Mapping Daily Mobility in Metro Vancouver: An Ethnography of Regional Transportation for Newcomers Studying within the Service Industry

by

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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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or

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Abstract

This project explores the everyday travel of a small set of newcomers studying within the hospitality industry in Metro Vancouver. Using ethnographic methods of interviewing, exercises of 'mental mapping' and travelling together, each participant’s respective travel scenario is examined as an individual case study. This research seeks to provide an understanding about the set of strategies and tactics that are used to realize participants’ distinctive mobility needs and the role of daily transportation as a component of settlement in the Metro Vancouver region.

**Keywords:** mobility; daily travel; ethnography; mobility justice; newcomers; immigrants
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I am extremely grateful to the participants in this study who shared their daily travel experiences with me and let me follow them around the region. One of you asked me if I could do anything with this research to make getting around on transit better for you. You thought there should be more service in Surrey and Langley that isn’t only every 30 minutes because more people are settling there. Another one of you thought there should be another connection to the North Shore mountains from Burnaby as well as downtown. I said that I would try to do what I could. My commitment to honouring what I said motivated me every day to tell your stories.

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# List of Acronyms

| PR | Permanent Resident of Canada |
| Glossary | The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia is a provincial crown corporation that provides auto insurance for BC motorists and is responsible for issuing driver’s licenses, vehicle licenses and registration. |
Chapter 1.

Setting the Stage

Mary’s arrival for our first trip together on the SeaBus to the Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver captured some of my interests in conducting this research. We had agreed to meet in Waterfront Station and she texted me that she was running late. When she arrived, she said she had taken a wrong exit out of the SkyTrain and had ended up in a food court confusingly named “Waterfront Centre.” When I asked her later if she was using any travel apps to find where she was going she said that she wasn’t; when she realized she wasn’t in the right place for our meeting she asked a security guard for directions to get herself back on track. Mary’s personality and disposition allowed her to laugh about this experience. However, there is the potential that this lack of local travel skill in a foreign environment could negatively impact the arrival period for someone who is new to a city, trying to learn their way around and constantly encountering similar ‘mis-haps.’

What is the experience for people who are arriving in Metro Vancouver daily and having to figure out how to get to the places they need to go? What is it like to arrive in a new city, not be able to understand any of the signs and then have to find your way around? This could potentially be an exciting and exhilarating experience that is part of the adventure – or alternately – intimidating and overwhelming. It could mean relying on some skills previously developed while visiting other cities – or this could be the first time out of a smaller city and now facing a new reality of having to get around in a larger metropolitan region. I wanted to know more about the experience of gaining comfort and confidence while learning to navigate a new city during the period of settling into Metro Vancouver: how were travel skills developed and fine-tuned, what resources were used, and what adjustments were required? Knowing more about the complexities involved during this transition period helps us to understand the settling in experience and how individuals adapt to the uncertainties and unknowns of a new urban environment as they learn to find their way through them. These processes of wayfinding and navigation are
daily activities that enable someone to become more experienced and confident as they orient themselves to a new city.

Starting from a mobility justice perspective (Sheller, 2017), I hold the general value that people who are in the process of settling in the region should be able to find their way to access basic resources and get to the places to which they need and want to go. Sheller (2016) states that “mobility may be considered a universal human right, yet in practice it exists in relation to class, racial, sexual, gendered, and disabling exclusions from public space, from national citizenship, and from the means of mobility at all scales” (p.15).

As global populations are increasingly mobile, contemporary urban environments are therefore the locations where people are continually arriving. Metro Vancouver, as a “Gateway City” (Smith & Ley, 2008) is a popular destination for newcomers from around the world. Indeed, according to the 2016 census, 40.8% of the population of Metro Vancouver are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2017).

To gain an understanding about the processes involved in learning how to navigate around Metro Vancouver for someone who was in the process of immigration, I invited students from hospitality programs at a local Community College who were in various stages and pathways to immigration to participate in this ethnographic project and share their experiences. I was most interested in learning about the experience of those who were hoping to stay in the region and therefore determined as a selection criteria that potential participants would be intending to continue living in Metro Vancouver when they were done their programs. I specifically invited participants from hospitality programs because I was also interested in the possible challenges of late-night and early morning work shifts and what impact this might have on their abilities to get to the places they needed to access.

The Metro Vancouver region consists of 21 municipalities, one First Nation, and has a population of 2.46 million people according to the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2017). The region is constrained by mountains on the North side, the ocean on the west side, and the Fraser River that runs through the middle. Due to these geographic realities, population growth is pushed eastward, encouraging growth between 2011 and 2016 of 12.6% in Langley and 10.6% in Surrey (Canadian Press, 2017). Public
transportation in Metro Vancouver is provided by TransLink, the regional transportation authority. During this research, a $7 billion-dollar investment was finalized that will fund the next ten-year expansion plan to build an underground subway in Vancouver and expand service in Surrey with light-rail infrastructure (CBC News, 2018). As new projects are being finalized, transit ridership continues to grow. In response to transit usage rates as high as the record setting numbers established during the 2010 Olympics, TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond is quoted saying, “new service and capacity is being used as fast as we can get it out there” (Little, 2018).

At the same time, a multi-year national research project, Neighbourhood Change, led David Hulchanski, Professor of Housing and Community Development at the University of Toronto, is finding concerning trends of income inequality, polarization, and spatial segregation by income and ethnicity in Canada’s largest cities of Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver (Neighbourhood Change, 2017). David Ley, Professor of Geography at the University of British Columbia, is focusing on Metro Vancouver and is finding that socio-spatial inequalities characterize the Metro Vancouver region. Metro Vancouver is experiencing trends of “poverty suburbanization” for new Canadians where low-income, immigrant and concentrated visible minority populations are clustering in suburban locations (Mehler Paperny & Dhillon, 2011). Adding to this complexity is the fact that affordable rental housing along transit corridors, such as the Metrotown area, is being replaced with market price condos (Jones, 2015). This presents an additional challenge to finding affordable housing conveniently located near transit services for people who are newly arriving in the region.

Within this economic backdrop for mobility, I explore the intersections within which newcomers are moving to Metro Vancouver, seeking residential locations, finding employment, advancing their educational opportunities and setting up their lives in the region. In wanting to know more about the development of their travel skills and how this related to the process of moving to Metro Vancouver, I set out to answer the question: how do newcomers studying in the hospitality industry who are in the process of settling in the Metro Vancouver region develop and acquire the navigational skills and resources to accomplish their daily mobility? To extend this inquiry, I used this research inquiry as an opportunity to understand how participants’ experiences fit within the stated goals for supporting the adaptation and integration of newcomers set out by the Government of Canada’s Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship that aim to:
[s]trengthen social integration by providing newcomers with tools to fully participate in the labour market; promote social and cultural connections; encourage active civic participation; and foster a sense of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship...[P]rogramming is developed based on policies that support the settlement, resettlement, adaptation and integration of newcomers into Canadian society” (2017).

One of my guiding interests in conducting this project arose from learning that there is limited research on the topic of immigrants and transportation, in part because Canada has no national policies regarding public transit, cycling and urban sustainability (Sodero & Scott, 2016, p.259). I viewed this as an opportunity to understand how the region’s transportation systems are connected to the arrival period during which participants, as immigrants, become oriented and begin to find their way around.

Throughout this project, I have continually reflected on the terminology of how to represent the participants. They would technically be considered “International Students” but with the additional detail that they are all intending to settle in the region and are seeking to become Permanent Residents¹ in Canada. In fact, one of the participants who has been in the region the longest has already become a Permanent Resident. For the sake of the discussion that I undertake with other empirical studies on the topic, I will review other studies about transportation behaviour and “newcomers” or “immigrants.” But I recognize that these are not necessarily exact but instead heuristic comparisons.

1.1. Conceptual Grounding

The research that investigates the topics of newcomers and mobility such as those addressed in this project appears limited and reaches across academic disciplines from transportation geography to mobility studies to migration studies. To situate my research within a conceptual framework, I have consulted several fields of research and scholarship that assist in understanding the topic. Below, I will: review specific studies on newcomers and transportation; introduce concepts regarding travel as a practical skill; suggest a mobilities approach that is concerned with personal meanings and attentive to the factors that can restrict movement; review some of the relationships between travel

¹ A Permanent Resident in Canada is a citizen of another country who has been given permanent resident status by immigrating to Canada but is not considered a Canadian citizen.
capability and well-being; and touch on more flexible and "mobile" ways of thinking about integration and adaptation.

1.1.1. Newcomer Travel

Little is known about the transportation experiences of people who are new to Metro Vancouver and how they interface with and experience the urban environment as they travel through it. During this research, Fresh Voices\(^2\) and the Vancouver Foundation\(^3\) (2018) released a study on the employment, mobility and integration experiences of immigrants and refugee youth in Metro Vancouver. The study used a facilitated survey of 156 self-identified immigrant and refugee youth between the ages of 18-30. The survey was conducted in three locations with groups of participants filling out the survey in a community setting that permitted questions to be asked in person. With respect to those findings that focused on physical mobility, 49% of respondents used transit as their main form of transportation and 60% of respondents were very comfortable using transit. Additional research noted that respondents felt they had a hard time reaching recreational places such as regional parks (2018, p.16). Without specifying which level of government or which agency should be responsible for improving the outcomes, the study made three recommendations regarding physical mobility. Its recommendations were to invest in more frequent service during peak times especially in areas outside of the City of Vancouver, consider community settlement services to develop a transit system and pass benefits orientation process, and consider a subsidized transit pass for new immigrant and refugee youth (p.19).

One characteristic of the newcomer experience that has been documented by researchers is a high reliance on public transportation systems. In a study conducted by Lo et al. (2016) in the Greater Toronto area, the researchers found that immigrants have higher rates of public transit use than domestic born populations. Their argument is that transit needs to be considered as a key component for success in the immigrant settlement process. Research by Heisz and Schellenberg (2004) found similar levels of

\(^2\) Fresh Voices is a collective of immigrant and refugee youth leaders in Metro Vancouver hosted by PeerNet BC. The initiative offers a forum for members to engage in dialogue and action to identify and remove barriers to their success.

\(^3\) The Vancouver Foundation is Canada's largest community foundation and an important source for independent research with respect to urban issues in Metro Vancouver.
high transit use among immigrants in Toronto, and high rates of public transit use have also been documented in American cities (Tal & Handy, 2010; Chatman & Klein, 2013).

