

Picturing Halifax: Young Immigrant Women and the Social Construction of Urban Space

by

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Abstract

This study explores the social construction of space in the lives of young immigrant women. Drawing upon data from photo-elicitation interviews, I analyze how young women who recently immigrated to Canada interpret and transform the meanings of spaces in their everyday lives. Using the social construction of space as a conceptual framework, I demonstrate how the social positions of young immigrant women are reflected in and negotiated through their use of urban space. While participants share perceptions of risk and experiences of gendered safety issues, all negotiate these issues by gaining spatial knowledge through exploration. They all also experience Otherness in various spaces. However, they construct belonging by developing diverse social networks, claiming space, and getting involved in the international community. It is evident that the city affects how, and *whether*, young immigrant women mobilize their identities as immigrants. New spaces bring new understandings of their identities as women, young people, and immigrants. This study illuminates how young immigrant women transform cities, and how, in turn, the city transforms them.

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Introduction: Addressing the rise of diversity

The experience of the city is not entirely individualized. Gender, ethnicity, age, class, and cultural values are all elements that influence how one interprets and navigates urban space. However, people also exist as social agents who construct and shape their own unique meanings within those spaces (Low, 1996b). As spaces are reconfigured, interpreted, and experienced differently according to people's social positions, they are constantly changing. The accelerated mobility brought by globalization has saturated urban space with diverse everyday encounters that transform both the city and the people living in it. Immigration and its by-product of 'urban multicultural' have been positioned as exterior forces imposing on the fabric of countries and the cities within them (Hall, 2015, p. 854). However, immigration must not be understood as invasive reconfiguration (Hall, 2015); rather, immigrants actively shape urban space while negotiating the difference that characterizes their everyday lives.

Globalization continues to bring an increase of urbanization and diversity to Canada, with 95 percent of immigrants choosing to live in cities (Statistics Canada, 2011) and immigration targets increasing to 320,000 newcomers settling in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Young immigrant women settling in Canadian cities contend with the intersection of age, gender, and immigrant status as social positions that shape encounters with their urban environment. Facing numerous transitions, young immigrant women are required to 'grow up' and 'adapt' while establishing jobs, social networks, new understandings of gender, mobility, identities, and new modes of being. Debates in feminist theory have highlighted the need to incorporate intersectionality into analysis, meaning it is vital to address the overlap of multiple social positions such as gender, race, age, and class (Maynard, 1994, 2002). Although there is an increase in studies within urban anthropology that address intersections of youth, race, gender,

and urban space, the integration of the immigrant experience along with these social positions is underdeveloped. Additionally, further research is needed to incorporate intersectionality in youth studies (Green & Singleton, 2006). This study addresses the need to incorporate young immigrant women's voices, particularly those who have settled recently, into social research by examining the intersections of gender, age, and the immigrant experience within urban space. Young immigrant women's voices must be brought to the forefront of urban policy in order to work towards a city that accommodates *all* people. This leads to my research question: how do young immigrant women socially construct space in Halifax, Nova Scotia?

To address this question, I use photo-elicitation interviews to illuminate the experiences of eight young immigrant women who have immigrated to Canada in the last eight years. Through this participatory approach, I explore how young immigrant women construct 'belonging' in their new city, and how the experience of space in Halifax compares to the participants' country of origin. Situated in broader discussions in urban anthropology and geography, this study looks at how young immigrant women are shaped by the urban landscape, and in turn, how the urban landscape shapes them. As defined by Low (1996a), the social construction of space is the "phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict, and control" (p. 861).). I use this key concept to gather insight into the way young immigrant women experience and transform space in Halifax, a coastal city in Nova Scotia, Canada that is relatively small yet the economic and cultural hub of the Atlantic region..

According to the National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2013), Halifax has an immigrant population of 31,245, or 8.1 percent of the total population. 8,305 of Halifax's total immigrant population (31, 245) arrived between 2006 and 2011. This is more than a 50 percent

increase from the number of newcomers arriving between 2001 and 2005. Of the 8,305 immigrants arriving in Halifax between 2006 and 2011, 46 percent are women, and 14.5 percent of those women are between 15-24 at the age of immigration. In order address the rise of immigration in Halifax, we must ask how bottom-up, participatory approaches to urban development and policy-making can integrate voices of newcomers.

Organizationally, this paper begins with an overview of the social construction of space as a conceptual framework and draws on studies that give insights into gender, age, the immigrant experience, and urban space. Second, a detailed outline of the study's methodology is provided. Third, I explore how risk perceptions affect participants' experience of space, and how participants negotiate these gendered safety issues through developing spatial knowledge. Fourth, I discuss the way in which women navigate encounters with Otherness through sociability, renewing international networks, diversity, and claiming space. Fifth, I outline how space is shaped by memory of both similarities and differences in relation to their home country. Lastly, the ways in which young immigrant women access and mobilize new identities as immigrants, women, and young people are examined.

The Social Construction of Space: Gender, Age, and the Immigrant Experience

In this section, I outline the conceptualization of space in urban anthropology and geography and draw on various studies to frame my research. Recognizing that there are many areas of action in cities (Cruces, 2016), my study defines urban space as any space that is occupied by participants within the city, both public and private.

The notion that space is simply a passive, neutral setting in which things occur has been problematized in urban anthropology and geography. Places are not "inert containers", but rather "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" (Rodman,

1992, p. 641). Rather than being viewed as a static backdrop to key events, place needs to be conceptualized. Addressing this need, the social construction of space is a way in which locality is accounted for and theorized. The social construction of space is a transformative process conducted through people's "social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting" (Low, 1996a, p. 862). Therefore, space has multiple meanings for different people. Rodman (1992) argues that place is both *multilocal* and *multivocal*. Viewing space as 'multilocal' can refer to conceptualizing space "from the viewpoint of Others" (p. 646), through comparative examination, constructed through reflexivity, and possessing "polysemic meanings" (p. 647) for different occupants. This last point implies that spaces are also 'multivocal', meaning that spaces are composed of different narratives, highlighting the ways in which people construct multiple definitions of space. Massey (1994) builds on this insight stating, "social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted by those holding different positions as part of it" (p. 3). Low (1996a) further develops the ideas of the social construction of space, 'multilocality', and 'multivocality' in her fieldwork in Costa Rica. For example, she discovers that men tend to feel love for and attachment to Parque Central plaza, while women typically avoid the plaza due to the high number of unemployed men and low number of women present (Low, 1996a). This ethnographic account provides an example in which space and place are multivocalic and multilocal, constituting different meanings for different people based on social position and practice. These developments towards the role of space and place in society build the theoretical framework in this study.

For Massey (1994), the spatial world moves beyond "internal histories" and "timeless identities" (p. 5). In response to globalization, Massey (1994) makes a key argument towards a progressive, "global sense of place" where "people are everywhere conceptualizing and acting

on different spatialities” (p.4). This means that space cannot be defined as having a singular identity; rather, spaces are composed of “linking place to places beyond” (Massey, 1994, p. 156). The notion that space is the “lived world in physical form” (Rodman, 1992, p. 650) problematizes the dichotomy of the local and the global. Aiming to integrate “the localized discourse with larger political and economic processes” (p. 863), Low (1996a) discovers that different groups appropriate space in accordance to their social positions. Low (1996a) observed the plaza transforming into a “public forum for the expression of cultural conflict, social change, and attempts at class-based, gender segregated, and age-specific social control” (p. 876). These notions reinforce the importance of analysing the social construction of space for different groups of people. Employing the social construction of space as a conceptual framework can both “contextualize the forces” that construct it (Low, 1996a, p. 862), and illuminate the experiences of social actors who construct their own meaningful realities. Thus, examining how young immigrant women socially construct space shapes new understandings of immigrant settlement and integration in Canada.

Gender and Urban Space

The relationship between gender and urban space is reciprocal, influencing the formation of gender identity as well as *how* and *why* space is socially constructed. For Massey (1994), places themselves are not only gendered in the messages they transmit and relations they form, but they also “reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood” (p. 179). The discourse regarding women and space has long followed the domestic-public dichotomy, with men dominating public space and women confined to domestic space as a consequence of their gender roles (Rosaldo, 1974). Massey (1994) outlines that women’s *identities* are restricted as a consequence of their constrained spatial mobility, largely contributing to their subordination.

However, this spatial dichotomy is contested by the inadequacies between gender ideology and its ability to provide an accurate picture of women's realities (Brettell & Sargent, 2013). In other words, although women are in principle limited by spatial gendered restraints, reality is more convoluted.

In a participatory photo project of migrant women in Sweden, inclusion and exclusion were examined through the social construction of urban space. During this study, women were asked to take photos of what spaces brought them happiness and joy (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012). Common photos taken amongst participants were at school, with a culturally diverse mix of female friends, and photos of solitary moments in city centres. The researchers suggest that both spaces (social relationships at school and solitary city centres) exist as a "space between cultures" (p. 607), where ethnicity does not matter and participants find homogeneity through their ethnically diverse friend groups. As highlighted by the researchers, no photos of social relationships at school included men, and men did not speak during class talks conducted as part of the research project. Women involved in this study chose photos of their school as a site of connectedness and where important female social relationships are formed. Although men attend the school, the women in this study did not include men as a part of their inclusionary spaces. Thus, the researchers infer that the notion of belonging in space for migrant women is highly gendered, stating, "when considering gender as one of a series of social identities, the gendered space that exists between sameness and otherness is one where gender might be used as a rallying point for the common interests of women" (p. 610).

Although all women experience gendered space, white privileged women in Canada develop a sense of "at-homeness" (Koskela, 1997) through knowledge about their urban environment and safety. In Kern's (2005) study in Toronto, privileged white women feel 'at

home', and therefore safe, in their urban environments through the empowerment provided by their career, university education, wide access to resources, social life of the city, and confidence. All of these factors are part of these white women's lives and accumulated *through* privilege. This underscores the need for further examination of how newcomer woman construct belonging in urban space amongst inequality and racialized contexts.

