes clients come back to Linda a year later, realizing that the information Linda gave them earlier was, in fact, accurate.

As evident from LESLLA participant interviews as well as teacher and settlement counselor interviews, settlement counselors see clients about concerns that are broad in scope. Wood et al.'s (2012) case study including refugees and settlement workers in Calgary describes the critical role the settlement workers play in the settlement of refugees. The authors argue that the Canadian shift to neoliberalism shifts responsibility for refugee settlement from federal and provincial government to under-resourced municipalities. As Richards' (2015) and Lloyd's (2014) studies show, Wood et al. (2012) also found refugees' connection to their new home is founded on trusting relationships. As resources have decreased, the role of the settlement worker has become even more crucial to successful refugee settlement. As many refugees' sole source of connection to their new home, settlement workers become over-extended. Caseworkers involved in the resettlement process in Richards' study (2015) also described their role as broad. One participant said her role ranged from helping schools understand the educational background of a family, to accompanying a client to appointments, or securing housing for a client.

Participants in Richards' (2015) Australian study found the vast amounts of information received at the early stages of arrival to be overwhelming. A participant who arrived as a young

girl said she found information easier to digest because of her age. Most, however, felt inundated and incapable of sorting and prioritizing the information coming at them.

Other non-profit organizations. Nyadir and Tenneh, who both live in subsidized housing complexes, described supports accessed onsite from non-profit organizations. These organizations appear to work in partnership with social workers and staff from immigrant service agencies offering services. Nyadir and Tenneh both bring important documents to staff there for assistance reading the documents. Nyadir brings government letters to the agency for assistance to understand them. Nyadir avails herself of numerous programs and services available to her and her family. Nyadir's children participate in weekly clubs for youth, while she has participated in a women's group. Tenneh also discussed recreational programs available to families. Tenneh learned about these programs from her teacher, who also helped her complete the registration form. Tenneh followed up by going to the recreation centre to register her children. When programs were already fully booked, she determined she would keep the completed registration form for the following year so she could register her children then.

Although neither Natalie nor Linda outlined specific resources they connect learners and clients with, both spoke of the importance of connecting people to resources in the community. Both reported making connections in a highly supported manner. Literature pertaining to non-profit organizations and refugee settlement and integration had not been identified at the time of this study.

Social workers. Two learner-participants talked about interactions with social workers, with mixed experiences. Nyadir accesses support from a social worker whose office is based in her housing complex. As described above, the organization running this office has been a useful support to her and her family. Tenneh's current experience with the organization in her building

has also been positive. An encounter with a social worker who arrived at her children's school to remove her children left Tenneh needing to advocate for herself, demanding to know why the government was taking her children. Had Tenneh not successfully advocated for herself, her family circumstances would be very different today. Her friend's experience with Child and Family Services in another city has left a lasting impression that CFS is a threat to families who are unaware of Canadian law.

Linda mentioned the role of social workers briefly, as social workers frequently refer clients to Linda for services in the first language. Linda noted that social workers may have unequal depth of knowledge of policy related to refugee resettlement processes and sponsorship agreements. As differences between types of refugee sponsorship and the connected sponsorship agreements add a level of complexity to eligibility for government funded services, settlement counselors may need to inform clients that they are not, in fact, eligible for services they were referred for. Prior studies related to social work and refugee settlement and integration had yet to be identified at the time of this study.

LESLLA program staff. All learner participants described their teachers and educational assistants as important sources for developing English language and literacy skills; their role as liaise is equally important. Learners see their teachers as resources for learning about and accessing services difficult to obtain without strong English language or print-text literacy skills. Several learners reported their teachers as a support for completing forms, something they are learning about in class. Ibsituu, for instance, said that she now knows how to reply to questions about her name and address and can spell her children's names. For Tenneh, the support received in class to complete a recreation registration form for her children was so valuable that, when programs were full for the current year, she planned to keep the completed

form to use the following year. Abrehet has learned culturally valued knowledge and language, such as how and when to use polite language like “Thank you”. She has also learned how to access Emergency Services, and asks her teacher for assistance reading and understanding documents.

Natalie views the role of a LESLLA teacher as much more than teaching language and literacy skills. Descriptions of her thematic approach to teaching show that she not only teaches content but, as much as possible, connects learners to resources in the community. Language and literacy skills are tied to the development of cultural capital.

