

Staying Put? The Settlement Experiences of Iranian Immigrants in Halifax

by

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Dedication

To Rodrigo García. Thank you for all the love, the joy, and the laughter. May you dwell in a light even greater than the one you shared with us.

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ABSTRACT

Between 2005 and 2009, Iran became one of the most significant immigrant sending source countries to Nova Scotia. My thesis examines the settlement experiences of Iranian immigrants in Halifax to determine whether they plan on staying in the province. I engage literature on multiculturalism and transnationality as a theoretical framework to explore what influences newcomers in developing a sense of belonging to Canada. By conducting interviews with Iranian immigrants, I found that social network sites are an important tool for integrating and facilitating political organization and transnational activism. Other findings suggest that lack of employment opportunities and dismissal of foreign experience are the main reasons for out-migration.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CICIC	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
CIMA	Center for International Media Assistance
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
EDS	Ethnic Diversity Survey
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
ISIS	Immigrant Settlement and Immigration Services
ICASC	International Campaign Against Shari'a Court in Canada
ICS	Iranian Cultural Society
IICJ	Islamic Institute of Civic Justice
MSLNA	Maritime Secular Legal Network Association
MISA	Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association
NDP	National Democratic Party
NSGEU	Nova Scotia General Employees Union
PUMF	Public-Use Microdata File
SNS	Social Network Site
UICS	United Iranian Canadian Society
WLUML	Women Living Under Muslim Law

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In 2005, Iran became the 10th most prominent immigrant source country to Nova Scotia. By 2006, Iranians were the fourth largest immigrant group to the province and the largest non-European immigrant group (Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, 2007). My project examines the settlement experiences of Iranian immigrants in Nova Scotia to determine whether or not they plan on staying in the province and it also seeks to uncover the reasons that influence their decisions. Despite the considerable rate of Iranian immigration into the province in recent years, there is little scholarly information about this nascent group.

This thesis explores how immigration policy, economic opportunities, and ties to country of origin influence newcomers in developing a sense of belonging to Halifax and Canada, by which I mean the extent to which a person desires to be part of the larger community and the degree to which that person is accepted by other community members (Soroka, Banting, and Johnston, 2007, p.569).

My research examines these questions in relation to two main bodies of literature: multiculturalism and transnationalism. As the preferred model for immigrant integration in Canada (Kymlica, 1998) and a recurring theme in immigration related research (Jedwab, 2007), multiculturalism is a point of departure for exploring how immigrants develop a sense of belonging when settling in their new country. Because multicultural policies are often related to matters of employment equity, I analyze how economic opportunities impact immigrant integration. My project also uses theory on transnationality to help understand the ties Iranian immigrants have to their home country and how these shape their identity in Canada. In an increasingly globalized world, immigrants do not exclusively ‘belong’ to one place; instead they often actively

participate in the social, economic, and political life of more than one nation-state. My case study provides an example of how diasporas, in addition to being citizens in their country of residence, contribute to the nation-building project by engaging in projects oriented towards influencing the political situation within a territory they designate as their place of origin (Bernal, 2005).

Immigration Policies

Many immigrant-receiving countries view immigration as useful in the process of capital accumulation, thus immigration policies are designated in part to supply workers for various sectors. Among the selection criteria for Canadian immigration, immigrants—who are also prospective citizens—are chosen according to their labour market skills and ability to contribute to the country's position in the global economy (Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2002, p.62). A recipient society benefits from competitive international migration because the cost of producing educated and skilled immigrant workers is borne in another country (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.63). In Canada, immigration has a small but positive effect in terms of expanding the labour force and developing new markets. Li (2003b, p.86-87, 99) claims that immigrants contribute more taxes than the social benefits they receive, make less use of employment insurance than native-born Canadians, and create jobs through demands of goods and services.

At the provincial level, immigration is often promoted as an effective way to overcome the consequences of population decline, which include restructuring of the economy, declining federal transfers, a diminishing tax base, labour shortages, closure of services, and weakening of a province's political representation at the national level (Tastsoglou, 2008). In the case of Nova Scotia, the provincial government has stated the

need for immigration to help the economic growth and mitigate the demographic effects of an aging and declining population (Government of Nova Scotia, 2009). Since 1996, Nova Scotia has experienced difficulties retaining immigrants. Although the province has managed to raise its retention rate from 48% in 2001 to 63% in 2006, high out-migration is still a problem (Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa, 2007). Furthermore, the province received less than 2% of immigrants landing in the country in 2007 (Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, 2007).

The presence of an already established immigrant community and local economic conditions are major factors in why particular regions attract newcomers (Akbari, 2008). In this sense, the history of immigration alters the context within which future migration decisions will be made. Recent immigrants and people who are thinking about changing their country of residence draw on social ties with those who have migrated before them in order to access to knowledge, assistance, and other resources that facilitate movement. As a result, immigration based on network connections sustains itself over time, increasing the likelihood that later migrants will move to a place with an established community (Massey, 1999). Existing literature suggests that if Iranian immigrants decide to stay in the province and manage to consolidate as a local community, more of their compatriots are likely to choose Nova Scotia as their destination.

Experiencing Identity in Immigration

Do Iranian Nova Scotians feel like they belong in Canada and how do they locate themselves in their countries of origin and settlement? In exploring these questions, I draw on theories of multiculturalism, transnationalism, and the concept of identity.

Taylor (1994) defines identity as “a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental characteristics as human beings” (p.25). This simple definition can serve as a starting point for a more complex discussion of the subject. Identity is a matter of relationships between subjects and discourses. The latter refers to “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about —a way of representing— the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular moment” (Hall, 1992, as quoted in Hier and Singh Bolaria, 2006, p.3).

Hall (1996) indicates that identification “is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiances established on this foundation” (p.2). Identification is a process of articulation that is never complete. It imperatively deals with more than one element, operating across difference, binding, and forming symbolic boundaries. It requires a ‘constitutive outside’ to acquire meaning. Identities function as points of identification because of their ability to exclude and create frontiers. They are understood in relation to other identities and symbols of them. Identities are produced in specific historical and institutional sites, using resources of history, language, and culture. They are subjected to complex sets of social relations that naturalize and formalize temporary and historical forms of knowledge (Hier and Singh Bolaria, 2006, p.3). Subjective positions reflect historical power relations that produce particular subjects in given moments. These are sustained by practices that reproduce and make sense of individual identities. Since identities are products of human interactions, they can be studied as socio-historical constructions, rather than from individual experience. Identities are shaped by the way subjects are represented and how they might represent themselves.

Ethnicity and race play a key role in identity formation (James, 1989), particularly for immigrants in Canada. Ethnic groups can be defined as “those who think of themselves, or are regarded by others, as having a common ancestry and/or shared historical past, whether in fact they do or not” (ibid, p.23). James argues that members of an ethnic group might share a language, cultural practices, physical traits, a past, and/or a nation. Ethnic groups are social constructions that allow individuals to identify or differentiate themselves. Identity, in this case, is being different from others (Howard-Hassmann, 1999).

Not all theoretical perspectives on ethnicity coincide. For example, Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov (2004) treat ethnicity, race, and nationality interchangeably because of the arbitrariness of the terms. They rely on Barth’s (1969) idea that ethnicity does not involve shared traits or cultural commonalities, but practices of classification and categorization of and by others. The concept of ‘race’, which has no scientific validity as a biological reality (Brubaker et al, 2004; Hier and Singh Bolaria, 2006; James, 1986), is another mode of classification that employs socially exclusive categories to naturalize status difference. For example, the meaning of ‘race’ has changed throughout history to refer to religious groups, nationalities, ethnic groups, people with distinct genotypes, blood groups, etc. (James, 2006; Satzewich, 1998). Although some approaches emphasize the process of categorization by which individuals are transformed into members of a group (Brubaker et al, 2004), my work differentiates between the terms ethnicity, race, and nationality because, regardless of their validity, they are acquired and experienced socially. Thus, a racial group is human group that defines itself and/or is defined by other groups as different by virtue of perceived physical traits (James, 1989, p.19). This becomes important when discussing previous immigrant admission criteria

into Canada —which placed great emphasis on race— as well as integration obstacles some immigrants face in the country due to their physical attributes or cultural backgrounds.

The social meaning given to ethnicity and race at a particular historical moment depends on whether or not individuals feel like they are part and are perceived to be part of a dominant group; such groups determine the economic, social, and political participation of other members in society (James, 1989, p.26). On the other hand, a minority group is defined as “any group that views itself and/or is defined by the dominant power elite as unique on the basis of perceived physical, cultural, economic and/or behavioral characteristics” (Kinloch, 1974, as quoted in James, 1989, p.26). The social majority has a role in shaping immigrants’ identities in relation to their country of residence and ethnic background. In Canada, this is evident in immigrant integration policies, such as multiculturalism. Differentiating nationalism from ethnicity is also necessary to comprehend transnationalism as a theory about immigration. Nationalism, which implies involvement in a nation-state, has a different political impact than ethnicity, a social identity based on place of origin.

Methodology

I conducted 9 semi-structured interviews with Iranian immigrants¹ in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), where 59% of the province’s immigrants reside (Akbari et al, 2007). My interviews focused on their motives for immigrating to Nova Scotia, their settlement processes, their social relations, and other attachments to the province. A few

¹ Although there are several ethno-linguistic groups in Iran, all the participants in my study identified themselves as Persian.

interviews included questions about ethnic and political organizations in which the corresponding participant was involved. The identities of the participants have been masked to ensure anonymity.

In addition to a qualitative analysis of my interviews, I also conducted a brief quantitative analysis using data from the Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (Public Use Micro File). Using the aforementioned dataset, I explored the relationships between sense of belonging among immigrants from the Middle East in Canada and economic opportunities, social capital, recognition of foreign credentials, and perceived ethnic and racial discrimination in the workplace. I used cross-tabulation to better understand the relationships among these factors. The findings showed interesting findings, but little statistical significance.

The strength of this combined qualitative and quantitative approach is that it provides a general picture of problems at the national level while addressing the case of a specific group in the province. The digitally recorded interviews allowed access to information based on subjective life experiences.

Chapter Breakdown

In the next chapter, I outline Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policies and the role they have played in the settlement processes of participants in my study. I detail interviewees' experiences with and perceptions of multiculturalism, ethnic institutions, and settlement organizations. For participants in my research, multiculturalism is an important and positive element in Canadian national identity. However, respondents also believe that the Nova Scotia provincial government should take a more active role in helping newcomers settle.

Chapter 3 details the difficulties some Iranian immigrants face entering the labour market in the HRM and how this might affect their sense of belonging to their adopted country. I begin with a quantitative analysis exploring the relationships between variables that, according to the literature, influence immigrants' economic integration and sense of belonging in Canada. These variables include discrimination in the workplace, highest degree of schooling, and participation in community organizations, among others. The chapter pays special attention to the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and how this affects immigrants in Halifax. Overall, economic opportunities are the main reason for out-migration. Scholars have linked economic mobility to social capital, a concept that highlights the benefits of group membership (Granovetter, 1973; Portes, 1998; Li, 2004). Participation in community organizations strengthens immigrants' sense of belonging to Halifax but have no direct economic benefits.

Chapter 4 draws on the literature about transnationality to frame my discussion of how Iranian Haligonians take part in the affairs of their country of origin. As a result of the 2009 presidential elections in Iran, participants in my study became involved in protest campaigns and other forms of activism. The use of online networking sites was an important tool in organizing demonstrations, exchanging information, and raising funds. The findings show that transnational practices do not weaken a sense of belonging to the country of residence, but instead, immigrants take advantage of the freedom and opportunities they have in Canada to mobilize resources and advance claims in the international arena. The closing chapter will offer general conclusions and raises questions for future consideration.

Chapter 2 – Multiculturalism, Settlement, and Identity in Halifax

Canada has a reputation of being an open and inclusive country for immigrants (Biles, Humera, and Tolley, 2005, p.4). This is due to the federal government's immigrant integration models, which are largely reflected in multiculturalism policies. Scholars have described this model as a "two-way street" in which newcomers are expected to adapt to Canadian norms while Canadian society and its institutions are expected to adjust to a diversifying population. Some of newcomers' responsibilities include speaking one of Canada's official languages, having some sense of attachment to the country, and participating in politics and institutions (Ibid, p.9). At the same time, Canadian society and institutions are expected to help newcomers integrate and facilitate their full participation in the country's social and cultural life.

In my research I found that the idea of multiculturalism has shaped the identities of Iranians in Halifax around diversity and human and civil rights. Although this can be considered an achievement for integration policies, some immigrants are not entirely satisfied with the provincial government's performance in helping them settle.

This chapter explains the origins and goals of multiculturalism policies and describes the experiences of Iranian interviewees in Halifax by looking at ethnic organizations, ethnic media, social network sites, and settlement organizations. I will also detail how notions of multiculturalism have influenced their sense of identity in Canada. Although multicultural policies seek to integrate newcomers while acknowledging their identities, some immigrants believe giving certain groups differential treatment threatens values associated with Canada. The 2005 Shari'a law debate will be used to illustrate how some immigrants of Iranian origin organized against religious and cultural accommodation in a liberal democracy.

Socio-historical Background of Canadian Multiculturalism

At the federal level, Canada's demographic composition has been heavily influenced with the implementation of the immigration point system in 1967, which grants skilled worker status based on education, occupational demand, work experience, adaptability, and age irrespective of country of origin or racial background (CIC, 2010). One of the reasons for the policy change was that economic conditions in Europe had begun to improve after World War II. Rising incomes and demand for labour in Europe caused a decline in immigration from Europe to North America (Akbari et al, 2007, p.12; Li, 2003b, p.32-33).