In Lisbon, Portugal, Franz Buhr conducted research with twenty-five migrants to understand how they made sense of a new, urban environment (2017a, 2017b). Buhr (2017a) introduced the concept of ‘urban apprenticeship’ as practical learning and states that, “we do not learn to make our ways through cities by internalizing a compendium of ready-made information and applying [it] to everyday life situations. Rather, it is our practical needs, our daily tasks and desires that direct us into exploring our urban environment and into finding in it the resources and experiences we look for” (p. 4). Buhr (2017b) identified an absence of local knowledge for migrants trying to find their way around a new city. In one example, a participant spoke of selecting a route that took the steepest option possible when locals would have known to go around to avoid the hill. Nuanced details such as this one suggest the importance of adopting a close look at the practices of getting to know the urban environment and the potential of navigational confidence to support full participation in daily life. More specific to my study, Buhr (2017b) claims that research on migrant integration could benefit from looking at the way in which migrants learn to use the city and how that impacts their access to urban resources.

In the Flushing neighbourhood of Queens in New York, Shaolu Yu (2016) conducted research on the mobility of Chinese immigrants and found a complicated relationship between accessibility, mobility and social exclusion. Yu found that it was not the availability of transport options that constrained participants’ mobility but instead their concerns about not speaking English, limited time available to them for conducting travel, and concerns about encountering racism (p. 15). Yu’s research draws a distinction between the ability to access destinations because of the availability of transportation options and the abilities to utilize these options that are connected to social, relational and humanistic dimensions. Yu found that individuals who immigrated to Flushing had all the amenities they needed within the neighbourhood and few travelled beyond a limited range. If they did want to travel further, there was a sophisticated network of options available that included Chinese operated buses between the three Chinatowns in New York and a system of Chinese taxis. Yu’s research highlighted many complicated reasons that participants had for not travelling beyond their neighbourhood that were connected to language barriers and fear of
deportation in the context of American immigration policy (p. 19). When one participant in the study travelled beyond their neighbourhood they used an intricate system of note taking as a strategy to cope with their language barriers; they would mark down the first letter of each station stop and attempt to monitor these as they travelled. The participant would also carry a piece of paper with their address on it in case they got lost and had to ask for assistance in returning to their residential location. Yu concludes that the embodied experience of immigrant mobility is largely understudied.

Research within the Canadian context appears to be limited. One study within the Greater Toronto area by Amardeep Kaur Amar and Cheryl Teelucksingh (2015) utilized in-depth interviews with nine immigrants to highlight “questions of access, socio-economic disparities, and the spatial polarization of Toronto in terms of immigrant settlement patterns and travel experiences” (p. 45). Their research found barriers for these newcomers and outlined some of the complex relationships between location, housing affordability, and work opportunities. For example, most participants in the study noted that they had limited choice in where they could live. One participant spoke of moving away from the subway line and her workplace to somewhere that her family could afford (p. 53). The researchers argue that with the demographics of the city changing, it is important to understand how recent immigrants travel through the city and that this understanding should influence transportation strategy and policy development.

1.1.2. Travel Skill

There is much to think about when looking at the demands of daily mobility in a new city. Practically, it requires an initial assessment of where one is and then how one is going to get to the next place they’re going. In understanding daily travel, I draw from Vered Amit and Caroline Knowles’ (2017) theoretical framework for navigation. They present ‘navigation’ as a skill that is about, “finding a way through the physicality of the world…that demands deep knowledge, close attention, and the capacity for invention when things don’t work in expected ways” (p.10). Recognizing that the physical world also contains social complexities, it is important to note their view that ‘navigation’ includes, “…a flexible set of practices for finding ways through complex social activities, relationships and apprehensions” (p. 10). Amit and Knowles introduce a definition of navigation that is not only about finding one’s way between destinations, but also includes “delicate interactive process[es] with unknowable directions and consequences”
(p.10). They also propose that strategies and tactics are required to cope with the unpredictability of daily mobility and present the concept of ‘tacking’ to refer to processes of navigation that include improvisation and how people “approach the uncertainties of their everyday rounds” (p. 1).

Continuing on the topic of how individuals situate themselves in unknown locations and develop travelling skills, the work of Tim Ingold (2000) is helpful. He suggests that learning to utilize a city is a development of skills and a process that happens during the act of travelling. He states that, “‘[f]inding one’s way’ is not a computational operation carried out prior to departure from a place, but is tantamount to one’s own movement through the world…we know as we go, not before we go” (p.239). In making this statement, Ingold draws attention to the active process of becoming familiar with the urban environment through the activity of travel itself. Paola Jirón et al. (2016) contribute to the discussion of the processes of travel ‘know-how’ and skill development in considering how residents of Santiago, Chile adapt and re-learn how to travel during a re-configuration of the transit system. Their research draws attention to a sense of ownership of the system that develops as people learn to navigate it on their own. Additionally, Phillip Vannini’s ethnographic work (2011) on travel on the coastal ferries of British Columbia highlights the advanced skills required to juggle locally held knowledge about how to line-up and other complications such as schedules.

1.1.3. A Mobilities Approach

Building from my perspective that daily travel is a practice of everyday life, I position this research within the inter-disciplinary field of “mobilities,” recognizing that travel is a complex social practice. Literature within the mobilities field provides a guiding framework for this project as I adopt the perspective put forward by Ole B. Jensen (2009) that “[u]rban travel is not just about getting from point A to point B. It is about producing and re-producing the city and the self in a complex relationship involving mobility cultures and different types of mobility knowledge” (p. 152). Jensen introduces the idea that daily travel is a process of inhabiting a city and highlights the opportunity to understand more about how the activity comprises a dynamic and potentially meaningful experience of living in the urban environment. A defining characteristic of mobilities scholarship is an interest in exploring and understanding the meaning associated with daily travel beyond simply an activity that gets people from one location to another.
Scholars in this field introduce the idea that people and objects in movement constitute a rich area of inquiry that extends beyond the scope to which transportation studies have previously approached the topic of people travelling. The ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Sheller & Urry, 2006) introduces the idea that corporeal movement, or daily mobility, is only one form of movement among ideas, capital, commodities and people. Within the field of mobilities studies, scholars are focusing on many scales of movement within larger social, political, economic and power structures. Tim Cresswell’s (2010) ‘politics of mobility’ provides a framework to analyze the complexity of daily travel. He states that, “mobility involves a fragile entanglement of physical movement, representations and practices” (p. 18) and that “[u]nderstanding mobility holistically means paying attention to all three of these aspects” (p.19). He notes that transport studies have done a good job of looking at the facts of movement, but that there is also room to expand on how movement has meaning and how it is experienced. Anthony Elliot and John Urry (2010), present the concept of mobile lives, that are, “the outcome of complex configurations of relationality, affect, desire, socialities, systems, states, regional organizations and global institutions” (p. 13).

A growing focus on the complexities of movement have encouraged mobilities scholars to focus on the barriers to movement and flow. Mimi Sheller (2017) introduces the concept of mobility justice and mobility equity and argues that in a research field where there is an over-emphasis on 'hypermobility,’ or the speed and freedom associated with automobile travel, and a growing class of 'mobile elites’, that there also needs to be a focus on the barriers and restrictions to mobility. She uses the term “immobilities” to refer to the fixed structures, or ‘moorings’ that complement a system of mobility such as terminals, and the structures that limit mobility such as borders (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006). The use of the term ‘immobilities’ within the field has also expanded to offer a counter to the concept of free and unrestricted movement and provides a perspective that contrasts with how earlier mobilities research over-represented the ease of movement through abundant research on automobiles and airplanes. Scholars are increasingly focusing on the idea that fast ways of getting places are available to those who can afford them, while those who can not are relegated to slower options.

Vincent Kaufman et al. (2004) introduce the term ‘motility’ as the potential for mobility, or the capacity that individuals possess to be able to choose how to get places.
They claim that earlier studies of spatial mobility are deficient because these “tend to focus on movement in space-time rather than on the interaction between actors, structures and context” (p. 749). Paola Jirón’s ethnographic research (2009) in Santiago, Chile investigates the lives of two low-wage workers and the challenges they encounter in organizing their lives around long, over-crowded commutes at the expense of time spent with their families. Work like Jirón’s is attentive to the inequalities present in mobility, and focuses on the idea that not everyone has access to the luxury and privilege of moving freely when desired – or even to stay voluntarily in one place.

Caroline Knowles (2010) critiques the often assumed ‘flow’ that characterizes studies of movement and states that, “[p]eople and objects do not flow. They bump awkwardly along, creating pathways as they go. They grate against each other, dodge, stop and go, negotiate obstacles, back-track and move off in new directions propelled by different intersecting logics” (p. 374).

1.1.4. Travel and Well-Being

Recognizing the potential for meaning in connection to travel and transportation experiences, I draw on Susanne Nordbakke’s research (2013) which explores the travel capabilities of older women in Oslo, Norway and how their capacities to travel relates to their well-being. Indeed, much of the research that investigates concepts of well-being and transportation is limited to research on older populations. Nordbakke’s research highlights how participants are able to remain mobile into their older years due to their prior experience and skill using the public transit system. She connects well-being to retaining capabilities for mobility defined as, “the individual resources, including individual strategies, and contextual conditions that enhance an individual’s options and choices about when and where to travel and which activities to participate in” (p.168). One of the key findings of her research was that an individual’s actions factor greatly in in “shaping their opportunities for movement” (p.172). This type of investigation provides a foundation as I look into the daily practice of mobility as a practical skill and explore whether, and if so how, there may be potential for participants to have more positive experiences if they are sufficiently confident in their travel abilities.

The line of inquiry that I pursue concerning the meaningfulness and personal experience related to mobility offers an opportunity to investigate the relationship between daily travel and the concepts of adaptation and integration that the federal
government's Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship aims to achieve. Before tackling relationships between daily mobility and the settlement experiences of the participants in this study, it is helpful to discuss some approaches that explore and link transport and subjectively experienced well-being in the literature. Jonas DeVos et al. (2013) review some of the research that addresses this topic and begin by distinguishing between hedonic views of well-being, characterized by the pursuit of happiness and pleasure, and eudaimonic views of well-being, characterized by the emphasis on purpose, personal growth and ‘flourishing’ (p.424). They employ Ryff and Singer’s (2008) use of the term ‘flourishing’ (p.31) to refer to the realization of the best in oneself and go on to present a theoretical model that suggests both should be considered when investigating well-being and travel. They also note that travel research has tended to focus on hedonic views of well-being. They highlight five areas of travel that relate to the concept of subjectively experienced well-being: (1) feelings experienced during travel, (2) through the activity participation that travel enables, (3) activities undertaken while travelling, (4) travel as the activity itself, and (5) their motility, or capacity to become mobile (p. 422). Their model also proposes that: “the direct link from motility to activity and travel patterns of individuals reflects that greater (smaller) motility can facilitate (diminish) participation in certain activities and so enhance (reduce) both hedonic and eudaimonic well-beings” (p.435). I interact with these five different proposed ways of understanding the relationship between travel and well-being as this framework provides a helpful tool to investigate the potential relationships.