Both of these studies exemplify ways in which the social construction of space reflects difference, how women feel a sense of belonging, and how women socially construct space based on their social position. In Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch's (2012) study, migrant women's position was strengthened by establishing a space between otherness and sameness in diverse female social relationships. Furthermore, Kern's (2005) study emphasizes the need to examine how ethnic minorities feel safe and "at home" if they do not have the same resources as her white, privileged participants. Both leave out the importance of age in these constructions of belonging. However, by comparing experiences of privileged women and racialized minorities in Kern (2005) and Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch (2012), we can observe the hierarchal and asymmetrical socio-spatial dialectic of women and space.

Youth and Urban Space

Just as gender is affected and reflected by the social construction of space, people of different age groups negotiate and experience urban space in diverse ways. Although often seen as "passive recipients of social transformations" (Nayak, 2003, p. 167), young people exist as powerful social agents producing their own spatial knowledge and identity. Green and Singleton (2006) problematize the notion that young people are passive and homogenous, illuminating the ways in which young women navigate leisure in culturally meaningful contexts. In their study of women in North-East England, Green and Singleton (2006) explore ideas of safety, danger, and

place held by South Asian and white women (all born in UK). This study demonstrates that young girls are aware of their racialized identity when considering themselves vulnerable to male physical violence in outdoor spaces (p. 860). Furthermore, although people in the area shout obscenities at the women such as, “go back to your own country” and “Pakis get out”, the South Asian women negotiate the “Otherness” ascribed to them by asserting the local space as their home, displaying pride in their cultural identity, and responding to abusers through “silent opposition and verbal countenance” (p. 862). If space is where young people form and negotiate identity (Green & Singleton, 2006), then it is imperative that urban anthropologists attend to these processes. These studies also call for further research to be conducted on the perceptions and experiences young people have of the spatiality of risk, and how they negotiate this in urban space. Although Green and Singleton (2006) address the intersections of race, gender, youth, and space, they do not include the immigrant experience.

Aiming to address the lack of focus on young people in urban studies, Skelton and Gough (2013) illuminate the importance of young people’s mobility in identity formation through a case study of Auckland, New Zealand. The influence of the urban landscape on identity formation and young people’s experience of cities is another way space is ‘multilocal’ and ‘multivocal’ (Rodman, 1992). Young people are characterized by their transitions; for example, many of Skelton and Gough’s (2013) participants were completing examinations, changing jobs or schools, and exploring their identities. This study argues that mobility between different spaces is integral to achieving independence, sustaining relationships, and ‘growing up’ (Skelton & Gough, 2013). Skelton and Gough (2013) argue that the everyday processes of mobility are integral to forming social identity and the “production, creation and alteration of city spaces” (p. 481). The strength of Skelton and Gough’s (2013) argument stems from the 81 semi-structured

interviews conducted with young urban dwellers, allowing them to describe their subjective experiences. Following the idea that “the city is constituted at the street level through footsteps” (Skelton & Gough, 2013, p. 468), understandings of city life must be built at street level as well.

Studies conducted by Skelton and Gough (2013) and Green and Singleton (2006) exemplify the power of qualitative interviews for recognizing patterns of how young people socially construct space, what’s important to them, and how they contend with inequality. These studies also call for an increased attention to intersectionality (Green & Singleton, 2006) and youth (Skelton & Gough, 2013) within urban studies.

Immigrant Experience and Urban Space

Migration challenges the seemingly natural and tight integration between ‘local’ and ‘community’ (Massey, 1994). Viewing these as conceptually identical creates a perception of space and place as rooted in one essentialist narrative (Massey, 1994). Globalization has propelled the movement of people throughout the world, with each person occupying different spaces throughout their journeys. This problematizes the idea of space as fixed, stagnant, and locally rooted. Massey (1994) argues that space is “formed out of social interrelations, and a proportion of those interrelations— larger or smaller, depending on the time and on the place— will stretch beyond that place itself” (p. 115). In other words, the social construction of space at the micro level represents a ‘snippet’ of the larger global network of social interactions and interpretations.

Immigration brings diversity to the social exchanges of everyday life and functions as an integral part of urban transformation (Hall, 2015). Hall (2015) argues that the key to understanding urbanization and migration lies in understanding these processes as “participatory rather than an invasive” (p. 854) processes of change. Hall (2015) emphasizes that examining the

‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ opens new understandings of immigration as “part of the lived processes of societal change” (p. 855). Using London, UK, as a case study, Hall (2015) discovers that constructing a sense of belonging is not a process of cultural acceptance, but rather an engaged negotiation of diversity within the framework of inequality. Hall (2015) outlines that migrants practice “everyday resistance”, transforming London streets into platforms of “shared discontent” (p. 859) and learning multiple languages to allow for strategic economic networking.

As Hickman et al. (2008) observe in the UK, dominant political expectations assume that immigrant social ‘cohesion’ and ‘assimilation’ occur on a platform of inclusive British values. Although this is in a UK context, the same notion can be applied to Canada with the policy of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism as a national symbol implies that Canada has structures and understandings towards multiculturalism and acceptance, which shape immigrant expectations. While I acknowledge the criticism and discussion towards Canada’s commitment to multiculturalism, (see Bissoondath, 2002), in order to discuss space and place in depth within the boundaries of my methods, I will not comment on it in great detail. However, for the context of this study, it is important to emphasize that despite this multicultural policy in Canada, immigrants are often subject to feeling like an Other.

Acknowledging that Atlantic Canada is diversifying its population, Tastoglou et al. (2015) address immigrant integration in Atlantic Canada. Tastoglou et al. (2015) argue that welcoming newcomers, an objective reinforced through multiple constituencies expressing concern with the “attraction and retention of immigrants” (p. 2), extends beyond the micro-processes of everyday life. Tastoglou et al. (2015) emphasize the “institutional and structural layers” (p. 4) that influence life for immigrants. However, as Hall (2015) highlights, understanding the “micro-global networks that are sustained by migrants in on-going urban

transformations”, (Hall, 2015, p. 857) cannot be neglected. The importance of analysing the ‘everyday’ and ‘ordinary’ is further explored through Rahder and McLeans’ (2013) study of immigrant women in Toronto. Rahder and McLean (2013) develop the idea of “other ways of knowing your place” (p.145). That is, through the process of acquiring spatial knowledge– the social process whereby meaning is attached to space– immigrant women navigate the lack of social infrastructure, social services, and inherent inequalities in the urban landscape. Through interviews with immigrant women, this study reveals that women utilize other places to create valuable social support systems when public services are inadequate, such as shopping malls.

Hall (2015) does not explicitly discuss gender and age, two variables that indefinitely shape the form and context of these “everyday resistances”. However, framing her study through active migrant *participation*, as opposed to migration as a process simply “carried out by migrants and regulated by the states” (p. 865) provides a key framework in looking at the immigrant urban space relationship. The key insights of both Hall (2015) and Rahder and McLean’s (2013) studies, including the micro-processes that exist within the context of a global network and strategic navigation of inequality, ground my framework of the urban immigrant experience.

Rapid urbanization, increasing inequality, and the growing number of people moving around the world create an immediate need to examine the socio-spatial dialectic of people in cities. Through the review of literature, it is evident that women, young people, and immigrants all experience, navigate, and contest space in different ways. The following questions have emerged from the literature review: In what spaces do young immigrant women feel they belong? What dimensions does being a young *immigrant* woman add to the discussion of intersectionality and space? Addressing this gap, I also ask: how does mobility affect young

immigrant women? What is the role of safety for young immigrant women? What is the link between identity, transition, and adapting to new spaces? How does the experience as an immigrant affect how space is experienced and interpreted? All of these questions work to unpack how young immigrant women socially construct space in Halifax.

Methods: ‘A picture is worth a thousand words’

This study employs photo-elicitation interviews to gather material through women’s idiosyncratic visualizations. In photo-elicitation interviews, participants take photos that are used later as interview stimuli. Qualitative research that uses photos primarily includes photos taken by the researcher or professional photographers (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Kolb, 2008). However, photos taken by the participants themselves provide an opportunity for them to visually express their own subjective thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I use photos as a mode of communication because it makes it easier to understand subjective experience through visual representations of how space is related to experience (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012). Photos make visible the complexities of everyday life, existing as visual inventories of objects and intimacies, extension of the social, and “connect one’s self to society, culture or history” (Clark-Ibanez, 2004, p. 1511). Thus, for this study, photos are used to anchor experiences and complexities in and out of space.

This method, driven by participatory communication, produces unique anthropological knowledge. As opposed to verbal-based interviews, photographs work to stimulate memories of participants in unique ways (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). Clark-Ibanez (2004) discovered that photo-elicitation interviews transcend the information produced from verbal interviews. Furthermore, Clark-Ibanez (2004) argues that photos allow participants to “reflect on related but indirect associations with the photographs themselves” (p. 1513) and reveal meaning that would

otherwise remained hidden. Furthermore, photo-elicitation methodologies can “disrupt some of the power dynamics involved with regular interviews” and “empower the interviewee” (Clark-Ibanez, 2004, p. 1512-1513). In the context of this study, using photo-elicitation interviews created a safe space where women could share their personal experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Through personal conceptions of space revealed by photographs, young immigrant women were able to express their experience in particular ways within my research.

I followed the four steps in the photo interview process as structured by Kolb (2008). The four steps are the *opening* phase, *active photo shooting* phase, *decoding* phase, and the *analytical scientific interpretation* phase. The *opening* phase included a brief meeting or email exchange with interested women in order to introduce myself and the photo prompts (see Appendix C), discuss aims of the research, and go through the informed consent process. In the *active photo shooting* phase, participants took photos of their daily lives in urban space over the course of three days in Halifax (two weekdays and one Saturday or Sunday). Participants also used old photos in order to incorporate spaces they were not able to visit during the period of data collection. In the *decoding* phase, participants met with me to discuss the meaning and experiences associated with their photos in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D for interview guide). In the final stage, *analytical scientific interpretation*, I coded data according to my key concepts, such as belonging, mobility, identity, and safety, but also left categories for codifying the interviews to “emerge from the empirical data itself” (Kolb, 2008). The photos served as a mode of communication for the interview and were not coded as data themselves.

Of the 8,305 immigrants arriving in Halifax between 2006-2011, 46 percent are women, and 14.5 percent are young women between 15-24 at the age of immigration. I locate my study in Halifax, Nova Scotia as a microcosm of broader immigration trends to small cities in Canada.