Traditionally, Canadian policy approached immigration in two ways: assimilation and differential exclusion. Under the first approach, immigrants were expected and encouraged to adopt the pre-existing mainstream Anglo culture, or the behaviour, practices, rules, and norms of the receiving society (Gans, 1999, p.162; Kymlica, 2007, p.41). This approach sought homogenization as the basis of the nationalist project. Similar to assimilation, which strived to maintain existing cultural norms, the objective of differential exclusion was to avoid significant changes in the social structure of the receiving society. This was sought through strict immigration criteria, which brought people in to the country to fill specific, temporary labour market demands (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p.61). Policies adhering to differential exclusion were used for visible minorities² from non-European countries who were thought to be incompatible with Canadian culture (Das Gupta, 1994; Li, 1998; Kymlica, 2007, p.41). In the social

² "Visible minorities" refers to an official government category of native and foreign born individuals whose physical attributes distinguish them from the dominant group. This Employment Equity Act administrative category does not necessarily reflect popular perceptions of what constitutes visibility (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.8-9).

environment of post-war Canada, these two models ceased to offer a credible solution to immigration and integration and were slowly discredited by critics.

The need to counter the separatist movements in Quebec and ensure national cohesion led to several structural changes in federal policy during the 1960s. When speaking of Canadian policy, “national cohesion” refers to “the capacity of society to set and implement collective goals” (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p.505). Of these changes, the most significant was the establishment of The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Ungerleider, 2006). Under the commission, French was recognized as an official language, thus propitiating partnership between the English and French groups. Although the commission was intended to mediate and analyze the relations between French and English Canada (Ng, 1995), a 1969 report recommended that further cultural policies were required to recognize the claims of other ethnic groups. Challenging previous models of integration, the 1969 report suggested that immigrants can both maintain their ethnic identity and participate as citizens in the recipient society without endangering its political culture. National cohesion is then sought through recognition of different identities, incorporation of newcomers into the economy, and promotion of diverse values in the political life (Soroka et al, 2007, p.568). The need to accommodate the culturally distinct immigrants that were entering Canada under the new admission criteria demanded a different integration model that ensured social harmony among distinct groups, promoting full and equal participation of minorities without risking the political agenda and national interests.

First proclaimed in 1971 and formally adopted in 1988, the Multiculturalism Act consists of a set of policies aimed to incorporate newcomers into the economic and social mainstream and strengthen a sense of solidarity through a shared national identity based

on common institutions (Soroka et al, 2007). The Act's corresponding constitutional provisions are found in sections 15 and 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the main coordinating federal government divisions are the Department of Canadian Heritage and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Kymlica, 2007, p.40). Its goals are to "promote civic participation in the larger society and to increase mutual understanding and co-operation between the members of different ethnic groups" (Kymlica, 1998, p.22). In other words, it attempts to help cultural groups overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society while enabling them to retain their ethnic and cultural identities. Multiculturalism policies —often referred to as "multiculturalism" — renegotiate the terms of the previous models of immigrant integration. This means immigrants and ethnic groups can identify with the cultural traditions of their choice within the framework of Canadian institutions. Unlike assimilation policies, multiculturalism does not view the introduction of cultural symbols from former homelands as a nostalgic attempt to return to the country of origin. Instead it is seen as a way of creating a new sense of home and understanding the new space in order to adapt (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 131).

Ethnicity and Critiques on Identity

Originally, the policy of Multiculturalism within Bilingualism framework was meant to recognize the contributions of European ethnic groups that have resided in the country for a considerable period. However, the policy was seen as beneficial to newer immigrant groups from non-traditional countries that arrived after the point system came into effect. Canada's multiculturalism policies enable the individual to negotiate the creation of his or her identity using collective resources, such as racial or ethnic identity.

Put differently, under the rubric of multiculturalism, individuals ideally have the option to express ethnicity if desired (Kymlica, 1998; Howard-Hassmann, 1999). While this is ideally true for all immigrants, some studies show that immigrants of European origin, particularly those of traditional source countries, develop a sense of belonging to Canada more quickly and easily than those who can be classified as visible minorities (Soroka et al, 2007) because they face less discrimination and social distance. For these groups, ethnicity is something symbolic and voluntary with fewer or no social costs (Waters, 2006).

The ethnic focus of multiculturalism has been at the core of many criticisms. Bannerji (2000) claims that multiculturalism replaces the emphasis on racism with a racialized ethnicity and cultural diversity. It has become a discourse for subject construction beyond cultural nationalism and national identity. For example, the term “visible minority” stresses features of being non-white (not a member of the charter/dominant groups), thus creating categories of people who are minor political players. This becomes a problem when issues of social justice, racism, and employment are displaced and rearranged on to issues of cultural and ethnic diversity, diluting social relations of power and class.

Ng (1995) also criticizes multicultural policies because they were developed by the state rather than from the specific demands of immigrant and ethnic minorities. Ng views these policies as an ideological artifact developed by the state within the framework of national unity that reoriented the popular understanding of Canadian society from English and French to multicultural. Even before the Multiculturalism Act was proclaimed, John Porter (1965, p.368-369) identified national unity as an obsession

for the political elites. As a consequence of multiculturalism, the state dictates the relevance of ethnic affairs at the bureaucratic level.

Other critiques indicate that the hyphenated identities resulting from the state-promoted multiculturalism make it hard to claim national identity without declaring ethnicity (Mahtani, 2006). Subsequent generations feel they are being confined to an ethnic category, impeding their full integration into mainstream society (Nayar, 2004). However, Khouri's study on Arabs in Canada (2003) shows that hyphenated identities can express a sense of belonging to Canada while acknowledging one's culture of origin. Furthermore, once "Canadian" was placed in the 1996 Census more people identified as such (Howard-Hassmann, 1999, p.523-537). There are, nonetheless, polar views about the influence of the state on citizens' identities, particularly manifested in the of multiculturalism policies.

Some theorists of liberal democracy contend that elevating ethnicity to a position equal in significance to a person's universal identity weakens the foundations of liberalism (Rockefeller, 1994). The state, in this view, is not responsible for guaranteeing cultural survival. From the state-ideology perspective, Bannerji (2000) suggests that the role of immigrants is to reproduce a Canadian underclass. In order to assure this, multiculturalism ethnicizes immigrants through subject construction, erasing social relations of power and ruling with an ethnic diversity discourse. This reiterates Porter's (1965, p.60-103) idea of Canadian society being a vertical mosaic in which immigrant

and other ethnic groups lack social mobility in relation to the dominant English and French groups³.

Although many believe that liberal democratic societies should be blind to the way in which citizens differ, theorists like Wolf (1994) and Taylor (1994) criticize this type of politics for having restricted acknowledgement of distinct cultural identities and the needs of underprivileged groups. The politics of difference, on the other hand, makes distinctions in the way citizens who might have heterogeneous identities are diverse and therefore should be given distinctive treatment. This politics challenges the conception of a liberal society because collective rights are given more importance than individual rights. Defenders of multiculturalism from a liberal-democratic perspective claim that the state should be involved in shaping the identity of its immigrant population because collective rights supplement individual rights (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1998). This is particularly important for disadvantaged groups. Fraser (2006) finds that collective rights are meant to protect vulnerable groups from two types of injustice: socio-economic, which is rooted in the political-economic structure of society, and cultural, which is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Canadian multiculturalism is meant to combat socio-economic and cultural injustice by acknowledging distinct identities and by preventing ethnic groups from becoming politically and economically excluded. After all, Canada's immigration goals are mostly focused on social and economic development (Li, 2003b; Ungerleider, 2006).

³ W. Clements (1998) did a revision of Porter's work thirty years later. He added gender, race, region, and employment to the variables that determine social mobility in Canada.

Multiculturalism as Identity

Multiculturalism was praised throughout my interviews as one of the most appealing aspects of Canada. Contrary to the academic critiques discussed above, Iranian Haligonians interviewed do not believe they are being confined to an ethnic category. To them, their hyphenated identity reaffirms them as part of Canadian society while simultaneously acknowledging their background.

Canadian identity was traditionally tied to institutions, particularly those developed and maintained by the federal government, to foster a sense of national achievement (Biles et al 2005, p.6). With the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Constitution Act of 1982, Canadians were encouraged to rethink their identity as something tied to concepts like multiculturalism, bilingualism, equality, human rights, and rights and freedoms (Idem). Indeed, most Canadians believe that multiculturalism has contributed positively to Canadian identity (Jedwab, 2003).

The Iranian-Canadians who participated in my study largely referred to Canada as a “free country” and mentioned its multicultural character as a positive aspect of their experience. Interviewees who entered Canada as refugees to flee from Iran’s political instability are particularly pleased with the human rights they enjoy in their new country of residence. Although the word “multicultural” was frequently mentioned during the interviews I conducted, Iranian immigrants were unaware that multiculturalism is a set of government supported policies directly related to immigrant accommodation. Li (1999) reports that popular perceptions of the term vary due to its ambiguity. Similar to Li, I found that Haligonian Iranians considered multiculturalism a social value while specific policies are unknown.

Halifax, where immigrants constitute only 7.42% of the total population, is not as demographically diverse as larger Canadian cities (Statistics Canada, 2010). In spite of this, participants in my study mentioned the “multicultural” aspects of the city in a positive light. To interviewees, multiculturalism consists of being able to interact with people from different countries, origins, and cultures and get to know their views and experiences. This view coincides with multiculturalism as a demographic trait rather than a policy. At the same time, it suggests that multiculturalism is successful as an ideology that promotes a particular national identity. Kamyar, an Iranian business owner from the HRM, gives some insight to what it is like to be an immigrant in multicultural Canada:

... the good thing about Canada is the world vision. Everybody that comes to Canada, we are all from different countries and here we all have some sort of the same kind of background. We’ve all been hurt at home and come somewhere that we’re going to be healed from the wound and try to create a family and try to share the knowledge of what you learn and try to maintain that culture that you think is so valuable (July 29, 2009).

Every respondent defined him or herself as “Canadian” at one point during the interviews. A few interviewees also highlighted differences between immigrants and non-immigrants, particularly when speaking about integration barriers in employment. This distinction is a clear sign of social stratification and obstacles faced by newcomers to the region. In spite of this, interviewees have adopted the Canadian demonym and appreciate the multicultural traits of Halifax. This suggests positive results in terms of social integration and national identity.

Ethnic and Immigrant Organizations

Ethnic institutions illustrate some of the ways multiculturalism operates and aids in fostering identities. Kallen (1995, p.86-87) contends that formal organizations are

crucial to the development of ethnic group consciousness. Once individual identifications organize collectively, the ethnic group is capable of concrete action. Ethnic institutions play an important role in multicultural societies because their presence generates a social life that extends beyond the ethnic group (Isajiw, 1999, p.200). In addition, organizations that negotiate with other societal agencies and institutions from outside the group become an important component in interethnic relations (Ibid, p.213). Ethnic institutions are sites or social spaces within which ethnic identity is produced and maintained over time (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.113). However, the terms “institutions” and “organization” are sometimes used interchangeably. Isajiw (1999, p.213-214) makes a distinction between the two, stating that ethnic institutions directly fulfill social needs of members of the ethnic group parallel to mainstream institutions, such as banks or ethnic media. Voluntary organizations, on the other hand, deal indirectly with the basic needs of the group, which sometimes derive from institutions or the lack thereof.

Ethnic organizations have different goals and interests regarding the group’s internal and external affairs. For example, they may hold recreational activities and events that strengthen social ties within the group and strive for the maintenance and development of the group’s culture. They may also provide services for the accommodation of new immigrants. At the same time, ethnic organizations are also involved in projects aimed at the larger society, including matters of government and policies on immigration, multiculturalism, human rights, the economy, and so on; they also include issues of discrimination and prejudice, relations with broader societal institutions (mainstream mass media, unions, the police), and relations with the country of origin (Breton, 1991, p.3).

My interviewees mentioned two main Iranian ethnic institutions in Halifax: the Iranian Cultural Society (ICS) and the United Iranian Canadian Society (UICS). I interviewed a representative of each organization. ICS was the first Persian ethnic organization in the HRM. Differences of opinions among the members of the organization regarding ideological issues, such as the role of political and religious affiliations in the organization, led to the foundation of the UICS in 2005. Both organizations have similar aims and activities, although there are small differences between the two. The ICS and the UICS work closely with Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) helping recently arrived immigrants with paper work, translating documents, and organizing workshops. But because immigrants go directly to ISIS, the organizations' role in settlement related activities is limited.

The ICS places great emphasis on the Persian language, which is regarded as a matter of unity amongst Iranians. A participant who was once a member of the ICS said that the organization was founded, among other things, to preserve Iranian culture by teaching children Farsi. Other ICS activities include organizing social events to celebrate Persian festivities and providing services for newcomers, such as workshops on understanding the Canadian tax system, getting mortgages, or starting businesses in Canada.

The UICS also offers language classes, both Farsi and English, workshops on computer training, music lessons, and observes the Persian calendar. The main difference between the two organizations is that UICS overtly opposes the current Iranian regime and this is reflected in many of the organization's activities. For example, the UICS sought the support of the Nova Scotia General Employees Union (NSGEU), who sent a letter to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Canada condemning the

actions taken by the Iranian government against protestors who opposed the elections in July 2009. Another variation between these organizations is that representatives of the UICS do not stress “preserving the culture”, but instead “bridging the cultures”. In this sense, the UICS strives with helping newcomers understand Canadian culture to assist with their integration in society.

Ethnic and immigrant organizations are linked to multicultural policies because of government expenditure on cultural and language preservation (Kymlica, 1998, p.42; Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.15). However, neither ICS nor UICS has ever received government funding; both organizations are financed through private sponsorship and donations.

Several participants in my study are or have been involved in immigrant organizations. An interviewee stressed the benefits of participating in these institutions by stating the following: “[ethnic organizations] help create unity in that you can still be Canadian but you can still hang on to your ethnic group” (June 24, 2009). Iranian organizations in Halifax provide their members with the opportunity to preserve their language and cultural occasions while getting involved with the larger society through projects with other institutions.

Ethnic Media: Radio Payam

Ethnic media provides another example of multiculturalism in practice with both inclusive and accommodation functions because it is thought to fill the gap between the ethnic community and the other media in the receiving society (Lam, 1997, p.244). The Canadian government has praised ethnic media as an institutional space for the development of cultural diversity and the promotion of integrated citizenship (Surlin and

Romanow, 1997, p.261-261). At the same time, researchers and policy makers often question the commodity-driven mass media's performance on cultural assimilation. Ethnic minorities are often discontent because mainstream media does not reflect their groups' interests and tends to portray their group in an inaccurate or negative way (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.166; Surlin and Romanow, 1997, p.264). This dissatisfaction has contributed to the creation of media institutions that operate alongside the mainstream.