1.1.5. Mobile Integration

Starting with concepts of well-being as they are related to travel develops a foundation to apply these experiences to the federal goals of adaptation and integration. The concept of integration is commonly used “in relation to immigrants’ participation in, and their incorporation into, receiving society” (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018, p.187). Aleksandra Grzymala-Kazlowska and Jenny Phillimore (2018) note that in an era of mobile global populations that the concept of integration is not keeping pace with the reality of populations that are increasingly diverse and often have ties to more than one country. They note that the concept of integration was developed on the basis of “structural and functional assumptions that immigrants constituted an alien element needing adjustment and connection to a society characterised by its well-defined
boundaries, integrated social and coherent cultural systems” (p.186). Adrian Favell (2001) raises the point that the concept of integration relies on an assumption of permanent settlement (p.352). Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2018) go on to note that immigrants are often living in diverse neighbourhoods where a single immigrant group often form the majority and that challenges may not be about the inclusion of migrants, but social cohesion more generally. This critique is helpful for understanding the findings in this study by relating participants’ travel experiences during their times of arrival and settlement to how they supported their adjustment into the region. For example, one of the observed characteristics of how some of the participants adjusted to travelling around in the region was through the experiences they had gathered while travelling in other cities in the world.

Aleksandra Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016) introduces the tool of “social anchoring” as a response to some the limitations of the concept of “social integration.” Her working definition is that anchoring is “the process of finding significant references and grounded points which enable migrants to restore their socio-psychological stability in new life settings and establish their (subjective and objective) footholds in a receiving society” (p.1134). Understanding how Metro Vancouver’s mobility systems support participants’ transition to the region is aided by Grzymala-Kazlowska’s statement, “[t]he anchors people use allow them to locate their place in their world, give form to their own sense of being and provide them with a base for psychological and social functioning. In this way, anchoring represents a means of both adaptation and integration” (p.1135). Grzymala-Kazlowska developed this concept with the idea that it can apply broadly to social bonds or, as I apply it here, to the process of how participants in this study searched out physical locations and mobility practices that appeared to support their efforts as they oriented themselves to a new location.

Recognizing the many directions this study could take as I reflect upon concepts of integration, I choose to build on Buhr’s concept of “spatial integration” (2017b) – as an investigation into participants’ interaction with the structural environment. Additionally, I seek to explore the possibilities of Gryzmala-Kazlowska’s (2016) concept of “social anchoring” as a more flexible and dynamic tool for understanding how these participants settle in the region. Working from this literature, I contend that daily mobility has the potential either to enable or constrain individuals’ sense of ease in moving through the
city, and that this is useful to know when thinking about immigration and settlement processes.

In the context of the limited research that has been conducted on the topic of immigrants, or “newcomers” and their experiences adapting to their daily travel needs in new locations, this study seeks to contribute by investigating how a small set of participants who are new to Metro Vancouver manage their daily mobility as they are in the process of settling in the region. Participants’ experiences highlight how central mobility is for those who are settling in the region. Moreover, their experiences also illustrate that daily travel is a very individual activity that participants have tailored to suit their preferences when they have the opportunity and resources to do so.

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1. Dialogue and Debate on Mobile Methods

Within the field of transportation geography and mobilities research, scholars are focusing on methods that are attentive to the personal experience of individual subjects. Elliot and Urry (2010) employ narrative as a research method because it “offers a distinct way into the telling of mobile lives, but also because it provides profound insights into the complex interplay between mobile lives and mobility systems…and grants a special place to the investigation of the subjective or lived experience as a means of better understanding the import of complex and hugely contested mobility processes” (p. xi). Their explanation highlights that the tools and methods used for research need to match the phenomenon under investigation.

Scholars are spending a great deal of time and energy on the topic of research methods that are compatible with and can capture the nuances involved in individuals’ daily travel experiences. Typically, scholars involved in transportation research have “focused on the who, what, when and why aspects of travel”, but not as much on “how people travel, particularly the experiential aspects of travel” (Fink & Taylor, 2010, p.2). There are, however, novel and creative methods that do arise in the literature that address the how of travel and capture the experiences of mobile subjects. Justin Spinney (2011) conducted ethnographic research on the affective factors of cycling with the use of video methods. Research by Camille Fink and Brian Taylor (2010) included a
website where participants could upload photos and commentary from their journeys. While this is an effective method of collecting data, the authors mentioned that there would be value in a more time intensive method of direct communication with participants.

These methods mentioned above also raise questions around the use of technology to study daily mobility. There are numerous options that would capture the spatial information of where people are travelling that I have not entertained for a couple reasons. I have avoided methods that rely on technology because I was uncertain whether the participants in my study would have access to digital devices. I also believe that mobility is an embodied experience and the use of technology as a requirement to execute a method inserts a divide that I think is unnecessary and could be more distracting than useful.

There are diverging opinions amongst scholars on whether methods that include the researcher being mobile with the subject are required to accurately capture the practice. Peter Merriman (2014) cautions against an overemphasis on the novelty and insistence of mobile methods that require travelling with the subject primarily due to his concern that the discussion revolves around the failures of conventional methods such as interviews instead of advancing the discussion about the plurality of methods suitable for mobilities research (p.168). In contrast to this perspective, Monika Büscher and John Urry (2009) advocate for “inquiry on the move” (p.110) as it “enable[s] questions about sensory experience, embodiment, emplacement, about what changes and what stays the same…” (p.110). Jirón (2011) contributes a convincing argument for “La Sombre, or The Shadow” as a mobile method that offers an ability to get closer to understanding a subject’s experience by being there and observing. I disagree with Merriman that there should be caution used in adopting mobile methods and adopt Laura Watts and John Urry’s argument that the spaces of travel are an extension of the field site and thus mobile methods are an extension of the inquiry and can be simply ‘mobile ethnography’ (2008). Letherby and Shaw (2009) also raise an additional concept of autobiography and reflexivity. In this research, it is often difficult to distance myself as the researcher and my voice as traveller-researcher appears within this study. From this review of some of the ongoing dialogue regarding methods, I turn to my study design – keeping in mind D’Andrea et al.’s claim that, “mobility as a complex, diverse and multidimensional
phenomenon calls for a care with methodological frameworks sensitive to complexity” (2011, p. 158).

1.2.2. Study Design and Data Collection

Building from Mario Small’s proposal (2009) that each interview conducted with a participant can be viewed as an independent case study, I designed an ethnographic study for a small set of individual cases that included a qualitative interview, the collection of each participant’s ‘mental maps’, and a mobile component of joining along on up to four hours of participants’ daily travels. Following Small’s approach, this study design was intended to allow for the methods to be flexible enough to learn as much as possible about the travel experiences of each participant while reflecting on and subsequently incorporating what was learned along the way into later stages of the inquiry. Small’s approach is well-suited to an analysis of how individuals conduct their travel practices because there is an expectation that new information and questions will arise as the interviews proceed. This approach allowed me to adjust my line of questioning as a more complete understanding of participants’ travel processes became apparent. Following this approach, I refined the questions I asked, treating each participant as a new case that would help incrementally elicit new details about learning how to travel in the region. For example, my understanding of the role of participants’ friends in orienting them to their travels arose during one of the first interviews, and I thereafter incorporated this line of questioning into following interviews.

I divided the research process into two parts to address the logistics of gaining ongoing consent. The first part of my research design included an in-depth, ethnographic interview based loosely on an interview guide that is included in Appendix A. Through the interview, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences adjusting to their daily travel experiences in the region since they first arrived. The interviews aimed to collect information about participants’ daily mobility routines, their geographic knowledge and sense of confidence in their abilities to get around, challenges they encountered, highlights, and coping strategies. The interviews acted as research ‘conversations’ that allowed participants to raise areas that were interesting and important to them and allowed me to follow-up on and ask further questions if they mentioned information that was of particular interest to me. My approach to the interviews was also consistent with the “active interview” method outlined by James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium
Holstein and Gubrium suggest that the material arising from interviews is the product of the talk between two people that activates the production of a narrative. Their method proposes that an interview is a social interaction and not the interviewer simply attempting to collect or ‘mine’ information from the respondent. They suggest that an interview guide can be viewed as more of a “conversational agenda” (p.76) and can appropriately vary in its form and application from one interview to the next. Participants were told in advance that the interview would take between one to two hours and they were provided with an honorarium and a meal. Most of the interviews lasted one hour and one for one hour and forty-five minutes. During interviews, I used TransLink’s Metro Vancouver Transit Map shown below in Figure 1 as a reference for the discussion. Interviews provided an opportunity for participants to explain their experiences upon arrival and provide their history of learning to get around the region.

**Figure 1. Metro Vancouver Transit Map**

Following from Franz Buhr’s work on migrant spatial integration in Lisbon, where he asked participants to draw the “Lisbon that [they] use” (2017a, p. 6), I asked participants to draw a map of the places they went when they first arrived and the places they go now. This process was a reflective exercise that captured their travels when they first arrived in Metro Vancouver and allowed them to provide a “spatial biography” (Amit and Knowles, 2017, p.3) of their changes in residential and employment locations, and other details such as where they do their grocery shopping, where they visit relatives, restaurants they go to, and other places they enjoy. The maps were helpful to understand the ‘mobile lives’ (Elliot and Urry, 2010) of participants, and practically, were of great assistance to keep their pathways and routes organized in my own mind during the analysis.

For the second part of the research process, I designed a mobile component based on Yu’s claims that ethnography is critical to conducting “place-based mobility research” as it familiarizes the researcher with “the geographical environment and contextualize[s] the interviews” (2017, p. 13). Travelling with participants on their routes provided an opportunity to follow up on some of the information that arose during the interviews and to experience their travel with them. I presented this to participants as an opportunity to show me or tell me anything they wanted about their travels, including their process of becoming comfortable travelling within the region and any strategies they developed during that time. I selected this mobile method to create a comprehensive set of methods that allowed me to gain an understanding of their travel experiences through our conversations during the interviews, what they showed me in the maps they created, and the shared experience of joining them on their travels. I outlined this component of my research in my Study Information Sheet and Consent Form and provided participants with an additional honorarium for participating in the mobile component of the research. As part of a verbal consent process, I asked participants after the interview if they would be comfortable having me join along with them for up to four hours of their travels that could be divided over multiple trips. At the start of each trip I reviewed the verbal consent process and ensured they knew that they could ask me to leave at any point along the trip with no questions asked.