LESLLA teachers hold diverse viewpoints of what their role encompasses. Fleming’s study (2015) outlines classroom instruction from the perspective of developing citizenship, as outlined in the literature review. Most teacher-participants in that study discussed the value of teaching skills to navigate life in Canada or deal with settlement issues that arise. Some also saw their role as engaging learners in justice-oriented citizenship, which involves looking at systems with a critical lens.

Teachers in Benseman’s study (2012) spoke of the importance of learners increasing their language and literacy skills as well as the value in gaining skills they could use in the community. Like Natalie, they felt learners were successful when they were more confident accessing services such as health care independently.

Language, literacy, numeracy, and technology

While all learner participants were LESLLA learners who are developing robust literacy skills for the first time and in a language new to them, their length of time in Canada, their English language skills and their print-literacy skills vary greatly.

Abrehet and Ibsituu had both been in Canada approximately 3 years at the time of their interviews, while Nyadir, Akuol and Tenneh had all lived in Canada well over 10 years. Abrehet described the English language as so valuable to life in Canada, she wished it could be absorbed like a potion. People take notice as she begins to use English more; at the hospital, for instance, staff took note when she said, “Thank you”. Ibsituu uses English to achieve daily tasks, such as withdrawing money from the bank, grocery shopping, or attending medical appointments. Abrehet and Ibsituu both seek out help to complete forms.

Nyadir is the only learner participant who reported using L1 literacy, writing letters to friends, using social media to communicate, and reading religious text in Nuer. Nyadir spoke of how a lack of English oral skills made it difficult for her to access services in the beginning. She’s no longer afraid to use English, however, and is able to seek out help and access most services without support, so long as they are based on oral language. She also uses English in the workplace. She even fills out some forms independently now, though she brings government documents to a social service agency for assistance. In addition to using technology to communicate with friends and family, Nyadir files her monthly financial assistance reports online without support.

Akuol’s main purpose for English use is meeting daily needs. When she was able to work, Akuol spoke in English at her workplace. She feels that her English language skills would be improved if she had children. Akuol now fills out some simple forms by herself. Tenneh, on the other hand, speaks mostly English outside of her home, not knowing anyone who speaks Vai in the city. Tenneh was the only participant who reported speaking some English prior to arriving in Canada. The reason for this was her ability to speak Krio, which she described as pigeon English. To learn to speak Canadian English, Tenneh mirrored a friend’s use of the language.

While this aided her ability to learn the language, she still found the English language to be a barrier in her early days in Winnipeg, using 1-word questions to ask directions. Tenneh believes “everything can be easy for you” with print-text literacy. She works on her own literacy skills with her 6-year old son. Tenneh thought she might be able to learn to file her monthly social assistance reports online if she were taught how to do so. In the meantime, she uses an automated telephone system to complete her report independently.

Abrehet, Ibsituu and Tenneh all referred to the use of bus numbers or train station names to find their way around the city. Abrehet and Tenneh ask for directions when needed, Abrehet in Tigrinya and Tenneh in English.

Natalie’s observation of the value of the English language and print-literacy skills to navigating systems supports learners’ personal experiences. Those with stronger oral language navigate better, as they can ask for appropriate supports from social workers, counselors or neighbours. Print-literacy presents as the largest barrier, as forms and documentation are required for most services in Canada. While agencies do provide support to complete forms and navigate systems, Natalie has found learners still face challenges accessing that support. For example, many of her learners face difficulty getting through the switchboard when they call for help. When they do get through and leave a message, they do not check their phone for messages, missing important phone calls from counselors. Natalie aims to circumvent these issues with a supported referral system as described earlier.

In her position as a settlement counselor, Linda talked about the importance of clients understanding how systems work. Helping clients do so, regardless of their educational background, is a considerable part of what Linda does when she meets with them. She has found, however, that clients with less literacy may need more time to understand how systems work.

She has learned that a holistic approach to needs assessment helps her ensure that she is addressing actual needs based on what they are truly eligible for. Helping clients to understand the system is an ongoing process, rather than a one-time event.