Ethnic media has several functions. It helps in the preservation and transmission of heritage cultures and facilitates the integration of immigrants into society by serving as a buffer and agent of socialization (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.166). It is promoted as useful for providing information to newcomers in their mother tongues, such as programs that are specifically designed to meet their needs and work opportunities (Lam, 1997, p.234). Ethnic media reinforces a sense of common heritage in a new land (Surlin and Romanow, 1997, p.261). However, scholars claim that it has been criticized for affecting integration by maintaining groups' ties and continued interests of their homelands (Black and Leithner, 1997, p.210; Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.166). Lam (1997) suggests that rather than studying ethnic media as a link between the former and the current country, more emphasis should be put on its role in easing emotional attachments to the homeland.

The most valuable function for integration purposes is to assist in the process of acculturation (Black and Leithner, 1997, p.207). The integrative perspective assumes that ethnic media encourages immigrants' involvement in Canadian politics and helps newcomers learn the norms of Canadian society (Black, and Leithner, 1997, p.208; Black 2001). However, some studies show that acculturation —measured by the knowledge of characters, symbols, institutions, and personalities of the host society— is not associated with the level of exposure to ethnic media (Lam, 1997, p.254). Furthermore, people who

are already aware and involved in political affairs do not use ethnic media as their main source of information (Black and Leithner, 1997, p.210).

In September 2009, the UICS aired the first Persian radio show in Halifax. Radio Payam, which draws its name from the Farsi word for “message”, broadcasts on a weekly basis. The show’s content revolves around the Persian calendar and relevant social events, which in turn are linked to the selected music, guests, and interviewed personalities. The show has a political tone without being strictly devoted to politics. It places emphasis on opposition to the Iranian regime and gives exposure to dissident groups who are not getting attention in the mainstream media. The show is broadcasted in Farsi to attract other Iranians and maintain its international audience. Radio Payam has listeners across Canada and Western Europe, and people in Iran and other countries can access the content through the social network site *Facebook* and the UICS webpage.

Radio Payam does not address local matters, although the programmers plan on doing so in the future. However, the show does provide some community services aimed at the HRM. These have included a transmission devoted to H1N1 prevention and treatment and announcements relevant to the general Halifax community upon request and without any charge. In gratitude, some listeners have showed support by donating resources to maintain the show. These include phone cards to interview people who are not in Halifax.

Although Radio Payam does not serve as an integration tool for newcomers and it does not deal with Canadian affairs, I suggest that it is a step for the Iranian community in developing its own institutions. From an intra-group perspective, Radio Payam raises some critical and controversial questions about Iranian political affairs. In spite of its limitations regarding Canadian content, the show connects Halifax with other parts of the

world by stressing its regional character through local announcements and events while bringing attention to Iranian topics.

Social Network Sites and Ethnic Community Building

Immigrant organizations are often studied as spaces for socialization based on ethnic affiliation (Reitz, 1980, p.215-225; Breton, 1991; Isajiw, 1999; Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.113-116). I argue that online spaces should also be considered for these purposes as shown by the “Halifax Iranians” *Facebook* group.

Social network sites (SNSs) are “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p.2). Most SNSs support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but they also help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or other activities. In a similar fashion, some networking sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. The main feature of SNSs is user profiles, which include the user’s information, such as name, sex, age, and location, a profile photo, and an articulated list of contacts. The visibility of a profile varies by site and according to user discretion. What makes social network sites unique is their ability to enable users to articulate their social networks and make them visible (Idem).

Facebook, created in 2004, is a popular SNS that many participants in my study reported using. It allows individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others. *Facebook* members can join

virtual groups based on common interests. According to the creator of the “Halifax Iranians” *Facebook* group, there are many associations based on professional, political, and other interests within the Iranian community. “Halifax Iranians” started with the intention of linking Iranians in Halifax regardless of background or affiliation with other ethnic, religious, and political organizations or groups. Although most participants in my study belong to this group, factors such as age, technological literacy, and interest have an effect on how much each person participates in the group.

Individuals in *Facebook* are most likely to connect with people with whom they have a pre-existing social connection rather than meet strangers. However, relationships that begin online tend to result in face-to-face contact (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, and Lamp, 2007). People who belong to the “Halifax Iranians” group become acquainted with other Iranians in Halifax, which results in online messaging, eventual face-to-face meetings, or simply recognizing each other in public. Newcomers also use the group to map the Iranian community, which gives them a sense of social security in a new city. Another feature of “Halifax Iranians” is that people who no longer live in Halifax but still have emotional attachments to the city join the group to maintain their sense of belonging.

People use the group’s webpage to post announcements of interest to the Iranian community, such as workshops, business advertisement, social and cultural events, and even obituaries. In a way, the *Facebook* group plays similar roles to those of an ethnic organization but is not a substitute due to its informal nature.

Perceptions of the Government's Performance

Canadian institutions have certain responsibilities in the two-way street integration model, which include welcoming immigrants as full and equal participants in all aspects of Canadian society and facilitating their integration (Weinfeld and Wilkinson, 1999, p.64; Biles et al, 2005, p.10). Immigration policies include government assistance in the settlement of newcomers. This area is not related to multiculturalism through the preservation of identity, but through questions of integration and the accommodation.

Most interviewees hesitated when asked about the government's performance in helping immigrants settle. Overall, opinions were not favourable. One participant's testimony illustrates the common perception of the provincial settlement programs: "I believe they [the government] do their best, but their immigrant program is not sufficient and is not immigrant friendly" (June 29, 2009).

The main problem interviewees mentioned was a lack of availability and accessibility of information. This ranges from buying basic household items for recently arrived immigrants with language barriers to enrolling in continuous education or doing taxes for people who have been in the province for more than 10 years. People who are proficient in English and have high computer skills said they were able to find most of the information they needed. However, they saw how access to such information could be a problem for people with lesser computer and language skills. As a result, newcomers are unaware of the resources that are available to them.

Some participants made comparisons between Halifax and cities like Toronto and Vancouver, where government documents and information in Farsi are available. Conversely, respondents believe government documents in Nova Scotia use really

confusing language, which makes their understanding difficult in spite of English proficiency.

Every participant in my study was familiar with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) —currently known as ISIS— and most of them had contacted this organization at least once. Their perception of MISA⁴ is rather positive, although a few reported negative experiences. Participants who had MISA help them find employment are satisfied with the time it took them to find work but believe the positions they got were considerably below their skills.

At the structural level the experiences of Iranian Haligonians and multiculturalism include relations between immigrants and ethnic organizations, settlement organizations, and the government. The findings show that settlement services, although functional, could be improved. I will now discuss a critical debate on multiculturalism which addresses minority rights in liberal democracies.

Individual and Group Rights

While some critics point to the problem of placing too much emphasis on ethnicity, as previously discussed, others raise the question of to what extent can newcomers embrace Canadian values in spite of their cultural backgrounds.

Multiculturalism, therefore, is perceived to be at odds with Canada's values (Stoffman, 2002).

As previously mentioned, Bannerji's (2000) critique of multicultural policies highlights the discourse of cultural diversity as a way to mask issues of social justice.

⁴ I talk about MISA when referring interviewees' experiences with the organization before it changed its name.

Bannerji's main preoccupation, from a feminist perspective, is that laws can appeal to diversity by using cultural and religious differences in court to suppress patriarchal violence. But the role of multiculturalism, according to Fleras and Kunz (2001, p.3), is to ensure national unity and social cohesion while safeguarding diversity. In addressing the issue of immigrants bringing practices to Canada that conflict with ideals of Canadian values, Kymlica (1998) distinguishes between two types of group rights. Internal restrictions, or intra-group relations, which deal with groups against their own members. These do not comply with liberal democratic values. In the case of Canada, groups are free to impose restrictions for voluntary membership among their affiliates. However, legal distribution of public funding to restrict individual freedom is not a permitted practice. The second type of group rights is known as external protections, or inter-group relations, and it helps protect groups from the larger society by limiting their vulnerability from economic and political decisions of the dominant groups. This kind of group rights promotes integration, equality, justice, and participation, thus it is consistent with liberal democratic values. It also explains why group rights promote individual rights. Canadian multiculturalism is a form of external protection that does not give authority for intra-group oppression.

In his discussion about the limits of tolerance, Kymlica (Ibid, p.60-71) mentions clitoridectomy, compulsorily arranged marriages, and talaq divorces as some examples of foreign cultural practices that are perceived as oppressive to women from a Canadian perspective. Tolerating such practices jeopardizes basic individual and equality rights even if they do not affect immigrants' integration into mainstream society. Kymlica notes that the Multiculturalism Act emphasizes individual rights, human freedom, and gender equality because it has to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The

fact that the government has not been explicit when it comes to explaining multicultural policies has generated public concerns over the limits of cultural tolerance.

Multiculturalism is not a matter of individual versus group rights, but a matter of multicultural and individual rights. In other words, those rights beyond individual rights designed to accommodate ethno-cultural practices and identities. Moreover, it is often ignored that only a minority of immigrants subscribes to these “cultural practices” and many people come to Canada because they are escaping from or disagree with such practices and beliefs (Biles et al, 2005, p.8). The Ontario Shari’a law debate illustrates how some immigrants, among them Halifax Iranians, perceive the limits of cultural tolerance discussed above.

The Shari’a Law Debate

The application of Islamic law in arbitration was first proposed in Montreal, Quebec, in 1994. The councils’ organizers, who did not identify with fundamentalist movements, stated that the arbitration panel, modeled after Britain’s Islamic Shari’a Council, would settle disputes with similar solutions as Quebec courts but in a more conciliatory and less costly manner (Khan, 2007, p.475). No formal government review followed and the council dissolved shortly afterwards. The proposal turned to be controversial as it laid the question of the place of religious cultural identity in a secular state.

The issue gained more attention in 2003, when an organization known as the Islamic Institute of Civic Justice (IICJ) announced its plan to establish a form of arbitration based on Islamic principles, Shari’a family law, in accordance to the Ontario Arbitration Act of 1991 (Boyd, 2007, p.466). Its proponents claim that Muslims should

have the same right as other cultural minorities, such as Hasidic Jews who were already using religious courts in Canada, to develop their own legal system (Ayala, 2004; Boyd, 2007, p.466). Many Muslim groups were not familiar or affiliated with the IICJ. These sectors of the Muslim community did not agree with such project and were discontented that the IICJ undertook the initiative without consultation within the community (Khan, 2007, p.478). Concerns aroused by the proposal, however, extended beyond the religious group.

Multicultural societies often face problems when a community's legal practices are seen by others, mainly the dominant group, as having little regard for the rights of certain members. In the case of the Ontario Shari'a law proposal, pre-existing fear and ignorance on the matter contributed to a media perpetuated misunderstanding that Ontario was going to allow Canadian law to be suppressed by Shari'a law (Boyd, 2007, p.466). This spawned outrage and opposition within sectors of the Muslim community and the larger Canadian society. Opponents of this arbitration who came to Canada to escape oppressive states, some of which are under the rule of religious groups, were concerned that Muslim family law would be the avenue that would lead to the implementation of full Shari'a law, applicable to all Canadian Muslims (Ibid, p.467-468). In an attempt to show its commitment to democratic constitutionalism, the IICJ stressed that the formation of a Shari'a court would not contradict the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, a few submissions made by Muslim groups to review asserted the opposite.

The distress among groups and activists who believed the principles of Shari'a law would erode equal rights for women led to the formation of various organizations that wanted to challenge the initiative at an institutional level. Muslim women came forward to express their concern for the well-being of women and children as vulnerable members

of the Muslim community (Khan, 2007, p.478; Ayala, 2004; WLUML, 2004). Some organizations argued that a 1,400-year-old set of rules and laws is flawed because it does not view women as equal and therefore cannot provide equal justice to all parties in disputes (WLUML, 2004). This was seen as particularly relevant for issues of divorce, separation, child custody, and division of property.

An organization called the International Campaign Against Shari'a Court in Canada (ICASC) took the lead in lobbying against the Shari'a law proposal. ICASC is headed by Iranian-Canadian activist Homa Arjomand, who believes religion should be removed from the justice system altogether instead of falling into the multicultural paradox of making people choose between human rights and cultural or religious practices. Arjomand (MSLNA, 2009) says that "minority rights ignore individual rights within that minority", noting that social pressures often force people to undertake religious arbitration against their will, a common concern among Shari'a law critics in Canada. Moreover, those who lack sufficient resources would have to subscribe to the Shari'a, whereas wealthier people could use the public legal system instead. This would create two sets of laws for some Canadians, an injustice that Arjomand says could be corrected by a single law equally applied to all Canadian citizens. To meet this end, all family disputes, according to ICASC's mission, should be resolved in the Canadian secular court system and not by arbitrators outside of court regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In Halifax, the Maritime Secular Legal Network Association (MSLNA) opposes religious arbitration of any sort and was established to prevent Nova Scotia from following Ontario's legislation. Although the MSLNA has no direct link to the Iranian community, all of its members are Iranian. According to representatives of this organization that I interviewed (June 29th, 2009; March 17th, 2010), the debate incited by

the IICJ in Ontario provided a venue for other Muslim groups to demand the implementation of Shari'a law in other Canadian provinces. MSLNA's mission is to ensure that religious arbitration in family disputes is not allowed by the government of any Canadian province or by the federal government, to foster civic debate on the issue of religious adjudication, and to work with groups throughout Canada and abroad to end practices of state sponsored religious adjudication. The MSLNA organized forums, invited speakers, and worked with other groups to bring attention to the issue by presenting both sides of the debate for a better understand of its implications. MSLNA worked with similar organizations throughout Canada, including ICASC.