To utilize the power of social networks, my study employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit eight participants. I use snowball sampling because it is a recruitment strategy that builds trust between researcher and participant by “introduction through a trusted social network” (Woodley & Lockard, 2016, p. 377). In addition to snowball sampling, I used mixed methods of recruitment to reach women who occupy various spaces, including distributing flyers, creating online posts (see Appendix A and B), as well as emailing or visiting community, religious, and immigrant associations. I conducted the recruitment myself using personal social networks, email, social media, and distributing flyers.

All women included in my study are 18-25 years of age, have university degrees or are university students (although this was not a criteria of participation), able to engage in conversational English, and have recently arrived in Canada in the past eight years. While seven participants fall under Statistics Canada’s (n.d.) definition of a recent immigrant (settling in Canada 5 or less years ago), one participant has been in Canada for 7.5 years at the time of the interview. However, as she has only been settled in Halifax for 3 years and her experience of space is still uniquely different, the extra 2.5 years did not seem to impede the data elicited. Participants include two women from the Philippines, two from Kuwait, and one each from Mexico, Egypt, U.S.A, and China. It is important to note that all women come from large urban centres in their home countries. For a table of participants’ country of origin and what date they arrived, see Appendix G. Representing young immigrant women’s voices with integrity and respect is of utmost importance. To ensure confidentiality, women either chose or were given a pseudonym. Any potential identifiers have been concealed, faces in the photos have been blurred, and photos have been printed with permission of the photographer. All of this

information was outlined to participants through the process of informed consent during the *opening* phase.

Due to scope and feasibility, only interviews, and not observations, were conducted. This, of course, is only what people say about space and not necessarily what people do in practice. Due to the size of the sample, my analysis is not generalizable to all young immigrant women in Halifax. Nonetheless, photo-elicitation interviews created a participatory process that elicited rich, spontaneous data. Participants dictated the content discussed during the interview through their photos, enabling them to talk about what spaces *they* found important and valuable in their lives. Furthermore, the participatory nature of this method required frequent contact throughout data collection, allowing rapport to be built in a way that exceeds semi-structured interviews. When a woman and I looked at the photos together, there was always a reason, story, or experience behind why she chose that photo. The photos chosen by women anchored experiences in a meaningful way and triggered memories that facilitated discussion. Using a method that allowed young immigrant women to lead the interviews through photos established a platform that highlights their voices and the particular stories they want to be heard.

Findings

Freedom, Risk Perception, and Gender

All the women I spoke to interpret urban space, in some way, through threatening experiences that they have encountered as well as through gendered risk perceptions. By risk perceptions, I mean the way in which women assess space as safe or not safe, and to what degree. Awareness, perception, and management of risk inform how we live our lives, make social relationships, and what spaces we occupy (Green & Singleton, 2006). Through risk perception and assessment, processes made necessary by gender, spaces are often interpreted as threatening, and as a result,

avoided. Rosa, a participant from Mexico, had an experience on the streets at night where a man followed her during her walk home. This experience now characterizes her urban journey, as she becomes fearful every time she walks through that space. Rosa recognizes that this fear is elicited by gender, stating, “Every time I walk there I get really scared, so I don't walk there anymore, but my boyfriend does not care. So I view that place as kind of scary, but he would never be scared of walking there”. For the majority of participants, memories of gendered, threatening experiences instill spaces with fear and influence how they assess their safety in space. This exemplifies that risk assessment and perception are spatially located.

Participants in this study perceive themselves as vulnerable in certain spaces as a result of their gender. This is reflected by May, who moved from China 5 years ago, telling me a story about a man who verbally harassed her while she waited for her bus. May told me she heard on the news that a man had been consistently verbally harassing young Asian women around Halifax, stating, “we don't know how to protect ourselves or how to defend [ourselves], so...that's the most scary part”. Feeling vulnerable as women in space was a consistent theme throughout all interviews. Mutya feels “cautious” and uneasy on public transport. Lily avoids certain spaces when it gets dark. Maria started putting her bag on her lap to block access to her body when she heard about a case of sexual harassment on Halifax busses, and, as Nina states, “if I were a man than I would probably feel more confident walking down the street 'cause I wouldn't feel threatened by anything”. Zoey, an Asian-American from The United States, is also aware of her vulnerability as a woman, stating, “If I was walking home and I saw a man that I thought could be following me, like, obviously I'm gonna feel a little bit more on edge being a woman 'cause there is more that they can take advantage of– there's a bigger chance for assault”. Risk perception and feeling vulnerable in space go beyond sensory interpretations, directly

affecting women's feelings towards space, how they move through it, and the behaviour they exhibit.

Having only been in Halifax for a year, May had never experienced this type of verbal harassment in China. This left her feeling *more* vulnerable to the situation. Unsure of how to report the situation, and unfamiliar with resources available to her, May responded to this experience by avoiding the space. Zoey had a similar experience of racialized verbal harassment in public space. As she told me, "Men only come up to me, I don't know to be like 'I like Asians!' or something you know, that kind of weird stuff. Which definitely makes me feel unsafe". Similar to May, Zoey has encountered racialized verbal harassment for the first time. For May and Zoey, and many of women I spoke to, how to assess risk and how to *respond* to these incidents (during the incident and after, such as what resources are available) have become additional learned parts of their new urban lives.

Interestingly, there is a tension between gendered safety issues and the newfound spatial freedom some women have in Halifax. Meaning, while some participants value having the freedom to occupy spaces they could not in their home country, often due to gender, the majority of women also feel unsafe in the spaces where they feel free. Coming from Egypt, Lily feels she is gaining independence by walking outside by herself, stating, "In Egypt, there's no way a woman can walk [outside]. You get, you know, verbal kind of comments. You don't feel comfortable walking down the street. But here, it's something I value so much, the privilege of being able to walk from one place to another". Lily also values networking events for career development that she could not attend in Egypt. However, she also feels threatened walking alone on the streets after 9pm and cornered in the small spaces where networking events are often held. Recalling one networking event she attended, Lily states, "I felt they could take

advantage of the fact that it was such a smaller place with tighter people to, you know, even just... I won't say harass but like, you know, being touched". May expresses the importance of accessibility to public transport, because it allows her to get to the important social spaces in her life, yet, the bus stop is also where she experienced verbal, racial harassment. The nightclub where Zoey expresses herself through dance and "doesn't feel judged" is also where she feels unsafe and cornered by men asking what race she is. These tensions were prominent in majority of interviews when discussing photos of spaces women feel free and independent.

An additional tension is present between new freedoms of mobility and the spatial restrictions of mobility they face as women. All participants express that since immigrating to Canada they have gained independence through increased mobile freedom in comparison to their home country. This includes accessibility to public transport, occupying public space, and the privilege of walking alone on the streets. However, they all simultaneously express the *limitations* of mobility they face as a result of their gender. Participants' mobility is restricted by what time of day it is, resulting in the avoidance of spaces at night; therefore, altering their everyday lives in space. Maria, immigrating from the Philippines two years ago, told me she doesn't like going to certain places "especially at night", continuing with, "you know the feeling?". Rosa also references this "*feeling*", stating, "Once me and my mom were walking close to the Salvation Army on Gottingen, and also it was like- you feel a little weird right? Even if they don't do anything". The majority of women I spoke to referenced this "*feeling*" as a result of being in space at night as a woman. This feeling that accompanies being a woman in space, especially at night, presents a limitation of mobility, as Lily explained to me:

I don't think [men] are scared of darkness. I feel like women are much more scared of the concept of darkness. We just feel like people can take advantage of darkness. We feel like physically we're not fit to be stronger. So it would be the physical ability that gives you that vibe, what time of day it is gives you that vibe, and the space also where you are... So, if you're like, at a park or if you're at

the club, gives you those kind of vibes as well. Who you're surrounded with, what kind of state of mind are people in.

Nina, immigrating from Kuwait three years ago, is scared to take cabs back home or walk the streets alone at night, and as Rosa states, "these spaces at night, you have to be a bit more careful if you're a woman than if you're a man". When recalling her experience with racial verbal assault, May said, "And that's super scary because what if this happened at night, right? I could be raped". Mobility and spatial realities, including who women share space with, how they feel in space, and what spaces they occupy, are influenced by gendered risk perceptions.

Despite their risk perceptions, spatial avoidance, and threatening experiences, all participants said that overall, they feel safe in Halifax. In fact, the majority of participants told me that for them, feeling safe is the most important thing about living in Halifax. Initially, I was struck by the overall consensus of feeling safe in Halifax, taking into account the frightening situations endured by some. How do *all* of these women maintain a sense of safety in Halifax, despite risk perceptions, fear, or threatening experiences they have told me? The answer is that in order to settle in their new cities, immigrants must learn how to physically and socially navigate space in order to develop "the new social and spatial networks that will allow them to feel connected, committed, and rooted in a new place" (Rahder & McLean, 2013, p. 161). For these newcomer women, this important spatial knowledge is developed *every day* as they frequently occupy new public spaces, try out new restaurants with friends, explore new areas of the city, take public transport, and wander alone in public parks. Through this frequent occupation and participation in the urban landscape, they actively build new spatial knowledge, familiarity, confidence, and in turn, socially construct safe space. As Zoey told me:

Normally I find [when I'm] outside walking by myself I don't feel unsafe in general. Mostly because I'm more at ease with nature [and] being by myself. I like having open public spaces and being able to use them and wander around in them. [...] Even walking from my house to

downtown. Just being able to do that. I don't feel unsafe so it makes it way more pleasant for me to live here.

May echoes this, stating, "I like Halifax. Besides, I think I'm more familiar here so I'm not worried about, like, safety issues". All the women I spoke to emphasized the importance of learning the city through exploration because it enables them to gain *familiarity* and *spatial knowledge*.

