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The Newcomer Women of Aliddesa: Exploring Practices of Resettlement, Citizenship, and Community Development in Toronto

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THE NEWCOMER WOMEN OF *ALIDDESA*: EXPLORING PRACTICES OF RESETTLEMENT,
CITIZENSHIP, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN TORONTO.

by

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Presented to Ryerson University

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Immigration and Settlement Studies

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative and exploratory research project focuses on observing *Aliddesa*, a grassroots organization that is made up of Spanish speaking newcomer women based in Toronto. Via interviews, personal reflections in writing, and a focus group with three members of *Aliddesa*, research findings provide insight into the participant's personal experiences of resettlement and their perceptions about community development work. Research recommendations point to the value of reconceptualizing the resettlement process by documenting the real life stories of newcomer women, and also, by developing a model of resettlement that more acutely describes this process with issues of gender as the primary focus. In addition, research findings are analysed from a conceptual framework of *cultural citizenship theory*, suggesting that it is a relevant paradigm to discuss and highlight the contributions that are made by newcomer women and also the benefits that enrich Canadian society as a result of their activities.

Keywords: integration, resettlement, community development, cultural citizenship

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Newcomer women make daily contributions to their communities that are undervalued and not recognized by society. In a Canadian context, there has been insufficient attention in research paid to these contributions and the positive ways that newcomer women organize themselves collectively. In fact, current research predominately draws attention to the obstacles and the negative stereotypes imposed upon newcomer women during the process of resettlement and integration (Papillon, 2002; Saloojee, 2003; Creese and Dowling, 2001). In addition, research has also demonstrated that current policy and social supports are failing to prepare newcomer women to participate in many aspects of life in Canada (Tastsoglou and Preston, 2006; Sherkin, 2004; Omidvar, and Richmond, 2005).

Scholars who begin from a feminist based epistemology have begun to examine the relationship between issues of resettlement and gender with regard to newcomer women (Dobrowolsky, 2007; Creese and Dowling, 2001). This paper supports Harding's (1991) notion of the importance of clearly conveying the gendered standpoint from which social science is done and it echoes Smith's (1987) idea of developing a sociology based on the standpoint of women. By drawing attention to the subject position of newcomer women in research, issues

of gender, race, and immigration status can provide context to learn about these experiences of resettlement in Canada. Furthermore, research that takes up the standpoint of newcomer women prioritizes their concerns and aspirations to be critical, instead of relegating their voices to the margins of social issues that are of concern to them. For example, Lister (2003), argues for an increase in research that examines issues of gender, resettlement and citizenship scholarship. She asserts the importance of interrogating citizenship not as a static and abstract construct, but as a lived experience (ibid). She suggests that this can be accomplished by documenting and observing the processes through which women actively struggle to acquire new rights and give meaning to existing ones (Lister, 2003).

However, research that seeks to document and chronicle how newcomer women conceptualize resettlement and community involvement in their own words, and through their own eyes is just beginning to develop. Through documenting the challenges and resettlement experiences from the standpoint of newcomer women we can understand the reasons why they may need or choose to engage in initiatives of community building. These reasons may include meeting practical needs, confronting systemic issues, creating social networks to offset feelings of isolation, or, to celebrate their respective cultural ethnicity. Whatever the motivating factors may be, it is important to explore how these affiliations evolve, and the

benefits experienced as a result of their formation. This knowledge will enable a better understanding of how newcomer women conceptualize belonging in a new land and how they participate and make social contributions.

In the context of this research, by observing the activities organized by the women who are a part of *Aliddesa*, such as, orientation workshops, informal counselling, planning events, and hosting conversation circles, we can enrich our understanding about how they conceptualize community work and how they approach community development. This information will also provide insight about how they attempt to bring about social change through providing services to other newcomer women.

Through a theoretical framework of cultural citizenship, this qualitative and exploratory research project aims to fill an existing gap in literature. This project is an examination of the contributions made by newcomer women who have formed an organization called *Aliddesa*, in Toronto. The research goal is to yield valuable insights about how these women approach and reflect on their own resettlement as well as their motivations for engaging in this type of community involvement. It will also generate their personal reflections on their highest hopes for *Aliddesa*.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will provide a critical analysis of theories that have been applied in the study of newcomer incorporation in Canada. Research findings that are referred to in this paper are predominately from within Canada. However, theorists from both Canada and the USA, are referenced as discussions about immigration and newcomer incorporation are prevalent on both sides of the border. As an introduction this literature review will define key terminology, and provide historical context on the research population. An overview of two pertinent theories, human capital theory and social capital theory, will be discussed by drawing attention to key gaps and limitations in the literature pertaining to this research focus. To conclude, the theory of cultural citizenship will be highlighted as a paradigm which addresses these gaps and limitations. This critical literature review will assess how cultural citizenship is a framework that acknowledges the importance of newcomers civic engagement and participation in the contemporary politics of immigration and citizenship. More specifically, it will also demonstrate how cultural citizenship as a theory can be implemented to study and document the contributions that are made by newcomer women.

TERMINOLOGY

Researchers across academic fields use common concepts in the development of theory. Therefore, it is important to clarify terms, as they embody different meanings in different contexts. This is the case with issues related to the study of how newcomer women cope, adjust, and contribute during their transition into Canadian society. In order to provide a compelling discussion, it is key to distinguish the specific meaning of terms that have relevance. Six of these key concepts are: 'newcomer', 'resettlement', 'integration', 'models of resettlement', 'gendered resettlement', and 'community development'.

Newcomer

For the purpose of this research initiative, the term 'newcomer' will refer to the immigrant, refugee, refugee claimant, and non-status woman. The term newcomer encompasses the various categories of legal status that women find themselves occupying during their transition to Canada. This discussion is not an attempt to scrutinize these legal categories. What is of importance are the shared experiences that are unique to gender, and the ways in which these experiences motivate newcomer women to organize collectively and contribute within society. Furthermore, Flores and Benmayor (1997), suggest that conventional notions of citizenship and categories of legal status are insufficient to address issues of social incorporation and diversity

(as cited in Anderson, 2009). In order to ensure a more comprehensive approach to understanding the realities of living in a diverse society such as Canada, they advocate that the newcomer needs to be recognized as a political subject:

Immigrants who might not be citizens in a legal sense or might not even be in this country legally, but who labour and contribute to the economic and cultural wealth of the country, would be recognized as legitimate political subjects claiming rights for themselves and their children, and in that sense, citizens. (2009: 7)

Therefore, it is not anticipated that the demarcation of immigration status will have primary importance to applying theoretical concepts, exploring research findings, or discussing conclusions. However, the terminology that is used in other research cited in this review will be respected and referenced accordingly.

Resettlement

The term 'resettlement' generally refers to the transition process that newcomer women go through as they adjust, learn, and engage in the host community (Yu et al, 2007).

Although used interchangeably with settlement in much of the literature dealing with issues of integration, for this research project it seems more fitting to refer to resettlement, for several reasons. Firstly, the term resettlement acknowledges that for some newcomers to Canada, the migration journey may not have been the first one that they have made (Abdul-Razzaq, 2008).

The experience of newcomers who have undergone multiple migrations may be very different than the experience of those coming directly from their country of origin (Abdul-Razzaq, 2008; Dobrowolsky, 2007). They may approach the integration and orientation process with a whole other set of 'cultural competencies', or plainly put, the acquired life skills and experiential learning that in some cases is transferable, or an integration strategy (Karim, 2005: 153).

Secondly, the term resettlement acknowledges the migration experiences that are unique to the refugee journey of flight. This experience may result in refugee's seeking asylum or residing in temporary refugee camps in more than one country (Yu, et al 2007; CCR, 2007). Thus, resettlement is a more embracing and inclusive term and will be used in this research.

Integration

'Integration' is a widely used term within academia as well as among the population at large. It describes the process of adjustment and the experiences that newcomers go through and accumulate when they begin to live in a new country (Li, 2003; Wong and Poisson 2008; Saloojee, 2003). From a policy perspective, integration in a Canadian context is a term that is officially linked to the ideology of multiculturalism (Li, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003). In 1971, the Canadian government was the first among Western nations to officially adopt a federal policy of planned multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995; Stasiulis and

Bakan, 2003; Saloojee, 2003). Generally stated in conceptual and practical terms, multiculturalism closely resembles pluralism, because it promotes the integration of newcomers via tolerance and the celebration of difference (Li, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003; Saloojee, 2003). This has been carried out through the development of a framework of policies that support multiculturalism.

Integration has also been officially adopted and institutionalized as a two way process. It requires social adaptation on the part of newcomers, and also the society of destination (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003; Li, 2003; Wong and Poisson, 2008; Saloojee, 2003). The federal government has declared it imperative that it's multicultural policies be based on the achievement of social inclusion, and aimed to ensure the provision for and enjoyment of full participation for newcomers in all aspects of life (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003; Omidvar and Richmond, 2005; Creese and Downling, 2001). These ideas are embodied in legal statute, in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA, 2001), which states that one of its objectives is, 'to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society' (IRPA, 2002: 3.(1)E). Thus, integration has been theoretically and officially understood to be a reciprocal process of engagement, interaction, mutual accommodation and change between

the newcomer and the host country (Li, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003; Saloojee, 2003).

Models of Resettlement

It is also important to note that theorists and service providers in the immigration and resettlement sector widely recognize that integration is a continuum of life experience (OCASI, 1991; Berry, 2007). They suggest that it is not a fixed point of arrival (OCASI, 1991:8). The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), is an advocacy body that represents over 200 community based organizations nationwide. They have described the resettlement process of integration as 'a long term, dynamic, two way process' (OCASI, 1991:8). Models of resettlement and integration have been developed to describe and track this continuum. For example, in 1988, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), formulated a model of resettlement by articulating integration as a process or continuum, with three stages. The first stage is acclimatization, which is a period of learning, where newcomers adapt to a new culture, language and environment (CCR, 1988). The second stage is adaptation, which is a process where newcomers begin to manage new situations independently and adopt new customs; and lastly, integration, which occurs when newcomers actively participate, by contributing and becoming involved in the host country (ibid). This is not a single linear process and they note

that,

Integration is a process lasting many years, if not generations. Individuals and communities may be "integrated" in some aspects of life but not in others. Issues can surface long after arrival, for example at times of significant change or crisis. (pp.10)

Another seminal model of resettlement is Berry's (2007), acculturation model. He describes integration as varying processes of acculturation depending on the interplay of what Berry describes as 'cultural maintenance' (or retention of one's norms and values), and 'contact participation' (or embrace of other norms and values). This leads to four possible outcomes: integration (optimal), assimilation, segregation, or marginalization (2007: 73,75). These are just a few examples of resettlement models that have been developed to describe the transition process for newcomers after arrival. What they all have in common is that they value integration as an optimal and successful outcome of the resettlement process.

Gendered Resettlement

Significant evidence suggests that the resettlement process is considerably different for women than men (VanderPlaat, 2007; Stasiulis, and Bakan, 2003). Newcomer women frequently face barriers to resettlement that men do not (VanderPlaat, 2007; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2003). Examining the resettlement process through the lens of gender focuses on the particular ways that women are impacted by social factors such as the intersections of race,

ethnicity, class, and life cycle as mitigating variables (Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009; Creese and Dowling, 2001).

From an equity, anti-racist and feminist perspective, Tsastglou and Meidema (2006), posit a new way to approach the integration of newcomer women. They conceptualize successful economic integration by defining this process as the achievement of 'racialized and gender parity' (2006:2). They build on Small's (1994), theory of economic integration coined as 'racialized parity'. According to Small (1994), the theory of racialized parity assesses economic integration to be relative to the economic experiences of Canadian born men in three categories: paid earnings, recognition of one's qualifications, and the equitable access to and distribution of resources for immigrants (2006). Tsastglou and Meidema (2006), adopted this theory in their research that explored the economic barriers that South Asian immigrant women experienced in Vancouver (as cited in 2006:2). Tastsoglou and Preston (2006), provide an analysis of how gender influences a newcomers woman's ability to acquire employment. They utilized composite measures of census and survey data to determine how various indicators, such as education, qualifications, and other work related characteristics account for what they call a dismal picture of immigrant women's economic integration in Canada (ibid). They contend that the ability of newcomer women to acquire suitable employment is also

affected by their social as well as legal status (ibid). Because of these factors, the economic integration of newcomer women is a complex and multi-faceted process. Racialized and gender equity theory considers these issues and measures successful economic integration for newcomer women as fair reimbursement for contributions made, recognition of their skills and qualifications, as well as access to resources (ibid). Through documenting the contributions made by the newcomer women who are apart of *Aliddesa*, I will adopt the framework of racialized and gender parity in a broader way in order to contextualize a more meaningful definition of integration that considers issues of gender.

Community Development

Civic participation, community involvement, and activism are all terms used to describe how individuals are involved socially and politically in their communities (Anucha, 2006; Tastsoglou and Preston, 2006; Birjandian, 2005). These terms also denote the active nature of participating with others around common beliefs and shared interests. In addition, they describe the manner in which these collective processes lead to deliberation, and decision making (Schugurensky, 2003; Rublee and Shaw, 1991).

Community participation for newcomer women has been studied as the ongoing processes of cultural production, or explained as 'moments of appropriation, creation, contestation'

(Anderson, 2009: 131). Schugurensky (2003), has asserted that in this sense, the civic participation of newcomer women creates an important link between the spheres of citizenship and public policy. However, the variety of ways that newcomer women organize and the issues that are embraced are rarely viewed in the public eye as valuable processes of community development. Certainly, these activities are not recognized as key components that are valuable and essential in the construction of viable communities (Martins and Reid, 2007). Consequentially, this remains an area of research that is under-examined and beckons attention (Birjandian, 2005; Abdul-Razzaq,2008). Therefore, in light of this research initiative it is important to establish a point of reference for the term 'community development'.