According to the ICASC and the MSLNA, allowing minority groups to apply religious law to family disputes weakens women's and children's rights of equality under Canadian law and segregates minority groups because it discourages its members to fully participate in Canadian society even if it seems to accord with Canada's multicultural policies. Allegations of segregation and marginalization of ethnic groups are at the core of critiques on Canadian multiculturalism (see Bissoontha, 1994).

Opponents of Shari'a law in Canada, who support a single set of secular laws for all Canadians, noticed that existing legislation was enabling the IICJ to demand religious adjudication. As Kymlica (2007, p.55-56) explains, liberal policies unintentionally strengthen certain conservative elites who seek access to the available resources to protect their traditional authority. Such is the case of the Ontario Arbitration Act of 1991, the legal mechanism by which the IICJ sought to implement Shari'a law in Canada. It is not surprising that groups, like ICASC, oppose the Arbitration Act because it could jeopardize individual rights under the pretext of religious freedom, tolerance and cultural

sensitivity (ICASC, 2009). One of MSLNA's main objectives is to change the Arbitration Act of 1991, although some members even speak of abolishing it.

Part of MSLNA's strategy consisted on building coalitions with similar groups in various provinces of Canada. Coalitions are collaborative arrangements between distinct organizational entities that allow actors to merge resources to achieve change (Tarrow, 2005, p.164). Collective work between MSLNA and other organizations concluded in a meeting with the Minister of Justice and the elaboration of a document explaining their views on religious arbitration that was presented before the House of Commons.

MSLNA members who were interviewed for my study highlighted the role of the Internet when working with people and organizations in other provinces. New communication technologies and broader access to them make it possible for diverse actors to communicate, consult, coordinate, and operate together across distances (Tarrow, 2005, p.6; Dartnell, 2006, p.20). In addition, the Internet is perceived to be a more open environment for political discussion (Dartnell, 2006, p.17). A member of the MSLNA said that, because the sharing of information was fast, opinions were quickly exchanged online (June 29th, 2009). In consequence, there was no need to do reviews when presenting before the House of Commons because the different parties knew each other's position and background. Katz, Rice, and Aspden (2000) believe Internet users are more likely to belong to community organizations and engage in traditional political activity. Interviewees who were involved in the MSLNA's activities mentioned being part of several online communities.

The IICJ refused to comment further to the media or reply publicly to any of the criticisms. The lack of a response heightened concerns from opposing sectors of society and forced the Muslim community to deal with the unfinished issue (Khan, 2007, p.478).

Although NDP attorney general Marion Boyd recommended the use of Islamic law in arbitration, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that Shari'a tribunals were not going to be allowed in the province, ending the controversy in September 2005 (BBC News, 2005). A MLSNA representative said that the organization's work successfully prevented Islamic arbitration in Nova Scotia.

The Shari'a family law debate had several valuable lessons for Canadians by engaging the Muslim community in public discussion and exposing its diversity. Although the arbitration proposal was not entirely in accordance with the Charter, the IICJ advanced its claim through provincial legislation that was already being used by other religious groups (Ayala, 2004). Yet, it failed because only a small group within the Canadian Muslim community proposed a Shari'a court; there was a lack of community consensus about the need of such an institution. Khan (2007, p.483-484) argues that a positive outcome of the controversy, however, was the participation of assorted sectors of society reflecting a growing engagement through established democratic institutions.

Kymlica (2007, p.65-68) believes Canada has three strategies for impeding illiberal elites from gaining control over the institutions and funding programs created under the multicultural policies. First, civic education and political socialization help develop and sustain a broader political culture of human rights and civic rights liberalism. There is a high consensus across ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines on the value of human rights, and newcomers are part of this consensus. In addition, the political values of newcomers tend converge with those of native-born Canadians over time (Ibid, p.66). Second, there are mechanisms for identifying actual or potential abuses so as to bring these issues to the scrutiny of public opinion. Finally, there are legal and constitutional

safeguards that empower the state to prevent or remedy possible abuses, like courts and human rights commissions.

Well-functioning liberal-democratic institutions tend to generate their own base of support and trust. If they coordinate fair schemes of social cooperation, then people will feel a sense of obligation to other institutions. Canada's diversity policies are meant to transform cultural identities by engaging minority groups in new practices that challenge their position in society through human rights and democratic constitutionalism. As a result, ethno-cultural groups are expected to eventually embrace Canadian values and institutions. According to Biles et al (2005, p.6), within one generation, the children of immigrants tend to share the same values as the children of native-Canadians. Immigrants often emigrate to liberal democracies because they want to live in a country with well-functioning public institutions. As Kymlica (2007) explains, "immigrants didn't leave unstable countries with dysfunctional public institutions in order to come and destabilize Canadian institutions" (p.74).

Internal concerns for possible oppressive internal restrictions from within the Muslim community challenged the implementation of Shari'a courts through multiculturalism because these policies, although having a collective aim, emphasizes individual and gender rights as stated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Nonetheless, critics have used progressive Muslim women's opposition to Shari'a law as evidence that multiculturalism conflicts with Canadian values such as gender equality (Biles et al, 2005, p.13).

MSLNA and ICASC are examples of the different ways immigrants identify and show commitment to Canada's liberal-democratic institutions. ICASC continues to campaign against faith-based arbitration at the international level and has become more

involved in human rights issues. Representatives of MLSNA say the organization still exists but is not currently in operation. It is important to note that the interviewed members of MSLNA are not familiar with Canada's multiculturalism policies, even though the word "multiculturalism" is mentioned in the organization's website. This could account to why members of this organization favour a unanimous set of secular laws over cultural accommodation. As one MSLNA spokesperson explained, he had a very defined view on where the line of tolerance should be drawn: "This was not a campaign against Islamic religion, I have nothing against it. This is against Islamic politics" (March 17, 2010).

The settlement experiences of Iranian immigrants provide some insight into how multicultural policies work in the HRM. Participants in my study reflect the success of multiculturalism as an ideology in that it has effectively influenced immigrants' understanding of national identity as "multicultural". Interviewees referred to themselves as "Canadian" or "Iranian-Canadian", which ultimately reflects an attachment to the country.

Immigrant organizations provide a positive example of multiculturalism in practice. Iranian groups collaborate with organizations in Nova Scotia and other provinces, engaging with the larger Canadian society while expressing their cultural identity. In a similar vein, SNSs provide virtual spaces for ethnic socialization and immigrant related affairs. The emergence of ethnic media is evidence that Iranians are gaining presence as a cultural group in Halifax.

Most interviewees have had contact with MISA and Iranian organizations work alongside ISIS, which is funded by both the provincial and federal governments.

Conversely, the ICS and the UICS—which have no direct contact with the provincial government—are privately funded in spite of having some settlement purposes.

Multiculturalism policies in the HRM are encouraging the adoption of dual identities. The lack of government involvement and funding, however, does not promote ethnic institutions. Overall, perceptions of the provincial government's performance in helping newcomers settle are unfavourable, with access to information being the most common complaint.

The enterprise against Shari'a law illustrates some Iranian Haligonians' commitment to liberal democratic institutions, which is the ultimate goal of multiculturalism. However, members of organizations such as the MSLNA launched a campaign against venues created by multiculturalism policies.

Although principles of multiculturalism seem to be positively shaping immigrants' identities, newcomers still face difficulties while settling. In the following chapter, I will continue to explore the integration of immigrants by addressing the difficulties newcomers face in the Canadian labour market.

Chapter 3 – Immigrants from the Middle East and the Labour Market

The economic integration of immigrants is of concern to scholars and policy makers in Canada. Most empirical studies measure newcomers' economic performance in relation to native-born Canadians. Li (2003a) has criticized this approach for assuming that immigrants who outperform Canadians are perceived as well integrated, whereas those who do not are seen as a burden to society. There are, however, structural components that hinder the performance of many immigrant groups regardless of their abilities. In this chapter, I will examine the economic integration of Iranian immigrants in Halifax and explore some of the ways this affects their sense of belonging. First, I will do cross tabulations using secondary data from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) Public Use Micro File to examine the correlation between variables that, according to the literature, play a role in immigrants' economic integration. For this study, I focus on immigrants from the Middle East in Canada, who comprise 1.22% of the HRM's population (Statistics Canada, 2010). I then compare the findings of my quantitative study with interviews with immigrants of Iranian origin in the HRM. Based on these interviews, I argue that problems with the recognition of foreign credentials and the lack of an Iranian ethnic enclave economy are causes for out-migration from Nova Scotia. I review theory on social capital, which suggests that an established network helps people achieve goals, including finding employment. I will also detail the outcomes of social capital for Iranian immigrants in Halifax.

Sample and Dependant Variable

In the early 1990s, the number of immigrants from Middle Eastern countries to Canada increased, probably as a result of the first Gulf War (Akbari et al, 2007). In the

following quantitative analysis, I examine how economic opportunities affect Middle Eastern immigrants' attachment to Canada. In order to look at landed immigrants only, I used the variables *Genyarr* and *Citcans* to keep those who are Canadian by naturalization and arrived in the country. This excludes temporary residents, permanent residents without Canadian citizenship, and people born in Canada. Due to limitations in the Ethnic Diversity Survey's design, I was not able to separate non-citizen permanent residents from temporary residents. The legal working age in Canada varies depending on occupation and province. I looked at people over 18 years old because they are more likely to have work experience. Following Reitz and Banerjee (2007), I merged several ethnic categories from the variable *EACI* to create a single variable labeled as *Middle Eastern*. As a result, my sample consists of *Lebanese*, *Other Arab*, and *West Asian*, which includes Iranians. This was done to increase the size of my sample, which normalizes the distribution and augments the statistical significance of my results.

Sense of belonging to Canada will be my dependant variable and will be represented by the EDS 2002 variable *AT_Q050*. This is an ordinal variable that measures people's "sense of belonging to Canada" in a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates a very strong sense of belonging to the country. As with the rest of the variables used in my study, I removed the *refused*, *does not know*, *not asked* responses.

Economic Obstacles

One of the major adjustments to Canadian immigration policy, the 1967 point system, emphasized occupational and educational demand rather than race and country of origin. Thus Canada's approach to immigration shifted towards social and economic development, which are often thought to facilitate national cohesion (Reitz, 2003;

Jedwab, 2007; Soroka et al, 2007). Failing to give immigrant groups opportunities leads to exclusion and marginalization (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p.94). Poverty, uneven access to employment and employment income, disproportionate contact with the justice system, and low health status are some of the outcomes of social exclusion (Galabuzi, 2006, p.173). As for national cohesion, sustained inequality and deprivation can be a source of social conflict and worsen inter-group relations in the receiving society (Ooka and Wellman, 2006, p.199). In addition, lack of employment is of great concern for most immigrants, since improving their economic status is usually one of the main reasons for immigrating (Henry, 1994, p.102).

Several policies are meant to assist minority groups, including immigrants from non-traditional source countries. For example, the Employment Equity Act of 1986 seeks to achieve equality in the workplace. Under the Act, no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability (Samuel and Schachhuber, 1997, p.25). Canada's multiculturalism policies, although originally intended to facilitate immigrants' accommodation in the dominant society by acknowledging their cultural differences, started placing greater emphasis on race relations and issues of equality during the 1980s (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p.523). Multiculturalism, therefore, adheres to the body of anti-discriminatory legislations that precede government interventions to assist minority groups, such as employment equity and anti-racism codes in the workplace. In spite of institutional efforts, several case studies suggest that there are earning disparities between immigrants and native-born Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2008) as well as discrimination towards visible-minorities in Canada (Henry, 1994; Reitz and Breton, 1994; Li, 2001b; Galabuzi, 2006; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). In fact, white immigrants earn more than Canadian-born visible

minorities (Li, 2001b). This trend has led re-cast Porter's idea of the vertical mosaic as a colour-coded mosaic when referring to the racialization of the labour market (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.94-95; Galabuzi, 2006, p.32).

Institutional racism includes the hindering of work opportunities by nature of not being a member of the dominant society. Definitions of institutional racism generally acknowledge that it encompasses overt manifestations of individual acts of racism to which there is no serious institutional response. Institutional racism also includes organizational policies and practices that, regardless of intent or motivation, are disadvantageous to minorities, such as non-recognition of foreign credentials or inflated requirements for a position (Henry, 1994, p.24). People who can be classified as visible minorities experience more difficulties integrating, particularly into the labour market, than those of European origin. Waters (2006) believes this is because the degree of discrimination and social distance attached to specific European backgrounds has diminished. According to a study made by Reitz and Banerjee (2007, p.497) using data from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, 33.65% of visible minorities report discrimination compared to 19.2% of people of European origin. It is important to note that the percentages across visible minority groups vary, since not all ethnic groups experience the same circumstances. Nonetheless, discrimination directly affects newcomers' sense of belonging (Henry, 1994).

Evidence of perceived discrimination questions the adjustment period as an explanation for economic disparities among immigrant groups and points back to racial inequality, particularly in the labour market. Ethnic discrimination in employment is defined "as the commission of acts that put people at a disadvantage in the search for work or in the workplace solely because of their racial or ethnic origin" (Reitz and

Breton, 1994, p.82). Although many factors come into play, physical attributes and cultural differences have been constantly discussed in the literature as a cause for economic marginalization. Since I am looking at discrimination and its effects on economic opportunities, I used variable *DISC_WORK*, which registers perceived discrimination in the workplace or when applying for a position or promotion, to examine it.

In the aftermath of 9/11, immigrants from the Middle East have been subjected to an increased prejudice based on race, ethnicity, and religion (Abu-Laban, 2007, p.102; Henry and Tator, 2006, p.3-4, 164). Ethnic profiling reproduces hierarchies among Canadian citizens, thus affecting social integration and relationships across groups. A study done by the Canadian Arab Federation (2002) shows that Arab immigrants have a strong sense of belonging to Canada in spite of experiencing racism. The study is limited to Arabs as an ethnic category, excluding other groups from the geopolitical region. However, it provides a good point of comparison because it includes groups I used in my *Middle Eastern* variable. Overall, 25% of the surveyed Arab immigrants claimed they or someone in their immediate family have experienced first hand racism in Canada (Ibid, p.18). Of those who reported institutional racism, 37% said it happened in relation to their employer. Without using the word “racism”, 26% said they were treated differently in the workplace.