Language and literacy were also viewed as barriers to settlement and integration in MacKinnon et. al.'s (2006) involving women who arrived to Canada as refugees. Participants discussed the need for English to gain employment and to be viewed as part of the city they live in. For one woman in this group, language was seen as a barrier to completing homework, as she was unable to understand instructions provided in class.

Participant Recommendations to Teachers

At the end of each interview, participants were asked what their advice to teachers would be. This question was not an easy one to address in some interviews. At two points during Nyadir's interview, she interrupted herself to ask whether her answer was right or not. With some discussion, it was explained that Nyadir is the expert on this topic, not the researcher and not the teachers. Ibsituu simply answered with "I don't know, teacher", at the beginning. This perhaps is a reminder of the power differential between LESLLA learners and researchers or service providers, including LESLLA teachers.

Learner-participants' responses to questions about their recommendations to teachers ranged from types of content that they have found useful to them in their own classes to attitudinal characteristics of teachers, as noted in Table 3.

Table 3

Participants' Recommendations to Teachers

Participant	Recommendations to teachers
Abrehet	Lessons involve important knowledge, practical skills, and language and literacy skills. Suggestions included how to use 9-1-1 as well as public transportation.
Ibsitu	Lessons involve practice with pedestrian street signs. Topics such as shopping, banking, and learning about community resources are important to her. Information about parenting norms in Canada is important for learners to know about.
Nyadir	Seek to understand, support and encourage learners. This can influence the way a learner feels about their ability to learn as well as their ability to persevere as they develop skills that are difficult for them. Teachers should spend time with learners individually so that they know what the learners' needs are.
Akuol	Teach learners skills that will enable them to 'protect' themselves. Learners must be prepared to handle emergency situations on their own.
Tenneh	Understand your learners. ELL literacy classmates come mostly from rural areas and will learn best with a teacher who is patient. Be aware of what learners are doing well. Newcomers need to be provided with information about Canadian law, how things are done in their new country, to avoid problems later on. Information on issues such as parenting law should be shared with all newcomers.

Four LESLLA participants prioritized content that would help them accomplish tasks or protect themselves in a new environment. Tenneh noted that most LESLLA learners come from rural backgrounds and need to learn skills for life in an urban centre, such as asking for and following directions. Abrehet and Akuol spoke highly of lessons where they learned how to access emergency services. Abrehet astutely noted that needs of privately sponsored refugees are different than those of GARs, and suggested that learning how to use public transportation was

important. Ibsituu, also recently arrived to Canada, found lessons and field trips to practice shopping and banking useful, and understanding pedestrian street signs were all important. Field trips to social service providers, such as the immigrant-service agency hosting her classes, was another recommendation. In addition to learning about emergency services, Akuol felt it was important to learn how to talk to medical staff.

Ibsituu and Tenneh both stated the importance of learning about parenting expectations in Canada. Newcomers need to know Canadian law regarding parenting regardless of whether they presently have children. As Tenneh discerned, newcomers to Canada should have access to information about cultural norms and laws in the same way that a Canadian tourist would have access to vast amounts of information if traveling to Africa.

Rather than discuss content, Nyadir's advice to teachers related to the student and teacher relationship. Nyadir told stories of experiences of LESLLA learners and the role teacher attitude plays in their view of themselves as capable learners. She describes new learners as children who cannot yet express their needs. A teacher's response to learners holds a great deal of power over their ability to learn and their perceptions of themselves. Learners lead full lives with many responsibilities and, when discouraged by a teacher, might consider whether there is a point to their time in school. Tenneh also highlighted teacher attributes as key to LESLLA learners' ability to persevere and develop English language and literacy skills. She contrasts teachers who become angry when learning occurs slowly with those who are patient and skilled, noting that when teachers direct learners' attention to what they are doing well, learners feel proud of their accomplishments.

Natalie's own advice to LESLLA teachers is to ensure that lessons are relevant to learners' immediate needs, to be explicit about how the information is relevant, and to tie that

knowledge to language and literacy skills development. Natalie's approach connects learners to community resources. If they are learning about emergency services, paramedics are invited to speak to the learners. When they talk about banking, the class visits a nearby bank to look at a real bank machine. Connecting learners to community resources is built into her monthly schedule, with regular field trips to an immigrant-service agency. As individual concerns arise, Natalie connects learners with appropriate resources, booking appointments with counselors, and following up with learners and counseling staff. She notes that, while learning about and connecting learners with resources may seem time intensive at first, learners become more independent as they learn about and begin accessing services available to them.