'Community development' has been applied to describe the ways that people form bonds of solidarity (Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2000), social environments that embody and reflect people's identity (McMichael and Manderson, 2004), or form associational ties and informal links that create companionship and mutual aid (Anderson, 2009). Tastsoglou and Miedema (2000), have suggested that 'community' and 'development' are contested terms, with varied meanings and applications in social science literature (p.13). Their research examines how involvement in organizational activities has assisted immigrant women in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to overcome systemic barriers associated with resettlement

(ibid). From a feminist and anti-racist perspective they based their research on Molyneux's (1985), theory of 'gender interests', as a framework to examine how the study population defined resettlement and made contributions through community development.

More specifically, the work of Molyneux (1985), has focused on issues of gender and women's political involvement in the region of Latin America (as cited in Miedema and Tastsoglou , 2000). Molyneux (1985), proposed that historically women have developed community organizations and movements as a reaction against repressive social measures by nation states (Kuumba, 2001). Organizing collectively has been the primary alternative in political environments where hostility has rendered individuals without personal agency or the influence to change circumstances on their own (ibid). She developed a model to describe the evolution of community development work among women that she witnessed in these situations (ibid). Molyneux, defined 'gender interests' as the social issues that are uniquely faced by different groups. For example, women are often limited by rigid social positions that have been established by societal conditions and expectations over time (2000: 68, Kuumba,2001). Molyneux, differentiates between two types of gender interests, 'practical' and 'strategic', with the former representing what women require in order to fulfill their personal roles and tasks in their private lives (2000: 68,69). The later or strategic gender interests, refers

to what women require in order to confront or overcome issues of societal subordination (2000). Molyneux, suggests that collective organizing always begins with the aim of meeting practical gender interests, but invariably evolves to address larger social problems (2000, Kuumba, 2001). In the context of Tastsoglou and Miedema's (2000), research of immigrant women in New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, this was proven to be the case. Participants expressed their motivations for community involvement as a means to remedy both practical and strategic gender interests. One participant expressed finding employment through affiliation in a multicultural community group (ibid). Another participant became involved in a community group that promoted the retention of her cultural heritage as a means to address discrimination in her community (ibid).

The research of Tastsoglou and Miedema (2000), has also demonstrated that addressing practical as well as strategic gender interests among newcomer women is a synergistic process that can occur simultaneously (ibid). One participant discussed being involved in a parental advisory group at her children's school for two reasons (ibid). First, it was a means to keep informed about her child's academic progress. Second, it was an opportunity to represent newcomer interests within the school (ibid). Das Gupta, (1986), eloquently describes this process as,

Enabling immigrant women to bring about change in their lives, as community development is to facilitate a process of a community's acquisition of resources, skills, and expertise in order to solve problems that they face, in order to set the conditions for change. (as cited in Miedema and Tastsoglou, 2000: 17)

Adopting Molyneux's framework of community development among disenfranchised women is an important theoretical grounding for this research project. First, this choice emphasizes that community development cannot take place unless individuals mobilize themselves and take initiative to address practical and strategic gender interests. Second, this focus recognizes that newcomer women possess agency, and that within their social networks, are resources, innovation, and skill sets that do facilitate societal change (Gidengil and Stolle, 2009). However, as previously mentioned, research that examines how newcomer women are making societal contributions through community development work has yet to be fully explored and affirmed in research and policy environments. This is an area that needs to be examined as issues related to immigration and integration in Canada holds immense historical significance and current social relevance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the beginning of Confederation in 1867, Canada's early days of nation building has been marked by the arrival of waves of newcomers. These time periods have characterized

the regulation and influx of migration as a means to fulfill labour requirements for the nation's economic and industrial demands. Immigration continues to serve national interests. Canada, has one of the highest proportions of newcomers to total resident population of any country in the world (CCR, 2007). Since 1991, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), has pre-arranged the immigration of approximately 250,000 people to Canada annually (CCR, 2007). In 2006, immigrants represented one in five or 19.8 percent of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2006). This reflects the highest proportion in 75 years (2006). On a municipal level, 68.9 percent of recent newcomers made Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver; home according to data from the last census (Statistics Canada, 2007). Statisticians also compile information about the intersection of immigration with issues of gender. For example, between 1994 and 2003, 72 percent of women new to Canada came as members of the family class either as spouses or dependents of economic class immigrants (2003, as cited in VanderPlaat, 2007:5). During the period from 2004-2008, a little over half of all new permanent residents to Canada were female (Statistics Canada, 2011).

As the above figures show, the migration of people to Canada is just as important now as in the past. Canada continues to be dependent on immigration, and there is wide recognition that newcomers fundamentally enrich society, in economic, social and cultural terms (Saloojee,

2003; Papillon, 2002). Papillon (2002), and Saloojee (2003), have advocated that ethnic and cultural diversity are great strengths for Canada. However, as discussed previously, they also assert that newcomers are impacted differently by social factors than the native born (Papillon, 2002; Saloojee 2003; Martins and Reid 2007). Immense focus has been given to the exploration of how social factors have both negatively and positively impacted newcomer experiences of resettlement. Both qualitatively and empirically, there exists a body of literature that theorizes and conceptualizes issues related to immigration, resettlement and integration, and lastly, how these issues pertain to discussions of citizenship (Li, 2003; VanderPlaat, 2007; Berry, 2007; Birjandian, 2005). Below is a critical discussion of two theories that have been applied to the understanding and social phenomena of newcomer incorporation.

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

Human capital theory and social capital theory are two widely used frameworks that have been applied to the study of how newcomers fair in a Canadian context. They will be discussed in respective order, by outlining their definitions, their applications to understanding integration in a Canadian context, and key issues and limitations that they do not address related to the participation and contributions of newcomer women. In addition, the theory of cultural citizenship will be also be defined, and I will highlight how it more sensitively and

appropriately reflects the social contributions and community development initiatives of newcomer women.

Human Capital Theory

Fram (2004), argues that an essential and discursive part of newcomer belonging in Canada is the 'hegemonic narrative' of human capital theory (2004: 565). Human capital theory has been studied alongside issues of immigration to describe the affects that economic trends have on newcomers during resettlement and integration. Butterwick (2003), argues that human capital theory 'values individuals and their skills only if they are considered to be economically productive' (as cited in McLarena and Dyck, 2004: 43). As a result, human capital theory fails to address the complex nature of resettlement and integration for newcomer women. It also fails to consider that issues of gender are mitigating social factors which restrict and undervalue the contributions that newcomer women make in Canada. As a result, newcomers have been perceived to be liabilities for the state or to be individuals that drain resources from the social welfare system (McLarena and Dyck, 2004; McBride, 2000).

Conceptually, the term 'human capital' refers to the value of an individual's accumulated skills, knowledge and experiences (2004). Key to the development of human capital theory is the definition that one's skills and credentials should be formally obtained, and institutionally

recognized (Killbride, 2000; McBride, 2000). Human capital theory is also viewed to be an economic paradigm because it advances the formal educational achievement of individuals as a means to accumulate professional, economic, and social status (McBride, 2000, Killbride, 2000). Therefore, the completion of educational accreditation is instrumental to an individual's self-sufficiency and economic mobility in the marketplace.

Human Capital Theory and Barriers to Integration

Likewise, as mentioned above, human capital theory has been linked to discussions about newcomer participation and incorporation in Canadian society. These discussions have focused on the ways in which the paradigm of human capital has been implemented in policy and institutional processes in Canada. These policies and institutional processes can have negative effects on the perception of immigrant and newcomer worth and productivity to society. These perceptions have negative effects on both the perception of newcomer integration and the reality of that integration. For example, human capital theory informs a societal expectation that newcomers to Canada, should be able to achieve economic independence quickly (Li, 2003, Martins and Reid, 2007; Sherkin, 2004)ⁱ. Consequently, the ability of a newcomer to successfully integrate is largely defined by how they are able to economically participate by gaining employment. Therefore, successful integration is often

understood and measured solely in economic terms (2003, 2007, 2004). However, research has shown that this is difficult for newcomers to reach and attain (Li, 2003; Sherkin, 2004; VanderPlaat, 2007). Newcomer women, for example, find it challenging to participate economically (Sherkin, 2004). Statistics from the 2001 and 2006 Census, indicate that newcomer women were less likely to participate in the paid labour force than their Canadian born counter-parts (as cited in Tastsoglou and Preston, 2006). They were also more likely than Canadian born men, Canadian born women, and immigrant men to be unemployed (as cited in Tastsoglou and Preston, 2006). As well, newcomer women are segmented into manual occupations, and they receive lower wage earnings than immigrant men and the Canadian born of both sexes (as cited in Tastsoglou and Preston, 2006). Findings from a study of Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver, confirm this, as the women that were interviewed expressed difficulties with economic integration by finding employment in low paying jobs and domestic labour (Creese and Dowling, 2001). This occurred in spite of high academic credentials from their country of origin (Creese, and Dowling, 2001). Similar research findings in Toronto, reported that a majority of immigrant women found it difficult to achieve meaningful employment in their fields of professional experience (Martins and Reid, 2007). Thus, difficulty achieving accreditation and recognition in Canada for the education they completed prior to

arrival were reported to be barriers to entrance in the Canadian work force (Creese and Dowling, 2001). The above statistics raise startling and disturbing findings about how newcomer women cope and survive in Canada. If newcomer women are not perceived to be economically productive, this can have negative repercussions in other areas of their integration and resettlement process.

Critique of Human Capital Theory

Two additional points of critique are relevant to this examination of how human capital theory has impacted the public and private lives of newcomer women. First, it is difficult to use human capital theory as a way to describe or explain issues of gender and resettlement.

Previously stated, Miedema and Tastsoglou (2000), argue that the narrative of the newcomer woman in Canada, is one of dual meaning; and it describes legal as well as social status. They also observe that while a newcomer woman may have acquired permanent residency status or full citizenship, her social status 'is another thing entirely,'(pp.1). Djao and Ng (1987), suggest that difficulties associated with integration for newcomer women are often constructed and socially construed as psychological and private problems when in reality they are sociological. Newcomer women, for example, express issues of isolation during resettlement (Smith, 2004). Djao and Ng (1987), further argue that isolation is socially and

structurally created by such factors as the organization of neighbourhoods, the nature of housework, gender segregation in the labour market, and governmental policies.ⁱⁱ

Abu-Laban (2000), has also suggested that the gendered structure of networks makes for unequal access to the resources and the types of information that are necessary for newcomer women to engage in their communities. Because of these dynamics, Dossa (2002), argues that the lives of 'immigrant women do not form part of the social and national imagination of the state'(pg.21).

The social invisibility that is experienced by newcomer women in Canada provokes an additional critique of human capital theory. Using this framework to study newcomer incorporation is limited in its theoretical scope and it fails to recognize other forms of contributions that newcomer women make in their communities (Brodie,2008; Clark, Glick, and Bures, 2009). Invariably, the investments and benefits that occur as a result of their private activities go undervalued (Clark, Glick, and Bures, 2009). For example, human capital theory does not take into account the various social and familial care-giving responsibilities that newcomer women must often fulfill (Clark, Glick, and Bures, 2009; McLarena and Dyck, 2004). Omidvar and Richmond (2003), in, *Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada*, discuss multiple social issues at play during the resettlement process for newcomer women. The

issues are,

Due to factors related both to their conditions of arrival in Canada and to the socio-cultural traditions of their country of origin, newcomer women carry very heavy burdens of domestic responsibility in terms of housework, family maintenance and socialization of children (2003:5).

In addition, numerous scholars have begun to acknowledge the core role that family and kinship bonds play during the resettlement process (McLarena and Dyck, 2004; Sherkin, 2004; VanderPlaat, 2006; Clark, Glick, and Bures, 2009). In fact, when viewed through the conceptual lenses of family responsibilities and commitments, the resettlement process of a newcomer women may be best understood (Abdul-Razzaq, 2008; VanderPlaat, 2007). This was proven to be the case in a recent study conducted by Martins and Reid (2007). They interviewed 12 immigrant women from St. Jamestown, Toronto. All of them were between 20-50 years of age, all were recent immigrants who had arrived within the past five years, and all had children (2007). By examining the occupational roles that participants identified, key findings indicated that the roles of caregiver, housewife and homemaker gave the women a sense of identity (ibid). More importantly, they expressed these roles as having primary importance over other resettlement goals, such as learning English, and finding employment outside of the home (ibid). What this research also implies is that human capital theory is not a suitable theory to

utilize when studying newcomer women's incorporation in a Canadian context. Indeed, more attention needs to be given in research and policy circles that examines how newcomer women approach resettlement and the issues and concerns which lead them to collective organization. This will enable a more accurate understanding of newcomer incorporation in Canada from a gendered perspective.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has been applied extensively with newcomer populations to measure and assess the nature and forms of their involvement in the host society (Li,2003; Anucha et al, 2006; McMichael and Manderson,2004). More specifically, social capital theory is concerned with how newcomers make contact with resources and utilize opportunities to enhance the conditions of resettlement (Li,2003; Anucha et al, 2006; McMichael and Manderson, 2004). A key conceptual facet of this theory is an acknowledgement that social interactions and relationships are important for newcomers during integration (Li,2003; Anucha et al, 2006; Gidengil, and Stolle, 2009; Tastsoglou, and Miedema, 2000; Yan and Lauer, 2009). Thus, while human capital theory posits a narrow focus on the economic contributions made by newcomers, social capital theory is utilized to examine the role of social networks in providing newcomers with avenues to grow, develop, and pursue interests in the host country (Yan, and

Lauer 2009). In Canada, there is wide recognition that social capital theory is a framework that affirms the role of newcomers in society. It does so by highlighting and giving voice to the positive skills, credentials, and investments that newcomers bring to the host country via immigration.

Social capital theory is generally concerned with the value that exists for an individual as a result of their social ties, networks, and loose and formal associations (Anucha et al, 2006; McMichael, and Manderson, 2004). It also explores the resources, information, and opportunities that flow as a result of social connections and associations (Li,2003; Anucha et al, 2006). Social capital at the individual level can be enabled through personal relationships, such as friends, neighbours, acquaintances, and professional as well as family ties (2006; Fram, 2004; McMichael, and Manderson, 2004). These social networks can reflect various forms and activities such as volunteerism, religious affiliation, involvement in ethno-specific organizations, and community activism to name a few (2004; Fram 2004; Yan, and Lauer, 2009). Ultimately, social capital is a theoretical tool that is used to describe the structure, function, and benefit of an individual's social network and connections.