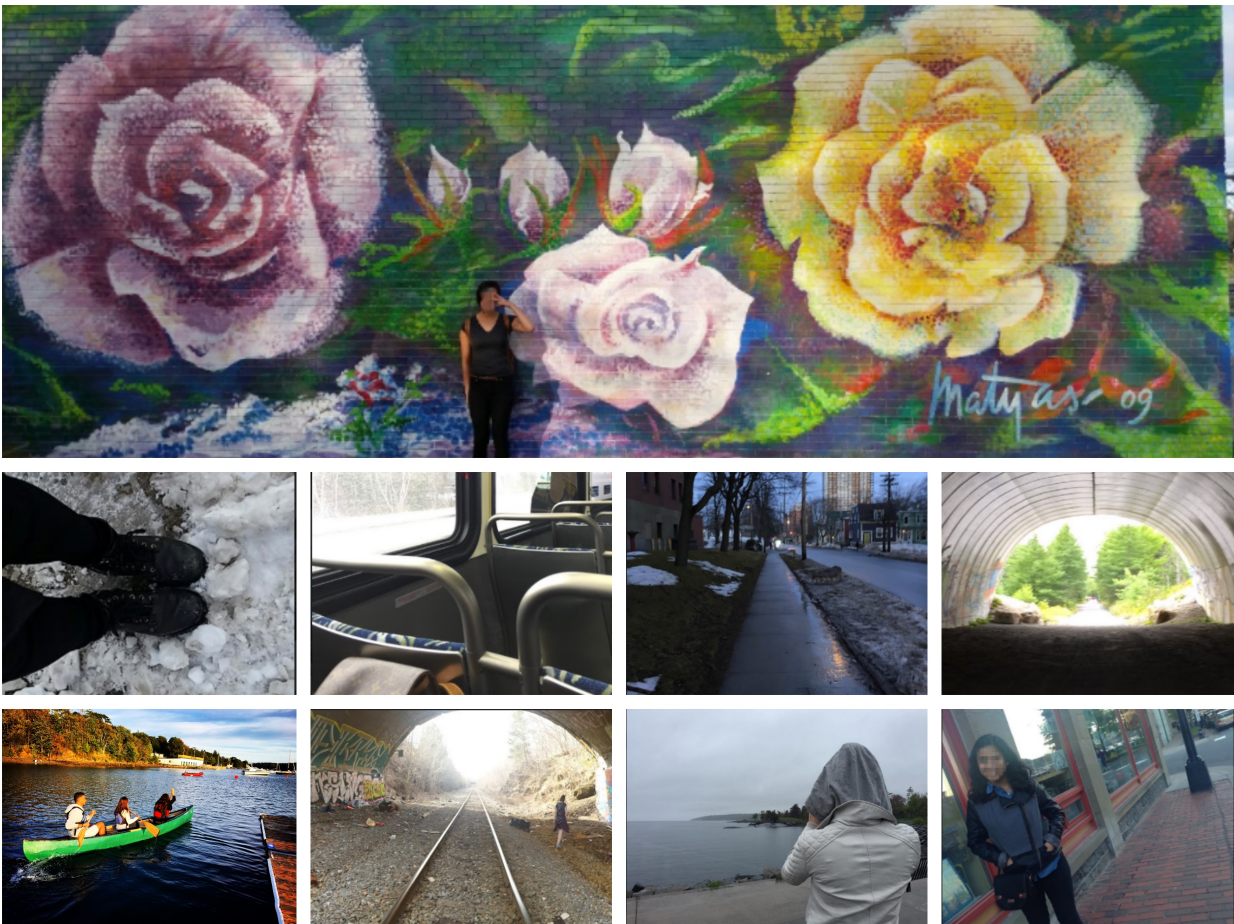


Figure 1. Photos of exploration. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

When asked what advice they would give to other young immigrant women, most participants told me that exploring the city, "putting yourself out there", and experiencing *all* parts of Halifax were of utmost importance. Utilizing their new mobile freedom, exploring is linked to gaining confidence in space. This was illuminated by Lily's response when asked what

her advice would be for other young immigrant women, stating, “Take every opportunity to walk and explore the city. There’s no way you can explore it if you don’t walk around spaces to feel comfortable and secure”. For Maria, spatial knowledge is developed through utilizing public transport, “I guess a big part of me learning about the city is commuting, like using the bus. I get to see many places and, you know, when you get lost... that’s when you explore and discover things.” Zoey expresses that spatial knowledge is important to feeling like she fits in, stating, “I felt like I fit in more, you know what I mean? Like once I kinda got to know a little bit about a place”. One way this familiarity and spatial knowledge is developed is through *involvement* in the city. This is exemplified by Lily’s account of how she got to know the city, stating, “Volunteering has helped a lot because with different volunteering and networking events, you get to explore a lot of different sides of Halifax”. Developing spatial knowledge through exploring the city and getting involved transforms spaces to be familiar and safe, as Nina highlights, “If you can go into that space and continue exploring, then you just get used to it and it becomes – it stops being new; it just becomes part of your life”.

This emphasis on exploring is linked to the transitional life stages of immigration and age, as exemplified by Mutya from The Philippines, “There’s so much to explore. When I got here everything is new. So I wanted to discover it. So that makes me go out more, right? When you're younger you want to go out and try a lot of things. Maybe it has something to do with growing up, too. So I feel like I should go out more. I feel like I should go out more. To grow.” Mutya continues to state that her parents have “had their fair share of exploration and all that stuff. They’re done”. Furthermore, when asked why her and her brother experience the city differently to her parents, Nina responds, “because we’re young, we’re open to trying new things or adapting. But my mom says she’s at a point in her life where she doesn’t want to change, she

wants stability”. In line with Skelton and Gough’s (2013) findings, mobility between spaces is integral for young people to develop independence, form new relationships, try new things, and ‘grow up’. However, mobility for young *immigrant* women is of increased importance, as it allows them to explore new urban spaces and, in turn, gain the spatial knowledge needed to construct safe spaces.



Figure 2. Photos of exploration. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

Women negotiate gendered safety issues by constructing spatial confidence and knowledge through exploration and involvement in Halifax. Women’s everyday use of space creates accessibility for *all* women, and as Koskela (1997) states, “women’s spatial confidence can be interpreted as a manifestation of power” (p. 316). Women are not kept safer by staying

inside their homes; rather, spaces become safer through frequent occupation, or as some participants said, “just getting out there”. These women are not victims of gendered safety issues, risk perceptions, or urban fear, nor is Halifax defined by the restrictions these factors bring. Rather, Halifax is primarily a space of excitement, freedom, and exploration where new spaces bring new feelings, new social relationships, and new modes of being.

Feeling ‘out of place’

As young immigrant women eat at new restaurants, walk around public spaces, try new activities, relax in nature, and attend university lectures, their everyday lives in urban space are packed with new social encounters and exchanges. While interacting with the dominant, white Euro-centric culture in Halifax, all the women I spoke to have felt Othered in some way, meaning they feel treated or perceived as fundamentally *different*, or ‘alien’, against the dominant culture and race. The way in which women experience and negotiate Otherness in space is extremely varied, which I will outline below.

May and Lily explain that feeling like an Other is a result of cultural difference. For example, Lily expresses that her encounter with Canadians creates Otherness through fear of judgement due to a cultural divide, stating, “Culturally, I feel there’s a huge difference between Canadians and immigrants in general. I feel like we have that... fear of being judged”. May, who works at a residence hall at her University, feels residents don’t take her seriously because she is Chinese, stating, “If you explain [the code of conduct] to them, they don’t care and they don’t want to listen to you because oh, uh because uh, ‘you’re a Chinese person and ‘what do you know about Canada?’ I think it happens to lots of immigrants”. Whether it’s judgement from cultural difference, or not being taken seriously at the workplace, being made to embody Otherness affects how these participants feel in space.

Feeling pressured to be similar to her coworkers due to the lack of diversity, Maria has felt like an Other in her workplace. When asked how being an immigrant relates to her work place, Maria responded, “At first I felt it was a threat. I’ve never felt so bad about myself”. She told me that she used to feel threatened when white, older people would come up to her to ask where she is from based on her appearance, but felt pressure to adapt Western customer service behaviours in the space. The experience of Otherness when being “called out” was also felt by Zoey, who feels reduced to race when people ask her unwarranted questions about what race she is, or where she is from. Zoey told me that these challenging moments of Otherness have resulted in negative memories attaching themselves to those spaces. These examples show that encountering the Canadian majority population in public spaces can often mean being “called out” for their visible difference.

Rosa and Mutya have both felt “outcast” in a University setting. Describing her first few weeks of University, Mutya states, “I noticed people didn't want to sit next to me. I don't know if it's because I'm not– I didn't want to assume, that's bad. You don't want to assume that people are being racist to you”. Recalling a time when her class was required to get into groups, Mutya said all the white people got together. Feeling upset, she “just ended up joining a group that was mixed race”. Rosa sometimes feels intimidated attending her mostly “all-white gym”, and experiences moments of isolation when she has to explain how to pronounce her name, stating, “It’s a little– maybe like outcasting? Obviously not on purpose, and nobody’s trying to outcast me, but it feels weird to have to repeat your name or answer the question ‘oh where are you from?’”. Rosa also explained her challenges contending with discrimination in Halifax, stating:

I think we experience much more discrimination in a way because we’re not Canadian, even though we might look the same, or like, the people that are Canadian don’t all look ‘Canadian’. But I think our culture is very different from here so how we experience things is very different from how people that are born here experience things, right? Plus, when in Mexico, for example,

everyone was like me and everyone looked like me, so coming here it's also very... it's a different experience [compared to] someone that was born here.

Rosa highlights that both visible appearance and 'invisible' cultural differences define how she encounters power in space. Although a few explicit experiences of discrimination were expressed, participants' awareness towards their position as an Other in divided spaces, and therefore subject to discrimination and racism, was emphasized.

Nina has experienced various moments of Otherness being an immigrant in space, one of which occurred while walking around Halifax, where a man yelled at her to leave the country. Undoubtedly, this overt verbal discrimination made Nina feel like an Other. However, she also told me less explicit instances of encountering Otherness. Nina said she feels "out of place" being around people drinking, being in spaces in Kuwait where rich people go, visiting spaces in Jordan and Lebanon where "members of a certain sect frequent", and lastly, as she states, "sometimes when I don't see people who are similar to me I feel out of place. Like maybe I'm not supposed to be here, maybe this place is not for me". Nina also describes feeling like an Other due to her hijab, stating, "I do feel kind of uncomfortable. My hijab, for example. If I go to, let's say, a restaurant where there aren't people wearing hijab or where there are people drinking or something, then I would feel kind of restricted. Well, not really restricted, but, what's the word? Like, I would feel that I shouldn't be there". Whether marked by class difference in Kuwait, belonging to a different sect in Jordan, or being a visible minority in Halifax, feeling out of place is something she has experienced in every country she has lived. However, each moment of 'displacement' is constructed by different contexts and each affects the way in which Nina experiences space, what spaces she chooses to occupy, and whether she feels like she belongs.