Linda's advice, though directed to settlement counselors, sounds similar to Natalie's advice to teachers. Settlement counselors serve as brokers between clients and resources. After a thorough, holistic needs assessment, settlement counselors' role is to provide relevant information, refer clients to appropriate resources, and assist clients to connect with those resources.

Gonzalves' (2012) and Love and Kotai's (2015) studies involving LESLLA women are in keeping with the five learners' purpose for attending classes: both studies found that gaining independence was of key importance to participants. When LESLLA participants in the present study described types of content or information that are valuable to them, they described learning skills that enable them to perform routine tasks in the community, skills that ensure they can access resources independently, and knowledge of cultural practice and law in Canada.

Fleming's study (2015) can perhaps help us think about ways that citizenship is addressed in LESLLA classrooms. With an eye to justice-oriented classroom practice, teachers can join learners in their effort to understand and address inequities they face, such as the

information poverty leading to crisis situations described by Tenneh, or the power imbalance between teacher and learner detailed by Nyadir.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of interviews with five LESLLA learners, a teacher, and a settlement counselor, followed by cross-case analysis of the data. Chapter Five will provide an exploration of commonalities and unique features of the interviews, followed by discussion implications for classroom practice in LESLLA programs.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Chapter Five consists of discussion and implications of the study in light of the guiding questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

Chapter Five begins with the study's major findings. Limitations to the present study are then identified before implications for the field are explored. The chapter concludes with suggested areas for further research.

Major Findings

As expected, participants reported language and literacy as key barriers to access to services in Canada. Other barriers included lack of knowledge or information about cultural expectations and the way systems work. Some participants also spoke of either limited social capital or hesitancy to ask friends for help, since their lives are busy with other obligations.

LESLLA participants described varied levels of social and cultural capital. Those who reported greater sources of social capital, namely Nyadir, Akuol and Tenneh, had lived in Canada 13 to 17 years at the time of their interviews. Nyadir and Akuol spoke of the importance of their ethno-cultural communities to seek out information and connect with resources, while Tenneh draws on friends. While participants spoke of the value of friends and community members, they also noted that the Canadian lifestyle is busy, and they hesitate to ask for help, preferring to learn how to access services independently where possible. Although Abrehet

talked about social isolation, she approaches members of her ethno-cultural community to ask for help at offices or even on the street. Ibsituu lives far from members of her community.

LESLLA participants also spoke of family as sources of social capital. Children develop English language and literacy skills more quickly than their parents, and are sometimes able to support their parents as Abrehet's son did when he accompanied her on public transit, or Nyadir's daughter, when she encouraged her to fill out a medical form independently and then checked it for her mom. Spouses were also noted as sources of social capital in instances where they spoke the language a service was provided in: Ibsituu's husband shared information he had received at the resettlement centre in Tigrinya, while Nyadir's husband relayed information from the school. In Akuol's case, she and her husband worked together towards a common goal.

As Natalie and Linda both note, refugees who are privately sponsored generally have stronger supports in place, as sponsors share information with them and, in the case of Natalie's learners, act as liaisons between organizations and the persons sponsored. LESLLA participants in this study, however, were not privately sponsored to Canada, and orientation services would have been expected to be made available through the reception centres though, it appears, with varying levels of success. Akuol's experience at the resettlement centre clearly aided the development of cultural capital. While Ibsituu discussed receiving support at the resettlement centre, information was unavailable in her first language, and she was therefore reliant on her husband to broker information. Ibsituu was unsure of who it was that helped her family, though she was able to describe what he helped them to access. Tenneh, though assigned a counselor at the resettlement centre she stayed at, was unable to obtain the information she needed to navigate school registration. Abrehet appears to have bypassed the initial resettlement process afforded to GARs.