Social capital theory also describes the process that individual's undergo as they exercise their personal agency. This can occur by three separate but not exclusive processes: *bonding*,

bridging, and *linking* (Putnam, 2000). *Bonding* is defined as the kind of social network which is internal to one's own community (2000). This can reinforce exclusive identities such as ethnic heritage, and religious affiliation. Consequentially, *bonding* usually reflects group homogeneity (ibid). On the contrary, *bridging* is a process that creates new connections between individuals and crosses various forms of social characteristics such as religion, gender, ethnicity and immigrant status (Putnam 2000;). Research has demonstrated that *bridging* processes are beneficial for newcomers during resettlement because it allows them to expand their social networks and contacts (Yan and Lauer, 2009). Finally, *linking* refers to the process of creating new opportunities that result in greater access to information as a result of *bridging* connections (Putnam, 2000; 2009). *Bonding, bridging, and linking*, are processes which describe how, newcomers can develop and expand social capital to enhance the conditions of their resettlement.

Bourdieu (1986), and Putnam (2000), are two seminal theorists who pose contrary approaches to understanding social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986, Putnam, 2000). Bourdieu (1986), defines the term social capital as the 'aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance' (Bourdieu, 1986: 249). Bourdieu, focuses his analysis of

social capital theory on structural dynamics. He directs his attention to the roots of social inequality and to the ways in which social capital is distributed unevenly among people of differing economic status (1986; Birjandian (2005). In doing so he suggests that social capital is largely at the disposal of the dominant culture (ibid; 2005). From a perspective of newcomer incorporation, Birjandian (2005), echo's Bourdieu's belief and contends that throughout history, newcomers have always been considered as aliens upon arrival in a new society (ibid). New customs, beliefs and practices have historically been feared by the dominant group, and as a result, the social, economic and political influence of newcomers has usually been limited, if not completely marginalized (ibid). He describes that as a result social groups experience ghettoization and social alienation because of a 'culture of protectionism' (2005:22). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986), asserts that individuals are interconnected within hierarchical social systems (ibid). Because of this he suggests that social capital and individual agency are 'situational and real', and that these two dynamics link the everyday world with the reality of structural constraints (1986:23). He argues that both politically and economically, these linkages contextualize the social inequalities faced by groups and communities (1986:23). As a result, an individual's social environment and personal circumstances carry important implications about their ability to thrive in society

(Fram, 2004). In summary, Bourdieu, describes the fault lines of social capital theory for the individual who is marginalized and vulnerable. In this context, he holds a pessimistic view of how applicable social capital theory is for people who do not belong to the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1986).

Putnam (2000), as distinct from Bourdieu (1986), conceptualizes social capital theory from a position of strength. He describes the ability of social capital in the form of networks and associations to create paths for positive change and to see desired outcomes realized (2000).

Drawing on Putnam's work, there is growing understanding that social cohesion and social capital are interrelated (Anucha et al, 2006). Social cohesion requires constant maintenance and regeneration of social capital through networks of social trust (Sharon, 2005; Yan and Lauer, 2009). This regeneration can take place via civic organizations and other not for profit associations (2005). Similarly, World Bank scholars (Krishna and Shrader, 2000), articulate three necessary indicators that operate synergistically in order to cause this regeneration: membership in local associations and networks, the presence of trust and adherence to norms, and finally, collective action. According to Putnam, the processes of social exclusion that result in the structural constraints that Bourdieu (1986) describes, can be offset by goodwill associations such as those that are mentioned above (Yan and Lauer, 2009).

Thus, according to Putnam (2000), social capital can positively enable successful integration through social networks that newcomers are in contact with. This is possible because of the strength laden within collective organization and community associations which allow them to bridge and link social capital.

Social Capital Theory and Integration

As I discussed above, social capital theory acknowledges individual and collective forms of agency, or the accumulation of skills that arise out of life experiences. In fact, social capital theory has been operationalized by municipalities in the development of policy aimed at minimizing poor integration outcomes which are often faced by newcomers who remain in urban areas (Galabuzi and Teelucksingh, 2010). The GTA region of Peel, Ontario, and the city of Calgary, Alberta, have both developed policy manuals designed to facilitate the incorporation of newcomers based on a framework of social capital theory (Galabuzi and Teelucksingh, 2010).

Social capital theory has also been applied practically in the development of models of service provision. Service providers have incorporated social capital theory in frameworks of social work practice in order to improve case management practices with newcomers during resettlement (Sakamoto 2007; Fram 2004; Putnam 2004). For

example, Yan and Lauer (2009), demonstrate this in a study that was conducted with nine resettlement houses in Vancouver. They examined the role and the positive impact of resettlement houses in assisting newcomer women to bond, bridge and link their social ties and networks during their early days in Canada. Similarly, Anucha et al (2006), initiated a community based study in Windsor. The aim was to investigate how social capital is generated and utilized during resettlement with newcomer women (Anucha et al, 2006). They conducted interviews with 22 organizations, administered a cross-sectional survey of 300 women and men, and also held in-depth interviews with 20 women (2006). Findings indicated that social capital proved necessary and vital to participants (ibid). A key conclusion revealed that contact with service providers in the settlement sector played an important role in facilitating avenues to develop social capital (ibid). In addition, cross-sectional survey findings confirmed that gender and other socio-demographic data, such as age, ethnic group and immigrant status, had an impact in how immigrants and refugee women accessed, used and benefited from social capital (ibid). Therefore, not all newcomers have the same ability to access and accumulate social capital; and, as every story of migration and resettlement is different, so too is one's ability to participate and grow in the host society. Social capital theory in a Canadian context then proves beneficial to some more than others.

Critique of Social Capital Theory

Theoretically, social capital theory describes a process that allows people to benefit from the skills and knowledge that they have accumulated through their life experiences and the contacts that they have made. Li (2003), discusses the prevailing reality that immigrants often have no problem creating bonding social capital, but are limited in bridging and linking social capital beyond their own ethno-cultural community. Li's work calls attention to the way that social capital theory fails to address the difficulty that newcomers face in accessing opportunities and overcoming structural constraints that would give them the ability to participate, utilize and further grow social capital.

Human capital theory and social capital theory are two paradigms which have proved unsuccessful to adequately describe the various ways that newcomers enrich Canadian society. They are both limited in their respective theoretical scope to reflect and capture the complex nature of women's resettlement and integration in a comprehensive way. Neither theory captures both the economic as well as the social contributions that are made by newcomers. In addition, neither theory addresses the gendered dynamics of integration and resettlement. While social capital theory does acknowledge the unequal distribution of resources and power which is pervasive and evident in Canada, they both lack foresight to

discuss and suggest practical and ideological remedies to tackle the ways that newcomers are hindered and barred from full participation in society. Finally, neither theory describes the benefits for society at large when newcomers engage in methods of collective action. Thus, human capital theory and social capital theory are not enough to guide this research initiative. In this next section I will discuss cultural citizenship theory and its importance to this exploration of the contributions that are made by the members of *Aliddesa*.

OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP THEORY

The concept of cultural citizenship was first coined in the 1980s, by the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (Anderson, 2009; Pawley, 2008). Rosaldo (1999), argues that cultural citizenship theory provides the right for people from minority, ethnic, or subordinated groups to be different and yet still belong to the larger community. He was one of a Latino cohort of social scientists who utilized the concept to examine Latino civic participation in the voicing, claiming, and negotiating of cultural space (Pawley, 2008). Their broader focus was to bring greater multicultural emphasis to discourses of race in the United States (2008). Up until that point discussions were focused mainly on the dichotomous difficulties between the black and white communities of the nation (ibid).

As a paradigm, the theory of cultural citizenship is both a theoretical perspective and a

methodological approach (Anderson, 2009; Stevenson, 2003; Foote and Smith, 2005). It examines broad social issues such as socio-cultural identity, political will, and cultural expression (2009; 2003; 2005). On a theoretical level, cultural citizenship theory acknowledges that ethnic communities and other marginalized groups have inherent value in larger society because of their cultural resiliency, social capital and agency (2009; 2003). On a methodological level, cultural citizenship theory requires that individuals who apply this framework in research or through front line service provision, do so from the social position and point of view of the respective marginalized group (Foote and Smith, 2005). This is understood to be necessary in order to appropriately perceive their needs, goals, and purposes (2005). Therefore, in general terms cultural citizenship theory allows for an interrogation of the ways that people understand and construct the world in which they live. It can impact how they interact with each other, and how they negotiate their roles to challenge 'the distribution and allocation of rights, privileges, and institutional access' (Anderson, 2009: 7).

Cultural Citizenship and Integration

During the last three decades, social scientists have developed many perspectives in the study of cultural citizenship. As previously mentioned, cultural citizenship theory examines the colloquial meanings of alienation and belonging (Karim, 2005; Sharon, 2005). These are issues

that are of core concern among newcomer populations (Anderson, 2009; Flores and Benmayor, 1997). Inevitably, this theoretical framework has been applied to grapple with issues of newcomer incorporation and integration (Anderson, 2009; Stevenson, 2003). For example, Pawley (2008), discusses the confluence of culture and citizenship as it pertains to the rise of minority claims. He asserts that due to the protection of civil liberties granted within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982,) the status of distinct ethnic and cultural groups has resulted in new forms of legal recognition (Kymlicka, 1995; Joppke, 2008; Dobrowolsky, 2007).

Multiculturalism is a state managed policy regarding immigration in Canada that has been instrumental in ushering in these measures of legal accomodation. Pawley (2008), maintains that cultural citizenship theory in practical terms has been linked with multiculturalism because they both acknowledge that issues of identity and difference are fundamental to the achievement of an equitable society. However, they diverge over the limitations that identity and difference can have via legal and policy processes. A multiculturalist view proposes that there are legal and social limitations concerning the provision of rights claims (Kymlicka, 1995; Joppke, 2008). Pawley contends that a multiculturalist understanding of minority rights creates the potential for divisive issues because it encourages groups to focus on their differences. He contends that this is done in an effort to legitimize their activities and presence politically, but

at the cost of building on shared experience with other groups in society (Pawley, 2008, Kymlicka, 1995). Alternately, cultural citizenship as a function of social unity is premised on a belief that issues of difference and culture are core to our understanding of state membership.

A second approach to understanding cultural citizenship is centered on the deconstruction and reconceptualization of citizenship as an institution (Pawley, 2008). Citizenship has been viewed as a social instrument that creates the foundational parameters of social inclusion and exclusion (Abu-Laban, 2000; Dobrowolsky, 2007; Delanty, 2003). More specifically, this theory has gained currency in recent scholarship concerning the politics of identity in response to the dramatic transformations that are taking place as a result of migration and globalization (Rosalda, 1999). Cultural citizenship offers a flexible theoretical framework to ask complex and multi-dimensional questions about the relationship among home, immigration status, transnationalism, and substantive notions of belonging (1999, Anderson, 2009). This marks a shift in how the institution of citizenship is viewed, as conventional narratives of citizenship are increasingly being called into scrutiny (Isin, and Siemiatycki, 1999; Joppke, 2008). This is the case with Marshall's (1952), seminal evaluation of citizenship as a set of privileges that grant legal and social rights to members of a nation. The theory of cultural citizenship departs from a traditional definition of citizenship in that it holds that citizenship is practiced

in everyday life instead of achieved via bureaucratic processes (Rosalda, 1999; Foote and Smith, 2005). Thus, new imaginations of this institution conceptualize and articulate citizenship as a *process*, and *activity* that one engages in as an evolving commitment to one or multiple communities (Isin, and Siemiatycki, 1999, Ong, 1999). From this perspective, cultural citizenship encourages an allowance for the diverse ways in which differing groups choose to express their belonging within the larger community (Taylor, 1991: 20).

Lastly, cultural citizenship theory can be used to examine the gendered nature of resettlement (Sharon, 2005). It can also be applied to promote a gendered approach to understand how newcomer women make contributions, because it allows scholars to theorize about the ways that newcomer women define their interests and purposes. These outcomes are possible because cultural citizenship theory holds that any act of communication can impact the power relations within a polity (Pawley, 2008; Anderson, 2009). In this manner, cultural citizenship places as key contributions, the 'small democracies of everyday life' (Sharon, 2005; Stone et al, 2007; Fuller et al, 2008: 170). Therefore, the theory of cultural citizenship can be used to evaluate the importance of people's everyday interactions. Consequently, the daily activities and commitments of newcomer women have value. Furthermore, they can be measured as meaningful acts of citizenship.

Stevenson (2003), describes this process and states that cultural citizenship theory encompasses not only, “rights and obligations, but civic spaces of participation, respect, identity, difference and individualism”, but also with place for “emotion and cognitive capacity to engage with intercultural conversation.” (Stevenson 2003:3). Delanty (2003), also echoes the potential of cultural citizenship to,

Shift the focus of citizenship away from the fact of membership of a polity onto common experiences, cognitive processes, forms of cultural translation and discourses of empowerment (Delanty, 2003: 5).

A framework such as this can be utilized to describe the cultural phenomena and circumstances of empowerment that lead newcomer women to civic action. Cultural citizenship theory ultimately allows for the recognition of the ingenuity, leadership, and action that newcomer women employ daily in their public and private domains (Anderson, 2009, Stevenson, 2003, Sharon, 2005, Stone et al, 2007).

Critique of Cultural Citizenship Theory

Notwithstanding the many positive aspects of cultural citizenship theory mentioned above, two important points of critique must be mentioned. First, it is difficult to agree on an operational definition of cultural citizenship theory because the term culture is a contested notion. It is one that holds various meanings in various contexts (Miller, 2007; Stone et al,

2007). As Taylor (1991), has noted, the term culture provokes deep relations and association with memories, events, and narratives (Stone et al, 2007:2). However, a wide, fluid, and evolving understanding of culture is what gives unique salience to the very notion of cultural citizenship. It is emblematic to our individual and private experiences of citizenship and belonging as members within society. It brings into focus one's emotional ties and psychological experiences of belonging, or non-belonging within society.