Some studies show that immigrants who are satisfactorily employed and meeting their professional or educational goals merge easier into Canadian society (Henry, 1994, p.249). I used an ordinal variable that measures income (*INCP20N*) and explore its relationship with sense of belonging to Canada. However, this variable also interacts with

others in a dependent way. I looked at how education and discrimination affect income before examining how these variables affect sense of belonging.

A second explanation for economic disadvantage has to do with educational credentials (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.98). Earning disparities between immigrants and native-born Canadians are sometimes justified by arguing that immigrants have less human capital, such as education, skills, or language capacity than native-born Canadians. Nonetheless, these disparities are not a matter of human capital but an issue of less marketable skills (Li, 2001b; Reitz, 2003), which becomes most evident in the discounting of foreign educational credentials in the Canadian labour market. According to Reitz, the explanations for economic disparities include: a) low quality or limited transferability of skills and/or b) non-recognition of skills because of employer bias or ignorance, resistance by protectionist professional groups, or other social and bureaucratic obstacles. Reitz also explains that the current availability of skilled native-born Canadians has an impact on immigrants entering the work market because employers want to avoid risking themselves into dealing with unfamiliar situations. As a result, immigrants are not getting work in their professional fields and have to settle for other non-related jobs that paid considerably less (Li 2001b; Li, 2003b, p.5; Galabuzi, 2006, p.134; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007; Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.63). This is rather common for immigrants at the early stages of their settlement who are most economically vulnerable (Massey, 1999, p.37-40). Overall, their inability to gain recognition for their qualifications acquired abroad is an impediment in their settlement process (Reitz, 2003, p.4). I used two variables to examine educational credentials. One of them indicates what are the highest levels of schooling (*HLOS*) and the other one shows if educational degrees were attained in Canada or somewhere else (*HLOSCAN*).

Social Capital: A Theoretical Approach

In recent years, the concept of social capital has been used to examine the outcomes of membership in groups. Soroka et al (2007) claim that participation and involvement with the larger society helps in the incorporation of new immigrants, facilitates dialogue between different ethnic groups, and ultimately reinforces a sense of belonging by recognizing diverse values and identities in the public sphere. Scholars have also made social capital an important component in research on immigrant and ethnic groups in Canada because it links social relations to economic outcomes (Li, 2004, p.174). Pierre Bourdieu's (1985) definition, widely used among scholars, states that social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (as cited by Portes, 1998, p.3). Coleman explains social capital by its functions, concluding that it is a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions for actors, whether persons or corporate actors, within the structure (1988, p.S98). Although there is a controversial debate on the ambiguities of social capital, there is little disagreement in the literature that it involves actors gaining access to resources through networks (Portes, 1998). The idea is that relations among persons facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit.

People gain access to social capital through membership in networks and social institutions, which can be used to improve or maintain their position in society (Massey, 1999, p.43). Portes (1998) distinguishes three elements of social capital: its holders, its sources, and resources. Holders of social capital benefit from network membership by drawing on resources, such as useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity

to organize groups (Li, 2004, p.173). In addition, it is believed that greater social capital increases commitment to a community and the ability to mobilize collective action benefits (Ellison et al, 2007, p.3). For these reasons, social capital is often addressed by its positive consequences. There are, however, some commonly discussed disadvantages of network-based resources. Social capital facilitates certain actions but constrains others, as in the case of groups where norms and sanctions are effectively enforced (Coleman, 1988, p.S105). Moreover, if social capital is advanced by group solidarity, it inevitably excludes outsiders (Li, 2004, p.174). Li recognizes that converting social capital into effective outcomes involves some costs to an individual in having to cultivate and maintain social relations in order to draw on them as social credits (Ibid, p.175).

There are two types of social capital that should be considered when studying immigrant integration (Soroka et al, 2007, p.570). Bonding social capital that brings together people of the same groups and bridging social capital which spans across ethnic groups. Bridging social capital has important policy implications because it helps build interpersonal trust and generates broader identities and generalized reciprocity, thus facilitating social integration. Moreover, access to individuals outside one's close group provides access to new information, resulting in benefits such as employment connections (Granovetter, 1973).

Bridging social capital is believed to contribute to the formation of interpersonal trust, thus facilitating social integration and providing more effective means of mobility and economic opportunities. Social integration can be defined as “the extent to which individual members of a group form relationships outside a group —relations that help them to achieve individual economic, social, or cultural goals” (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p.506). In this sense, as stated by the authors, social cohesion is similar to social capital

because it speaks of collective resources that help people achieve economic, cultural, or social goals. Following Soroka et al (2007), I looked at membership in community organizations as a form of bridging social capital, for which I used variable *PC_Comm*. It is important to clarify the weaknesses of this variable. The concept of social capital has been criticized precisely because it cannot be measured effectively (Portes, 1998). Moreover, membership does not guarantee frequent participation or opportunities for mobility. In spite of this, participating in community organizations is the most suitable variable to examine social capital according to previously done studies.

Economic Obstacles: Findings

Previous research indicates that visible minority immigrants experience difficulties in the Canadian labour market, which also affects their integration into the larger society (Reitz and Breton 1994; Li, 2001b; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). Cross-tabulation⁵ between income and sense of belonging (Table 3.1) showed strong attachment to Canada regardless of earnings.

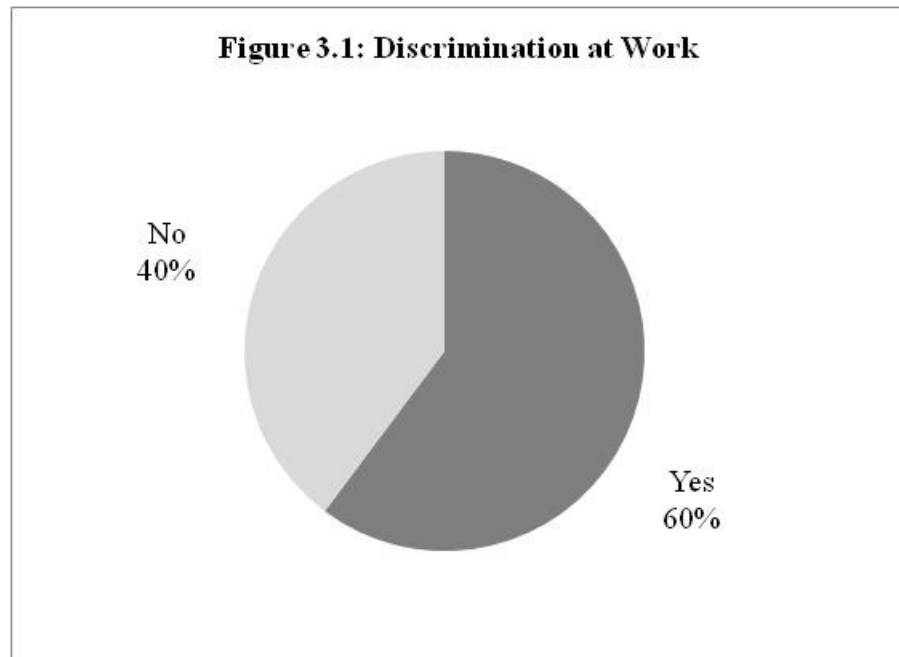
The strongest sense of belonging was reported by those who earn between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year —accounting for 86.72% of those claiming “very strong” —, followed by those in the \$80,000 and higher group with 77.47%. There were few responses for the lower categories that account for a weak sense of belonging, making up for less than 2% of the sample. Of these, the largest percentage (1.19%) was found in the *Not strong at all* category for people who make less than \$20,000. However, 76.83% of

⁵ For tests of statistical significance refer to Appendix 1 (Gamma tests, Kendall’s tau-b tests, and Pearson’s Chi² tests).

Table 3.1: Sense of Belonging to Canada by Annual Income

Sense of Belonging to Canada	Annual Income						Total
	No income	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000 to less than \$40,000	\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	\$60,000 to less than \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	
Not strong at all	0 0%	741 1.19%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	741 0.43%
Not strong	57 0.25%	40 0.06%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	98 0.06%
Indifferent	1,182 5.17%	3,017 4.86%	1,388 3.58%	1,501 5.34%	0 0%	754 5.42%	7,842 4.50%
Strong	7,086 30.97%	10,598 17.06%	8,145 21.02%	2,228 7.93%	3,485 41.57%	2,379 17.11%	33,920 19.48%
Very strong	14,553 63.61%	47,733 76.83%	29,214 75.40%	24,360 86.72%	4,897 58.43%	10,775 77.47%	131,532 75.54%
Total	22,878 100%	62,129 100%	38,748 100%	28,089 100%	8,381 100%	13,909 100%	174,134 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).



(Weighted).

the aforementioned income group reported a strong sense of belonging. When statistical significance was examined, the differences were not significant.

According to some studies, discrimination influences the development of a sense of belonging in the case of immigrants (Henry, 1994; Soroka et al, 2007) and is an obstacle for economic integration of ethnic groups (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). More than half of the sample (60%) Middle Eastern immigrants claim to have experienced discrimination at work (Figure 3.1). Yet, more than half of the respondents who have perceived discrimination at work (Table 3.2) feel like they “strongly” or “very strongly” belong to Canada (89%). This was similar to those that reported no discrimination. This indicates that experiencing discrimination at work does not necessarily affect the sense of belonging to the country.

Table 3.2: Sense of Belonging to Canada by Discrimination at Work

Sense of Belonging to Canada	Discrimination at Work		Total
	Yes	No	
Not strong at all	632 2%	741 3.38%	1,373 2.56%
Not strong	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Indifferent	2,709 8.57%	1,459 6.66%	4,168 7.79%
Strong	6,092 19.26%	3,800 17.34%	9,893 18.48%
Very strong	22,193 70.17%	15,914 72.62%	38,107 71.17%
Total	31,626 100%	21,914 100%	53,541 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

Many studies find that visible minorities earn less than whites in spite of their skills, and point to institutional racism as the cause (Reitz and Breton, 1994; Li, 2001b;

Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). Table 3.3 shows that 41% of Middle Eastern immigrants that perceived experiencing discrimination earned \$20,000 to \$40,000. People with annual earnings greater than \$40,000 account for 34% percentage of the reported cases of perceived discrimination in the workplace. The ones who responded with *No income or loss* comprise a small percentage of those who have perceived discrimination at work (4.51%). However, it is likely that these people are unemployed. This could be a biased response for the purpose of this analysis. The table indicates that discrimination in the

Table 3.3: Annual Income by Discrimination at Work

Income	Discrimination at Work		Total
	Yes	No	
No income or loss	1,184 4.51%	2,916 14.76%	4,100 8.91%
Less than \$20,000	5,227 19.90%	11,231 56.86%	16,458 35.77%
\$20,000 to less than \$40,000	10,767 41%	2,124 10.76%	12,892 28.02%
\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	3,392 12.91%	1,487 7.53%	4,878 10.60%
\$60,000 to less than \$80,000	2,745 10.45%	1,397 7.07%	4,142 9%
\$80,000 or more	2,949 11.23%	597 3.02%	3,546 7.71%
Total	26,264 100%	19,753 100%	46,017 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

workplace is most likely to occur when earnings are under \$40,000. The Gamma test and Kendall's tau-b show statistical significance and a negative association between these variables. In other words, in the case of immigrants from the Middle East, there is

evidence of a negative relationship between perceived discrimination in the workplace and income.

Immigrants have notable education levels that comply with the point system's expectations. Yet, many researchers find that their credentials are undervalued, affecting

Table 3.4: Highest Level of Schooling by Country where Highest Degree was Attained

HLOS	Country Where Highest Degree was Attained		Total
	In Canada	Abroad	
Graduate/Medical	9,297 34.87%	17,362 65.13%	26,659 100%
BA	22,177 40.45%	32,644 59.55%	54,821 100%
Diploma/Certificate	21,460 60.37%	14,086 39.63%	35,547 100%
Some university	15,802 70.10%	6,740 29.90%	22,542 100%
Some college	4,553 59.17%	3,142 40.83%	7,695 100%
Highschool	8,351 20.71%	31,978 79.29%	40,329 100%
Less than highschool	5,023 21.79%	18,031 78.21%	23,055 100%
Total	86,664 41.14%	123,984 58.86%	210,648 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

economic integration, satisfaction, and, ultimately, their affinity to Canada (Li, 2001b; Reitz, 2003; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). For these reasons, it is important to examine highest level of education acquired and where it was obtained in relation to income and sense of belonging. When analyzing highest degree of education and place where the degree was attained (Table 3.4), it is clear that most people obtain degrees out of the country. At the BA level, 59% received their degrees out of the country. At the graduate level this was about 65%. In contrast, at the diploma level, more than half (60%) obtained their degree in Canada. It could be the case that these people decided to obtain some skills to get a higher position in the labour market after immigrating.

Table 3.5: Sense of Belonging to Canada by Country where Highest Degree was Attained

Sense of Belonging to Canada	Country where Highest Degree was Attained		Total
	In Canada	Abroad	
Not strong at all	998 1.16%	374 0.32%	1,373 0.67%
Not strong	40 0.05%	57 0.05%	97 0.05%
Indifferent	4,472 5.18%	5,824 4.98%	10,296 5.06%
Strong	21,334 24.69%	15,875 13.56%	37,209 18.29%
Very strong	59,558 68.93%	94,906 81.09%	154,464 75.93%
Total	86,403 100%	117,037 100%	203,440 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

A high percentage (94%) of the people who obtained an education in Canada feel a “strong” and “very strong” sense of belonging (Table 3.5). However, 95% of those who

obtained an education somewhere else also reported the same. Of those who do not feel like they belong at all, a higher percentage is found among those who attained and education in Canada (1.16% against 0.32%). Yet, these numbers are too small to have an impact on the overall findings.