LESLLA participants shared several instances of social capital translating into cultural capital. Abrehet leverages her ethno-cultural community to gather information and accomplish tasks that require language and literacy. Through a contact of her husband's, Ibsituu learned about L2 literacy classes. Nyadir and Akuol both spoke of the importance of their ethno-cultural communities when they had questions or needed help. Tenneh's friends have taken her to a toy store to buy literacy-enhancing gadgets, helped her find a school for her children, and have connected her to valuable resources that she now accesses mostly independently. Tenneh and Akuol noted how busy people become when they move to Canada, and would rather develop the cultural capital themselves than have to continually ask friends for help.

Formal organizational supports are critical sources of cultural capital for the LESLLA participants. Learners depend on teachers for information about how to go about accomplishing daily tasks or who to see when their children's behaviour becomes challenging to manage. For LESLLA participants who are not yet citizens, settlement counselors are another valuable source of cultural capital. In addition to providing valuable information to clients, settlement counselors support the connection to additional services. Taking the added steps to both refer learners or clients to services as well as ensure successful connection is established was emphasized by both Natalie and Linda. While Natalie experienced some challenges connecting learners with services initially, her current processes for connecting learners to resources look very much like the 3-step process Linda outlined.

LESLLA participants appear to develop greater cultural capital over time, learning how to navigate systems successfully as exemplified by Nyadir's involvement in her children's education, Akuol's ability to navigate appointments with her family doctor, specialists, lab technicians and hospital staff, and Tenneh's ability to negotiate the city. However, while cultural

capital appears to have increased with length of residency in these cases, barriers to services and to integration have not disappeared. Even after a decade of developing social and cultural capital, of learning how systems work and how to navigate them, even after obtaining Canadian citizenship, which would be deemed a sign of successful integration, LESLLA participants require access to LESLLA educational opportunities and culturally sensitive services.

Many learners enrolled in the ELL literacy program described have limited options for schooling because, as citizens, they are ineligible for LINC programming, the major funded source of ELL programming in Canada. Canadian citizens, like Nyadir, Akuol and Tenneh have limited access to settlement and integration services provided by settlement agencies.

Tenneh's experience with Child and Family Services came a decade after arriving in Canada. She lacked critical information about child-rearing practice in Canada, and nearly lost her children as a result. Tenneh's citizenship meant she had been unable to participate in the in-home family literacy program for which she applied. Had she had in-home visits, one wonders whether she might have been connected to the parenting course she received in a manner less harrowing.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the current study. First of all, while there are benefits to case studies at a range of stages in their settlement and integration processes, there is limited data to say how time and life events interact with language and literacy skills. Abrehet and Ibsituu's initial resettlement experiences, for instance, differed vastly, and it is impossible to say how those differences will affect their integration over time. Further, for logistical reasons, it tends to be easier to interview participants with stronger English oral skills. The process of inviting LESLLA adults to participate in a study, then organize interpreter support, set up appointment

times, and ensure data is obtained ethically can be a challenging process, particularly where ethno-cultural groups are already underrepresented or have limited organizational visibility. This study intended to include at least one more LESLLA participant who had been in Canada for a shorter length of time, however, given the challenges in organizing the process, an additional participant was not included. LESLLA learners with 0-3 years of schooling, and those who arrive to Canada as refugees, come from additional countries not represented in this study. No participants, for instance, were included from Karen, Nepali / Bhutanese or Somali communities.

After much effort to secure an L1 interpreter for Ibsituu's interview, the researcher was unsuccessful obtaining first language support. While Ibsituu agreed to participate with an interpreter in an additional language, the conversation would have benefited from L1 interpretation to ensure all concepts were understood and to minimize the need for code-switching, unless the learner preferred.

Additionally, explaining the project, the consent form, and what was to happen with the data post-interview was a somewhat lengthier process than initially planned for. At some meetings, 30 minutes was spent prior to obtaining consent with understanding. Some learners felt ready to begin their interviews straight away, without explanation, stating that they trusted the researcher, that everything that has been done for them in the past has been good, and would have signed the consent forms without being properly informed first. Explaining the practice of research ethics and ethical consent was an important piece prior to the interviews. One learner-participant, after agreeing verbally, wondered if something was amiss when she was asked to sign the letter of consent. She explained that usually when she signs a paper, there is a problem: she did not elaborate on the types of problems she associations with signing documents.

Additional areas of importance to the field were outside the scope of this study. Power relationships were not explicitly addressed in this paper, nor were issues of race, which have been found to affect access to housing (Murdie, 2008).