Second, cultural citizenship theory has not been tested through the rigours of qualitative research in a Canadian context. In fact, I did not find literature that incorporated cultural citizenship as a theoretical framework to explore and examine how newcomers conceptualize resettlement or to observe the motivating factors that lead to processes of collective organization and civic actionⁱⁱⁱ. While this reveals a serious shortfall in academic research, it presents opportunity to add to a burgeoning body of work.

In summary, cultural citizenship is a theoretical framework that addresses the relationship between cultural identity and citizenship. It does so by regarding the symbolic and communicative practices of everyday life as central to achieving full inclusion and membership within a society (Pawley, 2008). In addition, subjective notions of race, ethnicity and otherness are essential to the construction of a national narrative of belonging. By linking

culture and citizenship the fundamental aim of this discourse is to call for "the positive acknowledgment of difference in and by the mainstream" (Miller, 2007:2). In the context of this review of the literature, the theory of cultural citizenship allows for the development of a full and comprehensive picture of newcomer resettlement and incorporation in Canada.

Cultural citizenship differs theoretically and methodologically from how human capital theory and social capital theory are applied to the study of newcomers and immigration. Human capital theory focuses on the contributions that are generated by newcomers via economic participation in the labour market. However, it fails to contextualize issues of gender or to tackle the social inequalities that lead to widespread experiences of socio-economic marginalization among this population. Social capital theory focuses on the benefits accrued from to the accumulation of social networks and connections. However it falls short at providing newcomers with avenues and strategies that will empower newcomer women to bridge and link their social capital in spite of widespread systemic barriers. Although these theories have been studied extensively and used to describe experiences of resettlement and integration, generally, they fail to move beyond the current social disparities that are so pervasive in Canada for a new vision of newcomer incorporation.

Cultural citizenship is a framework which addresses these limitations. First, it acknowledges

the emotional and substantive dimensions of belonging which are so important when considering newcomer resettlement and incorporation in a Canadian context (Li, 2003).

Second, cultural citizenship places high value on all types of contributions that are made by people in society (Foote and Smith, 2005). In this manner, daily activities can resemble positive acts of citizenship. Third, issues of gender are viewed as dynamic and unique factors during the resettlement and integration process (Anderson, 2009). A gendered perspective combined with cultural citizenship theory can support women to ‘cross, contest, and reconfigure borders, problematize not only legal and political dimensions of citizenship, but also social, economic, and psychological ones’ (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2000:7). Finally, cultural citizenship theory provides a theoretical and methodological framework to study the motives, purposes and intentions of marginalized and ethnic groups who collectively organize for the purpose of civic action. In these ways, incorporating the theory of cultural citizenship will enable an exploratory examination of the contributions that are made by *Aliddesa* members through their plans and activities.

This literature review has addressed the importance of the research focus and its relevance to how newcomer women are incorporated into Canadian society. I have established that the resettlement experiences of newcomer women are unique and can lead to acts of civic

participation and community development. In addition, an overview of human capital theory and social capital theory, reveals that these theories do not consider issues of gender and are not appropriate when studying the contributions that newcomer women make daily in their communities. Consequently, they are also not suitable for reflecting on the ways in which these contributions indirectly and directly enrich the whole of Canadian society. This leads to the conclusion that researching the social contributions of *Aliddesa* must be undertaken utilizing a theoretical framework that considers and includes issues of gender. This is where I anticipate the theory of cultural citizenship will be useful. An exploration of *Aliddesa* through this framework will generate important findings about how the participants approach and conceptualize community development. In addition, cultural citizenship theory can be applied to understand how they reflect on the contributions that are being made to society because of their efforts.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project is to conduct a qualitative and exploratory study and in the process observe a group of newcomer women in Toronto, called *Aliddesa*. The aim is to document the history, activity, and ideas that motivate their work in the community. An anticipated outcome of this process is to highlight the contributions and benefits that occur for the larger society because of their efforts. In addition, the needs, motivations, and perceptions of the members of *Aliddesa*, have provided insight into the complexities and personal negotiations of the resettlement experience from a gendered perspective. I have also gathered what I feel are valuable observations about how this group of newcomer women approach community development and civic participation. This is a topic that is currently not addressed within academia.

RESEARCH GROUP

The selection of the research population was purposive. Participants were limited to *Aliddesa* members who presently serve on the board of directors. This was chosen to keep the project manageable within the limitations of the research scope. At the time of data collection,

the board of directors comprised a total of five seats. One member declined to participate, one seat was vacant, and the remaining three consented to participate in this study. All of the participants share some common sample characteristics. They are all adult females and willing members of a social group. They all speak Spanish and their countries of origin are in either Central or South America. Finally, they are all residents of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and are all among the immigrant and refugee population.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative research study is exploratory in nature. The methodology that is used reflects triangulation by four data collection methods. Each participant completes a questionnaire that asked basic demographic questions about themselves. This was devised to develop a group profile (see Appendix A- Demographic Questionnaire (English version), Appendix B- Demographic Questionnaire (Spanish version). Individual interviews were also conducted with the participants in order to record the history, activities and vision of *Aliddesa* (see Appendix C- Individual Interview Guide). Participants were asked to write in a diary. This was a means to capture each participant's personal reflections of resettlement, and how involvement in *Aliddesa* has or hasn't impacted these experiences (see Appendix D- Guide to

Reflective Journal (English version), Appendix E- Guide to Reflective Journal (Spanish version).

Finally, participants were asked to attend one focus group near the completion of the research project (see Appendix F- Focus Group Guide). This was intended to provide an opportunity for participants to give feedback about the research process and to ensure member checking. It was also an opportunity for the researcher to provide an overview of research findings that emerged through previous research activities. Before beginning the interviews with participants, the interview guide was pilot-tested to assess the clarity and relevance of questions (see Appendix G- Test Pilot Individual Interview Guide). The interview guide that was used for individual interviews and also for the focus group were both modified as participants initiated topics that arose. This was helpful as it allowed the researcher to follow the natural flow of discussion.

Incentives were provided as a way to acknowledge the importance of the participants' time and input, and also to offset any financial loss due to time spent involved in the research process. Sixty dollars was given to participants for their contribution. The participants wished to have these funds given to *Aliddesa* instead as an honorarium. Light refreshments were also provided at the individual interviews.

The interpreter who was involved in this project is a trained professional (accredited through Multilingual Community Interpretation Services, MCIS). She was responsible for providing interpretation and translation during the individual interviews and during the focus group. This was done to ensure that the research process was not hampered by language difficulties. In addition, she provided transcription services for the questionnaires and the reflective journals that were completed in Spanish. The interpreter also signed a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H-Role of Interpreter and Confidentiality Agreement).

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection occurred between May-July 2011. Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The focus group lasted approximately two hours. Individual interviews and the focus group were located at various locations in Toronto, such as a refugee shelter, a coffee shop, a public library, and, at a supermarket café. All communication during the individual interviews and the focus group were documented using a digital voice recorder. This was important for reference purposes and to ensure accuracy of results. Participants were informed of the use and rationale for this instrument, and were given the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions prior to their consent to participate (Appendix I- Consent Form). All voice recordings

were transcribed verbatim to an electronic file after individual interviews and the focus group.

Journal entries and questionnaires were written in English and Spanish depending on the participants' desire. Those written in Spanish were translated into English by a professional interpreter and stored in an electronic file. All transcriptions were appropriately codified for reference purposes. Descriptive notes and observations of individual interviews and the focus group were kept. For the purpose of reporting findings, conclusions, and recommendations, all transcriptions, questionnaire answers, reflective journal entries, and researchers notes were grouped according to emerging themes, and sub-themes. Research findings and conclusions are not intended to be representative of a larger social phenomena or research group; and any research outcomes are not aimed at generalizing any findings or conclusions beyond the scope of this research project.

The primary research objective was to document how the participants of *Aliddesa* perceive and understand their work and purpose. Their voices, their ideas, and their skills and contributions are highlighted and captured through this research process. Therefore, I conducted the interviews and focus group using an open-ended question format. Real names have not been disclosed in the final report. Participants have been assigned by a fictitious name

and direct quotes or statements were referenced accordingly.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The process of interviewing the participants of *Aliddesa* both on an individual basis and as a group, generated fruitful and dynamic discussions. What emerged was a vital portrait of *Aliddesa* as a organization; and, the contributions that are being made as a result of their member's activities. The participants discussed what motivates them, and this exploration brought fourth several themes. In addition, by writing in a reflective diary and completing a questionnaire, each participant wrote about their personal experiences of resettlement. They also shared about how these experiences relate to their involvement in *Aliddesa*. I would like to begin a discussion of key findings with an examination of some demographic information that was discussed by participants followed by a group profile of *Aliddesa*. I will then review the five themes that participants expressed as being important to them in their community work. These themes are: the personal experiences and benefits of involvement in *Aliddesa* for its members; the importance of helping newcomer women; the creation of opportunities to network and build the Spanish community, the perceived contributions of *Aliddesa* to other newcomer women; and the perceived benefits of *Aliddesa* for Canadian society at large.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

To insure the confidentiality of each participant, fictitious names have been assigned accordingly. They are Eliana, Claudia, and Patricia, respectively. All three women in this study are from countries in South America, specifically from Peru, Colombia, and Uruguay. Each participant indicated that they had been involved in political and social forms of community development in their home countries. During the focus group, Eliana, made this statement about activism in South America and Canada. She says that:

I think it is not by chance that women in South America are the most politically engaged in the world. I believe that it is very often that women in these countries feel that they are second rate. We originate from countries that have suffered from dictatorships at the hands of men. And in my particular case the country where I passed the first twelve years of my life had a dictatorial regime. The reason [that] we are very clear [is] that we want to participate in the West in such a way as that would never happen again...to do away with corruption. That is something that we have in our backgrounds.

At the point when the research was conducted, all three participants reported to reside in Canada as refugee's, with differing resettlement time frames of 7 years, 3 years and 10 months, and, 3 years and 3 months. The age ranges for the participants are between 40-69. Upon arrival in Canada, two women possessed limited English language skills, and one knew more advanced English. This demographic information indicates that there are similar and different experiences of resettlement among the participant group.

GROUP PROFILE

Aliddesa was created in 2008, by a small circle of newcomer women who wanted to assist the Latin American community in Toronto. Participants were asked about what inspiration led to the formation of *Aliddesa*. They expressed that the founding members wanted to create a group of Latin American women in order to develop leaders in social, political and economic areas of society. Appropriately, the name *Aliddesa* is an acronym in Spanish and reflects the original vision of the group. Translated into English, it means the, *Leadership, Action and Women's Development Group*. Their official mission statement expresses that their purpose is to,

promote the development, the participation and leadership of Latin American women residing in Canada, paying close attention especially to the prevention of domestic and family violence as well as to the social problems that (are) attempted against them and their families.

A number of activities were outlined by participants as a means to realize this collective vision.

Members organize workshops about computer training, family violence, and business.

Aliddesa hosts orientation sessions for newly arrived newcomers and immigrants, and they provide information and referrals to assist with resettlement concerns. Participant's discussed their plans for special celebrations annually which focus on the rights of women as well as on

Latin American culture. In addition, *Aliddesa* members facilitate conversation circles aimed at supporting women and seniors with their social integration through English language learning. Finally, during an individual interview, one participant spoke about the informal ways that the group supports newcomer women through relational support and counselling. Thus, over the last three years, these activities and services have been launched in an effort to address the social and resettlement needs of newcomer women.

Since the inception of the organization over three years ago, *Aliddesa* has grown to about 25-30 registered members from more than nine Latin American countries. In spite of this growth, participants discussed the importance of building an organization that is structured and efficient in terms of operations. For example, *Aliddesa* has been legally registered as a nongovernmental organization (NGO). Eliana discussed the genesis of this decision,

When we were about to join *Aliddesa*, it was not yet registered with the government. It was really a group of women coming together and doing certain activities, but the purposes were not identified. So we decided to re-organize ourselves and to register with the government as an NGO.

Aliddesa, has also instituted an ethical code of conduct, as well as implementing a strategic plan that is updated and evaluated on a yearly basis. The group also functions with a well thought out leadership team that is hierarchical in nature. This was brought out in the observations of

the participants. Eliana, noted that she currently acts as president of *Aliddesa*, and Patricia, expressed that she is vice president. In addition, the leadership team is comprised of a Board of Directors consisting of five members. This board holds the responsibility of making decisions for *Aliddesa*. Patricia, and Claudia, both noted that decisions are made in a democratic fashion according to the group's organizational objectives. Patricia expressed that there are a number of commissions, or profiles, that require the management of activities that *Aliddesa* facilitates. For example, there is the professional social support commission, as well as commissions for arts and culture, public relations, financial affairs, volunteers, and education.

Participants spoke at length about some organizational needs that they feel limit the work and social contributions of the group. They highlighted two areas of specific concern to them. The first concern is in regards to infrastructure needs, such as (a lack of) funding, office space, and a website. The second concern is about the organization's human resources needs, which include for example, committed people to fill leadership roles, and the training to acquire new skills sets. However, the participant's optimism and passion for the future of *Aliddesa* was evident during all aspects of this research process. One response from the focus group aptly expresses this optimism. Eliana states that:

I believe that we are only at the beginning but I think that we have a lot to give and I think that we are on the right track to achieve the objectives that we set out. Now we know ourselves a bit better, and we know what all of our strengths and weaknesses is and we know what we need in order to achieve our goals.

In addition to displaying a positive attitude about the objectives that *Aliddesa* has set out to accomplish, respondents participated in this research process with transparency and openness.

I believe this impacted the salience of information that emerged about *Aliddesa* as a community level organization. Certainly, participant's expressed the personal impact that their experience as members of this organization has had on them.