Between late January to the end of March, 2018, I travelled with eight of the participants for at least one and up to three trips that lasted between 25 minutes to 2.5 hours per trip. One of these trips was by bicycle and the others occurred on the public
transit system. The trips varied in purpose for the participants from being recreational and exploratory in nature, such as a trip on the SeaBus to the Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver, to more functional trips, such as following along on a participant's SkyTrain commute home to Surrey at midnight after a hotel work shift downtown. Other trips included tagging along on a bus ride to Langley when one participant travelled to conduct their weekly family care obligations, joining a trip downtown to a church service, going grocery shopping in Metrotown, commuting home from campus on Broadway Avenue and another campus downtown, venturing out to find a milkshake café seen on Instagram4 and cycling home from Kensington Plaza in Burnaby. My participation on these trips ranged from trying not to take notes to allow the events to unfold to taking notes on my phone or in a small notebook during the trip. I then wrote up field notes for each trip as soon as possible and in as much detail as I could remember. There were many locations I travelled to for the first time to meet participants. Out of interest and necessity, I used Google Maps regularly during this research period to plan, prepare and find my own way to and from the trips with them. As a supplement to my data, and a reminder of the journeys, I saved both screenshots of the trip planning and any photos taken before, during and after our trips together. Through this combination of methods, this study design resulted in nine data sets that allowed for the mobile component to build on the interview and maps and provide additional context and understanding of each participant’s travel situation. The primary purpose of my data collection was to understand each individual case in its entirety, and therefore there was some variation in the application of the methods as the data collection period unfolded. An example of this variation was one participant who created an updated map while we were hanging out in a park waiting for the café they had selected to open.

What I found to be one of the most interesting aspects of this research was how participants engaged in the information sharing as collaborators. One participant took the opportunity to continually reflect on his own travels and provide me with new thoughts and information every time we met. As we were on our way up the escalator he said to me, “oh ya, there’s something I forgot to tell you. I also go to the gym, so I will go to the gym today after work and have to carry this extra bag.” Or in telling me about getting a new job during the course of the fieldwork, “I have a new route, I thought you

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4 Instagram is a social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos and to endorse, or ‘like’ other users’ content.
would like that.” Or after my folding umbrella broke while we were walking to Costco, he pointed out how he always gets a cane umbrella so he can hang it off his bag when he’s not using it. One challenge with the mobile methods procedure, however, was that the scenery, and especially the soundscape, was constantly shifting. In one moment, the travelling environment would support conversation and the next it could change to a loud tunnel, or involve the logistics of exiting the train and queueing up for a bus which could take precedence over any conversation that was underway. Because of these uncertainties along the way, there was a quality to the discussion in transit that could make in-depth conversation more challenging. The conversation was often more about seeing and experiencing the same things, and in-depth discussion occurred more naturally during times of sitting. There may have been an opportunity to discuss a topic in more depth, but the nature of the environment didn’t always support it. The notion of being ‘on the go’ is already a transitory and shifting experience that followed an intermittent rhythm along the journey such as: campus to station, SkyTrain station to SkyTrain station, walk to the bus-stop, board the bus and travel to the next stop, depart the bus and walk to the desired location. While it can be discussed as one trip, it was instead experienced as a series of short trips along the way – requiring any conversation to adhere to the structure and conditions of the journey. If I was to conduct a similar study again, I would consider a final short audio-recorded interview after the mobile component had concluded to have a more focused opportunity to allow participants to reflect again on their most recent practices of daily mobility while having been engaged with the research.

1.2.3. Data Analysis

This study was designed to elucidate the details of individual experiences and is not intended to be statistically representative of the larger population of newcomers. Instead, it provides a window into a set of participants and highlights in some detail how they have learned to get around the region. To this end, I analyzed my data independently for each method for each participant, as an integrated combination of methods for that participant and then also as a comprehensive set of participants in relation to each other. Initial interview analysis included listening to interviews and transcribing them shortly afterwards to ensure that I understood their situations and had given thought to areas for follow-up questioning in preparation for their trips that I would
subsequently accompany them on. The maps they created were helpful at this stage to provide clarity on the many different places where participants had lived, worked and visited since their arrival in Metro Vancouver. At this stage in the process I utilized integrative memos to start to make sense of the data and note my initial thoughts, observations, questions and observed relationships.

My analysis consisted of transcribing the audio recorded interviews and conducting inductive coding. With this approach, I was open to noting what I observed in the data and revised my system of codes as the analysis progressed. Following Per Gunnar Røe's suggestion (2000) for a dialectical conversation with theory, where there is continual reflection upon fieldwork and literature (p. 106), I compared these codes to some of the concepts I found in the literature and continued to make comparisons as my study progressed. As I was conducting this process and concepts were emerging, I continued to write analytical memos centred around excerpts from the interviews and fieldwork data. I analyzed the maps collected as a tool to better understand how each participant’s knowledge, skill and confidence travelling in the region progressed over time. I reviewed the original maps that participants created to note the places they went when they first arrived and how those places have been added to or changed now that they have been here longer. I conducted the analysis of my field notes with the same process as the interview data. I created initial memos of thoughts and observations, conducted open coding and then refined the codes in relation to the interview data and concepts from the literature. Analytical themes and categories emerged through the process of coding and refining the codes.

While I have presented the steps for analysis for each method, this process was about developing the depth of understanding for each participant and was iterative and non-linear. I continually reflected on different aspects of their specific cases and revisited notes from the trips together, re-listened to their interviews and reviewed their maps as new thoughts, curiosities or questions arose. This analysis allowed me to reveal a more comprehensive picture of related components of their everyday lives and the extent to which these are interwoven through their mobility. I did not expect to find homogenous or consistent experiences among participants. At the same time, I aimed to build my analysis and understanding across the set of participants in order to be able to make comparisons between this research in a Metro Vancouver context and the empirical evidence from other studies that have been conducted internationally on the newcomer
travel experience. The details I have outlined for my analysis are to ensure that I have an auditable, documented process and that the conclusions I have drawn from the data are valid. I didn’t aim to find generalities amongst the participants but instead aimed to understand their experiences in the context of other participants in the study. To build my analysis on the relationship between how participants conducted their daily mobility and the relationship this has with how they adapt and integrate or “anchor” themselves in the region, I continually reflected on what I found in the literature in order to assess how my findings either align, refute or add something original to the literature in this field. The analytical phase of this project began with the first interview and continued through the writing of the final document.

1.3. Participants

There were many factors that made each participant different. These included their gender, age, country of origin, size of the city where they came from, the education and careers they had before they arrived, and how long they’ve been here. Additional factors also included the areas in the region they’ve lived in, whether they have available support networks such as friends and family, what options they have for conducting their travel, whether they’re working while studying, the jobs they’ve had since they’ve been here, family responsibilities and obligations, whether they’ve spent time in other cities in the world, and their general attitudes and approaches to new experiences. Participants had varying mobility profiles both in their home countries and in Metro Vancouver. For all of them, the public transit system was their primary mode of travel when they first arrived. For many of the participants in this study, their first years after arrival in Metro Vancouver were particularly mobile as they moved from temporary housing to more permanent housing and moved around to different jobs. Some of them had previously only driven in the countries they came from due to safety concerns with respect to public transport and another who had used the transit system in her home country had always been accompanied by family members.

Participants ranged in age from nineteen to thirty-eight, six were female and three were male. Out of the nine participants, three of them were from South American countries, five were from Asian countries, including the Philippines, India, China and Korea, and one was from Eastern Europe. The size of the cities they came from ranged in population from approximately 250,000 to approximately 25 million. One participant
had arrived here in 2010, and others arrived between 2014 and as recently as December 2017. They had various educational and professional backgrounds that included two law degrees, a Bachelor of Hospitality degree, Bachelor of Science degree and a previous professional career in marketing. Some participants had moved directly to the location they live in now, but most had gone through a transition of staying in temporary locations such as a homestay\(^5\) or Airbnb\(^6\) and then finding their next locations in which to live through friends and family networks. Participants worked in restaurants and hotels, and three of them didn’t have jobs at the time the research was conducted but were waiting on work permits or had acquired a new job by the end of the research period. There was a sense of housing precariousness that required one participant to leave the room he was renting because the landlord’s family needed to use it, while another was concerned about finding a similar location close to transit when the house she was living in was put up for sale. At the time of this study, participants lived in six municipalities around the region: Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam and Surrey. Prior to the research period one participant had first moved to Langley before re-locating to Surrey. Most of the participants lived near a SkyTrain station, or at maximum, a fifteen-minute walk or ten-minute bus ride away. One participant was the legal guardian to his teenage brother, and another had family obligations that required travelling to Langley on a near-weekly basis to assist with a new baby. Two participants had personal vehicles, and one participant’s husband had a vehicle that she didn’t drive. Three of the participants were in the process of studying for their drivers’ licenses, and some have considered whether a car-sharing service would be suitable for them. Others don’t see a vehicle as a feasible option due to the cost, or even the confusion of having to drive when transit is already available. The participants who had jobs had to undertake transit commutes that ranged between 30 minutes to up to two hours. One of the criteria I had when recruiting participants was that they intended to settle in the region. One participant has been considering moving somewhere more rural such as Northern British Columbia when they are finished their program because they may be able to find better opportunities and less competition in the hotel industry.

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\(^5\) Homestay is a form of temporary accommodation commonly used by international students. Typically, for a fee, a “host” provides rooming services, and depending on the terms of the agreement, can also provide meals. These situations include the “host” welcoming the guests into their homes and providing them with a local experience.

\(^6\) Airbnb is an American company that operates an online market for temporary housing such as vacation rentals and short-term lodging.
they work in. The participants in this study all had a U-PassBC\textsuperscript{7} transit pass through their school program that provided them with unlimited subsidized use of the transit system. For some of them, this was experienced as though they had free transit because the fees were included when they paid their tuition.

Anna’s\textsuperscript{8} map, included below in Figure 2, outlines her spatial biography in the region and provides an illustration of the extent of the mobility involved for participants in this study. She has shown a layered history of the places she went when she first arrived in 2016 and the places she goes now. Appropriately, she was an enthusiastic participant in this project and noted that, after my recruiting visit to her class, a friend who knew how much she travels around the region had suggested she participate. When she first came here for her program at the College she stayed with relatives a bus ride away from the Scott Road Station in Surrey. Through Craigslist\textsuperscript{9}, she got a job at a bakery in New Westminster that she travelled to by taking a bus, then the SkyTrain and then the #106 bus from New Westminster Station for her 8 a.m. shifts on the weekends. Through her relatives, she got her own basement suite (with another family from her native country) that is a fifteen-minute walk to the Lougheed Station in Coquitlam. When she moved to Coquitlam she still worked at the bakery and would travel a new route from her house where she would walk or take the #152 bus to Lougheed Station, then the SkyTrain and then the #106 bus. She then got a new job working at a hotel in North Vancouver and so switched her route again so that she would take the #152 bus to Lougheed Station, then taking the Expo Line to Waterfront Station and then the SeaBus to her hotel near the Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver. She’s taking driving lessons, which she loves, and is working on getting her license because she has difficulty getting home on the last SeaBus and the last SkyTrain after her late-night shifts at the hotel.