According to the table, there is no relationship between the place where education was obtained and sense of belonging to Canada; most people feel part of the nation regardless of their place of schooling. Although the Pearson Chi² test did not show statistical significance, the Gamma and Kendall's tau-b tests are significant at the .05 level. When analysing income and country where education was attained, there was no evidence to support the claim that people who had studied abroad earned less (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Annual Income by Country Where Highest Degree was Attained

Income	Country Where Highest Degree was Attained		Total
	In Canada	Abroad	
No income or loss	11,714 15.61%	11,462 11.55%	23,175 13.29%
Less than \$20,000	27,905 37.18%	34,496 34.75%	62,401 35.80%
\$20,000 to less than \$40,000	14,459 19.26%	24,387 24.57%	38,845 22.28%
\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	13,112 17.47%	14,977 15.09%	28,089 16.11%
\$60,000 to less than \$80,000	2,960 3.94%	5,421 5.46%	8,381 4.81%
\$80,000 or more	4,904.17 6.53%	8,526.47 8.59%	13,430.64 7.70%
Total	75,054 100%	99,269 100%	174,323 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

Limited Opportunities Even for the Qualified

The dismissal of foreign credentials is a common obstacle for Iranian immigrants in Halifax and some participants identified this as a cause for out-migration. One of the ways immigrants mitigate this issue is by getting a Canadian degree (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.98; Statistics Canada, 2005, p.55). A couple interviewees enrolled in higher education programs in the HRM with hopes of ameliorating their work and financial situations. However, the costs of schooling have caused these people to go into debt and some still experience employment discrimination even after getting a Canadian degree.

One of the explanations for immigrant entrepreneurship states that immigrants go into self-employment as a means to avoid the obstacles in the labour market (Li, 2001a). Although many participants in my study are business owners, a few decided to engage in self-employment out of necessity. When asked why he decided to start his own business, Saeed, an Iranian-Canadian businessman, said he was “forced” to do so:

After I finished university I didn't have a chance to work in my field, so I had to go into to business. If you don't find a job in your field, you have to do something else. So I started my own business (July 9, 2009).

The majority of the participants think of the lack of economic opportunities as a phenomenon that “naturally” happens in Halifax. Saeed even suggested that potential immigrants should do more research on the place they plan to migrate to. As he expressed: “It's good for people to know that if they're coming here, they shouldn't expect to find a job if they come as immigrants” (July 9, 2009).

Most interviewees believe the provincial government is not doing enough to retain the immigrant population through economic opportunities and is not taking advantage of immigrants' human capital. An interviewee explained with frustration:

The main difficulty, not only for me, for everybody as an immigrant, is you cannot find a job that you had experience in the past. We have a doctor who's driving a taxi, we have a project manager who is doing construction work... We have a lot of professionals who are not in the right places! (August 25, 2009)

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office indicates that qualifying as a skilled worker for immigration to Canada does not mean that foreign educational credentials and work experience will be recognized or that prospective immigrants will be qualified to work in a particular occupation (Foreign Credentials Referral Office, 2010). In Nova Scotia professional and technical qualifications are acceptable for practice, although additional training may be required to meet federal and provincial standards (Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, 2010). Credential recognition is a costly and time-consuming process and is different in each province and territory (CICIC, 2010). The Nova Scotia government indicates that applicants should consider beginning the recognition of international qualification process before coming to Canada in order to have easier access to employment documentation. The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, however, does not assess international credentials. It refers clients to assessors in other provinces or professional associations. Since some professions are regulated by the provincial government while others are regulated by professional associations, ISIS assists immigrants in referring them to the corresponding organism.

Recognition of foreign credentials is not an issue exclusive to Nova Scotia and policy makers are addressing the problem at the federal level. The Canadian government has announced the creation of the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, which will speed up the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications (Canada News Centre, 2009; Canada Visa, 2009). Internationally trained workers in some professions will be informed within a year if their

credentials will be recognized in Canada. The framework is meant to facilitate immigrant professionals' entry into the labour market because it is increasingly recognized that their skills benefit the Canadian economy. Nonetheless, the framework will apply by late 2010 or even 2012 in the case of some professions. The efficacy of the framework is still to be seen for both newcomers and already established immigrants.

Social Capital and the Enclave Economy

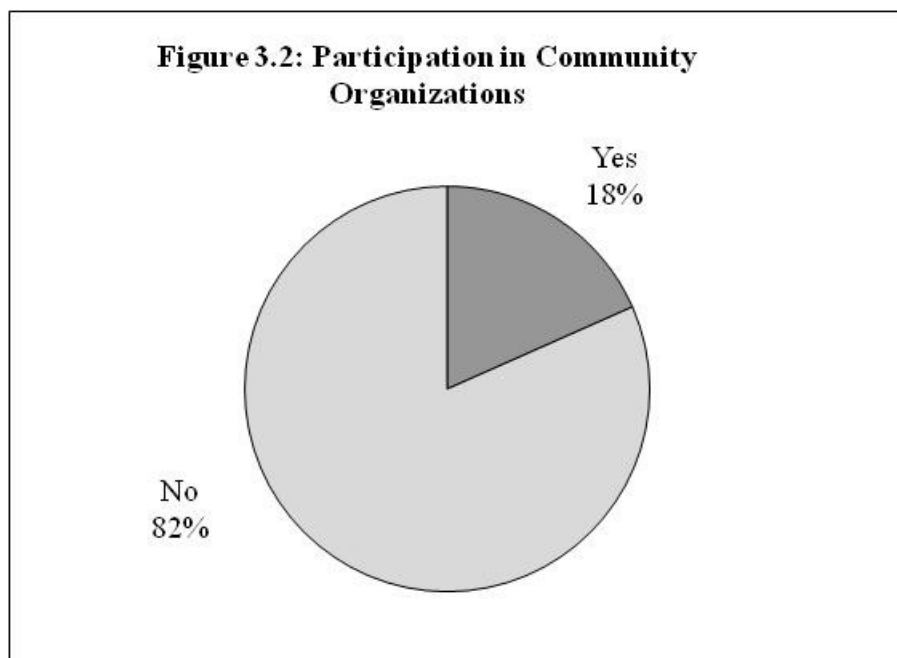
Bridging social capital enables actors expand their network beyond their ethnic groups (Portes, 1998), thus providing more means for mobility and work opportunities. Some scholars suggest participation in community organizations is a way to create bridging social capital (Soroka et al, 2007, p.570). Of those who claimed to be part of a community organization, over 99% reported "strong" and "very strong" senses of belonging (Table 3.7). The comparable rate for those that did not participate is 96% --a small difference.

Something to consider is that only 18% of the sample belongs to an organization (Figure 3.2). None of the tests showed significance between these variables. As a modal response, 37% of those who participate in a group earn between \$40,000 and \$60,000 annually (Table 3.8). Speaking of social capital in terms of mobility, people who earn the highest reportable income comprise 24% of those who participate in an organization while people with no income make up for 17%. No statistical significance was found between these factors.

Table 3.7: Sense of Belonging to Canada by Social Capital

Sense of Belonging to Canada	Soc. Capital (Participation)		Total
	Yes	No	
Not strong at all	0 0%	257 0.48%	257 0.39%
Not strong	0 0%	40 0.08%	40 0.06%
Indifferent	44 0.37%	2,032 3.82%	2,076 3.18%
Strong	3,337 27.54%	7,150 13.43%	10,486 16.04%
Very strong	8,735 72.09%	43,776 82.20%	52,511 80.33%
Total	12,116 100%	53,255 100%	65,372 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted)



ighted).

Table 3.8: Income by Social Capital (Participation)

Income	Soc. Capital (Participation)		Total
	Yes	No	
No income or loss	1,851 17.49%	4,670 11.12%	6,521 12.41%
Less than \$20,000	1,084 10.24%	13,949 33.22%	15,032 28.60%
\$20,000 to less than \$40,000	1,174 11.10%	6,743 16.06%	7,918 15.06%
\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	3,950 37.33%	8,673 20.66%	12,623 24.01%
\$60,000 to less than \$80,000	0 0%	4,753 11.32%	4,753 9.04%
\$80,000 or more	2,521 23.83%	3,197 7.61%	5,718 10.88%
Total	10,580 100%	41,986 100%	52,566 100%

Data from Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey PUMF (Weighted).

The theory of social capital accepts the view that international migration is an individual or collective decision, but migration at one point will systematically alter the context within which future migration decisions are made, increasing the likelihood that later migrants will move to a place with an established community (Massey, 1999, p.45). Ethnic groups have alternative ways to survive economically; large concentrated populations of co-ethnics create a demand for specialized cultural products and services that immigrant entrepreneurs are qualified to fill (Ibid, p.30). When a group is large enough and has enough institutional completeness, the ability to provide immigrant services through its own institutions, it is possible to form an enclave that provides a sheltered economy for the members of the group (Breton, 1964; Li, 2003b, p.150). The strength of the ethnic enclave economy is premised on the growth in number and urban

concentration of immigrants and the ability of the community to take advantage of ethnic ties and relations to develop a protected economy (Li, 2004, p.180). The ethnic enclave economy thesis postulates that, rather than being handicapped by language and cultural barriers, ethnic affinity and cultural distinctiveness give immigrant employers privileged access to the immigrant labour market, as well as to an ethnically based consumer market while immigrant workers benefit from the employment opportunities. Professionals often advertise and offer services in ethnic languages. They do so to expand their clientele, but by doing so they further add to the institutional completeness of the community and express and reaffirm their sense of attachment to the group (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007, p.114).

Satzewich and Liodakis (Idem) note that ethnic enclaves have been constantly criticized for their negative aspects. From the social integration perspective, institutional completeness minimizes ‘unnecessary’ contact with non-group members. As for the economic consequences, minority occupational enclaves and minority social networks do not provide the necessary contacts to find good jobs (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p.494). The ethnic mobility entrapment thesis (Li, 2004, p.178-179) claims that the ethnic community provides certain opportunities to its members. However, in the long run the economic isolation of the community and its lack of access to lucrative job opportunities outside the community do not provide chances for upward mobility. In this way, strong ethnic ties and affinity can confine vulnerable immigrants in low paying jobs in ethnic businesses. In a similar fashion, the ethnic attachment thesis states that the maintenance of ethnic identity, social networks, and institutional affiliations come with costs to members of ethnic groups as they miss opportunities in economically rewarding jobs in the mainstream society (Ibid, p.177-178; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p.494). In other

words, ethnic groups and minority members who have been slow to assimilate tend to be penalized in earnings and economic status.

Although the Iranian population in Halifax is growing and there are some prosperous Iranian-owned businesses, the group has not developed an enclave economy. There seems to be a rift between cohorts of Iranian immigrants in Halifax based on religious and political affiliation and time length in Nova Scotia. I believe these divisions within the community are one of the reasons Iranian ethnic business has not prospered in the HRM. In addition, Iranians are not concentrated in a single residential area, which makes the creation of a captive market more difficult.

Although the participants in my study did not have plans to leave Nova Scotia, they mentioned friends and acquaintances that left the province to improve their economic situation in larger urban centers with a greater ethnic community. Furthermore, ethnic enclaves give professionals the opportunity to offer services in their field of expertise without having their credentials dismissed. The following statement illustrates the grounds for leaving Nova Scotia for a larger city:

[Immigrants] come, stay, try, fail, and leave. And then go to a city with a big market and a big [ethnic] community and they use their professional skills and become more satisfied than they are or they were in here. (...) The community is big in a city like Toronto, therefore the needs of those communities is larger than here. So if you have any profession, you will be able to use that profession (August 25, 2009).

The literature on social capital suggests that actors draw on resources from an established network and use them to pursue upward mobility (Coleman, 1988; Portes 1998). People with connections outside their immediate network have access to information that can result in work opportunities. However, this does not appear to be the case with Iranians in Halifax. Even people with extensive social networks in Halifax

cannot seem to use them for their economic benefit. A few exceptions have occurred among entrepreneurs who were already in a privileged position and expanded their business through bridging associations in Halifax. Coleman (1988) had already noted that the effective outcomes of social capital depend on class-based advantages because individuals in influential positions have access to resourceful and powerful circles.

Involvement in community organizations, however, is important because it confirms the literature on national cohesion, which states that participation in civic organizations facilitates interaction and builds trust that extends across ethnic and cultural boundaries, thus fostering a common sense of identity (Soroka et al, 2007). Social participation encompasses a number of practices that include voluntary sector activities as well as a range of other forms of interaction within the public and private spheres. Social participation goes beyond the issue of democratic participation and the strength of social commitment frequently mentioned when discussing social capital (Couton and Gaudet, 2008, p.24).

All participants in my study said they feel like they belong to the Halifax community. However, Iranian-Canadians in my case study who actively participate in organizations, such as cultural, political, and ethnic and immigrant organizations, or who do or have done volunteer work, take more pride in their sense of belonging than those who do not. Their involvement in public affairs gives them the sense that Halifax is a home they have helped build, and for that reason they have no intention of leaving Nova Scotia, regardless of their economic situation.

Overall, in this chapter I have discussed some of the most common obstacles immigrants face integrating in the Canadian labour market. Bi-variate analysis shows that

immigrants from the Middle East tend to have a strong sense of belonging to Canada in spite of adverse situations, such as ethnic discrimination in the work market. The recognition of foreign experience is a major obstacle for Iranian immigrants in Halifax and one of the main reasons for out-migration. Most participants in my study believe work opportunities are limited in Nova Scotia and the provincial government is not doing enough to retain the immigrant population. In consequence, some newcomers leave for cities like Toronto or Vancouver. In large urban centers, such as the aforementioned, the presence of a notable ethnic community provides immigrants with the opportunity to provide professional services to members of their group.

Literature on social capital suggests membership to networks can be used for economic mobility. This is not the case for Halifax Iranians. Social ties only seem to provide economic opportunities to people already endowed with class-based advantages. However, other forms of networking confirm studies on social commitment and belonging. Notably, participation in community organizations seems to foster a sense of pride and emotional attachment to Halifax.

Chapter 4 – Transnationalism and Long Distance Politics

Canadian immigrant integration policy acknowledges that immigrants' identities cannot be limited to being citizens of one country and presupposes that national allegiance to more than one nation-state does not necessarily pose a threat to national cohesion (Kymlica, 2007; Jedwab, 2007). Transnational practices, like obtaining dual citizenship and becoming involved in the politics of the homeland, are a sign of a sense of belonging and attachment that extends beyond Canadian borders and is, therefore, a logical extension of multiculturalism (Satzewich and Wong, 2006, p.4).