EMERGENT THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

During the interviews and focus group, as well as from the participants written comments, valuable information emerged about the activities and plans of the organization. In addition, the participants personal thoughts about their involvement in *Aliddesa* also became apparent. The themes and respective sub-themes that came to light through these discussions are as follows:

- I. Personal experiences and benefits of involvement in *Aliddesa* for its members.
 - A. The importance of finding a sense of belonging and community.
 - B. The personal benefits experienced by its members due to their involvement in *Aliddesa*.

- C. The professional and personal strengths that each participants brings to the organization.
 - D. The participant's perceptions about the resettlement and integration process.
- II. The importance of helping newcomer women.
 - A. Assisting newcomer women with their integration.
 - B. The importance of helping newcomer women establish independence.
 - C. The importance of developing leaders in the community.
- III. The creation of opportunities to network and build the Spanish community.
 - A. Creating environments where people can meet each other and build community.
 - B. The importance of developing partnerships on an organizational level.
- IV. The perceived contributions of *Aliddesa* to other newcomer women.
 - A. Personal feedback of individuals involved in Aliddesa.
- V. The perceived benefits of *Aliddesa* for Canadian society at large.
 - A. The importance of retaining ethnic identity.
 - B. The importance of developing leaders.

THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN *ALIDDESA* FOR ITS MEMBERS.

The participants of *Aliddesa* discussed the various ways that they have been personally impacted due to their involvement in the organization. Three sub-themes emerged in conjunction with this theme: the importance of finding a sense of belonging and community; the personal benefits experienced due to involvement in *Aliddesa*; and, the professional and personal strengths that each participant brings to the organization.

The importance of finding a sense of belonging and community.

Participants were asked a number of questions about their experiences of resettlement and how this impacted a process of engagement with *Aliddesa*. For example, participants were asked to discuss any factors that led them to join *Aliddesa*. Responses were different for each participant. Claudia indicated that it was a way for her to socialize, as well as to work and help in the social services. Eliana responded that, 'the need for Spanish speaking women and their families to integrate in a better way into the Canadian way of life, with more success and more efficient results,' is what compelled her to join the group. Finally, Patricia expressed that it was a way for her to integrate herself in an active and productive manner. However, a sub-theme that emerged through each participant's oral and written responses was the importance of finding a sense of belonging and community for them during resettlement. For example, Patricia said that,

Whenever such a great change occurs in one's life such that one has to move to another country, one has to actively seek to belong, to be a part of something. And that is just what community is. [A] church, high school, university or, other families. And once you get to form your very own community that is when you start to be comfortable, this is when the process of integration begins.

The same participant mentioned the importance that finding community has played in her life.

Patricia expressed that it 'serves as support and it is my link to the outer world.' Connecting

with others was reported by participants to be instrumental in the resettlement process.

The personal benefits experienced by its members due to their involvement in Aliddesa.

Another predominate sub-theme that emerged was the ways in which the participants were positively impacted because of their involvement in *Aliddesa*. Participants discussed the personal benefits that they have received. When asked to write about their personal experiences of resettlement in a journal, each participant provided valuable feedback.

Responses indicated that not only had they been greatly enriched through engaging in group activities, but that they were also inspired by one another. Eliana writes,

My personal experience has been very rich and positive, because [of] the group of amazing woman I have the pleasure to work with. [They] are very intelligent, supportive and consistent in their practical way to work and solve the problems we affront, giving their best every single moment.

During the focus group, Eliana also expressed that,

I think my experience in participating has been really quite enriching. Because it's true I have been involved in women's groups in the past, but it is the first time that I do this outside of my country. And just the experience of trying out for a common objective with people who are very different both professional as well as cultural. That was one of the main challenges which I have also found very interesting and I have been very happy to be involved.

Unanimously, each participant also reflected on the benefits received relating to their own process of resettlement. Each made mention of how their integration was enhanced as a

result of their involvement. For example, Claudia states that,

During this time, I have tried to do my work as best as possible, overcoming many obstacles and working in parallel to my re-settlement and that of my family. This has been therapeutic because by helping others, I give feedback to myself and I can see that my problems are more manageable than those of other immigrant families.

Claudia also expressed how being involved in *Aliddesa* has been a reciprocal process

which has helped her integration. During an individual interview she expressed that 'on a

personal level, it has been a great help. Because we have been given a lot but we have also

been able to give a lot of what we have.' Patricia expressed that the fact that she was able to

connect her professional background with the reality of living in a new city has helped her to

cope. She says that,

Through my profession I could be able to be helpful to Latin women who arrived to this country just as I did. And that was a way to integrate, [to] be active and productive [as] a way into the Canadian society.

Finally, Patricia also discussed how *Aliddesa* created an opportunity that enhanced her

integration as a result of intercultural learning. She states that,

The organization gave me the opportunity to meet women of different cultures with whom I started to share experiences facilitating my integration [in]to the Canadian system. The group of women [are] of great human quality [and] was and is for me a great emotional support.

What the above statements show is that involvement in *Aliddesa* has been a key positive factor

in the participant's experience of resettlement in Canada.

The professional and personal strengths that each participant brings to the organization.

A final sub-theme emerged when the participants were asked to describe what professional or personal strengths each woman brought to the organization. The responses were individual and unique. Eliana indicated that she has utilized her professional knowledge of marketing and communications. She expresses that, 'I was able to give a better structure to the organization. Having [a] structure and the strategy will define something that will enable us to reach out to more of our community.' Claudia described that she has brought her management and financial skills as a result of operating a family business in photography. In addition to keeping the organization on sound financial tracks, Claudia describes the importance of keeping a photographic archive for the organization. This is because 'photos are much more than just an image. It is the history, the memory and the emotions associated with it. It is a living testimony of what has been lived.' Finally, Patricia noted that her role as a psychologist in her home country has brought a new level of education to the members of *Aliddesa* about mental health issues. Patricia expresses that this has enabled her to promote 'comprehension, understanding, and tolerance' for women and families that have experienced emotional and

mental difficulties during the resettlement phase. Therefore, each woman discussed how their unique and individual involvement in *Aliddesa* has contributed to their personal growth and also to the evolution of the organization.

The participant's perceptions about the resettlement and integration process.

The participant's spoke briefly about how they conceptualize successful integration. They discussed one factor that can enhance the resettlement process for newcomer women. In addition, they also spoke about how the organization has defined the term integration. Although this discussion topic did not warrant its own theme, it is included under this main theme as a sub-theme.

For example, Claudia expressed how important it was that *Aliddesa* was an organization that was developed by newcomer women, for newcomer women. During the focus group, she stated that, 'I believe that if you are in your own home, you do not have to fight for your rights like we do.' Another participant noted that she benefited from the knowledge given to her by other newcomer women when she first arrived to Canada. Patricia observes,

I felt a great deal of relief knowing that there were a lot more people like me in this country. A couple of things that are very important about being in one's community is that you can [access] information, as well feeling safe. You can return to people who have been in Canada for a long time.

For the participants of *Aliddesa*, it is critical and important that resettlement support is provided to newcomer women, by women who are further along on the resettlement journey. As mentioned earlier, Eliana noted that *Aliddesa*, has formulated a definition of integration for organizational purposes. During the focus group, she expressed that successful integration has two major stages. She says that,

There are two levels of integration. First is [the] attention given to [establishing] a Canadian life... in the midst of which every single [ethnic] community can supply with its various shades of language, habits, etc...as well as the true, the veritable integration into mainstream Canadian society. [That is] to get to know the system, to integrate [into] the system and make full use [of it].

Therefore, the participants of *Aliddesa*, perceive that integration first takes place by meeting life's basic needs and by finding a sense of community. Secondly, it occurs through one's ability to get to know the system and make full use of opportunities.

What became evident through the participant's personal reflections of involvement with *Aliddesa*, is there passion to better the lives of women who are newcomers. The women related their experiences with a deep sense of solidarity for the organization and also for their fellow colleagues with whom they share this collective vision. As a result, the following theme, and sub-themes emerged about how *Aliddesa* aims to help newcomer women.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HELPING NEWCOMER WOMEN

The participants offered valuable feedback about how and why *Aliddesa* is involved in the community at large. This generated a variety of responses and perspectives. For example, during an individual interview, Eliana expressed that,

The organization is a way to have a voice for Spanish community people and to have a [way] to develop for Spanish speaking women [a means] to develop the tools, you know, in order to integrate in a better way in order to save the barriers.

Consequently, three sub-themes became apparent as the participants shared their thoughts about the organization's activities and objectives. To the participants, helping newcomer women meant that *Aliddesa* was first, assisting newcomer women with their integration.

Secondly, they were working to assist newcomer women to be independent and to know their rights. Finally, the participants discussed the importance of developing leaders within the community.

Assisting newcomer women with their integration.

The sub-theme of assisting newcomer women with their integration was discussed at length. Each participant reflected on the importance of organizing activities in order to equip women with practical knowledge and information. Hosting activities such as orientation workshops, and providing key referrals to community services were identified as practical and

important measures of support. Patricia discussed how important it was for newcomer women to be connected to resources, by saying that 'it is very important to form a social network of support and orientation...this is the best way not to feel isolated and to be able to integrate in society.' Eliana reflected on the long term goals associated with helping newcomer women to integrate. She discussed that it is essential,

To have more Spanish speaking women involved successfully in the Canadian life, developing their own professionals that they used to do in their back countries, involved in Canadian life with less pain, less sacrifices than they have today and really committed..[this is an] integration issue in this country.

Participants also discussed that there was a connection between accessing resources which can help with the resettlement process and a newcomer women's issues of independence.

The importance of helping newcomer women establish independence.

Another sub-theme that became apparent through the interviews is the importance of helping newcomer women to establish independence. The participants who represented *Aliddesa* in this study were open and transparent about their concerns that newcomer women do not always have the opportunity to know their rights in Canada. Conducting workshops about family violence, and organizing annual events that are aligned with International Women's Day on March 3rd, and the International Day for the elimination of Violence against

Women on November 25th, are specific tools to build awareness. Eliana commented that,

It is [a] very important topic for us to create information ways to help the woman, the immigrant woman to know their rights in this country and to know how to be very well informed about the services that Canada has to offer them in case [they are] of risk to be living in [a] violence situation right?

Patricia made this comment,

We are helping women that are going through or that are suffering from family violence. And we do the computer workshops in general. So that women are more independent and have more resources.

Claudia reflected on a more general level about how newcomer women often lack self-confidence. Participants expressed that this is a vital personal characteristic necessary in order for women to rebuild their lives on their own terms. Claudia comments that the work of Aliddesa,

Is not just [about] networking but we need to make sure that these women are made to feel safe as in sure of themselves. And this is what we aim to address at the first level. And we expose them gradually to the tools, such tools that they may need to take hold for them to be able to later use them with their own families and in their communities.

Thus, participant's shared that issues of low self esteem were often connected with the inability of newcomer women to assert their independence. They expressed that finding ways to enhance the self-esteem and confidence of newcomer women was very much at the heart of many of the group's activities. This was certainly the case when they discussed how *Aliddesa*

strives to build leadership skills among the newcomer population that they serve.

The importance of developing leaders in the community.

The last sub-theme under the larger theme of how *Aliddesa* is working to help newcomer women, revealed the necessity of developing leaders. Participants noted at length about the importance of the organization's original vision as it relates to helping newcomer women. The original intention of *Aliddesa* was to train and mobilize leaders in the Spanish speaking community. Claudia noted that,

Indeed, this has been a very initial motivation to be able to fashion the true skills that these women have and to be able to bring them to fruition.

This still lies at the heart of what the organization attempts to do. Patricia expressed during the focus group that, 'the members of the organization have become like a family who is trying to achieve the goal of forming women leaders.' Another participant expressed the group's rationale for focusing on developing leaders. Eliana states that,

We need leaders because so many times Latin women come to Canada well educated, so she [the founding member] had that idea [of] providing that support so that all that knowledge and experience that they are bringing from their countries wasn't lost.

A long term goal that was shared by participants was the objective of developing a leadership school. During the focus group, Eliana clarified that, 'the leadership school

is the main goal that we have as a group.’ Claudia responded that her highest hope for *Aliddesa* would be that the school of leadership could be a place where ‘any woman from anywhere in the world could come and be formed.’ Participants reported that helping women during resettlement, and assisting them to be independent were short term goals of the organization in order to achieve a long term objective of developing leaders. In addition, assisting newcomer women to become successful through enhancing their leadership skills was reported to be an integral component of strengthening the Spanish speaking community in Toronto. Therefore, addressing the needs of the individual women that *Aliddesa* provides support to is very much linked with another theme that the participants expressed was important in them in their approach to community development. This is the theme of creating opportunities to network and build the Spanish speaking community.

THE CREATION OF OPPORTUNITIES TO NETWORK AND BUILD THE SPANISH SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Another theme that emerged from the interviews is that participants discussed the importance of building greater social capacity among the Spanish speaking community in Toronto. Two sub-themes also emerged from this topic. The need to create environments where people can meet each other and build community and secondly; the importance of

developing partnerships on an organizational level.

Creating environments where people can meet each other and build community.

Participants expressed that many activities of the group are intended to create environments that can help facilitate personal connections. During an individual interview, Eliana discussed how *Aliddesa* as an organization was focused on strengthening social ties among the Spanish speaking community. She says that,

We realized that we are a little bit free and a little bit uncommunicative and we thought that women's association are a part of the society and I thought, that it was very important to have a voice and to create certain ties with certain ways to connect with each other and to have a network inside the Spanish speaker community. That was one of the things that motivated us.

Patricia wrote about the importance of networking and building community for individuals.

She wrote that,

I would like it if many women could be involved because it is a way of developing personally, and in resettlement it is very important to belong to something. Because this helps establish your identity and you form a new community here where you are living.

Another participant expressed the importance of women working together for a collective cause. Claudia states that,

I always invite each and every woman I meet to join us, so that we do not miss the pleasure of serving others in an environment of solidarity and respect.

Responses that were provided by participants indicate that building community and strengthening social ties are two critical issues that mandate the work of *Aliddesa*. Activities that are organized, such as workshops, orientation sessions, and celebratory events are intended to be informative, but also facilitated as a way to help build community among the members, and also among those who are indirectly or directly connected to *Aliddesa*. Participant's also discussed the value that community partnerships have for the organization as they attempt to do this.