All young immigrant women I spoke to encounter Otherness as they shape experiences in new spaces. However, these women also actively negotiate these everyday encounters with Otherness. One way this is done is through finding homogeneity in diversity, or being “together-in-difference” (Ang, 2003), through ethnically diverse social networks. Every woman I spoke to had a friend group composed of other immigrants or international students, or friends of similar cultural origins. Underlining these international bonds are perceptions of commonality based on shared experiences, understanding, and the absence of judgement. Lily, with friends from Syria, Egypt, and Palestine, told me she finds a common ground with international people because they share the same experiences, stating, “You would find at least common grounds as to feeling the same way. Feeling like you don’t belong at first, you know, going through the same struggles of adapting. [...] Culturally, I feel like I might be judged rather than if I speak to someone, you know, who’s been through the same thing”. Lily describes this as “an unspoken understanding”, a notion that encapsulates how majority of participants justified their international social networks. Participants found comfort and relief in building diverse social networks, as illuminated by Negsti from Kuwait, “I thought that if I didn't find people where I’m from, I’m not gonna fit in. But after a while I met people who were from other places. And, to be able to have conversations or to have things in common with people from different places was great”. Explaining the commonalities amongst her diverse friend group, Nina states, “people who are away from their home country, they experience things in a similar way. Everything is new to them”. Furthermore, four participants told me they express themselves *through* their diverse social networks, no matter what spaces they occupy. This illustrates that the construction of belonging is mobile and has the ability to transform spaces to ones of belonging by moving from place to place.



Figure 3. Participants and their social networks. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

In addition to constructing belonging, participants also actively find, claim and construct spaces that *belong to them*. This is done through religious space and giving back to the international community. Local churches serve as an avenue for Mutya and Maria to meet diverse groups of people and renew their international social networks (Figure 4). They actively claim this space through renewing their connection to the international community and practicing Filipino rituals. For Nina, the prayer room at her university is more than just a place to pray. Stating that it makes her feel safe because she is “acknowledged as a Muslim in society”, and free from judgement, she links that space to a feeling of belonging. Before showing me a photo of the prayer room (Figure 4, top left), Nina states, “Immigrants may be intimidated by these

places where they see a lot of um... native people going. Maybe they feel that these places are not for them”. Standing in stark contrast to the spaces Nina interprets as “not for immigrants”, the prayer room is a space that belongs to her. Massey argues that the “identity of a place is always being produced and reproduced through its processes” (Massey, 1994, p. 171). In line with Massey’s argument, these young immigrant women actively shape the identity of space to be spaces of belonging. This means that, by negotiating Otherness through socially constructing belonging in space, young immigrant women also create spaces that *belong to them*.



Figure 4. Religious spaces highlighted by participants. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

Giving back to the international community and forging international bonds are ways in which participants claim space for themselves and larger international communities. For

example, three participants find value in helping other immigrants adapt to Canadian life. Working as a resident assistant at her university, May states that she expresses herself through her workplace because, “I always wanted to help international students adapt to Canadian culture and University life in Canada. So I feel like I want to do something for them”. Lily, who took a photo of the farmers market for a place that is important to her (Figure 5), told me about her experience working with Syrian refugees to establish a sustainable food business, stating, “It’s a space where I feel important because I feel like I have made something happen, I’ve helped even just for a slight bit”. Moreover, Rosa volunteers for the international student society at her university, working to establish a voice for international students on campus. These women actively work to claim and make space for international communities, further establishing their sense of purpose in the city. The spaces where they help international people are used to situate themselves within their wider community, renew larger international networks, and utilize their own experiences to help others.



Figure 5. Lily's photo of the farmers market for the prompt 'place that's important to you' Source: Reproduced with permission from an anonymous participant.

Lily, Negsti, and Maria negotiate Otherness by changing their understanding of what it means to be an immigrant in Halifax. These three participants construct everyday belonging in space through discovering *value* in being an immigrant. Negsti sees her cultural background as an asset for getting a job as a translator to help refugee families, and Lily believes her immigrant identity brings a different perspective to her workplace, stating, "I feel like who I am is being rewarded all the time". Maria, who originally felt threatened by customers asking where she's from at her workplace, now sees it as an asset to develop her customer service skills. For these women, belonging is not *finding* spaces they 'fit in' or becoming more Canadian; rather, they negotiate Otherness by finding *value* in their identity as an immigrant.

When participants responded to the question of what an ideal space would be for young immigrant women, discussions did not include ‘cohesion’, ‘assimilation’ or ‘fitting in’. Rather, majority of participants stated that their ideal space would include “diversity”; “inclusivity”; “common places for everyone”; “designated spaces for people to worship”; “accepting of all people”; “the ability to try new things”; “a collective space where everyone’s allowed”; “nature”; “where you can meet new people”; and “a space to talk to people from different cultures”. When responding to this question, many women were aware of the idealistic nature of their responses. However, these women illuminate a different understanding of belonging *in* and *to* space. As Mutya disclosed, “I have my Canadian; I have my Filipino, but I’m still me. I’m not completely adapting everything so I’m bringing my own to the table as well”. For these women, belonging is not a process of cohesion or integration to Canadian culture; rather, belonging is constructed through everyday processes of *diversity* in space. In line with Hall’s (2015) argument, for these women, belonging is an everyday, participatory process that is “renewed and remade rather than simply accommodated” (p. 865). They are involved in “an active *making* of new urban spaces” (Hall, 2015, p. 856) and therefore, urban transformation.

Transcending Borders

There is never a single place existing in isolation (Massey, 1994). Spaces exist in multiples, and memories belong to places as much as they belong to our minds. During my interviews, all women experience space through relating the material setting or activities in space to their home country through memory. This “reflexive relationship” (Rodman, 1992, p. 646) with space results from drawing upon *similarities* between spaces in Halifax and their home country, “engaging in a multilocal way of sorting out meaning” (Rodman, 1992, p. 647). For example, when a bubble tea shop opened downtown, Maria and Mutya told me how emotional they were

to “finally have, a taste of home”. Maria links her experience in that space to memories of drinking bubble tea with friends in the Philippines, stating, “[When] you’re always there with your friends, and you remember the conversation, you relate it to what you’re drinking and where you are”. Furthermore, when Lily goes horseback riding in Halifax, she accesses memories that influence how she experiences the space, stating, “it reminds me of that feeling I get when I’m back home”. Many participants are reminded of their home countries when they look out at the ocean. Nina told me she thinks of Kuwait when she looks out at the ocean, stating it reminds her that the world is small and large at the same time because, “maybe things are not that different elsewhere”. Young immigrant women are able to find moments of continuity in a time of change by using spatial memories of their home country as a point of reference to understand and shape meaning in Halifax. Women socially construct space through memory of the global to feel like they belong in the local. By breaking geographical boundaries through their own memories, these women change the meaning of “the local” to create Massey’s (1994) “global sense of space”.

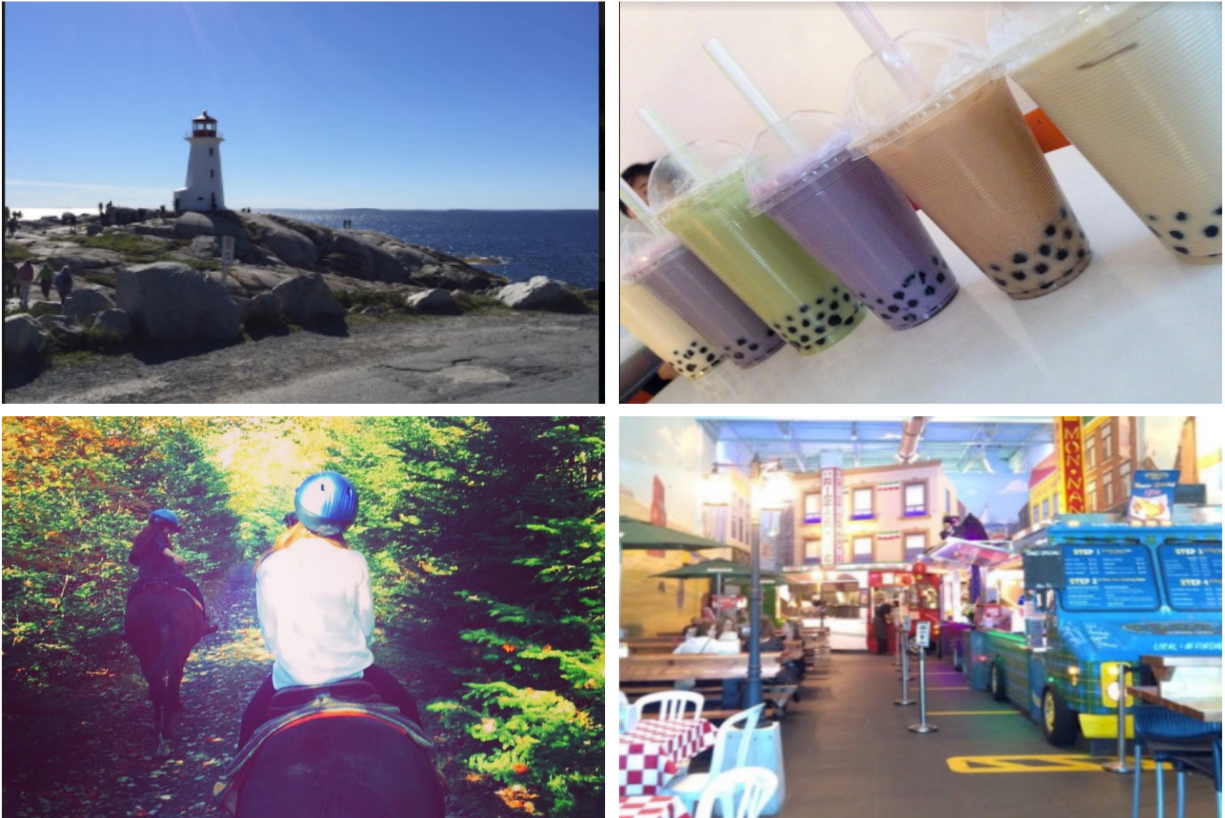


Figure 6. Photos of spaces participants said were similar to their home country. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

Comparisons that illuminate *difference* instil new value in Halifax spaces. For example, the majority of participants expressed value in the public parks and other spaces of nature in Halifax. May compared the parks in Halifax to the parks in China, emphasizing that parks in China are loud and busy, and therefore Chinese immigrants appreciate the silence. Lily has found new value in places of nature and has begun to incorporate them into her lifestyle and social life, something she had never done in Egypt. Mutya, Maria, and Nina interpret the Halifax Central Library as a privilege that they didn't have back in their home countries, all valuing highly the facilities, borrowing system, and, as Nina expressed, the ability to just "spend a day there". Negsti told me that she values the material setting of the Spring Garden Basilica because, "the churches in Kuwait were not this pretty". While aesthetic differences are certainly an aspect in

these comparisons, the new value they instil in space influences how they use and interpret it. This notion resonates further when Negsti explains the difference between her interpretation of space and my own, as I was born and raised in Canada:

I think I view, based on my past, my background, and the place I lived before, I would value more [spaces] because I see them as a privilege, where as... if it was for you, you would see [them as]... something that was privileged to you for your whole life.