Contemporary immigration studies note that some immigrants live in more than one society and thus participate in the life of more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller, 1999). Iranian Haligonians are no exception. As described in the previous chapters, they actively participate in the political and economic life of Canada, their country of settlement. Yet Iranian Haligonians also take part in actions aimed at influencing political processes in their country of origin. This chapter details some considerations of transnationalism as a theoretical approach to immigration and describes how Iranian Haligonians participate in the life of their native land.

The interest of Iranian Haligonians in Iranian politics was fueled after the June 2008 presidential elections in their country of origin. As a result, social network sites became an important tool for facilitating cross-border participation. The Internet, along with other communication technologies, has provided protesters in both Halifax and Iran with the opportunity to engage in activism. My case study shows how the Internet links diasporas to the political life of their country of origin, thus facilitating transnationality. The actions taken by Iranian Haligonians after the presidential elections illustrate that immigrants can have a sense of belonging to more than one nation-state, as highlighted in

transnationalism theory, and raises questions about the power governments have over their citizens in the era of globalization.

Theorizing Transnationalism

Understanding transnationality requires abandoning methodological nationalism. As Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) explain, methodological nationalism is “an intellectual orientation that assumes national borders to be the natural unit of study, equates society with nation-state, and conflates interests with the purposes of social sciences” (as quoted in Glick Schiller, 2007, p.451). The origins of the modern state can be traced back to 17th century Europe. Following the Peace of Westphalia treaties, unified territories constituted a new system of political organization. Modern nation-states were formed under the ideal of self-determination, which included centralization of political power, expansion of state administration, and monopolization of the means of coercion by the state (Steger, 2003, p.57-61). Nationalism is “a set of beliefs and practices that link together people of a nation and its territory” (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.17-18). Nationalist culture absorbed the allegiances and identifications that previously resided in religious affiliation or regional identification (Anderson, 1991). Hall (2006) further develops this theme by asserting that the nation-state is not a political entity but a system of cultural representations that produce the idea of the ‘nation’ as an imagined community, substituting for pre-modern forms of collective identity. It constructs memories of a shared past to validate national interests (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994).

Nationalism assumes that a nation has the right to control itself by having its own state. For this purpose, a state is a “sovereign system of government within a particular

territory” (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.18). The common belief is that each nation, along with its corresponding society and culture, is exclusively located within its own separate national territory, delimited by international borders. This coincides with Anderson’s (1991) idea of nations as imagined communities because their physical boundaries and sovereignty are taken for granted (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.29). Although many countries are formally independent and democratic, they are intertwined in the global economy and international organizations.

Transnational migrants and the transnational political practices are not new phenomena; these processes are as old as modern nation-states (Glick Schiller 1999, 2007, p.452). Transnational and global studies, however, emerged at the end of the twentieth century. Glick Schiller (Ibid, p.95) attributes contemporary transmigration to the restructuring of global organization and accumulation of capital, and modifications between state structures and global economic processes. The speed, scope, and complexity of present-day cross-border interconnections and global processes cause an event in one place to immediately affect people and places a long distance away (Hall, 2006; Li, 2003b, p.3). The impact of globalization, however, depends on how much the states in question are incorporated in the international arena. Transmigration is the result of several technological advances in telecommunications and transportation, which facilitate the international flow of goods, capital, people, and ideas (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p.6).

It is important to make a distinction between globalization and transnationalism. The first focuses on recent reconfigurations of space, economies, polities, and other processes that happen, presumably, throughout the entire globe. The second refers to political, economic, social, and cultural processes that extend beyond the borders of a

particular nation-state and includes non-state actors who are shaped by the policies and practices of states (Glick Schiller, 1999, p.96). Transmigrants are people who maintain and develop multiple relationships —social, cultural, political, and economic— beyond borders with both country of origin and settlement (Basch et al, 1994, p.7). These relationships are known as transnational social fields and they exchange, organize and transform ideas, practices, and resources in an unequal manner (Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2004). Glick Schiller (2007) defines social fields as “an unbounded terrain of multiple interlocking egocentric networks” (p.455), where “networks” refer to social relationships that stretch out from a single individual. National social fields stay within national boundaries whereas transnational social fields operate across borders. The impact of transnational social fields is what distinguishes involvement in more than one country from cross-border ideas of membership or a social identity based on place of origin.

Multiple Belongings in Canada

The transnational activities of immigrants in Canada are subjected to similar critiques as multiculturalism as policy and practice: loyalties are shallow and unclear (Wong, 2007; Jedwab, 2007). However, critiques of multiculturalism revolve around integration, whereas negative views on transnationality focus on citizenship. Immigrants are not just workers but potential citizens as well, thus there are expected attitudes towards the polity of the country of settlement (Wong, 2003, p.366). Wong (2007) indicates that transnational practices do not hinder civic participation or diminish a sense of belonging to Canada. Ethnicity, rather than transnationality, is a more influential component of civic and political participation and emotional attachment to the country (Ibid, p.96). Similarly, Jedwab (2007) contends that dual citizenship does not affect

national allegiances. On the other hand, he warns about the risks of making the debate of attachment to Canada a matter of citizenship.

Interest in homeland issues can actually assist integration because it facilitates incorporation into the receiving society's political system (Wayland, 2006). When immigrants advocate for causes in their homeland, they generate social and political capital they can use in the long term in their host societies. The case of the Nova Scotia General Employees Union showing solidarity with the United Iranian Canadian Society in a cause related Iranian affairs, mentioned in Chapter 2, reflects how immigrants generate political capital in the country of settlement through transnational participation. Furthermore, lobbyists learn to negotiate in the political language of their country of settlement (Wayland, 2006, p.33).

Transnational Activism and Long-Distance Nationalism

Nation-states are constructed within a range of activities that strive to control and regulate territory, discipline subjects, and socialize citizens, but those processes and activities are not necessarily located within a single national territory (Glick Schiller, 2007, p.449). However, the identities of immigrant populations are still rooted in nation-states. People making claims to belong to a state by collectively organizing to protect themselves, gain rights, or make contributions to the development of that state are substantively acting as citizens, whether or not they have legal citizenship (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.25). Diasporas contribute to the imagined community in the nation-building project (Bernal, 2005, p.669). For example, long-distance nationalists engage in political projects oriented towards influencing the political situation within a territory they designate as their place of origin (Glick Schiller, 2005, p.571).

When a government does not respond to claims or resorts to repression, individuals and domestic groups often have no recourse within domestic political or judicial arenas. This leads domestic contenders to seek international connections to gain the attention of potential international allies (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p.12; Tarrow, 2005, p.145). When social movements become transnational, they seek to bypass their state and directly search for international help to bring pressure to their states (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p.12). This strategy is known as the “boomerang effect”. It relies partially on “mobilizing shame” by putting the behavior of target actors up to the light of international scrutiny. Insofar as activist networks can demonstrate that a state is violating international obligations or is not living up to its own claims, they hope to jeopardize its credit enough to motivate a change in policy or behavior. The degree to which states are vulnerable to this kind of pressure varies (Ibid, p.24).

As a result of the political instability that resulted from the 2009 Iranian presidential elections, many Iranian Haligonians became interested in the political events happening in their country of origin. Some interviewees admitted not following Iranian politics prior to the elections. Other participants have even become involved in transnational political activism. It is important to note that in most cases, interviewees’ interest in homeland politics depends on the relevance of the events in their country of origin. This is best exemplified by a participant who, when asked if he followed Iranian politics, replied “Now I do!” (July 9, 2009). Although most participants in my small sample claim to be interested in Iran’s current political situation, those who landed as refugees were more likely to take political action.

Immigrant activists live in two worlds: the world of their adopted countries and the world of their native countries (Tarrow, 2005, p.51). Conditions in either country may

encourage or obstruct the beliefs and practices that contribute to long-distance nationalism (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.21). Civil rights, such as freedom of assembly and expression, facilitate the maintenance of ethnic identities and transnational activism (Tarrow, 2005, p.52; Wayland, 2006, p.21). Similarly, the situation of the sending state, as well as the conditions of departure and context of arrival, are also determinant. Some immigrants, including several participants in my study, might leave a situation of persecution for a democratic state that guarantees civil liberties. In such situation, migrants have strong grievances and are able to take advantage of newfound freedoms to organize and accumulate resources to an extent that was not possible in the homeland (Wayland, 2006, p. 30). A conflictive sending state contributes to the formation of transnational ties because diasporas want to keep track of the homeland's politics (Ibid, p.25).

Every participant in the study described Canada as a "free country". Iranian-Canadians who live in Halifax and are deeply involved in transnational political activism feel that they should take advantage of the political freedom in their country of residence to speak up on behalf of their Iranian co-nationals who are subjected to an oppressive regime. Nikki Jafari, spokesperson for Iranian Haligonians, explains:

When you look around the world right now, look at Iran and Middle East, look at other parts of the world, people are fighting for basic human rights, human rights that we take for granted every day living in North America or other parts of the world. (...) There are a lot of people in Iran who want to have a voice but they don't have a voice; they want to voice all their anger and their frustration but they don't have a voice and I feel that since we're allowed to voice our opinions, we should speak on their behalf (June 24, 2009).

Social movements have retained their national character, remaining tied to the waves of political opportunities present in individual states, but they have also increasingly become transnational (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005. p.10). Tarrow (2005,

p.5) identifies globalization as a cause of transnational activism. Rapid electronic communication, cheaper international travel, and diffusion of the English language have also facilitated transnational coalitions. Non-state actors provide information that would not otherwise be available and try to make this information comprehensible and useful to activists and publics who may be geographically and/or socially distant (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p.16). In a parallel fashion, non-governmental actors depend on their access to information to legitimate their claims (Ibid, p.17). Transnational diffusion, however, does not guarantee either the success of a new form of contention or its popularity among people far away from the struggle (Tarrow, 2005, p.118).

The Iranian government censored its opposition through control over traditional media (Blair, 2009; Santana, 2009). Consequently, the Internet has played a major role as a communication tool for the Iranian dissents in the current political crisis. Actors use the web to gain attention by attempting to increase concern in other parts of the world (Dartnell, 2006, p.18). The Internet is, without doubt, an important tool for diffusing information; however, the importance of this medium in social movements goes beyond communication. A group website, with very little need for formal organization behind it, can be used as a node for organizing protest campaigns or communities, as seen in previous chapters. If the Internet has become a basic organizing tool in liberal democratic states, it must have great potential in organizing transnational contention, where activists at great distance from one another have little opportunity to develop face-to-face ties (Tarrow, 2005, p.137). New forms of electronic communications, such as social networking sites, make it easier for activists to communicate with one another even in the midst of an episode of contention (Ibid, p.103). Iranian citizens use digital cameras and cell phones to capture protests and then post them on *Youtube* while *Twitter* and the social

network site *Facebook* have been used to organize mobilization, inform on the opposition's activities, and garner support (CIMA, 2009). The use of these sites throughout the uprising has drawn international attention as a novelty. These communication technologies have been used to challenge the Iranian state's control of the traditional media. States interfere but are unable to completely eliminate the entry of what they consider dangerous views via the Internet (Dartnell, 2006, p.17). Even when the Iranian government blocks sites like *Twitter* or *Facebook*, people use Internet servers from another country or rely on sympathizers from other nations who upload the information on the SNSs and provide downloadable software to help evade censorship (Stone and Cohen, 2009; NedaNet, 2009).

The construction of a national space within cyberspace demonstrates that the Internet can be used as a transnational public sphere for the circulation of news and views about politics (Bernal, 2005, p.661). Cyberspace links diasporas to the political life of their nation of origin by offering the opportunity to center political participation and civic engagement on a distant homeland. Nonetheless, technological innovation does not inevitably lead to greater participation nor does it enhance social justice or radically transform politics (Dartnell, 2006, p.26, 44). A public sphere cannot be reduced to access to information; in true democracy, the opinions formed in the public sphere must be linked to government decision-making (Bernal, 2005, p.672).

The Iranian Haligonians interviewed in my study identified *Facebook* as their most reliable tool for transnational activism. The SNS was mainly used to share posted videos, articles, and opinions. The "Halifax Iranians" *Facebook* group was created prior to the Iranian elections for social purposes. During the weeks following the elections, the site became a platform for political activism, enabling users to coordinate and promote

mobilization in Halifax. Throughout this period, the *Facebook* group's most representative forms of transnational activism were the organization of demonstrations and the promotion of a Halifax created memorial fund.

Participants in this study said that demonstrations were the main form of long-distance activism for Iranian Haligonians. Demonstrations, which are historically connected with democratization, can spread rapidly from place to place and combine many social actors. They can be employed on behalf of a claim, against an opponent, to express the existence of a group, or to express solidarity with another group. Oppressive states regard demonstrations as potential riots, which leads to brutal repression. Protests have become the major non-electoral expression of civil politics (Tarrow, 1998, p.100). Tarrow (2005, p.6) claims that new electronic technologies and broader access to them have enhanced the capacity for movement campaigns to be organized rapidly and effectively. *Facebook* was a useful tool for organizing demonstrations in the HRM, some of which were planned 2 days in advance in the "Halifax Iranians" discussion board.

Protests and demonstrations usually intend to disrupt the normal functioning of the target group's realization of interests to such an extent that the cessation of the offending tactic becomes a sufficient inducement to grant concessions (McAdam, 1983; 735-736). Although this is the case in Iran, the Halifax demonstrations that took place throughout the summer of 2009 were peaceful, quiet, and in compliance with the city's policies. Both Iranians and non-Iranians were invited to raise public awareness of the human rights violations in Iran and express discontent towards the results of the elections. An interviewee explains the importance of demonstrations outside Iran in the following statement: "People who are in Iran can know that they are not alone; people around the

world feel their pain and are connected to their pain, frustration and sorrow” (June 24, 2009).