\textsuperscript{7} U-Pass BC is a regional transit pass program for post-secondary students funded by the BC government. The program provides unlimited access to the TransLink service area for a mandatory monthly fee of $41 for eligible students in Metro Vancouver. The monthly fee is $41 for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years and is subject to change pending a renewal of the program.

\textsuperscript{8} To protect confidentiality, participants are referred to by pseudonyms that they selected for themselves.

\textsuperscript{9} Craigslist is an online marketplace targeted by city and region, where users can buy and sell goods and services. It is commonly used to find rental housing and jobs.
The logistics required for Anna to undertake these trips are not to be underestimated. Yet, her sense of adventure and love of travel appear to inspire her to tackle any difficulties she faces in both her commutes and the exploring she undertakes by herself.

I had an expectation that participants in this project would encounter scenarios where they had to orient themselves to the region, familiarize themselves with their routes, and develop some individual approaches to execute their travels. I was quite surprised to also find the incredibly strong desire they possessed to get out and experience new places. This research provides some new understanding about how this set of participants use the transportation systems in the region and how the ability to get around is central as they are adapting to the new environment and setting up their lives.

Through asking the questions I’ve posed in this research and undertaking this project, I’ve had the opportunity to observe the daily mobile lives of these participants and better understand what some of their considerations were as they adjusted to travelling around Metro Vancouver. Specifically, they shared with me their individual
approach to their daily travel, which was different in at least some respects for each of them. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I aim to outline some of the nuances involved in the skill development process that includes short-term adjustments and adaptations, the set of strategies and tactics they developed in response to challenges, and some of the longer-term learning that participants developed as they became better acquainted with the navigational realities of travelling in the region. Following an understanding of their travel capacities, in Chapter 3, I focus on the investigation of their travel confidence and the other information they shared about the range of emotions they experienced related to their travels. From there, in Chapter 4, I return to what I think is one of the more interesting findings of this study, which is the role of the social landscape in assisting them with their adjustment period as they developed their travel skills. Through this discussion, I take the opportunity to engage with the concepts of adaptation and integration and probe further into how the personal mobility experiences participants developed in the region appeared to support their process of settling-in. Buhr (2017a) draws attention to the ‘making’ of mobilities as complicated undertakings involving schedules and options and points to Vannini’s argument (2012) that mobilities are complex taskscapes\(^\text{10}\) not to be taken for granted. I accept Vannini’s argument, and recognize that the participants in this project have figured out a good deal about how to travel in the region in the time that they have been here.

\(^{10}\) Tim Ingold (1993) introduced the term ‘taskscape’ as an array of related activities. He draws a comparison to ‘landscape’ and states that, “the taskscape is to labour what the landscape is to land” (p.158). In the context of mobility, the taskscape would refer to the continually evolving combination of tasks required to travel, including but not limited to: the checking of schedules; the acquisition of directions and route information; the preparation of correct fares; and the attainment of driver’s licenses and registration.
Chapter 2.

A Commitment to Learning

To keep moving in their desired directions, participants adopted and applied numerous strategies to assist them as they adapted to their daily travels in a new urban area. To achieve these travel accomplishments and develop a personal approach to their daily travel in Metro Vancouver, they honed their skills and competencies in various ways and sought out travel experiences that were of interest to them. Their daily travel was distinct in some respects for each of them and they exhibited a wide range of abilities, levels of confidence, and strategies and tactics as they negotiated the unknowns they encountered. Generally, these participants exhibited great skill and patience in their abilities to adapt, particularly when faced with a range of challenges such as limited English skills, not knowing what google was or how to check online, or finding themselves alone and having to be more independent than they were previously accustomed to being in their home countries. Beyond the fact that travelling was essential for them to get to campus and their jobs, it also appeared to be a genuinely enjoyable activity that enabled them to explore the region and get to know the city better as they situated themselves in it. There was a sense of shock upon arrival and a need to get acquainted and oriented that varied widely between participants, especially depending on whether they had previous experience of visiting other cities before arriving in Metro Vancouver.

In the discussion that follows, I refer to participants’ travel abilities as the extent to which they are able to execute their desired travels. I then refer to their travel skills as the proficiencies they develop and learn through practice. Additionally, my use of these terms is informed by the detail that Kaufmann et al. (2004) outline with respect to their concept of motility – or the potential for movement. They propose that being mobile is an interdependent relationship between access, competence, and appropriation. Firstly, they state that motility involves being able to access the range of different forms of mobility. Secondly, competence, involves the skills and abilities to move. This includes physical ability, acquired skills such as an understanding of rules, regulations, and specific knowledge, and organizational skills, including the acquisition of information,
abilities and skills. Thirdly, appropriation, involves how individuals, “…act upon perceived or real access and skills” (p. 750).

2.1. Spatial Models of Learning

I shall now outline three spatial models that I observed in the research and then discuss the skills that prepared travellers for the uncertainties they faced in the immediate short-term as improvised strategies and tactics to get oriented, participants’ responses to some of the challenges they faced, refined as a set of preferences and know-how, and then as a long-term calibration.

Through the maps that participants drew and what they told me, I observed three models of how their mobility routines progressed and how they expanded their urban learning during this transitional time. I have termed these: Along the Line; Within the Neighbourhood and Beyond; and Adding Another Layer of Knowing. These models provide a reference point for further discussion and a framework to understand some of the pulls that motivated participants to travel to different destinations. At its most basic, this project has captured the interface between individuals and their spatial environment and provided an explanation as to how they incrementally expanded their understanding of the region.

2.1.1. Along the Line

The first model of spatial use I observed was characterized by travel along the SkyTrain line. The region’s SkyTrain, which runs above ground, served as a beacon of familiarity that participants were very comfortable using. As Mary said about the train lines, “it was easy to get used to this kind of transportation” as she then later went on to inquire about the order that the different train lines—the Expo, Millenium, Canada, and Evergreen—were built. The buses, however, were a source of confusion and frustration and motivated some participants to limit their mobility solely to the SkyTrain lines. Roberto, for example, had trouble understanding the buses because his English wasn’t very good when he first moved here in 2010, and he therefore only took the SkyTrain:

Roberto: Confusing by the bus is, sometimes in the weekend, maybe some buses only work on the weekday, some buses on the weekend, and some buses overnight. Some buses end up at 10’oclock maybe, so I
remember one time downtown I just finished my dinner with my friend. I need to take bus to South Burnaby, but the bus is, he doesn't work on the weekend and then I walk, I just walk to the SkyTrain station for one hour, and take the SkyTrain to home.

Perhaps because the participants’ campuses were close to the SkyTrain lines and all participants used the SkyTrain to commute to their campus, there appeared to be a swift and easy transition to train travel. This phenomenon of limiting travel to the SkyTrain line is visible in Roberto’s map in Figure 3 below that shows his initial journey along the dotted line from his first home in South Burnaby marked “Rumble” to Fraser International College (FIC) on Burnaby Mountain.

**Figure 3. Roberto’s Travel Map**

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11 Participants in the Hospitality programs were studying at a campus downtown. Participants in the Culinary Arts programs were studying at the campus downtown and a campus on Broadway Avenue as they cooked and served meals at both cafeterias.
Because of his limited capacities, Roberto chose to constrain his daily travel between Patterson Station and Production Way Station where he understood the logistics required for catching the one bus that would transport him up to his language school. He told me how this was one of the only routes he took for the first two years that he lived here. Otherwise, he didn’t need to leave the SkyTrain line because he worked at a restaurant that was within walking distance from Metrotown Station and could do his food shopping at Metrotown or Patterson Station. He told me how he had previously lived in New York and had used the subway there. This was the reason he suggested to explain why he could only take the SkyTrain here. He had developed his travel skills there on the New York subway and when he arrived here he relied on those previous experiences to travel on the SkyTrain. The limitations that Roberto had with respect to his travel could point to a preference for familiarity and demonstrate the difficulty of moving beyond what is familiar.

Participants repeatedly mentioned that the SkyTrain was simple and was an obvious piece of infrastructure that greatly assisted them in their abilities to get to where they needed to go. Julia, who had lived in the Marpole neighborhood in South Vancouver for a month in 2014, noted how easy her travels to downtown were when she returned in 2016 and lived near the Brentwood SkyTrain station in Burnaby. It was also obvious early in my analysis of the research findings that Metrotown, the large mall along the Expo SkyTrain Line in Burnaby, appeared as the centre of the regional universe. It was commonly mentioned as a location for obtaining groceries, shopping, or a place to go with friends. It was evident that Metrotown was one of the locations in the region that was easily recognizable when participants first arrived and was a popular destination for them to go and see.

2.1.2. Within the Neighbourhood and Beyond

I have termed the second model I observed, *Within the Neighbourhood and Beyond*. Hazel’s map in Figure 4 below portrays this second model of knowing that appeared to me to involve becoming acquainted with the local neighbourhood area and then expanding beyond. At the top of the page is her neighbourhood in Richmond, which includes the places she went when she first got here, and at the bottom of the page are the places she goes now. As she told me about her map, she said that she was now comfortable with the places in her neighbourhood and she wanted to be able to know the
downtown Vancouver area better. Also worth noting on Hazel's map is that she has added Surrey to the bottom right corner. She has relatives she visits there but sees it as an overnight trip because of the time it takes to get there and back in the same day.

Figure 4. Hazel's Travel Map

2.1.3. Adding Another Layer of Knowing

The third model I observed is characterized by the incremental addition of new places to the travel repertoire as part of an ongoing accumulation of travel experience, knowledge and understanding of the urban environment. One of Ken’s experiences when he first arrived is characteristic of this “layering of knowing”. He told me about how he disliked a path that went under the SkyTrain because he slipped on the ice while walking on it. Over time, by looking on Google Maps, he eventually found a different path through the houses that he much preferred to get him under the elevated SkyTrain. Another experience of his that is characteristic of this same model occurred during a heavy snowstorm one afternoon after I had joined him on his morning work commute to
North Vancouver. The next time I saw him I asked him if he was able to get home, and he told me that his manager told him to take a bus to the SeaBus at the Lonsdale Quay because the buses weren’t running over the Lion’s Gate Bridge. He shrugged his shoulders about it and said, “at least now I know how to go that way.” Indeed, this layering characteristic of incrementally adding knowledge about more places and routes reflects the common processes of repetition and practice that allowed all participants to increase their travel expertise.