Nina is also aware of how this comparison shapes her interpretations of space, stating:

People born in Canada experience [space] differently because they may have other spaces where they were born that are similar to the ones that are here [in Halifax]. So they relate it to them and feel more or less like they're home. Then immigrants are on another level. More or less, everything is new to them when they first come to a new place. They may notice things that other people never did before.

While *similarities* bring continuity, creating Massey's "global sense of place", *differences* instil space with value. This illuminates that young immigrant women interpret space, and therefore socially construct it, through comparisons driven by memory.

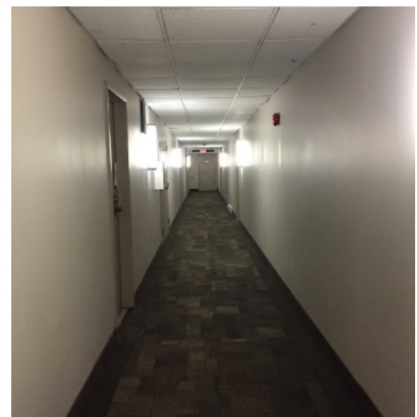
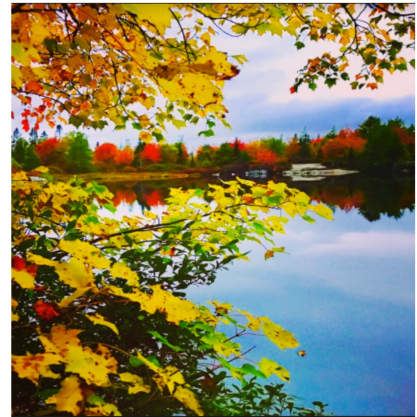


Figure 7. Photos of spaces participants said were different from their home country. Source: Reproduced with permission of anonymous participants.

Mobilizing Identities: Spaces as Becoming

According to the literature on gender and space, women's identities are perceived as restricted due to the confined spatial mobility— especially confinement to domestic spaces— that contributes to their subordination (Massey, 1994; Rosaldo, 1974). However, all participants chose photos of their bedrooms, or homes, as places where they “express themselves”, or “feel most themselves”. As participants told me, this transitional period of their lives requires them to perform new understandings of gender, perform “maturity” at their jobs, speak English, and perform new cultural behaviours in order to “adapt”. Some participants expressed that part of understanding space involves observing how people act within it, and adopting those new learned behaviours, such as how women dress, how young people socialize, or how people greet each other in the grocery store. Thus, spaces outside are characterized by constant performance. Home, however, is a refuge from this learned spatial performativity, both gender-based and cultural, that young immigrant women feel they must take on. Home is where Mutya dances, Rosa learns about herself, Maria learns new recipes, Nina can take off her hijab, Zoey can finally think clearly, and Lily can speak Arabic with her mother. Home is where identity is both formed and rooted. For these women, home is not where gender roles are located or performed, nor are their identities restricted due to expected domesticity. Home is where performativity is ruptured and identity is explored.

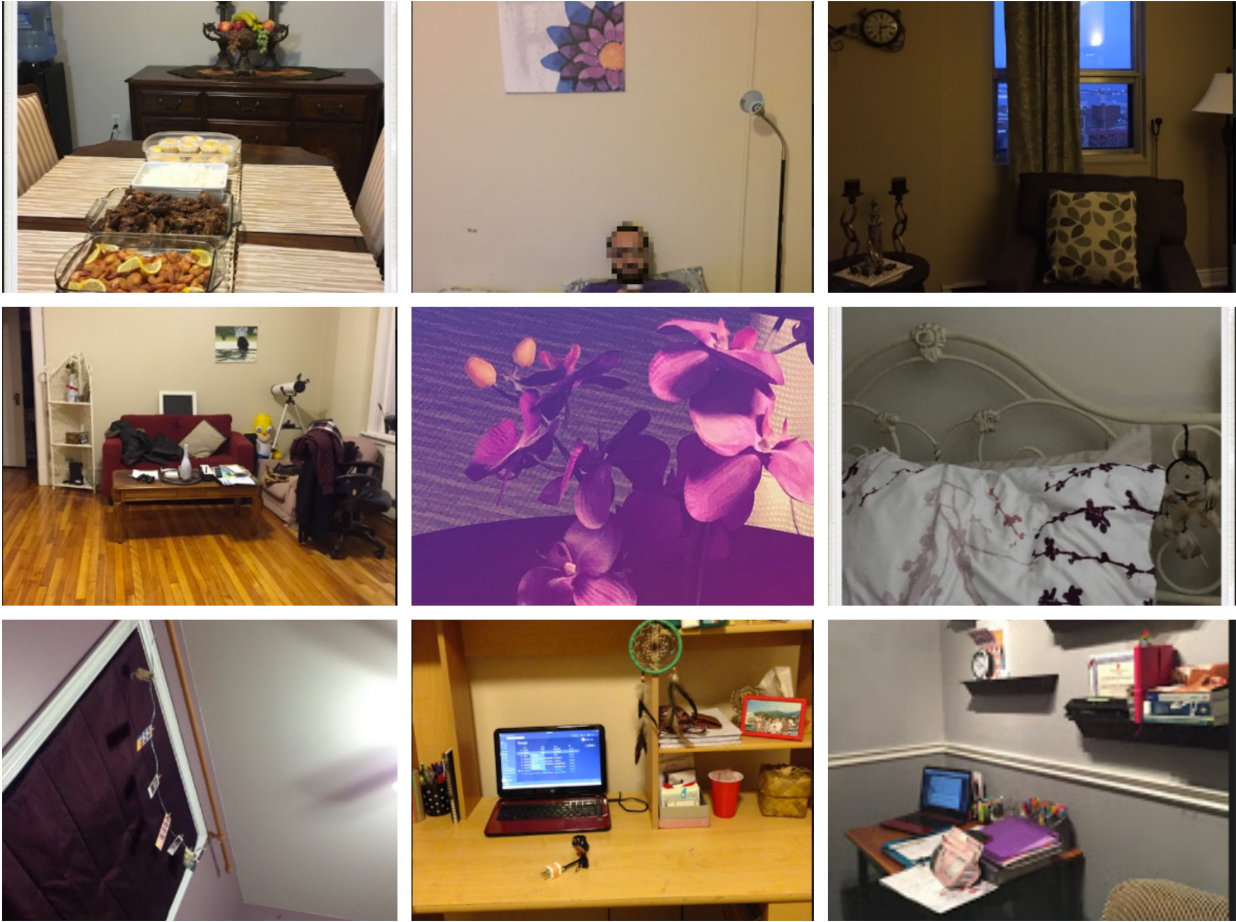


Figure 8. Photos participants chose of their homes and bedrooms. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

Not only are these women new immigrants, but they are also transitioning into adulthood, adapting different ideas of womanhood, trying to find temporary work, places to live, and deciding a career path. Whether it was fear of having to move back to the country they came from, or nervousness about getting a job in Canada as an immigrant, all participants expressed ambivalence or uncertainty in some way. In response to this uncertainty, an evident theme throughout the interviews was seeking spaces of stillness and control. Participants view these still, quiet spaces as *separate* from the outside world. Often labelled by participants as “my space”, these are spaces that are predictable, in stark contrast to the unpredictable outside world laden with movement and change, as Negsti said about her church: “Outside there’s a lot of

movement. [Here], you feel like the place is pausing for a moment”. In these spaces, they are able to slow time, be in control of their environment, and address the anxieties of adjusting to new environments, negotiating Otherness, and developing new social and gender identities. These are spaces where they can exert some level of control, standing in opposition to the ambivalence that characterizes their lives.



Figure 9. Photo of the church Negsti goes to be alone. Source: Reproduced with permission from an anonymous participant.

When describing why these spaces are important to them, women told me the following: “It’s where I can stay for a while then go back to normal life” (May), “I feel like my room is like my mind. I can think there” (Negsti), “It’s where I have that alone time” (Lily), “I pray there, which is a personal expressions of myself” (Maria), “you make it your own place, rather than places outside” (Rosa), “you forget you’re in Halifax when you’re there, you forget about the world for an hour” (Nina), “I have complete control over it. It’s a place you can feel grounded” (Zoey). While these spaces are viewed as quiet and still, even sacred, as May told me about her piano room (Figure 10, top left), they are still *moving*. These still, quiet spaces are where the processes of identity formation are at work. Participants disclosed that these spaces are where they learn about themselves and find, as many state, “time for myself”, “freedom”, and “space to think”. When photos of these spaces were discussed, conversations revolved around how they

are spaces *for themselves*. These spaces are where participants express themselves, pray, study, paint, try new things, and speak to friends from their home country. While these women may experience their secluded spaces as immobile and unchanging, they still embody movement through the processes of identity formation. In line with Massey’s argument, even if space is perceived as still, place is not being– it is always *becoming*.