Another action taken by Iranian Haligonians was the creation of a fund motivated by the death of Neda Agha-Soltan, a student who was shot during a protest in Iran (Moar, 2009). The resource mobilization theory on social movements states that resources, both material and symbolic, are central to the success of collective action (Staggenborg, 2008, p.16). Resources include skills, money, and time for movement mobilization. These assets do not necessarily come from aggrieved groups, but many come from conscience constituents who contribute to movements but do not personally benefit from their achievements (Idem). Furthermore, it is easier to mobilize resources from affluent countries (Van Hear, 2005, p.585). The Neda Fund, promoted by a *Facebook* group, was set up for people nationwide to make donations. The money raised was donated to the United Nations Relief Fund on behalf of Agha-Soltan. Activists frame issues around symbolic events, such as Agha-Soltan’s death, that heighten awareness of a particular situation (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p.22). The interpretations of these events, known as collective action frames, legitimate and motivate collective action through the construction of cultural meaning to identify injustice, attribute blame, and propose solutions (Staggenborg, 2008, p.18). The Neda Fund, besides paying homage to Agha-Soltan, was intended to create awareness on people risking their lives for human rights.

Iranian Haligonians feel a sense of duty to show support to their co-nationals in the midst of a political crisis in Iran. Their interest and actions show that they are still involved in the social and political affairs of their country of origin. Communication technologies enable diasporas in Western countries to advance their causes in their home

countries without leaving their place of residence (Tarrow, 1998, p.180). The role of the Internet in the Iranian uprising has been the centre of attention in media coverage, but the use of *Facebook* by Iranian Haligonians is not to be overlooked. Although the SNS was not the only cause for mobilization, it did facilitate coordination and helped reduce timeframes for organizing collective action. However, the “Halifax Iranians” *Facebook* group has gradually lost the political tone and regained its initial social character.

The actions taken by Iranian Haligonians, particularly in organizing and attending demonstrations, show how transnational contenders challenge the nation-state’s autonomy when it becomes unable to constrain collective action from abroad (Idem). In domestic terms, involvement in the homeland’s affairs does not diminish sense of belonging. Iranian immigrants in Halifax are taking advantage of the conditions in their country of settlement to advance claims regarding their country of origin. The inclusion of non-Iranians in the demonstrations as well as the support provided by the NSGEU shows solidarity from the larger society. In this case, transnational activism has the ability to unite ethnic groups with other sectors of society through common interests in political causes, such as human rights issues.

Although protests and the Neda Fund showed support for the movement in Iran and created international awareness through media coverage, Iranian Haligonians have not formed any organization or coalition that directly fights the Iranian government at the international level. It is debatable whether these long-distance nationalists can be referred to as transnational activists or part of a social movement. However, it is clear that they have mobilized resources in favour of a movement. The extent to which these mobilizations will affect Iranian politics is impossible to measure or predict.

Not all Iranian Haligonians are equally involved in the affairs of their country of origin. For many, interest in Iranian politics is salient only during times of political unrest. Interviewees who claimed to be deeply involved in activities such as the Neda Fund were already involved in community organizations. These facts challenge claims that ties to the homeland impede civic and social participation. Furthermore, the repression in Iran and the ability to publicly protest against it reinforced Iranian Haligonians' appreciation of the rights and freedoms they enjoy in Canada. In this case, transnationalism has a positive effect on sense of belonging to the new country of residence.

Chapter 5– Conclusion

Over the past few years the HRM has attracted an increasing influx of Iranian immigrants. Although the province has faced considerable difficulties in retaining its immigrant population, my research suggests that Iranians develop a sense of belonging to Halifax and Canada. Out-migration, therefore, seems to be a result of structural barriers mostly related to employment.

I used theory on multiculturalism, the preferred model for immigrant incorporation in Canada (Kymlicka, 1998; Jedwab, 2007; Biles et al, 2005), to examine how policies help newcomers integrate in the recipient society. The idea of multiculturalism appears to be positively shaping immigrants' Canadian identity. Participants in my study, however, are not familiar with the policies and understand the term to mean demographic diversity. All 8 interviewees, ranging in years in Canada from 30 to 1, referred to themselves as “Canadian” or “Iranian-Canadian”, which reflects a sense of belonging and commitment to Canada. At the same time, it shows that ethnicity is also important to immigrants, as noted by James (1989), and is not mutually exclusive with their Canadian identity related to values such as diversity, rights, and freedoms.

Most participants, particularly refugees, skilled workers, and family class immigrants, chose Canada for its civil and human rights record. It can be inferred that they have a predisposition to integrate and embrace the liberal democratic values that attracted them to the country in the first place. The Maritime Secular Legal Network Association, discussed in Chapter 2, illustrates how immigrants favour the aforementioned values, which is the ultimate goal of multiculturalism policies. Simultaneously, it also shows that some immigrants do not entirely agree with the degree of cultural relativism embedded in those policies.

Interviewees feel the government is not doing its best to help immigrants settle, particularly in relation to providing accessible to information, which ranges from buying household items to doing taxes. As a result, people cannot connect with the resources that are available to them. Several participants believe the language used in government documents is confusing in spite of their proficiency in English. It is worth exploring if immigrants from a different background are experiencing a similar situation. Some participants could not avoid drawing a comparison to Toronto, where government documents are available in Farsi. It might be beneficial to get both the UICS and the ICS more involved in settlement related activities, with public funding being an incentive for the time and human capital used. Additionally, the provincial government could take a more active role and collaborate with the Iranian organizations directly, not just through ISIS, to improve its image even if it is just symbolically.

The government's performance in helping immigrants settle gets the most criticism when it comes to integrating newcomers into the labour market. The findings of my quantitative study using data from the 2002 EDS show that, in spite of economic obstacles, immigrants from the Middle East have a strong sense of belonging to Canada. The case of the Iranian Haligonians in my study is similar. However, the lack of economic opportunities, mainly characterized by the dismissal of foreign credentials and professional experience, is the main reason for leaving the province. Ethnic enclaves in larger cities enable professionals to provide services in their fields. As a way to mitigate the effects of foreign experience recognition and the shortcomings of the employment market in the HRM, some Iranian immigrants enroll continuing education or go into self-employment. These options, however, require investments that not everyone can afford. For some people, acquiring a Canadian degree provides better chances for employment

but also entails taking on long-term financial debt. In addition, the Iranian community in Halifax has not developed an ethnic market. I believe this is a consequence of divisions within the ethnic community rather than a matter of group size. Participants claim that Iranians who leave the province go to cities where the presence of a larger co-ethnic population provides more employment opportunities, as suggested by the enclave economy thesis (Breton, 1964; Massey, 1999, p.30; Li, 2004).

Immigrants who have been in Nova Scotia for less than 2 years chose to come to the province but say that their plans to stay depend entirely on work opportunities. This is a concern because every participant believes the province does not have a lot of opportunities to offer. In order to counter the impact of these limitations, the foreign credential issue must be addressed as soon as possible.

The literature on social capital states that social ties can be used for economic mobility (Granovetter, 1973; Portes, 1998; Li, 2004). But in my sample only those people who were already in a privileged socioeconomic position were able to draw on their networks for upward mobility. Another approach to social capital indicates that networks that extend beyond ethnic groups facilitate integration and reinforce a sense of belonging to the larger society (Soroka et al, 2007). I found that active membership in community organizations generates a sense of pride and strengthens the sense of belonging to Halifax. Interviewees who are active in organizations have no intention of leaving the province regardless of their economic situation.

I used theory on transnationality as a second approach to explore how Iranian immigrants developed a sense of belonging in Halifax in relation to their country of origin. Critics claim that the transnational practices of immigrants in Canada interfere with full citizenship, as national loyalties become unclear. Some authors believe these

claims are inaccurate and involvement in homeland affairs has no effect on attachment to Canada (Jedwab, 2007; Wong, 2007). The findings show that transnational practices do not weaken affiliation to the country of settlement in the case of Iranian Haligonians. The most salient aspect of transnationality for participants in my study is political involvement. The 2009 presidential elections in Iran sparked a series of social movements that advocate for a political reform. The events that followed in Iran in the summer of 2009 engaged Iranian Haligonians in a form of transnationality known as long-distance nationalism (Glick Schiller, 2005, p.570). It is important to note that in most cases interviewees' interest in Iranian politics depends on what they consider relevant regarding the events in their country of origin.

Demonstrations were the main form of activism undertaken by Iranian Haligonians. The protests were non-violent and orderly and were meant to raise public awareness on Iran's political situation. This type of collective action follows the boomerang effect pattern, in which challengers try to jeopardize the reputation of the actor they oppose in the international arena (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p.12; Tarrow, 2005, p.145-6). Iranian Haligonians were also responsible for creating a memorial fund that was donated to the United Nations Relief Fund. Finally, the NSGEU showed solidarity with the UICS in condemning the actions taken by the government against demonstrators in Iran, providing an example of how transnational advocacy can engage immigrant groups with the larger society. I do not believe Iranian Haligonians are part of a social movement in the sense that they are not continuously challenging the Iranian government. However, their actions were intended to mobilize resources in favour of a regime change in their country of origin.

Iranian Haligonians took advantage of the conditions of their country of residence to speak out in behalf on their co-nationals in their country of origin. This shows that participants in my research appreciate and support what they identify as Canadian values such as human and civil rights. Their involvement in demonstrations and other activities shows that their Iranian identity is not merely ethnic, but a matter of political views as well. It is possible to say that in my case study transnationality consists of participating in the nation-building project of two countries.

Social network sites proved to be an important tool in exchanging information about the events in Iran and mobilizing resources in Halifax. Communication technologies help link diasporas to their country of origin (Bernal, 2005) and facilitate transnational activism (Dartnell, 2006; Tarrow, 1998, p.180; Tarrow, 2005,). The political impact of these technologies is further assessed by the MSLNA, which worked with similar organizations in different provinces in a campaign against Shari'a law in Canada. But the scope of social network sites is not limited to the political realm. SNSs are used as social spaces to exchange information relevant to Iranians in Halifax. Some newcomers use *Facebook* to map the community and people who left the province use it to stay in touch. Further research should be done on the role of SNSs in shaping and preserving ethnic identity and forming social capital among ethnic groups in Canada.

The number of immigrants from Iran is increasing in the HRM. In many cases, changing one's country of residence has to do with human rights rather than economic improvement, which some authors identify as the main reason for migrating (Ogbu, 1993; Li, 2003, p.5; Massey, 1999, p.35-36). This does not mean that immigrants are willing to be underemployed for the sake of human and civil rights. People choose to settle in the HRM because they are attracted to tranquility of a small city. As I have demonstrated,

multiculturalism contributes to a sense of belonging to Canada while participating in community organizations develops a sense of belonging to Halifax. Iranian newcomers are showing willingness and disposition to settle in Nova Scotia.

The provincial government is continuously working on attracting new immigrants and increasing Nova Scotia's immigrant retention rate. However, negative perceptions of the province's economic potential, lack of government involvement with ethnic organizations, and unfavourable opinions of the settlement assistance available to newcomers hint that different measures might be needed. The provincial government needs to become more visibly involved in ensuring that newcomers' human capital is put to adequate use and their needs are met.

Appendix 1: Gamma Tests, Kendall's Tau-b, and Pearson's Chi² Tests

Note: Due to the way certain Stata commands operate, the following values are not weighted.

1. Belonging by income

Gamma = 0.0486 ASE = 0.088
Kendall's tau-b = 0.0269 ASE = 0.049
Pearson chi²(20) = 18.1145 Pr = 0.580

2. Belonging by discrimination at work

Gamma = 0.0537 ASE = 0.196
Kendall's tau-b = 0.0253 ASE = 0.092
Pearson chi²(3) = 0.1865 Pr = 0.980

3. Income by discrimination at work

Gamma = -0.3495 ASE = 0.136
Kendall's tau-b = -0.2209 ASE = 0.088
Pearson chi²(5) = 7.8235 Pr = 0.166

4. Discrimination by highest level of schooling attained

Gamma = 0.2497 ASE = 0.127
Kendall's tau-b = 0.1616 ASE = 0.083
Pearson chi²(6) = 10.0756 Pr = 0.122

5. Belonging by place where highest degree of schooling was attained

Gamma = 0.2453 ASE = 0.108
Kendall's tau-b = 0.1088 ASE = 0.050
Pearson chi²(4) = 5.2885 Pr = 0.259

6. Income by place where highest degree of schooling was attained

Gamma = 0.0482 ASE = 0.079
Kendall's tau-b = 0.0298 ASE = 0.049
Pearson chi²(5) = 1.0331 Pr = 0.960

7. Belonging by social capital

Gamma = 0.0661 ASE = 0.264
Kendall's tau-b = 0.0208 ASE = 0.086
Pearson chi²(4) = 0.5763 Pr = 0.966

8. Income by social capital

Gamma = -0.1072	ASE = 0.188
Kendall's tau-b = -0.0516	ASE = 0.091
Pearson $\chi^2(5) = 6.5752$	Pr = 0.254

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees and Dates

Maryam (June 6th, 2009): Married, 34 years old. 3 years in Canada. Administrative personnel.

Shirin (June 18th, 2009): Married, 33 years old. 1 year in Canada. Cashier.

Nikki (June 24th, 2009)*: Divorced, 30 years old. 20 years in Canada. Mortgage broker.

Hami (June 29th, 2009): Married, 41 years old. 17 years in Canada. Transportation worker.

Saeed (July 9th, 2009): Married, 50 years old. 30 years in Canada. Business owner.

Kamyar(July 29th, 2009): Married, 50 years old. 27 years in Canada. Business owner.

Behbud (August 25th, 2009): Married, 45 years old. 10 years in Canada. Information analyst.

Massoud (November 19th, 2009): Married, 52 years old. 3 years in Canada. Entrepreneur.

(March 8th, 2010). Follow-up interview with representatives of UICS and MSLNA.

8 interviews: 5 males and 3 females, all of whom live in the Halifax Regional Municipality. All names in text are pseudonyms and some details have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. Interview dates are included above.

*The participant requested to not have her identity masked.

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