The importance of developing partnerships on an organizational level.

Through interviews and the participants written responses, a second-sub theme emerged within the larger theme of how *Aliddesa* aims to strengthen and build the Spanish speaking community. Participants expressed that community partnerships play a vital role in the life of the organization. Community partnerships have enabled the organization to grow and facilitate many activities. For example, Eliana wrote about how community partners have assisted

Aliddesa. In a reflective journal entry she wrote that,

I was forgetting to mention *the creative way to do it*: supported by other community centers or non profit organizations that are helping us with their meeting rooms and facilities in order to provide our services for the most possible Latin-American residents at different neighbourhoods in Toronto.

Participants shared at length about how community organizations have supported *Aliddesa* with office space, administrative services, and meeting space. Currently, *Aliddesa* has community partnerships with approximately eight organizations located all over Toronto. One respondent discussed how the connections made with one particular community partner has been a tool to evaluate the health and credibility of *Aliddesa* as an organization. Claudia says that,

It is good to be there because it is like an auto evaluation when we get accepted to participate with them. For example, when you came to the celebration for women's day you could see that there was no room left at Culture link. People believe in *Aliddesa*.

Participants also made comments about how *Aliddesa* is providing mentorship to other new community initiatives. Eliana discussed this phenomenon by saying that,

There was for instance the program teach to learn, which broke off from *Aliddesa*, and is now on its own. They realized that women were facing difficulties in their very own children's learning processes. And we decided to support them from that and now they are independent.

Based on participant's responses, it is clear that *Aliddesa* as an organization seeks to build bonds of solidarity and support both within their group and in the larger community as well.

When participants were asked to discuss how they perceive *Aliddesa* has made social contributions within society, they expressed a variety of ideas.

THE PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTIONS OF *ALIDDESA* TO OTHER NEWCOMER WOMEN

A fourth theme that arose from the interviews and focus group was that the participants perceived to have made contributions in the lives of other newcomer women as a result of their activities and events. Participant responses were unanimous; and one sub-theme emerged from these discussions that, contributions were perceived to be the stories of personal impact told by people who have been involved in the organization.

Personal feedback of individuals involved in Aliddesa.

The three participants discussed the fact that many members have expressed to them that *Aliddesa* has been a source of inspiration in their lives. In addition, the participants expressed that they have made social contributions because they have been able to better the lives of those they support. Eliana wrote about how positive feedback has motivated her:

The happy faces from our clients when every workshop or event is running is the maximum prize I get every time. And the thanks that often come later are itself clear success[ful] expressions [that] we only need to keep working hard, pursuing now a growing number of members as well as government grant[s] to organize [and] better the fix[ed] events we already have.

During an individual interview, Patricia shared her thoughts about the contributions that *Aliddesa* has made. She noted that:

I think it's the happiness of the people when they come to our meetings. The results and

the things to help them, that is one of the most encouraging things for us because we can see the experiences and the result of the lives changing about certain information that you gave to them, or the group that you gave to them, or the activity that you referred to them. So that is itself very important and very motivating and that justifies itself the job we do.

Claudia expressed that more people come to events all the time, and this indicates to her that

Aliddesa is having a positive impact in the lives of people. She says:

The last time that we brought everyone out for a general meeting, we had very many people. Every single time we organize this event we have more people coming. [We get a] better response.

Participants communicated overwhelmingly that this kind of positive feedback and support gives them much encouragement. It provided an important element of credibility and legitimization to their efforts because the services and activities of the group were making valuable contributions in the lives of others. This was also a source of inspiration to keep working as an organization and to improve the lives of newcomer women. In addition to the ways that the participants perceived the organization and respective members were making social contributions, another theme emerged. This theme centered on the ways in which *Aliddesa* is benefiting Canadian society at large.

THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF *ALIDDESA* FOR CANADIAN SOCIETY AT LARGE.

As participants discussed how they perceive *Aliddesa* has benefited society at large, two

sub-themes became apparent. First, they spoke about how *Aliddesa* is making contributions to society through initiatives that allow members to retain their ethnic heritage; and second, they spoke about how society at large will benefit through the efforts of *Aliddesa* to develop leaders.

The importance of retaining ethnic identity.

The newcomer women in this study all expressed pride at the mosaic of cultures represented by the members of *Aliddesa*. Eliana said that,

There is a consolidated group of good dynamic girl friends from Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay, developing help and needed services for other newcomers women and families, without any financial backup but [a] deep passion and love to serve.

This ethnic diversity, participants maintained, is an important part of benefiting society. They expressed that they could retain their ethnicity by remembering the beauty of their cultural heritage. Events that *Aliddesa* organizes were discussed as ways for people to come together in a celebratory fashion. In addition, annual events, such as the Latin American dance festival, are also seen as a way to retain a sense of ethnic heritage. Participants also shared that this event is designed to be a positive representation of Latin American culture within the society at large. Furthermore, one participant discussed the importance of maintaining her

own individual cultural roots as a newcomer in Canada. Eliana states that,

[We] are very lucky to live in one of the best multicultural cities in the world. So that makes the beauty of Spanish speaking people, Latin American in particular [important], to keep our cultural ties alive and in contact and in reproduction.

Assisting children in understanding their cultural heritage's was also discussed and in this

context Eliana also commented that,

People that are living here that are having children...they don't keep in touch with their countries cultural issues so it is very important for us. That is why certain dates or certain events with cultural [content] matters right? So that is another social thing that is important for us as a group.

The women discussed that there was an important connection between addressing social issues and creating ways to retain cultural identity. Through these processes, they expressed that the best of one's culture can shine and at the same time, contributions could be made to society that benefited everyone.

The importance of developing leaders.

The second sub-theme in this larger theme of how *Aliddesa* is benefiting society, and as previously discussed, is that participants expressed that *Aliddesa* as an organization held a primary objective of developing leaders. Participants also discussed the benefit that would be incurred to society by increasing the number of leaders among the population of newcomer

women. Claudia noted that, 'if women get to be leaders then they contribute to the entire world, and naturally Canada.' Another participant expressed their confidence in *Aliddesa's* ability to provide mentorship in this area. The following comment was made by Eliana during the focus group. She says that, 'you see when someone gets some leadership with us in *Aliddesa*, they will take that to the larger society.' Another participant responded about the positive domino effect that can occur for society. Patricia states that, 'in our minds we hope that this is going to work very much like a cascading effect.' In spite of *Aliddesa's* goal of developing leaders and the positive impact that can result on a societal level, one participant solemnly responded with awareness that leadership is often a form of modelling behaviour. Claudia stated that, 'you see the point is that if we can shine as positive examples for other women, they can follow in our shoes.' Based on these participant responses, it is clear that they perceive the development of leaders to be a crucial way of strengthening and benefitting society.

SUMMARY

The participants discussed the activities and plans of the group with dynamic energy and optimism. Indeed, what also became apparent through discussions was that the services and

support that the group provides to newcomer women are conducted in a systematic and purposeful fashion. Through an analysis of findings, five central themes emerged. First, participants discussed at length about the variety of ways that being involved in the group has enriched their lives, and positively impacted their processes of resettlement. In addition, participants expressed how *Aliddesa* approaches community development work. They articulated that the group is working to help newcomer women, and also to create opportunities to strengthen and build the Spanish speaking community. Participants also shared their thoughts about how they perceive that *Aliddesa* is making social contributions; and lastly, they talked about how they hope that the group can benefit society, through retaining their respective cultural heritages, and also by developing leaders. These findings are by no means exhaustive, but produce a narrative of *Aliddesa* as an organization.

Consequently, key findings in this study have relevance to a critical discussion about the applicability of the theoretical frameworks that were discussed in the review of literature. In the next chapter, I will compare my findings in this research with some of the dominant themes on immigration that I presented in Chapter two.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The responses that were provided by the women of *Aliddesa* raise important issues about the incorporation of newcomer women into Canadian society. More specifically, about how they make social contributions through their daily and collective activities. Therefore, the research findings provide valuable information from which to draw several key recommendations that pertain to research and also to the development of theory. First, new methods of conceptualizing the resettlement process from a gendered perspective needs to occur. This can be done by documenting the real life stories of newcomer women, and, also by developing a model of resettlement that more acutely describes this process with issues of gender as the primary focus. Secondly, an increase in qualitative research is necessary. This is research that can examine and assess activities that are related to community development and that are initiated by newcomer women in a Canadian context. I discuss this in more detail below. Lastly, the theory of cultural citizenship will be deployed in order to explore, as perhaps the most relevant and available paradigm to discuss and highlight, the contributions that are made by newcomer women and also the benefits that enrich Canadian society as a result of their activities.

CONCEPTUALIZING SUCCESSFUL RESETTLEMENT

During the research process, participants discussed, at length, the challenges and successes of their individual experiences of resettlement and integration. They expressed the importance of finding a sense of community and belonging during the resettlement process. They also discussed the importance of learning about other cultures, and developing English language skills as a way to help facilitate their transition into society. Furthermore, they noted that by being involved with volunteer work and by helping other newcomer women, they have fulfilled their personal desire to be productive and active in Canadian society.

These responses provide a wealth of information about how newcomer women conceptualize resettlement and integration for themselves. Furthermore, these responses raise two important recommendations that have relevance for policy and service provision, and also for existing theory and for future research. First, the experiences which have been shared by the participants indicate the necessity of documenting the stories of resettlement experienced by other newcomer women in a systematic and scholarly fashion. Second, the experiences of resettlement that have been discussed by the participants point to the need of developing a gendered framework that articulates this process in a Canadian context.

As I discussed previously in the overview of findings section, newcomer women conceptualize experiences of resettlement from varying perspectives. This research with Alidessa suggests that we need to have current and evolving accounts of these experiences in a Canadian context. For example, by recording the life histories and stories of resettlement told by newcomer women, we can begin to collectively understand what motivates these women to rebuild their lives. In addition, we can also begin to more comprehensively understand how newcomer women conceptualize the terms of their engagement in society as a result of their experiences. In addition, when these stories and experiences are given a public voice, areas such as policy and service provision can be more appropriately aligned to meet the resettlement needs of this population. Furthermore, immigration debates will be enriched by a more accurate portrayal of how newcomer women experience and approach their incorporation into Canadian society.

In this research the participants also expressed their own ideas about how they define the terms of successful resettlement and integration. This raises a second recommendation about how newcomer women engage and approach the resettlement and integration process. My research suggests that what is needed is the development of a framework, or model of

resettlement, that considers issues of gender in the equation of what constitutes successful integration. For example, the participants discussed the fact that newcomer women often face unique obstacles during the process of resettlement that men may not experience. In this context, one participant noted how important it was for newcomer women to receive resettlement support from other newcomer women who are further along on the journey. This was expressed to be an important factor that can enhance one's resettlement, and also be a source of inspiration and encouragement.

In addition, the participants shared their thoughts about what successful integration is. They discussed that successful integration is first achieved by meeting life's basic needs and by finding a sense of community. Secondly, it occurs through one's ability to get to know the system and make full use of opportunities. While this is not an exhaustive and comprehensive discussion of what should be included in the development of a resettlement model that incorporates a gendered focus; what these suggestions do reflect on, however, is that newcomer women have distinct and unique ideas about what resources and factors need to be in place in order to enhance and ease one's resettlement journey. Most importantly, these ideas present an interesting contrast with other models of resettlement that describe this

process.

For example, a seminal resettlement model that has been mentioned in the literature review, is Berry's (2007) acculturation model. It provides a comprehensive look at how newcomers experience the process of adjusting and belonging in a host country (2007).

However, Berry's model lacks any acknowledgement that issues of gender are mitigating variables which impact this process. In addition, Berry (2007), stresses that the process of integration and acculturation is mainly characterized dually by varying patriarchal and ethno-cultural attitudes, approaches and norms. In this manner Berry (2007), fails to widen the scope of his model to consider that the resettlement process is not solely universal to a man's experience. Indeed, the participant's of *Aliddesa* discussed other important factors which impact a women's experience of integration. They expressed that issues such as self-confidence and independence, as well as appropriate access to knowledge and information about community supports and legislation were critical aspects of navigating the resettlement process. What this example of Berry's acculturation model indicates is that current paradigms that track and describe this process only partially address the issues that matter to newcomer women.

In similar fashion in Chapter 2, I discussed the theory of racialized and gender parity, by Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), as a possible starting point to contextualize the issues and experiences of resettlement from a gendered perspective. This integration framework presents both similarities and differences compared to the ideas of resettlement that have been brought forward by the participants of *Aliddesa*. Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), suggest that there is value in conceptualizing successful integration as a process of acquiring 'racialized and gender parity'. They conceive that racialized and gender parity reflects one's ability to access and/or to acquire ownership of resources comparable to a Canadian born male or female. In economic terms, Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), measure the ability to acquire and have access to resources in two ways (ibid). First, they suggest that for the newcomer woman, successful economic integration is measured by their ability to receive fair and equitable reimbursement for contributions made during employment (ibid). Secondly, Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006) suggest that another component of achieving racialized and gender parity is through one's experience of having their skills and qualifications institutionally recognized (ibid). Therefore, in general terms, racialized and gender parity describes the process by which a newcomer woman is able to receive fair compensation for contributions made, and

the realization of having her skills and knowledge recognized in Canadian society.

This definition holds both similarities and differences when compared to the definition of integration that was articulated by the participants of *Aliddesa*. A key difference is that the participants of *Aliddesa* referred to various substantive forms of integration. For example, they spoke about the importance of meeting life's basic needs and establishing a sense of community. Racialized and gender parity theory fails to include these factors which contribute to one's whole experience of resettlement and integration. However, Tsastglou and Meidema (2006), do articulate more clearly the specific forms that integration can take when a newcomer woman seeks to enter into Canadian society by making full use of her opportunities. Even though the participants from *Aliddesa*, perceive this process to be the second stage of integration, they do not make specific mention about how a newcomer woman can approach this. However, by establishing oneself into the Canadian system, these participants, and Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), agree that one part of successful integration can be evaluated as making full use of the resources that are available.