Implications

LESLLA participants talked about their abilities to navigate complex systems, such as their children's educational system, medical systems, and public transportation. In each of their cases, social capital translates into cultural capital, but with some caveats. Translation of social capital into cultural capital assumes that a person's network has and is sharing accurate information. This is also true of organizational supports: when the information shared is accurate, it increases cultural capital. In some cases, however, where misinformation is shared, refugees may become frustrated when they are later told they are ineligible for certain services.

Reasons for uneven access to information at the early stages of resettlement are not fully known. Abrehet is likely to have missed the orientation stage when she left Vancouver soon after landing, while Tenneh's experience at the reception centre provided her limited support at best. Ibsituu's settlement counselor was helpful, but did not speak a language in which Ibsituu was fluent. Akuol, on the other hand described in detail the types of information gained and the supports in place to access services during her first year in Canada. Information was provided to her and her husband in L1. The types of information accessed prior to arrival, during the orientation session prior to leaving the refugee camp, or by friends who settled in Canada are also worth consideration. As long-time Canadian resident, and now citizen, Tenneh pointed out that newcomers to Canada should have access to the same level of information that a Canadian tourist would have when traveling to Africa. Further, length of residency or citizenship status do not determine need for services, whether language and literacy programming, settlement

services, or other means of support to access social services. As Pothier (2011) asserts, eligibility for language and literacy programming should not be removed when a person gains citizenship status.

Language and literacy appear to affect access to services. Early on, learners may be flooded with information and unable to absorb everything that is shared, as appeared to be the case with Abrehet. Low literacy acts as a barrier for LESLLA immigrants, regardless of length of residency. When LESLLA immigrants have developed stronger English oral skills however, they are able to access support reading letters and completing paperwork from organizations in their communities. Service providers can increase successful access to their services by considering the means in which information is shared and must be reported, the complexity of paperwork required, and by putting supports in place to reduce these barriers. Non-profit organizations and agencies in the settlement sector already offer these supports. Further, ensuring agency staff understand the barriers created by limited L1 literacy, oral language skills and knowledge of how systems work, and by the demands of a print-based society can increase positive outcomes for clients and staff. And if language and literacy pose barriers for LESLLA learners, then quality of instruction for LESLLA learners is critical, not only to improve proficiency, but to increase literacy practice.

LESLLA participants discussed the importance of relationships with teachers and counselors and the power these relationships hold. They also talked about trusting, respectful relationships with their teachers and how much they appreciated the support they experience. As Yu et al. (2007) discuss, front-line workers (and in the case of their study, specifically settlement workers) with whom refugees have developed trusting relationships are vital to the resettlement process. Conversations with LESLLA learners suggest that this is no less true for LESLLA

teachers. Given the enormous power differential between teachers and LESLLA learners, the attitudinal qualities of a teacher may strongly influence a LESLLA learner's belief about themselves and their potential to learn to learn English and develop literacy skills. Service providers working with LESLLA adults must be understanding of the LESLLA context, patient, and skilled to support the development of skills, knowledge, and ability to navigate systems.

Front-line workers can employ strategies to better support LESLLA clients, as Natalie and Linda demonstrate. LESLLA participants rely on front-line workers like teachers, settlement counselors, and other service providers to learn about how systems work in Canada. Addressing settlement issues in class is, as Natalie says, not optional. Teachers like Natalie and settlement counselors like Linda offer us exemplary models for working with LESLLA learners and clients. Linda's mantra - *Inform, refer, and connect* - may be a beneficial model to consider for all working with this population.

Literacy practices and reading proficiency continue to develop at various points during a person's life (Reder, 2013). In the present study, the data clearly indicate that LESLLA participants' literacy proficiency and ability to access to services are not complete after citizenship is obtained or after any number of years. It might be of value to consider Reder's (2013) Practice Engagement Theory in relationship to not only literacy practice and literacy proficiency, but also to the settlement and integration processes of LESLLA adults. Further, a person's ability to engage in society is not tied to language benchmarks or as Fleming (2015) notes, active citizenship does not require a high language benchmark. However, once citizenship is obtained, it should not serve as a barrier to successful integration or limit access to culturally sensitive service provision.