What I also observed within this model was that destinations arose for participants that acted as a motivating factor, or a “pull” for them to take another trip. Mary, who wanted to go to the Capilano Suspension Bridge, used the opportunity of this research to take a trip on the SeaBus to the Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver. For Ken, this meant wanting to go to the Hard Rock Café, Walmart, Metrotown and the Tsawassen Mills shopping plaza in his down-time. Not only was Metrotown a popular destination, but so were shopping locations in general. Hazel mentioned how, when she first arrived, she would go to IKEA just to look at all of the stuff. Similarly, Steven mentioned taking trips to Walmart in Langley just to look because it was different than Walmart in China. Eventually, Hazel had enough of shopping and was more interested in finding new places to go that were “in nature.” This may have been because most of the participants in this study had figured out their basic travel, didn’t appear to be burdened with administrative needs, and possessed an interest in wanting to know the city. When speaking about the month that Julia had spent here in 2014, she said, “I just want to explore and know as much as possible, so I walk everywhere, like downtown, Gastown, Chinatown, False Creek. Ya, I just walk for, not exercise, but especially for ya, explore and then I could see much more things than if I take a bus.” She also spoke about the time where she spent a day hiking up the Grouse Grind and then rented a bike and rode around Stanley Park. Julia’s statement is indicative of the commitment to learning that was observed in all participants. Engagement in the research process also seemed to increase participants’ awareness of how they were becoming better acquainted with the region and learning new travel options. On one of our SkyTrain trips together, Mary made sure to note that she had just recently taken the SkyTrain Millennium Line home from VCC-Clark station for the first time and was surprised how busy it was at 9 p.m. on a weekday. She added that, since the last trips we had taken together, she had also travelled to the Richmond Centre to go shopping with her sister. Her contributions to our
conversations made it apparent that continuing learning and the addition of knowledge about how to access more destinations characterizes her travel experience.

In pursuing the research question about how participants develop and acquire the navigational skills and resources needed to accomplish their daily mobility, the data that I collected suggests there are motivating factors and reasons that encourage participants to want to learn how to travel within the region. These reasons appeared to extend far beyond the requirements of getting to school, work and acquiring other necessities such as groceries and indicated a desire to get to know the city more and to see different places as a key part of being somewhere new. I observed this process as these participants who were new to the region were trying to find the most effective and successful ways to piece together their desired lives in Metro Vancouver.

2.2. Learning Trajectories

Next, I present and discuss the learning processes I observed as participants became better acquainted with their travels in the region. These are outlined below as short-term adjustments, responses to challenges, the refinements they made in their travel skills, and their longer-term learning.

2.2.1. Getting Oriented: Short-Term Learning, Strategies and Tactics

While some participants spoke of simply researching the places they would need to go when they first arrived and then finding it to be simple to access these with the support of Google Maps or other travel apps, this wasn’t the case for all participants. Those who did not find getting around simple spoke of a more challenging adjustment period that required a set of tactics they devised to ‘find their bearings’ and develop solutions ‘on the go’ to the predicaments they found themselves in. The arrival period included some requirements that called for quick adaptations, adjustments, “course corrections” or remedial actions for participants to stay on target and help them find their way. I view the acquisition of these skills as a set of capacities participants employed in the short-term to get them started on their routes, get themselves out of precarious situations such as getting stranded, being lost and late for work, or simply getting acquainted with new routes for the first time. These actions taken by participants are
similar to the acts of ‘improvisation’ and ‘tacking’ that Amit and Knowles (2017) outline as components of the navigation process that require ‘on the go’ adjustment.

This included how participants used technology for wayfinding. Codi and I took a trip together to a waffle café on Kingsway Street in Vancouver that she had never been to before. On the way there she told me about how she knew where to go by searching Google Maps: “I just saw the route, and just following the route”...“28 minutes.” As we were leaving the café we started discussing what route we were going to take to get back to New Westminster. She pulled out her phone, searched Google Maps for New West Station and then started to direct us toward 29th Avenue Station, which neither of us had been to before. As we started walking in one direction she quickly realized we were going the wrong way and turned us around to get us back on track. Steven showed me how he uses Google Maps by marking his favourite places with heart and star icons and then when he is driving he searches for them and follows the routes indicated on the app. Anna was the only participant to speak about using the “Next Bus” service of TransLink where you text your stop number and it texts you back when the next buses are scheduled to arrive. During a standing-room-only trip on the SkyTrain to Coquitlam, I asked her about it: “is this because you don’t want to use the data on your phone?” “Yes” she replied. Aman had probably the most elaborate system of using her phone; she would check the directions when she was at home and had access to the internet and then take a series of screenshots of the directions that she would tick off as she passed the places she knew. Julia had a challenging and perhaps somewhat unanticipated adjustment when she moved from Surrey to the West End neighbourhood in Vancouver and thereafter had to get to work on Sunday mornings by bus. She’s not interested in walking this route because her work shifts require her to be on her feet all day. In almost the same sense of despair she exhibited when she used to commute on a 40-minute train ride back and forth from Surrey, she found the #6 Davie bus to be much more unpredictable than she expected. She showed me how she had developed a system of toggling back and forth between a series of four apps that all had different information about when the bus might arrive.

Part of this set of initial skills also included the amount of advanced preparation and planning participants undertook so they were ready for the trip ahead. Hazel, who

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12 Data is the additional package for mobile phones that provides internet connection.
had already found herself lost and encountered a problem when her phone wouldn’t work in the rain, explained to me that one of her strategies to address this problem was to take screenshots of the route before she left as a “back-up plan.” Hazel has had a difficult adjustment period after being accustomed to driving in the Philippines and is really trying to get better at travelling independently. Her preference to have a back-up plan suggests that becoming acquainted with a new city is not a simple task for someone who has spent their entire life in a different one.

Beyond these initial skills of using technology to assist them in finding where to go were another set of strategies and tactics that participant employed – often to get themselves out of precarious situations or to face the challenges ahead of them. In this sense, we can return to Knowles’ critique of the concept of flow and fluidity that often characterizes mobilities literature, “that it conveys an unreal sense of ease, a smoothness of motion, that is contradicted by even cursory examination of the mechanics of specific mobilities” (2011, p.138). Instead of an effortless set of journeys through the urban environment, these experiences presented below show that learning to travel in the region often involves adapting to one’s most recent mistake in wayfinding.

On the topic of improvisation, or remedial action, Roberto told me about a situation he found himself in where he had heard that Maple Ridge was very beautiful and so he got dropped off there by a friend who was driving to Alberta. At the end of the day he thought his phone would work online and he would be able to find his way home but that wasn’t the case. His solution to this predicament was to call a taxi and he was thankful that the driver suggested to drop him off at the nearest bus stop to save him money. For additional assistance, he asked the driver to draw him a map so that he could find his way back to Burnaby. Another participant, Anna, who loves to travel and has spent time in the United Emirates, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, France, Turkey, and Egypt appeared to have a strategy for the inevitable uncertainties and was prepared in advance for things to go wrong. Her approach to finding her way around is to “just try everything” and ask people along the way if she doesn’t know where to go. If she gets lost, she says to “just go back and start again.” This is also perhaps how she found herself lost at Buntzen Lake on another occasion after asking a bus driver which bus to take and then having to walk about four kilometers to get herself to the lake – only to find herself stranded. She told me how she thought about hitchhiking but instead walked back to wait for the bus to get home.
Some of the participants spoke of using specific familiar locations, or ‘guard rails,’ as I term them, as a fixed point they could orient themselves around. In this context, a ‘guard rail’ would be a known location that participants could use if they had lost their way and needed to re-orient themselves to where they were. Roberto spoke of his SkyTrain trip to his English language school and said that he knew once he passed the Lougheed Mall that his stop would be the next one. Hazel explained a story of trying to figure out where she was when she got lost downtown while trying to pass some time before her work shift started. Her scenario seems to capture the disorienting experience of becoming accustomed to new surroundings. She told me how she had gotten lost coming out of a store and was trying to figure out how to get back to her work so she “video chatted” her roommate who told her to find “the trashcan” and she was eventually able to find her way back to her work. Aman’s map below outlines the places she went when she first arrived and includes the Superstore she used as her ‘guard rail’ for orientation as she explains here:

Aman: So I usually like write it down. “I have to get out after bus stop.” … I have to cross the road, so it’s like written “Superstore.” So I look throughout the window, like, this is the stop, “ya superstore,” it’s written there, so I have to get out at the stop.
Aman also used her technique of creating screenshots of all the stops she would pass during her trips as a ‘guard rail.’ She told me that one reason she had developed this technique was to be prepared in case she saw a location on her way to her destination that she wanted to return to. Because she had screenshots of all the stops, she could then make a note of it and know when it would be coming up on her return journey. After meeting Aman and knowing that she had a background in engineering and computing science, it was not surprising to me to see that she had gone to such lengths to organize her trips. Aman’s somewhat academic approach to her travels points to her preference to record some aspects of her trips that she feels confident that she knows and then to use these as a platform for jumping into trips to unknown areas. For Mary, understanding the East/West orientation of the region assisted her in using her map and helped her to get a sense of which direction she was going. Similarly, Ken was confused with the names of Waterfront Station and Production Way but thought it was like New York except with just one line and was then able to get oriented.
2.2.2. Responding to Challenges

Some of the strategies that participants employed arose as a response to specific challenges or barriers. For the participants who worked in hotels, one of these barriers included late-night and early morning weekend shift work when the SkyTrain doesn’t run late enough or start early enough. In response, participants had to adjust to using the NightBus\textsuperscript{13} system, trying to get rides home with co-workers, or, as Anna is in the process of doing – choosing to get her driver’s licence so she can get a car. As mentioned in the model of “along the lines,” adopting a strategy that avoided the buses due to confusion or preference was a prevalent theme. Ken, for example, commits to the following approach: “[w]hen I can, I walk. So, it’s like this, I take the SkyTrain when I can, then I walk, then the bus as a last resource, that’s pretty much it.”

Ken had also devised a strategy for grocery shopping that was compatible with his SkyTrain lifestyle. He said that nearly every day, he walks from his campus downtown, through the Stadium-Chinatown Station to Costco to avoid the rain and plans exactly what he is going to buy so that he can fit the large items in his backpack and then carry them home to Nanaimo Station. Costco appears to be of his key places that he marked on his map in Figure 6 below.

\textsuperscript{13} TransLink’s NightBus is a system of bus routes that differ from the daily schedules and routes and provide service overnight when the SkyTrain is not operating.
The weather was another challenge that participants had to prepare for, and respond to. In early February, Ken asked me if I knew when Spring was supposed to start because he was finding it difficult to carry all the items he needed for the day when it rains. He said that he would prefer snow because it was easier to walk in. As we were on the SkyTrain, he pointed out that he had to carry two pairs of shoes for the day so he had a dry pair to wear in the gym. Aman explained to me how she needed to keep rubbing the condensation off the window on the bus so she could see where and when she needed to exit. Roberto told me how his decisions about whether he would drive to Richmond or take the Canada Line train depended on whether or not it was raining.