What this comparison reveals, is that defining the term integration is difficult. This is because the term can be understood from a variety of perspectives. Yet, according to the

Aliddesa participants, the representation of a variety of perspectives is needed in order for a more accurate portrayal of how newcomer women approach and understand this process. For this reason, racialized and gender parity theory, is not entirely sufficient to fully address the myriad of experiences that occur during resettlement and integration. It's framework fails to consider other resettlement experiences that newcomer women face besides economic ones.

The implicit critique made by the *Aliddesa* participants of Berry's (2007), acculturation model, and the theory of racialized and gender parity, by Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), points to the conclusion that more theoretical development needs to take place in the area of studying and observing how newcomer women approach and experience resettlement in Canada. By hearing the voices and stories of resettlement by newcomer women, the development of a gendered model of resettlement can take shape. This is critical in order to begin a process of social change in a Canadian context. A model that is both dynamic and flexible can positively affect for good the terms of how newcomer women are able to grow, develop and utilize their skills and abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FROM A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

The participants noted, at length, the importance of approaching their work among

newcomer women with a sense of unity, purpose, and a well defined strategy. For the participants, this meant working to address the unmet social needs that relate to issues of gender and that arise during the process of resettlement. Consequently, they perceived that assisting newcomer women with resettlement referrals, and facilitating orientation workshops that inform women about their rights in Canada were important forms of support in this regard. In addition, the participants expressed the belief that providing relational support and informal counselling were also ways to encourage newcomer women in the development of their self-esteem and independence. Thus, in the case of *Aliddesa*, the unaddressed social needs that were experienced by the participants and their social contacts became the mitigating factors which led to a collective strategy about how these problems could be addressed. These experiences to some extent mimic Molyneux's (1985) framework of 'gender interests'. It can serve as a starting point to conceptualize community development from a gendered perspective. Such a conceptualization, I would like to suggest, is key to future research and the development of theory in a Canadian context.

As explored in the literature review, Molyneux (1985), developed a framework to explain acts of civic engagement by women in Central and South America. The factors that define

Aliddesa's approach to community development resonate with Molyneux's (1985), theory of gender interests. Molyneux (1985), theorized that gender interests are the unique issues that are faced by different groups, such as women, as a result of political and institutionalized processes. According to Molyneux (1985), both practical as well as strategic interests are factors which motivate women to organize collectively. This was proven to be the case with respect to the activities that motivate *Aliddesa* members in their community work. Participants identified both practical as well as strategic gender interests as the genesis of their engagement in society. However, participants also discussed the importance of achieving practical gender interests before the achievement of systemic ones could be realized, as was hypothesized by Molyneux (1985). The framework that Molyneux (1985), conceptualized to understand the why and how of community development work among women, is certainly a viable starting point to discuss the activities and purposes of *Aliddesa*. However, more theoretical development is necessary to fully capture and accurately represent the myriad of factors that lead newcomer women to organize grass roots organizations. Certainly, issues such as social inclusion and exclusion, urban vs. rural, immigration status, familial and kinship bonds, and economic factors are examples of gendered issues which cannot be suitably captured by

Molyneux's framework. This calls for the development of a gendered framework and also theory that can further contextualize the complexity of issues that arise among this population group as they are involved in activities of community development.

Secondly, an increase in qualitative research is necessary in a Canadian context. More specifically, an increase in the development of theory is required that considers issues of gender, and furthermore, that is grounded in what Dorothy Smith (1987) has coined, 'the standpoint of women'. This feminist social theory is premised in the postmodern and inter-disciplinary method of analysis called standpoint theory (1987). Generally speaking, standpoint theory is used in the social sciences to analyse and understand the distinct nature of social groups by exploring dynamics from inside and within the respective community (ibid). In addition, standpoint theory holds that different social groups view and understand the world around them from different social positions and perspectives (ibid). From this approach, a feminist standpoint epistemology such as Smith's, proposes to make women's experiences, instead of men's, the point of departure in qualitative research (ibid). Likewise, it is important to develop theory that begins not just from all women but from the standpoint of the particular immigrant women whose experiences are researched.

The development of immigration- based theory that is grounded in the standpoint of women would sensitize both researchers and the public to the social issues that are of concern to newcomer women. In addition, utilizing theory in this context would be a critical asset in helping to more fully understand the ways in which newcomer women approach and engage in this type of community work. It would also lead to a better and more accurate picture of how newcomer women experience their incorporation as newcomers into Canadian society. Finally, the development of theory that considers issues of gender and that begins from the standpoint of women would fill a gap in research that current theory is unable to adequately represent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASURING SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE USEFULNESS OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP THEORY

The participants of *Aliddesa* perceived that they were making contributions to society because of their personal impact experienced in the lives of newcomer women whom they have supported. They also discussed their conviction that the members of *Aliddesa* were benefiting society through their efforts to retain a strong sense of ethnic identity, and also through their efforts to develop leaders. Therefore, what emerged from the interview's conducted with each participant, was that they expressed a strong sense of obligation to find ways to care for the needs of those around them. Furthermore, they expressed that *Aliddesa*

was created so that newcomer women could contribute their skills and abilities in order to strengthen the communities that they are involved in. This type of civic engagement needs to be recognized through research and ultimately valued in society. It is imperative to establish linkages in society and in the social sciences that connect the everyday activities that newcomer women engage in with an assessment of their value and worth to society as a whole. Solely measuring the political and economic contributions of the newcomer population, which seems pervasive and popular, is no longer a comprehensive approach to documenting and assessing why this population is not thriving in Canadian society.

In addition to the work done by theorists such as Molyneux (1985), and Tastsoglou and Meidema (2006), discussed above, my research also suggests that the theory of cultural citizenship is a paradigm that can be used to assess and discuss the contributions that are made by newcomer women. As I indicated in the literature review above, Cultural Citizenship theory is a framework which focuses on issues of cultural identity and citizenship. My interviews with members of *Aliddesa* show that these are two important issues. Through this research, they expressed, at length, the issues that they hope to give voice to as they journey personally to establish their own sense of belonging and to *actively* become, citizens.

Upon my reflections on the participant's experiences and responses, I would conclude that there are three principles which lead me to see value in utilizing cultural citizenship theory within this context.

First, the theory of cultural citizenship is concerned with how people's differences lead to processes that create cultural identity. For example, Rosaldo (1999), discussed how cultural citizenship theory was utilized in his research to document the struggle of minority groups to claim social rights. He observed that this struggle leads groups to advocate for the incorporation of ideas in society which were not upheld by the majority group (1999). Both Rosaldo (1999) and Delgado-Moreira (1997), have stressed that cultural citizenship is a paradigm that is purposeful because it provides a framework to examine how groups seek to give voice to new social values. In this process, the end result is always aimed at constructing more suitable and equitable institutions (1999; 1997). These aims are also evident in the mandate and activities set out by *Aliddesa*. Participant responses reflected a group objective of strengthening the Latin American community in Toronto. Through their activities and resettlement services, they are trying to establish more appropriate supports for newcomer women. As previously discussed, the group also works to equip newcomer women to learn and

utilize leadership skills. These motivations reflect the groups interest in establishing increased cultural identity, and also introducing new social values about the resettlement process.

Therefore, cultural citizenship theory can be utilized to observe and chronicle the group's activities as they work to achieve these outcomes.

Second, cultural citizenship theory can be implemented to describe and observe the activities of collectives. Rosaldo (1999), asserts that collectives generally organize because they are not experiencing the benefits of citizenship in the ways that they would like. Thus, cultural citizenship theory provides a framework to observe, study and document the activities of collectives and grass root organizations in their desire to see social change. For this research group, cultural citizenship theory is an appropriate paradigm for two reasons. First, it provides a structure and framework to observe and track the activities of members. In addition, it is a framework that inherently provides a level of credence and legitimacy to the collective as an organization. Cultural citizenship theory can be utilized because it affirms the reasons why organizations like *Aliddesa* are necessary in society. This can occur in spite of an organization's size, popularity, financial means, or level of public exposure and support.

Third, cultural citizenship is grounded in the theoretical premise that nation states should be

places where everyone contributes. More importantly, cultural citizenship theory is also grounded in the premise that people and groups have the ability to make social contributions in different forms. Therefore, the everyday activities of individuals and groups have meaning and value. Cultural citizenship theory is a paradigm that can be used in an analysis of organizations like *Aliddesa* to recognize the unique social contributions that are being made in the lives of these individuals, and to society at large, because of their efforts. Ultimately, cultural citizenship theory encompasses issues of micro-politics, local activism, and collective acts of negotiation. This framework sets the parameters whereby the activities and contributions that are made by *Aliddesa*, can be evaluated as critical and necessary for the growth and vitality of society.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

It is important to note several methodological issues that have impacted this research process with the participants of *Aliddesa*. On a positive note, the salience of information that was generated because of the responses provided by participants can be attributed to the strength of triangulation that was implemented in this research. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback by four methods: during individual interviews, by

participating in a focus group, by writing in a reflective journal, and by completing a questionnaire. As a result, many opportunities for member checking took place and served to clarify any issues or questions that became apparent through the research process. The interviews and reflective journals generated valuable feedback about the ways in which experiences of resettlement and integration are individual and unique. In addition, participants also provided insight as to how these experiences lead to collective acts of civic participation. It also became strikingly clear that the perspectives and activities of newcomer women need to be understood and analysed with the help of theoretical paradigms that approach the subject matter with a gendered lenses. Finally, utilizing cultural citizenship theory has been suggested as a vital framework that positively examines and describes the contributions that are being made by this group of newcomer women.

Conversely, the sample size of this research project consisted of only three participants. This is in part due to the small numbers of volunteer staff and human resources within the organization. The sample size was also kept at this level because of the scope of the research project and due to the fact that I was the only researcher. More and larger exploratory and ethnographic studies are needed which can examine how newcomer women approach

community development and civic participation. In addition, research studies that have larger sample sizes would also yield more fruitful and dynamic responses and would enrich our understanding of this topic in a Canadian context.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

This exploratory study of *Aliddesa* has revealed several important insights for newcomer women and their full incorporation into Canadian society. What has been shown is that the personal experiences of resettlement expressed by participants has played a critical role in why *Aliddesa* was formed, and what currently motivates their activities and plans.

In addition, the participants discussed the importance of having a purposeful and strategic approach to community development. Furthermore, they expressed that doing so has enabled them to fulfill their organizational objectives. Based on these organizational objectives, five themes emerged from the interviews, focus group, and written responses.

These themes are: the personal experiences and benefits of involvement in *Aliddesa* for its members; secondly, the importance of helping newcomer women; third, the creation of opportunities to network and build the Spanish community, fourth; the perceived contributions of *Aliddesa* to other newcomer women; and fifth, the perceived benefits of *Aliddesa* for Canadian society at large.

Subsequently, through an analysis of research findings, several key imperatives became clear. In a Canadian context, we need to capture and document the resettlement experiences

of newcomer women, through the agency of their own voices and various perspectives. We also need gendered frameworks that articulate the resettlement process. I have also suggested that a genuine examination of the civic participation of newcomer women must be explored, documented, and conceptualized. This also must be done with the aid of new theoretical frameworks that consider issues of gender by beginning from the standpoint of these newcomer women. Finally, cultural citizenship theory is a vital framework that has the potential to give positive representation to the activities and forms of civic participation by newcomer women.

In the case of *Aliddesa* itself, this research focus has provided an academic platform with which to recognize the contributions that are made by this group. These contributions are evident in their efforts to build capacity among newcomer women via its role in building community and in providing resettlement assistance. This study has been a hopeful attempt at beginning to complete a now fractured and partial representation of how newcomer women are incorporated into society. An increase in ethnographic and exploratory research is very much needed to promote the development of a national anthology of academic work that examines these issues in a Canadian context.

Appendix A- Demographic Questionnaire (English version)

Demographic Questionnaire

Codified Name (for Researcher use):

1. What is your name?
2. What is your country of origin?
3. What age category do you belong to? (Please circle)
20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79
4. How many years have you been in Canada as an immigrant or refugee?
5. How did you hear about Aliddesa?
6. What motivated you to join Aliddesa?

Appendix B- Demographic Questionnaire (Spanish version)

Cuestionario demográfico

Nombre codificado (para uso del investigador)

1. ¿Cuál es su nombre
2. ¿Cuál es su país de origen?
3. ¿A que categoría de edad pertenece Ud.? (Por favor circule la que le corresponde)
20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79
4. ¿Hace cuantos años está Ud. en el Canadá como inmigrante o refugiado?
5. ¿Como oyó Ud. acerca de Aliddesa?
6. ¿Que lo motivo a formar parte de Aliddesa?

Appendix C- Individual Interview Guide

- 1) When did you become involved in the collective?
- 2) What is your role?
- 3) What kind of activities has the group been involved in?
- 4) What inspiration led to the formation of the collective?
- 5) Does the work and plans of the group reflect the original vision?
- 6) Are there any particular social needs that *Aliddesa* is trying to address?
- 7) What would you say has been significant milestones in the life of *Aliddesa*?
- 8) What would you say has been road blocks or barriers that the group has faced?
- 9) If you had a 'wish list' for *Aliddesa*, or your hopes for the collective, what would they be?
- 10) Are there any resources or needs that hinder the potential that the group has?
- 11) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience being involved with *Aliddesa*?

Supplementary Questions:

What is the size of the organization?

How are decisions made? Are there member driven initiatives that do not need the BOD's approval?

How does planning ahead take place, i.e Strategic Plan?

How frequently are you meeting?

Is *Aliddesa* connected to the larger community, ie. Through partnerships?

What does *Aliddesa* mean? Is there any important symbolism?

Appendix D- Guide to Reflective Journal (English version)

Research Facilitator: Shelley Stiller (Hasho)

You are asked to commit to one piece of what is called 'reflective journaling'. This is not meant to be an onerous task, but is a way for you as a participant to personally reflect on any issues or experiences, both personally, or as a group, which surface as a result of your involvement in the collective. This is extremely helpful to support and maintain the integrity of the research process, and to ensure that the findings from this research process are true and accurate as best as possible.