Further Research

This study touched on how LESLLA women with refugee backgrounds access services in Canada by attempting to address the following questions: First, what barriers do LESLLA clients experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources are they employing in order to access these services?

LESLLA participants' ability to access services independently evolved over time, and all participants reported continuing to seek out support to access services, regardless of length of residency or language proficiency. An analysis of access to services employing Reder's (2013) busy intersection model may be useful to policy makers and program designers as they consider how and when information is accessed and delivered. Further consideration into ways of engaging LESLLA populations in information sharing and informing service delivery models would be constructive.

Further research can help the field understand the extent to which programs and teachers working with LESLLA learners are aware of the implications of L1 literacy in access to services and are supportive of learners' need for support accessing services. Natalie's approach involves both creating opportunities for information sharing and tangible support to access those services. How widespread this approach is among teachers working with LESLLA learners, however, is unclear. An inquiry into the beliefs and approaches of LESLLA teachers related to access to services and to their role in power relationships would be of value.

Additionally, Linda's approach to *inform, refer, connect* is in line with LESLLA participants' concerns surrounding access to information and services. Further study into how service providers interfacing with LESLLA perceive their role in increasing clients' or learners' cultural capital would be of interest.

Personal Reflection

Engaging in this study has provided me with a means to interact with a topic of interest more carefully and comprehensively than I had before. During the literature review, I became immersed in related research from a variety of fields of study I had not previously been acquainted with. Preparing for and carrying out interviews has taught me that these things do not always go as planned, and that there is as much learning in the process as there is in the outcome. Conversations with participants have given me a greater appreciation for the intention and commitment of the learners, teachers and settlement counselors to successful settlement and integration.

This exercise has also given me tools to think critically about policy's role in enabling or creating barriers for learners, teachers and settlement counselors who work for equity: there is no separation between policy and practice. Just as importantly as all of the gained skills and knowledge, this exercise has left me with further questions about the way LESLLA instruction is implemented, programs are designed, and policy is shaped. All of this – new skills and questions – are sure to shape my own practice in the field.

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Appendix A

Guiding Interview Questions

Guiding Interview Questions for LESLLA Participants:

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me!

I'd like to learn a bit about how you access services. For example, when you go to the doctor, or get your prescription; how you find housing or communicate with your landlord; or how you complete important forms. I'd like to learn about how you get things done here in Canada.

First, I'd like to ask some questions about you.

Demographical

- Where are you from?
- Which languages do you speak?
- How long have you been in Canada?
- Did you go to school in your country? (If yes) What was that like?
- Tell me about your experience reading and writing in your language. What things do you read in your language? What things do you write? How do the people you live with use reading and writing?

Open-ended questions about literacy and settlement experience

- What do you do in a typical day / week? Where do you use English?
- Who are the people who help you with your settlement needs? For example, who helps with housing, food, money, school, income tax, etc.

I'd like to talk a bit about moving to a new country and the types of services you access / use.

- What types of services are important for you now or when you first arrived in Canada?
(e.g. medical appointments, getting around the city, registering children in school / talking to teachers, social assistance, housing, food and clothing banks or something else).
- How do you find important information for day-to-day life in Canada?
- How important is it to know English if you want to access these services?
- How important is reading and writing to access those services?
 - What are types of forms do you need to fill out?
- How do you access (services described) if the language or reading and writing for that service are difficult?
- Can you tell me about a time in your life *in Canada* where you couldn't access a service?
- Who helps you when you want to access a service? (e.g. filling out forms, making appointments, going to appointments if interpretation is needed, etc.)
- Can you tell me about a time when a friend or someone in your family helped you access a service? What did they do?
- Can you tell me about a time when a friend or someone in your church / mosque / community helped you access a service? What did they do?

Guiding Interview Questions for Settlement Worker:

I'd like you to talk a bit about adults who didn't attend school in their country of origin and their settlement process. I'd like you to think of clients / students who access your services who have 0-3 years of schooling in the first language.

- What types of services do such clients access?
- How do such clients hear about your services and programs?
- What are some ways in which a print literacy might affect a newcomer's ability to access services in our city? Examples?
- How do newcomers who lack print literacy navigate systems here in Canada, given the emphasis on print-materials for providing information (e.g. promoting services)
- What are some ways in which working with clients who have not accessed formal schooling before coming to Canada might differ from work with clients with more schooling?
- Are there any special considerations you might make when working with clients who lack print literacy? What are some ways you adapt your service for clients with additional literacy needs?
- What can settlement workers do to support settlement of clients with limited print literacy?