Steven had one of the more elaborate and sophisticated responses to the challenges in front of him. To begin with, he was disappointed when he arrived in Langley and realized how difficult it was to travel there by bus from his campus. He told me how he would make his way to Walmart to buy items he needed, such as a desk chair, but that he would have to plan his entire day to fit in the trip to the Walmart. He
was particularly frustrated because there was even less frequent bus service on the weekends – which was the only time he was available to make these trips. On his first trip back to China to visit family, he got his driver's license. As he and other participants told me, international students can drive with a license obtained in their home country and so he was using his Chinese license that he had translated through ICBC. He told me of getting pulled over by the police four times for them to check that he had the correct driver's license and of one officer taking his license away. In response, he decided to get his BC driving license, but there were no appointments for a test available for months unless he used their stand-by system. At this point the learner's license he had only allowed him to drive until midnight so he had to devise a plan where he went to the centre before midnight with another licensed driver in the car and then waited all night in his car to be first in line for the stand-by options in the morning. As Amit and Knowles (2017) state in relation to the concept of “tacking,” that it is “…people trying to improvise in response to new information or changed circumstances, to get by, rather than to radically challenge the structures through which they are navigating” (p.3). Steven exhibited creativity and resourcefulness to approach this situation but also seemed fairly exasperated by the lengths he had to go acquire his driver's license.

2.2.3. Skill Refinement: Preferences

What really struck me during this project was how each participant had a different approach, a differing source of confidence in their ability to get to the places that they were going and widely varying preferences in how they chose to conduct their travels. Jirón (2016) views these individual preferences, such as whether people choose to sit or stand, or how they situate themselves on the waiting platform, to be a form of “know-how” (p.603). These factors were indeed present in this study and I refer to them as a refinement of the travel skills beyond what is needed for immediate adjustment. For example, Roberto preferred to get on at the very front of the train at Commercial-Broadway station so that he “saves time” when he gets off at Stadium Station. Aman considered herself “lazy” and didn't want to have to stand on the bus so conducted assessments of the line-ups for the different doors of the 96 B-line in Surrey to increase her likelihood of getting a seat. On the trip that she and I took together from Stadium-Chinatown to Surrey Central, she showed me how she first boards the train to Waterfront, then waits for all the passengers to get off the train so she can then find a
seat for her long trip to Surrey. The unknown factor in her plan is whether the train she
takes to Waterfront will turn out to be a train from Waterfront to Production Way or a train
to King George. She had anticipated this announcement on our departure from
Waterfront and sighed with disappointment when we found out we were on a Production
Way train and would have to switch trains at Columbia Station. In contrast, Anna showed
little concern if she had to stand on the train. She did, however, have a plan for her bus
ride during which she would stand near the back doors on the way to the SkyTrain so
that she was the first one off. Ken travelled earlier than he needed to so that he could
avoid the crowds. He told me how he travels at 5:30 a.m. to the gym and, since it’s
“against the flow, it’s so nice, it feels so good.” It was through observing some of these
detailed differences in how participants approached their travels that I became aware of
the time and attention they were devoting to refining their travel plans to suit their
preferences.

2.2.4. Long-term Learning

This study captured particularly mobile experiences of coming to live in Metro
Vancouver which included initially finding temporary places to stay such as: with friends,
relatives, homestay, an Airbnb, or campus dorms. There was then a series of moves as
participants adjusted and refined the logistics of their spatial lives. This was a set of
participants who were mobile in many senses, including that they had few belongings
and were often ready to, or expecting to, move again with short notice. When I asked
Ken if he used a bicycle, he replied that he didn’t because he needed to be able to move
his residential location and wouldn’t know if he would be able to use it to get to his next
job. The approach of this study captured their longer-term trajectories in the region which
appeared as a type of negotiations once they knew the routes they needed to take and
could then make some decisions (if they had that luxury) about where to live and work.
In the longer-term, depending on the flexibility of their situations and the options
available to them, participants exhibited a preference to adjust the distances between
where they lived and where they worked or went to school. Mary’s map in Figure 7
below includes the places she went to when she first arrived in November 2017 and
shows the Airbnb she stayed at for one month, where she had to walk and then take a
bus to the Richmond Brighouse Station to then catch the Canada Line train to get to
school.
After this experience, she concluded that location and access to transit were her main criteria for finding another place to live. She had one tip to pass on to others:

*Mary: Maybe, if I have a friend coming, I actually will recommend it to stay in a place close to the station, so she or he wouldn’t take so many time in the bus. If it’s possible, more close to the station.*

Mary had mentioned how much she likes the train and that she finds the buses to be slow. Through the experience of developing her own travel expertise, she now feels that she has a valuable contribution to pass on to someone else.

Hazel was one participant who didn’t have the luxury of reducing the distance she needed to travel between her home and work, and her experience drew attention to a paradox between the housing and job support provided by family as a form of ‘immobility’. With assistance from her godmother who already lived here, she had found an affordable room to rent in Richmond for $500 per month. Through her cousin, she had found a job at a downtown restaurant, but found the commute between home and
work to be too long. She had thought about looking for a different job in Richmond, but didn’t want to leave her current job for at least a year because she was told that it reflected poorly on your record as an employee if you weren’t in your previous job for a full year. Her concern was that if she left her job before she had worked there for a year, she wouldn’t be able to list that experience on her resumé. She had considered moving closer to her work downtown but was not able to afford the $700-$900 per month for the rooms she was finding. Anna had a similar experience where she had found an affordable basement suite in Coquitlam through her family network and then got a job in North Vancouver. She said that she had been thinking about moving, but wouldn’t be able to until she had completed her program. At this point, she was limited in her ability to reconcile the distance between her housing and her job – which was up to a two-hour commute by transit. Ken had a similar experience where he was concerned about his transit commute to North Vancouver because someone had told him that the traffic on the Lion’s Gate Bridge is a problem in the summer. His main priority was transferring to a specific new job in North Vancouver, which he obtained through a friend who recommended him to the employers. The employers at this new job were willing to help Ken get his “PR” (Permanent Residency), as they had done with his friend. He had been considering moving to North Vancouver to be closer to his work, but again, he wouldn’t move until after finishing his program. He told me that when he was looking for a new place to live he had filtered out Surrey, Coquitlam and New Westminster because they were too far away.

Participants had acquired the geographic knowledge and travel experience that permitted them to make more informed decisions about where they chose to live and work once they had been in the region for a longer period of time and had become familiar with the places they needed to go. This ongoing “calibration” was especially obvious in Julia’s story of moving from a residential location in Burnaby to Surrey to match her husband’s job and then moving again during the span of the project when his job had shifted to Annacis Island. Since they had no reason to be in Surrey anymore, they re-located to the West End in Vancouver to be closer to her job and school as well their friends. The multiple moves they needed to execute were made easier by the fact that they had few belongings and had only ever rented furnished apartments until taking their apartment in the West End. They accomplished their first move from Brentwood Station to Surrey with a rented SUV and this was now the first time they were
considering the logistical implications of buying furniture. Her moving history is shown in her map in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8. Julia’s Travel Map**

Julia previously had a job at a pizza restaurant at the Outlet Malls in Richmond that she acquired through a referral from one of her husband’s friends from his English language school who was also working there. She told me how she soon grew tired of the commute from Surrey to Richmond. Even though she had satisfied the criterion that if she and her husband were going to live in Surrey it had to be right beside the SkyTrain station, she was still looking forward to moving to the West End in downtown Vancouver where she would be closer to her work at a new job at a hotel.

*Julia: It’s not a bad story, but it’s like very hard. I used to work in Richmond. So ya, I take like from King George Station Surrey until Richmond it was like one and a half hour. Too long. So, this was one of*
the reasons to change the job because, too long, too much time commute.

Beyond some of the strategies and tactics that participants developed in response to the scenario at-hand, there were a couple examples of an even more grand “approach” to the task of urban navigation. Amit and Knowles (2017) propose the idea that some of the skills of mobility draw on “a deep ‘intuitive’ knowledge of how the world works” (p.10). Mary reflected on the knowledge and wisdom of learning to navigate the city after I had joined her at her church:

I mentioned the comment that the pastor had made, “that we have lots of knowledge, not as much wisdom” and said that I wondered if there was any connection to daily travel as I had been looking at how people were accumulating the knowledge of how to get around. Mary said that “wisdom is knowing how to search for the right knowledge. Knowledge is just information and you have to find what is right for you.” She said that for her in Brazil, “wisdom will make me go the safe way, but here it is just the convenient way.”

Mary’s comments seem to hint at the idea that there are many layers to acquiring travel ability. Gathering information beforehand can help find the right routes, and as she indicates above, an application of that information can help one to accumulate a certain travel wisdom. This is fairly significant in her reference to Brazil, because she is suggesting that the application of travel knowledge and experience can enable a traveller to avoid harm. Her comment then points to the freedom she has travelling on transit here where the extent of her concerns reaches only to which routes are the most convenient.

When I asked Hazel if she had any specific approach to the travels of her day she told me:

Hazel: Everytime I wake up I just pray, and then thank the lord, always, and then after the prayer, it’s like, there’s already an energy to move and get up and go to school, cause I’m a believer of God, and then also when I get home I pray again that I’m safe, that I survived today. Cause I always ask myself, like, how did I survive today? Like, what happened?

Hazel’s comment emphasizes that she prepares for, and expects to encounter uncertainties as she conducts her daily travels. Her travels are a part of her everyday routine, and she approaches them in the same manner in which she approaches all
aspects of her day. Her religious faith helps her to get her through the day, and as she has stated here, it is something she relies on to execute her daily transportation.

For these participants, daily travel in a new city is a complex undertaking that includes unfamiliar locations, route choices, mysterious bus schedules, initially incomprehensible bus signs, and unknown geographies. Jirón (2016) mentions that “[w]hen observing the way people orchestrate mobility practices to various rhythms, the complexity of transport systems emerges” (p.603). Based on the limited research conducted on the topic of newcomers and their transportation behavior, it appears that these complexities have been frequently overlooked. However, as has been shown here, participants have demonstrated creativity and inventiveness as they have had to make swift adjustments and develop their region-specific mobile competencies. Some of the other refinements in participants’ travel skills and capacities to respond to the challenges and uncertainties they encountered appeared to rely upon their personal styles and dispositions, including whether they seemed worried, nervous, relaxed or excited. I address these matters in more detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 3.