Your piece of reflective journaling will also be transcribed by a professional interpreter (Multicultural Community Interpretation Services) if written in Spanish. Your real name will not be assigned to any quotes or statements that are written here that is to be used in the written report, as a false name will be assigned in order to ensure your confidentiality.

Appendix E- Guide to Reflective Journal (Spanish version)

Pautas del diario reflexivo

Facilitadora de investigación: Shelley Stiller (Hasho)

Se pide que se comprometa a escribir una parte de lo que se llama 'diario reflexivo.' Esta parte no tiene el propósito de ser una tarea ardua sino de que sea la manera en que ud. como participante reflexione personalmente acerca de cualquier asunto o experiencia que surja ya sea a nivel personal o a nivel de grupo como resultado de su participación en el colectivo. Esto es de gran ayuda para mantener y apoyar la integridad del proceso de investigación, y para asegurarse de que las conclusiones de este proceso de investigación sean verdaderas y exactas en cuanto más sea posible.

La parte de su diario reflexivo será transcrita por una interprete profesional (acreditada por Multicultural Community Interpretation Services) en el caso de que este escrito en español. Para mantener su confidencialidad su nombre verdadero no será asignado a ninguna cita o declaración que vaya a ser usada en el reporte escrito ya que se usará un nombre falso.

Appendix F- Focus Group Interview Guide

What does 'community' mean for you? Has *Aliddesa* formulated an approach to community work?

How important is it that *Aliddesa* is run for Latin American Women by Latin American Women. Can you share in more detail the importance of *Aliddesa* being a grass roots organization?

Have you as the BOD for *Aliddesa*, noticed or observed the amount of political and community participation among Canadian born than immigrants? If so, why do you think this is the case?

What experience, skills, and resources have you personally brought to *Aliddesa*?

Are there any partnerships or causes that *Aliddesa* has officially endorsed?

From the descriptions that you have each provided about the activities *Aliddesa* is committed too, and the vision of the organization, it seems that you are trying to address 'the whole woman' as they face integration in Canada. Is this an accurate observation?

What strategies has *Aliddesa* utilized to gain exposure? Has this been important to the group?

Has it been difficult for *Aliddesa* to achieve credibility?

How many other community groups or organizations are each of you individually involved in?

Are there needs that *Aliddesa* is trying to address which has been motivated by your own experience of resettlement? In other words, are you trying to provide supports through *Aliddesa* which you yourselves found difficult to access?

Of registered members, how many countries do you think is represented by *Aliddesa* members?

Has being involved in *Aliddesa* expanded your participation in other organizations or sparked an interest in other issues?

What does successful integration mean to the members of *Aliddesa*?

Appendix G- Test Pilot Individual Interview Guide

- 1) When did you become involved in the collective?
- 2) What is your role?
- 3) What kind of activities has the group been involved in?
- 4) What inspiration led to the formation of the collective?
- 5) Does the work and plans of the group reflect the original vision?
- 6) Are there any particular social needs that *Aliddesa* is trying to address?
- 7) What would you say has been significant milestones in the life of *Aliddesa*?
- 8) What would you say has been road blocks or barriers that the group has faced?
- 9) If you had a 'wish list' for *Aliddesa*, or your hopes for the collective, what would they be?
- 10) Are there any resources or needs that hinder the potential that the group has?
- 11) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience being involved with *Aliddesa*?

Appendix H- Role of Interpreter and Confidentiality Agreement

Research Proposal: The immigrant women of *Alidessa*: exploring practices of integration, citizenship, and community development in Toronto.

Research Overview: The purpose of this research proposal is to qualitatively garner and reflect on the settlement experiences and citizenship activities of immigrant women newly arrived in Canada. The research facilitator will engage a group of Spanish speaking immigrant women who have formed a collective, called *Alidessa*, based in the West End of Toronto. In operation since 2008, this collective numbers approximately thirty women, all of whom are recently new to Canada, and have willingly consented to join this collective. The opinions, motivations, perceptions, and involvements of the *Alidessa* collective will provide insight into the gendered complexities and personal negotiations of the integration experience. In addition, valuable observations will be gathered about how this group of immigrant women employ their respective social and cultural capital as they approach community development and civic participation.

Between: Research Facilitator, Shelley Marie Hasho, and professionally accredited interpreter, ----- for the duration of this research process (anticipated completion date: May 31, 2011).

Role of Interpreter: The primary purpose of interpretation assistance is to insure accurate language translation, and to assure that everyone involved in this research process (research facilitator as well as participants), has access to any details of this project that may need explanation and clarification, providing knowledge, information, and transparency.

As an interpreter, you will be involved in the following components of the research plan and methodology:

A) Interpretation for Introduction meeting and Questionnaire- Potential participants of *Alidessa* will be asked to attend an information meeting where the research plan will be proposed and discussed, allowing each eligible participant to clarify and details of the research process. Any interested participants will be provided with a consent form, and asked to sign before participation begins. In addition, participants who have signed the consent form, will be asked to complete a questionnaire which asks basic demographic questions about the individual. As the research facilitator will present the above material, your assistance as an interpreter will be to provide interpretation for this meeting, relay information, and to clarify any questions or issues that arise for the researcher.

B) Meeting Transcription- The researcher will attend three leadership meetings held by the *Aliddesa* collective, and will act as a silent observer, documenting the meetings with a voice recorder. As these meetings will occur in Spanish, your role will be to transcribe faithfully the group's activities and discussion as they occur. Name attribution will not be necessary.

C) Reflective Journaling: Six participants will be asked to engage in one piece of reflective journaling. Your role as an interpreter during this component will be to transcribe these pieces of reflective journaling if written in Spanish. Codification of entries and transcriptions will be used to insure confidentiality of participants.

D) Focus group- The researcher will facilitate one focus group (60-90 minutes in length) with willing participants, as an open forum to debrief and share experiences, insights, suggestions, and constructive criticisms about this project or the research process. This will happen after the above mentioned meetings and reflective journaling will occur and once the researcher has begun to disseminate data and begin assessment of research findings. The research facilitator will suggest open- ended questions to begin discussion, and will act as note taker for this session. Your role will be to provide interpretation assistance to assure equity, access, and validity to this debriefing time.

Confidentiality Agreement:

As a trained and accredited interpreter (accredited through Multilingual Community Interpretation Services, MCIS) you will fulfill your duties and abide by the organization's Code of Ethics and Role and Responsibility Statement. This insures that while being involved in this research project and post completion, you will commit to the following ethical considerations:

- A) Remain objective, impartial and neutral when providing individual and group interpretation, as well as transcription and handling or any administration of all data.
- B) Respect the importance of insuring confidentiality for research participants, both in protecting their identity (no names will be attributed in transcription notes or final research findings) or disclose any details and information discussed by participants at any time.
- C) Be dedicated to accuracy (both in oral translation and with regard to written transcription).
- D) Will ask for clarification if and when necessary.
- E) Shall avoid, and where it arises, disclose to the researcher any real, potential, or apparent conflict of interest in relation to any matter for which you provide services in this research project, such as previous knowledge of a participant.

Name of Interpreter (please print)

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix I- Consent Form

Ryerson University

Consent Agreement

The immigrant women of *Aliddesa*: Exploring practices of integration, citizenship, and community development in Toronto.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators:

This research study is being conducted by Shelley Stiller, a Ryerson University Graduate Student. This study is part of her Major Research Paper which she is doing as a graduate student in the Department of Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University in Toronto. Her research is being supervised by Dr. Carmen Schifellite who is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Ryerson University.

Purpose of the Study:

This qualitative research project is focused on collecting information about the settlement experiences and citizenship activities of immigrant women who have newly arrived in Toronto. I would like to study your experience by asking you to attend and participate in an individual interview, complete a questionnaire, write in a journal and take part in a focus group. The activities and plans of *Aliddesa* will help me to understand, as individuals, and as a group, how immigrants become a part of Canadian society, and specifically, the unique experiences faced by women. I am hoping to look at your experience and use a theory called *cultural citizenship* to help describe how you, as an individual and part of a group use your life experiences, learned skills, and resources as you approach being involved in your communities.

There are three goals in this research project:

- 1) To add to the body of academic knowledge about immigrant women by documenting the difficulties of the settlement experience faced by women, and also the ways in which immigrant women contribute to their communities.

- 2) To use the theory of *cultural citizenship* to examine the settlement experiences of immigrant women, citizenship discussions and civic participation.
- 3) To help make suggestions for changes in society as well as within government regarding how immigrant women become a part of Canadian society.

Description of the Study:

As a participant and volunteer in this study, you will be asked to complete one questionnaire which asks basic information about yourself. For example: What is your name? What is your country of birth? These questions will be asked of you in order to understand the various characteristics (differences and similarities) of the women who are a part of the executive group. This will take about five minutes.

You will also be asked to attend an individual interview. I will ask general questions so that I can learn more about what sort of activities and plans *Aliddesa* is involved in. For example: What is your role? What kinds of activities are *Aliddesa* planning or involved in? An interpreter will be there, and I will voice record so that I do not miss or forget any important information.

You will also be asked to write in a diary about your experiences with *Aliddesa*, approximately one page. You can write about how you became a member of *Aliddesa*, or what motivated you to join *Aliddesa*. This writing will require about one hour of your time. This can be written in Spanish.

Last you will be asked to attend and participate in a focus group at the end of the project. I will lead this by asking the group questions about your experience being involved in this project. The focus group will be approximately 60- 90 minutes. This will also be voice recorded.

All meetings, and the focus group will be conducted at the Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, Toronto, Ontario, M6G-3B1.

Risks or Discomforts:

I understand that you may be very busy with other challenges in your life, (i.e.: finding a job, helping your family, applying for education) and you may not feel you have time for this study. I would like it to be easy for you to participate in this study however it will take 3-5 hours of your time to complete the activities which I have talked about above. All these activities will take place over approximately a six week time frame.

You may feel uncomfortable or shy sharing information about your beliefs and opinions of *Aliddesa* with me. You may also have concerns about speaking about other members involved

in *Aliddesa* activities. All information that you share will be kept confidential. In other words, no one will know, outside of the research, what you said. The names of people you describe will not be revealed. You do not have to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason and you can choose not to write anything down in your journal which would make you uncomfortable. At any time during the interview or group session, if you or anyone feels uncomfortable; anyone can stop participating in this project either temporarily or permanently.

Although I will guarantee confidentiality, I cannot promise this on behalf of the other focus group participants, although it will be requested.

Benefits of the Study:

There are several group benefits experienced from participation in this research project.

First, it can be an experience that unifies the group in common purpose, and vision. Second, this process can bring to light the resources and needs that the group may have moving forward. Last, this process may lead to the establishment of new networks of support and partnership for you. As a participant you will be adding to a larger body of knowledge due to being a member of *Aliddesa* and through participating in this research project, however, there may be no direct personal benefit.

Confidentiality:

The identity of the participants in this research project will be kept confidential. Only the researcher, the interpreter, and the study supervisor will have access to the data collected during interviews. An audio recording device will only be used to document the interviews and statements made during the group meeting if I am given permission by the group. These recordings will be transcribed from Spanish to English. Both transcriptions and audio recordings will be stored in a computer secure hard drive which is password protected and which only the principal investigator and her supervisor has access to. All recordings will be destroyed upon completion and grading of the research study. Research participants will not be able to review or edit the tapes prior to publication. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

As every effort is being considered to insure and maintain the confidentiality of group participants, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed on behalf and among other group participants.

Incentives to Participate:

Participants will be paid \$60.00 to participate in this study.

Costs and/or Compensation for Participation :

There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relationship with Ryerson University, with the researcher, OR with your involvement in the Aliddesa organization. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed. If you withdraw from the study, all data you have provided, will be destroyed. At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

Shelley Stiller
Shelley_stiller@ryerson.ca
Tel: 416.455.3609 .

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information:
Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below means that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also means that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant Date

*Signature of Participant Consenting Date to have meeting audio-recorded

Signature of Investigator Date

ENDNOTES

ⁱⁱⁱ The implementation of the Point System in 1967, and its impact on newcomers is cited as one example of a highly researched federal policy that has its roots in human capital theory (Stasiulis, and Bakan, 2003). The point system was developed to be a determination process that selected potential newcomers by language capability, education attainment and financial capital for investment (Kymlicka, 1995). It was designed to eliminate subjective and racialized selection practices, and while it achieved that aim, a new set of expectations has emerged that has put pressure on newcomers to achieve economic independence soon after arrival (Stasiulis, and Bakan, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995; Joppke, 2008).

ⁱⁱⁱ According to McLaren and Dyck (2004), human capital theory is also firmly entrenched in the current and pervasive neo-liberal paradigm. Neo-liberalism is directed at promoting market economy principles that emphasize reduced social spending and an increase of privatization and fiscal restraint (2004; Gazso, 2009). Canada's economic and social life is increasingly shaped by these principles which guide the development of social policy (Gazso, 2009). This in turn determines the direction set for Canada's social welfare regime, immigration, citizenship, health care, and the education system (Fram, 2004). It has been well documented that neo-liberal values have had led to the further social marginalization of newcomer women.

ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to a lack of available literature about cultural citizenship theory and community development work, it was extremely difficult to find field research, community based and ethnographic research that observed and documented newcomer women who had formed organizations or collectives themselves. It was equally disappointing to find so little research available that explored the positive ways that newcomer women make contributions to society at large. This indicates that there may be a vacuum in our collective knowledge that needs investment. In addition, as the newcomer women of *Aliddesa* originate from the regions of Central and South America, a key limitation was finding appropriate research concerning resettlement data in the GTA. Existing research was outdated and focused on the demographic profiles of nations who represented periods of influx migration to Canada. From a gendered perspective, available research on Latin American newcomer women mainly focused on two social issues. Research highlighted the negative aspects of integration: domestic violence and frustration with care giving responsibilities, whether among family or through paid employment. Attempting to incorporate this information seemed irrelevant and counterproductive to the research goal of documenting the contributions that *Aliddesa* is making in Toronto because of their community development work.

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