Guiding Interview Questions for Teacher:

I'd like to talk about learners in your classes who have 0-3 years of L1 schooling and settlement issues that arise.

- What types of settlement issues do your learners discuss with you?
- What types of help with settlement do they ask for?
- Can you tell me about a time when a learner was not able to access a service?
- How have you observed print literacy's effect on a person's success at navigating systems here in Canada?
- How do you see learners getting things done where they may not have the language or

print literacy to complete the task?

- What can teachers do to support settlement of LESLLA learners?

Appendix B
Letters of Consent

February 28, 2017

Dear [Executive Director]:

I am writing to request the permission of [organization name] to interview clients and employees as part of my final project in a Masters of English as a Second Language university program at Hamline University. I am currently completing a thesis on the subject of *L1 Literacy and Its Implications for L1 Non-Literate Women who are Newcomers to Canada*. The thesis addresses two questions: First, what barriers do adults who lack print literacy experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources do they employ in order to access those services? It is my hope that this work will help those of us working with adults who lack print literacy in our goal to provide effective, responsive services to such clients. Once complete, the thesis will be available on Hamline University's website.

The project will involve me interviewing two to four adults who are current or prior learners in [the agency's] programs. It is also designed to include interviews with two employees at the agency from the [literacy] program and the Settlement and Integration department. Learners and colleagues will be invited to participate in the study with the understanding that participation in the study is voluntary and confidential. To protect confidentiality, learner and staff names will not be included in any publications, nor will the name of the agency be included in any publications. Learners and staff who agree to participate in the study will be interviewed two to three times (learners) and one to two times (employees). Learners will be offered two hours of tutoring at a Public Library in appreciation for their participation. Recorded audio files will be kept on a password protected device and will be deleted after two to three years. At the conclusion of the study, you will receive a summary of the findings.

Please contact me at twall01@hamline.edu or my supervisor, Julia Reimer, at jreimer@hamline.edu with any questions.

Thank you,

Theresa Wall

Date 2017

Dear Student,

I am studying in a Masters of English as a Second Language university program at Hamline University. For the last part of my program, I am completing a project. I want to learn more about what is important to students who are learning to read for the first time. I hope that this will help me become a better teacher. When I finish this project, it will be available on Hamline University's website.

If you choose to participate in this project, we will meet two or three times. I will ask questions about your experiences with school, and what is important for you. I will also ask you about the ways that your classes now can help you in your life. An interpreter will meet with us. Our meeting will be recorded on paper and by video. You will miss some class time for these meetings.

When I write my report, I will not use your real name. Everything we talk about is confidential. It is okay if you do not want to participate. If you choose to participate now, and change your mind later, that is okay, too.

I have permission to complete this project from [organization name] and Hamline University. If you want to participate in this project, I also need your permission.

Please contact me at twall01@hamline.edu or (phone number) if you have any questions. You can also contact my supervisor, Julia Reimer, at jreimer@hamline.edu.

Thank you,

Theresa Wall

March 2017

Dear Colleague,

I am completing a Masters of English as a Second Language university program at Hamline University. My thesis, addresses two questions: First, what barriers do adults who lack print literacy experience to accessing social services and to settlement? Second, what resources do they employ in order to access those services? It is my hope that this work will help those of us working with adults who lack print literacy in our goal to provide effective, responsive services to such clients. Once complete, the thesis will be available on Hamline University's website.

If you choose to participate in this project, we will meet one or two times. Our meeting(s) will be recorded on paper and by audio recorder. Questions will be focused on your work with adults who have 0-3 years of schooling in the first language and how they access social and / or settlement services.

Information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any publications. If you choose to participate now, you change your mind later.

I have permission to complete this project from [organization name] and Hamline University. If you want to participate in this project, I also need your permission.

Please contact me at twall01@hamline.edu or (phone number) if you have any questions. You can also contact my supervisor, Julia Reimer, at jreimer@hamline.edu.

Thank you,

Theresa Wall