Figure 10. Spaces of seclusion and stillness. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

Upon immigrating to Canada, participants expressed the need to connect to their cultural identity. This need to access and mobilize their new identities as immigrants is facilitated by certain spaces. Mobilizing different dimensions of their “old selves” and maintaining a connection to their cultural heritage through space is important for all participants. This is exemplified by Maria, who accesses her cultural identity through attending Church with other Filipinos, stating, “When I’m there I just feel like I’m myself again, like a part of myself is actually still alive even if I don’t feel it. [...] Sometimes the world is just running right... it’s

going and you tend to forget some things that are of value to you”. These women use different spaces to act on different dimensions of their identities, with some spaces highlighting the formation of their new identities as immigrants. Four participants connect to their cultural identities at home, where they can speak their language, cook food from their home countries, and connect with their families, as Lily states, “I’m still connected with you know, still my background, my roots. I feel like it’s where my family and roots are”. May accesses this part of her identity through helping other international students adapt to Canadian life at work, or as she states, “I found myself”. Furthermore, as Mutya states:

The only time I feel I’m an immigrant is when I have to get in touch with my Filipino roots. But I don’t see it as a negative thing because I’m gonna stay here and eventually I want to be a Canadian. But at the same time, I’m taking both of my identities with me. It’s like a mixture of both. I miss my home and everything, and a lot of things that I do is— it still has to do with my being Filipino. But I don’t see it as a negative thing. It makes me different, but it’s not something bad. The word immigrant is kind of getting to me I guess, because this is my home now. I’m gonna live here. I’m not planning on going back.

Mutya also highlights that eating at Filipino restaurants, or attending events where Filipinos gather, are a way for her to act on her cultural identity, and therefore her identity as an immigrant. Furthermore, like Mutya, many participants expressed importance in attending events where a variety of cultures are shared. Accessing and forming an immigrant identity is important in their integration to Canadian cities. Furthermore, Rosa and Negsti both desire more spaces where they can express their cultural identity through sharing culture, traditions, spices, clothes, and customs. It is important to note that the context of being in Canada shapes how immigrants express identities or address their heritage because the policy of multiculturalism officially validates it. This is exemplified by Lily’s belief that being an immigrant in Canada is an asset in her career development compared to other countries. Thus, the need to share one’s culture may play out differently in a country where there isn’t an explicit recognition of multiculturalism.



Figure 11. Photos where participants express cultural identity. Source: Reproduced with permission from anonymous participants.

The women I spoke to form new definitions of gender identities and what they view to be adult and ‘Canadian’ identities. An important component to accessing and mobilizing new understandings of themselves is their life stage, where new identities must be formed in order to ‘grow up’ and ‘adapt’. All aged between 18-25, many of the participants work to carve out parts of themselves that exist separately from their parents. Many believe that moving to Canada has allowed them to ‘grow up’ in different ways than they would in their home country, as May states:

I think the main thing I learned in Canada is that I know more about myself because in China you’re always a child. You’re a child, all the time! Even though people thirty or forty or so, they’re still a child to their parents, their grandparents, their families. So you never get a chance to really...

be yourself. Or be an adult. An independent adult. Back in China I'm always the "good girl", but that's not what I want to be forever. Every time I go back [to China] they say 'oh you're more mature now; you're an adult! You're not a girl anymore!' and I feel proud of myself because they treat me differently so they don't treat me as a little girl, they treat me as a young adult with my own thoughts.

This quote reflects the thoughts and feelings of all participants, who expressed that they are more outgoing, confident, and independent as a result of the new spaces they are able to occupy, such as being able to live alone, get part time jobs, hang out in public spaces, establish new social identities, and have freedom from parents who previously dictated what spaces they occupied. Observing Western women in urban space has also brought new understandings of gender identity and performance, with many participants stating they have become "less conservative" than they were in their home countries. Many women share the belief that if they were to stay in their country of origin, they would not have developed in the same way. May believes her life has changed because the primary goal for young women in China is to find a good husband. Negsti expressed that living on her own is a privilege, as she could only move out as a woman in Kuwait if she got married. Furthermore, when asked if her life would have followed in the same direction if she stayed in Egypt, Lily replied, "Knowing how I came here to Canada, I would have been much more closed and struggling with interacting with strangers. I wouldn't have met someone like you, for example. That outgoing personality I have right now wouldn't have been developed at all". While all participants view these changes as positive, it is important to note that these changes are linked to perceptions of who women *think* they should be within their new urban landscapes (an independent 'Western' woman). As these young immigrant women contend with new spaces, they also form new social identities and understandings of themselves as a result of their life stage.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how the social construction of space is at the core of young immigrant women's experience of the city. This analysis illuminates the ways in which young immigrant women actively transform their city through the social construction of space against a foreground of inequality and racialized contexts. First, I have emphasized two tensions experienced by participants in space; one being between newfound spatial freedom and gendered safety issues, and the second between freedom of mobility and the spatial restrictions they face as women. I argue that young immigrant women negotiate gendered safety issues through the development of spatial knowledge and through these processes, help transform spaces to be accessible to *all* women. Second, I outlined the diverse ways in which young immigrant women experience Otherness in space. What's emphasized here, however, is that they actively *negotiate* this Otherness by constructing belonging and claiming spaces. Third, I argued that young immigrant women socially construct the city through linking space in Halifax to spaces in their home countries. This is done through memory of both similarities and differences that dictate the feelings and meaning women ascribe to space.

After examining how young immigrant women shape the city, I analyzed why women chose their bedrooms, homes, or secluded spaces as where identity manifests. I discovered that home is a refuge from both the performativity they must adopt and the change that characterizes their life stage. As places where the processes of identity formation are at work, I argue that while perceived as still, these spaces remain in motion. Lastly, I examined how participants act on and mobilize their new identities as immigrants, women, and adults through different spaces.

This study illuminates that young immigrant women are not passive recipients who simply encounter social change, inequality, or new understandings of themselves. Rather, they actively engage in the processes that transform cities through claiming spaces, constructing

belonging, negotiating inequality, and acting on different social identities. Young immigrant women are not simply accommodated; rather, they actively weave themselves into the fabric of cities. Addressing the underdeveloped research of young immigrant women in Canadian urban spaces, this study shows that participants' everyday experience of urban space is participatory, active, and negotiated.

Exploring how young immigrant women interpret and experience urban space opens up ways of understanding larger issues involving diversity, inclusion, and identity within cities. Meaning, engaging with the 'everyday' social constructions of space builds new understandings of integration, where space is actively claimed and shaped by immigrants. Further research is needed that allows the voices, needs, and perspectives of young immigrant women to be integrated in social research and urban policy. As this study focuses on the everyday, and how people subjectively interpret space, more research is needed that analyzes how young immigrant women in particular are affected by overarching structures of power. It is vital to explore the tensions between political and economic power held by elites that manipulate agency, and how this affects the social construction of space for young immigrant women. Furthermore, an analysis that includes young immigrant women and *class* as a social position is required. Addressing the rise of diversity in cities calls for reframing questions regarding immigrant integration to consider how spaces are actively claimed and constructed as ones of belonging by immigrants themselves. If cities are to belong to *all* people, *all* people must create them. If this is to be achieved, acknowledging that people experience space differently is crucial, and the multiple ways young immigrant women experience space must be incorporated, understood, and acted on by urban policy makers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer and Online Posting



CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THE CITY?

Are you a woman between the ages of 18-25, living in Halifax, who immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years?

Do you want to share your experience of Halifax through photos? I'd love to hear from you!

Join an anthropological study exploring the experience of the city by a Dalhousie honours student. I'm looking for young immigrant women, from a variety of different backgrounds, who want to talk about their experience living in Halifax.

Participation includes taking photos and a single interview.

Please contact Sarah England if you're interested, or to find out more information:
Email: sr260064@dal.ca Text or call: 902-403-8754

Appendix B: Recruitment Email for Organizations

Information sent by email to organizations were as follows:

Dear (insert name of organization or contact person)

My name is Sarah England and I am an honours student in Social Anthropology from Dalhousie University. I am undertaking a research study for my honours thesis that explores how young immigrant women experience urban space in Halifax. My aim is to better understand women's subjective experiences of urban space, through inviting them to engage in photography and a single interview.

I was wondering if you would be able to forward this email along in the hopes of reaching some interested women. I have attached a recruitment flyer if you wish to post online or around your offices or areas where potentially interested women would be able to view them. This is of course voluntary, and I appreciate any help provided.

The following text describes recruitment details and can be emailed to potential participants. I have also included it as a separate attachment.

How do you experience the city?

Are you a woman between the ages of 18-25 and have immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years? Do you want to share your experience of Halifax through photos? I'd love to hear from you! Join an anthropological study exploring the experience the city by a Dalhousie honours student. . I'm looking for young immigrant women from a variety of different backgrounds who want to share their unique experiences of Halifax
Participation includes taking photos and a single interview lasting up to one hour
Please contact Sarah England if you're interested, or for more information.

Email: sr270064@dal.ca

Phone: (902) 403 8754

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact me by email or phone (902-403-8754) for more information.

Regards,
Sarah England

Appendix C: Photo Prompts

Information given to participants during the initial meeting:

Please take photos over the course of 3 days (2 weekdays and 1 Saturday or Sunday) of your everyday life! Don't worry about being a professional photographer, I just want to see how you experience your life through space! Please feel free to skip any prompts. Make sure to make a note of which prompt each photo is for ☺ We will discuss the photos together when we meet for an interview.

You can take photos of **any kind** of place in Halifax (inside, outside, private, public, routes, destinations) following the given prompts. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions and thank you for your participation, I appreciate your time and enthusiasm. **Please take a photo of:**

- A place that makes you feel safe
- How you get from place to place
- Places you go to often
- A path/route you travel
- A place that is special to you
- A place you associate with your future
- Is there a place that reminds you of home?
- Is there a place that is completely different from where you're from?
- Take a photo of a space that has been **easy** and/or **hard** for you to adapt to
- Where do you go for leisure?
- Is there a space that makes you, *you*? (A part of who you are)
- A place that's important to you
- A place that makes you happy
- Spaces for fun and leisure
- Where you feel most yourself

- Where you express yourself
- A space that makes you feel challenged
- A place that sums up ‘Halifax’ for you

After you have taken your photos, please send them to me via email or text (unless we have discussed a different method). Thank you!

Email: sr270064@dal.ca

Phone: 902-403-8754

Appendix D: Interview Guide

The following interview questions are based on photos produced by each prompt. These questions guided the interview, but participants were in control through the photos they took.

Context Questions

1. How did you immigrate to Canada?
2. What do you think of Halifax?
3. How have you learned about / gotten to know the city?
4. Do you think you’re going to settle here?

Photo Prompts

1. A place that makes you feel safe
 - a. What do you do in this space?
 - b. How come this space makes you feel safe?
 - c. Are there any places in Halifax that you avoid?
 - d. How much time do you spend here?
 - e. How do you think other immigrant women your age view this space?
2. How you get from place to place
 - a. How much time does it take you to get around?
 - b. Are you happy with your mode of transportation in Halifax?
 - c. On a daily basis, how often do you use this mode of transport and where do you go?
3. Places you go to often
 - a. Do you have any roles in these spaces?
 - b. Who do you usually interact with in this space?
 - c. How do these spaces make you feel?
 - d. How have you adapted your daily life from home to here?
 - e. How do you think other immigrant women your age view this space?
4. A path/route you travel
5. A place that is special to you
 - a. What have you experienced in this space that makes it special?
6. A place you associate with your future
7. Is there a place that reminds you of home?

- a. Can you tell me if you behave differently in spaces at home vs. here?
- 8. Is there a place that is completely different from where you're from?
 - a. How have you adapted to this?
 - b. Do you think your behavior changes in this space?
- 9. Take a photo of space that is **easy** and/or **hard** to adjust to
 - a. How do you think other immigrant women view this space?
 - b. How does this relate to your identity? Or, how does your identity fit in this photo?
- 10. Where do you go for leisure?
- 11. Is there a space that makes you, *you*? (A part of who you are)
 - a. Did you have a place like this at home? Was it similar or different?
 - b. How does your identity fit into this photo
- 12. A place that's important to you
 - a. Why is this place important to you?
- 13. A place that makes you happy
- 14. Spaces for fun and leisure
 - a. How did you learn about this place?
- 15. Where you feel most yourself or express yourself
 - a. How did you discover this place?
- 16. Where you express yourself
- 17. A space that makes you feel challenged
 - a. Have you experienced any conflict or frustration in a space?
- 18. A place that sums up Halifax

Extra:

- 19. What is most important about the city to you?
- 20. What would you change about Halifax?
- 21. What's your idea of a "good" or "ideal" space?
- 22. What would your advice be for other women from _____ to experience Halifax in the best way possible?
- 23. What spaces would you recommend other women immigrating from _____ to go to?
- 24. What kind of space do you think young immigrant women want in Halifax?

Direct Questions:

- 1. How do you think women experience these spaces versus men?
 - a. Do you remember an occasion where your gender affected how you acted, what you did, or how you viewed any of these spaces?
 - b. Could you describe how this learning occurred for you?
- 2. How do you think people your age view these spaces versus others (older/younger)?
 - a. Do you remember an occasion where your age has affected how you acted, what you did, or how you viewed any of these spaces?
 - b. Could you describe how this learning occurred for you?

3. How do you think being an immigrant affects how people experience Halifax?
 - a. Do you remember an occasion where you felt that being an immigrant affected how you acted, what you did, or how you viewed any of these spaces?
 - b. Could you describe how this learning occurred for you?

Appendix F: Consent Form (see next page)

CONSENT FORM

Picturing Urban Space: Young Immigrant women in Halifax

You are invited to take part in research being conducted by me, Sarah England, an undergraduate student in Social Anthropology, as part of my honours degree at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this research is to explore how young immigrant women experience urban space through photos. I will write up the results of this research in a paper for my class, called the honours thesis.

As a participant in the research you will be asked to **take photos of places in your everyday life**. The photos will be taken over the course of 3 days (2 weekday, 1 weekend) and I will provide prompts for photos. Then, we will sit down together to discuss the photos. You will be **asked to answer a number of questions** about the photos to tell *your* unique story. The interview will take about an hour in a quiet location of your choice and last approximately an hour. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. If I quote any part of it in my honours thesis, I will use a pseudonym and not your real name.

Photos:

After sending me photos through a method of your choice, with your permission I will print them off for our interview. I will keep physical and online copies as I write my final report. I ask for your permission to use your photos in my final report, which will be available online, and in the presentation I make to my university department. If you are taking photos with people in them, you may colour in or blur out their faces so they remain anonymous. If you choose not to do this, I will make sure that any faces are blurred before I use them in my final report. The people who took the photos will remain anonymous in both my report and presentation. If you do not wish for your photos to be printed in my final report, or do not want to send me photos, you can choose to simply show me your photos during the interview so they remain in your possession.

Information that you provide to me will be kept private and will be anonymized, which means any identifying details such as your name will be removed from it. Only the honours class supervisor and I will have access to the unprocessed information you offer. I will describe and share general findings in a presentation to the Sociology and Social Anthropology Department and in my honours thesis. Nothing that could identify you will be included in the presentation or the thesis. I will keep anonymized information so that I can learn more from it as I continue with my studies.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions that you do not want to answer, and you are welcome to stop the interview at any time if you no longer want to participate. You are also free to skip any photo prompts that you do not want to follow. If you decide to stop participating after the photo-taking

process or interview is over, you can do so until March 15th, 2017. I will not be able to remove the information you provided after that date, because I will have completed my analysis, but the information will not be used in any other research.

Although the risks associated with this study are no greater than those you encounter in your everyday life, there may be discomfort if any emotional or difficult topics arise. However, you are in control of the subject matter, as we will be discussing the photos you take. You do not have to discuss anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. Taking a few breaks is entirely welcomed, and you can stop the 3-day photo-taking process or interview at anytime.

There will be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research and you will not receive compensation. The research, however, will contribute to new knowledge on the lived experiences of urban space for young immigrant women in order to shape cities that accommodate *all* people. If you would like to see how your information is used, please feel free to contact me and I will send you a copy of my honours thesis after April 30.

If you have questions or concerns about the research please feel free to contact me or the honours class supervisor. My contact information is sr270064@dal.ca or (902) 403-8754. You can contact the honours class supervisor, Dr. Martha Radice, at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University on (902) 494-6747, or email martha.radice@dal.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email ethics@dal.ca.

Participant's consent:

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

I agree that the researcher can audio-record the interview with me.

I agree that the researcher can use and print photos taken by me.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Participant Profiles

All participants were 18-25, university educated, and able to engage in conversational English.

Pseudonym	Home Country and City	Year Immigrated to Canada
Maria	Manila, The Philippines	2015
Rosa	Mexico City, Mexico	2009
Nina	Kuwait	2015
Nina	Originally from Palestine, Immigrated from Kuwait	2014
May	Chengdu, China	2012
Mutya	Manila, The Philippines	2014
Zoey	Eastern U.S.A	2013
Lily	Cairo, Egypt	2010

Appendix H: REB Final Report (see next page)

ANNUAL/FINAL REPORT

Annual report to the Research Ethics Board for the continuing ethical review of research involving humans and final report to conclude REB Approval

A. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

A1. Lead researcher contact	
Name:	Sarah England
Email address:	sarahfengland@gmail.com
For student research:	
Supervisor at Dal:	Martha Radice
Supervisor email:	Martha.Radice@Dal.ca

A2. Lead Researcher Status
Please indicate your current status with Dalhousie University: <input type="checkbox"/> Employee/Academic Appointment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current student <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):

A3. Project Information	
REB file #:	2016-4045
Project title:	Finding a place in urban space. Young immigrant women in Halifax
Sample size (or number of cases) approved by REB:	1

B. STUDY STATUS

B1. Study progress (check all that apply)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participant recruitment not yet begun Reason (please explain):			
		During past year	Total since study start
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary data use (no recruitment)	Number of records used:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Participant recruitment on-going	Number of participants recruited (by group):		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participant recruitment complete	Total number of participants/records:	8	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Data collection on-going			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Study complete. Data collection complete. No further involvement of participants. Approved data analysis and writing may be ongoing. This report is the final report to close the REB file for this project.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):			

B2. Study Changes
Have you made any changes to the approved research project (that have not been documented with an amendment request)? This includes changes to the research methods, recruitment material, consent documents and/or study instruments or research team. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, please explain:

C. PROJECT HISTORY

Since your initial REB submission or last annual report:	
C1. Have you experienced any challenges or delays recruiting or retaining participants or accessing records or biological materials? If yes, please describe:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
C2. Have you experienced any problems in carrying out this project? If yes, please describe:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
C3. Have participants experienced any harm as a result of their participation in the study? If yes, please describe:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

<p>C4. Has any study participant expressed complaints, or experienced any difficulties in relation to their participation in the study? If yes, please describe:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>C5. Since the original approval, have there been any new reports in the literature that would suggest a change in the nature or likelihood of risks or benefits resulting from participation in this study? If yes, please describe:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>

D. ATTESTATION (this box *must be checked* for the report to be accepted by the REB)

- I agree that the information provided in this report accurately portrays the status of this project and describes to the Research Ethics Board any new developments related to the study since initial approval or the latest report.

E. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Submit this completed form to Research Ethics, Dalhousie University, by email at ethics@dal.ca at least 21 days prior to the expiry date of your current Research Ethics Board approval.
2. Enter subject line: REB# (8-digit number), Last name, Annual (or Final) Report.
3. Student researchers must copy their supervisor(s) in the cc. line of the Annual / Final Report email.

F. RESPONSE FROM THE REB

Your report will be reviewed and any follow-up inquiries will be directed to you. You must respond to inquiries as part of the continuing review process.

Annual reports will be reviewed and may be approved for up to an additional 12 months; you will receive an annual renewal letter of approval from the Board that will include your new expiry date.

Final reports will be reviewed and acknowledged in writing.

CONTACT RESEARCH ETHICS

- Phone: 902.494.3423
- Email: ethics@dal.ca
- In person: Hicks Academic Administration Building, 6299 South Street, Suite 231
- By mail: PO Box 15000, Halifax, NS B3H 4R2