Travel Confidence: Adjustment, Meaning and Fulfillment

3.1. Adjusting to Travel in Metro Vancouver

Another of my reasons in wanting to know how participants developed their navigational skills was also to learn more about whether they had experienced a positive adjustment period or not. Following along on that line of inquiry, I was interested to know about their sense of confidence in their abilities to get to the places they needed and wanted to go to – including which destinations they found to be particularly challenging or enjoyable to arrive at. In response to questions such as, what was it like arriving here and having to figure out how to get to all of the places you needed to go?; do you feel confident in your abilities to travel around here?; and, how comfortable were you travelling when you first arrived?, participants spoke of many different aspects of their travels in the region that caused them a range of emotions from frustration and exhaustion to freedom and joy. Hearing more about this range of emotions assisted me in gaining a better understanding of their experiences as they arrived in the region and how daily travel served as a component of it. Asking about their comfort and confidence in conducting their travels, prompted them to tell me so much more about their desires to navigate to unknown places, as well as some of their fears and concerns. Moving from the discussion in the previous chapter about the travel competencies, skills, strategies and tactics that participants employed during this project, I shift now to the topic of their evolving confidence and comfort and some of the emotions they conveyed to me. This discussion serves to further develop the topic of daily travel and how it is important and meaningful in participants’ lives.

While the acute process of getting situated took only a few days for some of them, I observed an ongoing and dynamic relationship between exploring to new places and continually extending their range of what was known. This appeared for the most part to be a satisfying process that honed their skills, increased their confidence and enabled them to expand the places they go. To different degrees, participants were guided by a sense of adventure and an opportunity to experience new destinations and
add them to the list of places that were now familiar to them. This, however, wasn’t the experience of all participants. Hazel was instead overwhelmed by the size of the region, and said with mild exasperation, “there are so many places.” The range of ways in which participants had embraced the opportunity to travel and explore appeared to be related to the other travels they had done before arriving in Canada. This experience of moving to Metro Vancouver was Hazel’s first, “out of the country” journey, and she told me she is “scared of travelling.” She also had a traumatic experience early on in her arrival when she got lost while on a trip in her neighbourhood to PriceSmart to purchase food. She told me that to become more comfortable, she then took trips back and forth until she got to the point where she thought it was fun.

What became clear is that the approach each participant applied to his or her travels in the region was tailored to suit that person’s disposition, skills, and aspirations. I suggest that how they conducted their practice of daily mobility reflected in some part the life they aimed to live here. Participants exhibited a sense of individuality in how they reacted and responded to the set of challenges before them. As an illustration of this, Julia was becoming more comfortable travelling downtown and had begun to discover what was personally important to her regarding how she spent her time. She told me about the time she spent touring around with a friend who was visiting from Brazil:

_We met at Denman and Davie and walked to Sunset Beach and then home and then to Winners to show her some of the shops and then to Gastown. To show her, “what I like to do. Not just the famous sight-seeing spots.”_

Her comment points to the fact that there may be a set of expected tourist activities that almost function as a check-list during the arrival period. The fact that Julia has moved beyond these tourist activities to spending her time with a guest in what she thought was an interesting way could in itself be seen as a form of personal adjustment. Instead of “fitting in” to the region through some of the standard sight-seeing activities, she was more creative in seeking the different places that were compatible with her interests.

### 3.1.1. Negative Adjustment Experiences

Similar to the range of skill-levels and capabilities discussed in the first chapter, there was also a range in how participants responded to, and were impacted by, the situations they encountered and the difficulties they faced. Some of the more negative
experiences reported came in reaction to a set of challenges that included the unfamiliarity of the environment, concerns around language, confusion with the bus system, low transit service levels more generally, and how long it took to get places due to the size of the region. For example, Aman had a difficult early adjustment to being independent for the first time and said that she had questioned why she even came here. She spoke of the difficulties of looking for a job in Surrey and having to renew her transit ticket multiple times during the day because it took so long to get to the different locations where she was applying for work. She was also confused because she was accustomed to the five-minute frequency of the 96B-Line bus and assumed that one of the other buses she had just missed would be coming again in a few minutes – not in another twenty minutes. Codi, who experienced some stress because she wasn’t confident in her English was concerned that people wouldn’t be able to understand her if she lost her way.

Codi: Um, ‘cause English is my second language and I worried about when I ask people how to get there or something like that but I feel like they don’t understand, they won’t understand me so I was uncomfortable about that.

Codi’s experience highlights the degree to which her interest in going places was reduced because of her concerns about getting lost. Her explanation of this experience presents the picture of someone who is moving around the region with a sense of unease. Indeed, Codi was still learning and adapting to being independent in her travels. Her situation has similarities to Yu’s work (2016) on Chinese immigrants living in New York who were constrained by their fears of not knowing how to speak English. Above and beyond these expected concerns around language, Codi also experienced a sense of unease in her daily travels in relation to some unanticipated fears: for instance, encounters with crows. She told me how she doesn’t like the transfer at Commercial-Broadway Station when it’s dark in the morning because there is always a large flock of crows. “I think it’s kind of dangerous, it’s kind of scary ‘cause there’s so many crow in the sky, they’re like, cawww! (as she makes a crow sound).…. so I just run, take a bus right away….” Anna spoke of other fears such as how she was concerned about the cars in Surrey after her roommate had been hit while walking across an intersection. These fears acted as a guiding concern to adjust her approach and remind her that “you should be very, very like, attentive there.”
One specific area that was a source of frustration for multiple participants was the lack of control and sense of powerlessness they had over the bus routes compared to the consistency of the SkyTrain. Roberto told me about the considerations he makes in deciding whether to take the bus along Hastings Street or the SkyTrain to get home. In addition to mentioning that taking the bus requires a longer walk to his house, he said that he preferred the reliability of the SkyTrain because it doesn’t get stopped in construction traffic. He noted that with the SkyTrain, “you can control the time.” Returning to Ken’s approach of how he chooses to walk first, then take the train, and finally the bus as a last resort, he told me that the worst trip he has had so far was when Google Maps told him to take a bus from Burnaby to Richmond. He described this trip as “really painful…the bus was crowded. It took way longer than the SkyTrain thing would take.”

3.1.2. Positive Adjustment Experiences

On a more positive note, there was also much about participants’ travels that brought them joy, such as how Ken mentioned that he enjoyed his bus trip to North Vancouver and the Canada Line train because of the views from the bridges. Roberto told me how he likes the convenience of riding his bike and all the places that he finds. Early on after his arrival, when he was working at a Chinese food restaurant in South Burnaby, he had bought himself a small folding bicycle at the Metrotown mall. He would take it on the SkyTrain from his home near Edmonds Station and then fold it up and put it in his locker at work. For cycling trips on the SeaWall in Stanley Park, which he especially enjoys, he rents a bike because his bike is far too small for long bike rides. When I asked him about not wearing a helmet he said, “ya, I like the wind. I know it’s dangerous….and illegal.” Steven, who was one of two participants who had a car, enjoyed being able to go shopping at Metrotown or to the beach in White Rock for sushi and live music. He told me how much he likes to travel here, particularly because he had become accustomed to not going anywhere in China – where there can be day-long traffic jams. In contrast, he spoke of the freedom he has here to drive with his friends to Harrison Hot Springs or Kelowna. Aman, who spoke of a challenging initial adjustment period then went on to tell me how glad she was to have the experience of travelling around here and how she likes the transit system because it is a unified system unlike what exists in India. Anna told me that she really enjoys the #555 bus from Lougheed
Station to Langley because it’s an express bus that travels on the highway with just one stop and she can put her earphones in and enjoy the trip.

In the discussions about what participants enjoyed, walking was frequently mentioned. After telling me about how exhausted he was on the evening he walked for an hour to get to the Skytrain, Roberto specified that he enjoys walking for distances of around one kilometer. Julia elaborated on how she enjoys finding new areas in her neighbourhood or how she likes getting a different perspective of Granville Island when she walks across the Granville Street bridge. Anna mentioned how she prefers walking over taking the bus if it is raining or snowing heavily (and if it isn’t uphill like the route from the SkyTrain to her house). Ken told me how he enjoyed walking to the Walmart near Grandview Highway for some reason he couldn’t really explain as he said it wasn’t really walkable but was quieter than “crazy downtown.” Codi told me how she used to prefer walking forty minutes on the trip home from her high school in New Westminster. This preference, however, reflected the fact that she would rather save the money that she would have otherwise spent on the bus trip. On a trip to North Vancouver, Mary and I ended up at the dead end of a path as we were walking around a waterfront park. While I had anticipated that we would be moving on, I refrained from taking any action when I saw how content she appeared standing still, quietly looking at the view, ‘dwelling’ (Ingold, 2000) in this quiet nook in the city.

It became clear to me that gaining experience through practice supported participants’ sense of ease as they made their way to new places around the city. This was visible in Aman’s experience of becoming familiar with a trip to Langley to help her family friends, which she said was a fairly new trip for her. She told me how angry she was at herself on one of her early attempts at this trip when she encountered a bus that was ‘unloading only’ and then had to wait thirty minutes to take a different bus to get to her destination. For her early trips, she had made screenshots of her trip planning on the Transit\textsuperscript{14} app when she had access to the internet at home. As she was travelling, she was on alert to tick each stop off until she arrived at her destination. In contrast to this level of uncertainty was the trip that her and I took together. Knowing that she has an incredibly rigorous schedule and that this bus trip was one of the few times she could

\textsuperscript{14} Transit, is one of the apps mentioned by participants that provides navigational support through a mobile phone.
rest, I suggested that she was welcome to sleep. She took me up on the offer and told me to wake her at 232nd Street. Yet her own mastery of the route allowed her to wake up just before we arrived at this stop. Mary explained to me that as she gets to know the city better, travelling around had become easier for her. She mentioned that when she was not as confident as she is now, she would be a bit afraid and would leave home an hour earlier in case something happened that would make her late. Now, she says that she leaves home at the right time.

The incremental accumulation of travel skills acted as a ‘buoying’ factor that gave participants an increased sense of confidence and motivation to go to other places that were of interest to them. Codi explained this best when she told me how it will be good to go some places relying just on her memory.

Codi: …when I go there, go somewhere alone it’s kind of adventure to me and I see so many the streets and I remember the street later, yes, and then just when I go there alone I have a confidence…

Codi’s comment speaks to the satisfaction she finds in the learning process as well as the comfort that developing travel memories along the way offer her. She was one of the only participants who framed it this way: that the memories developed through experience are what seem to provide her with a sense of ease. Returning to the ‘guard rails’ I introduced in the previous chapter, these familiar streets that she finds by going by herself then act as familiar locations in terms of which she can orient herself around in her future travels. Roberto told me of his dream to move to Port Moody because he liked the view of the mountains and the ocean and it was on his list of places he wanted to go. When I asked him how he would get there, his answer was, “maybe drive to there because I didn’t know any detail there. I never go there.” He had only seen a picture of Port Moody on his friend’s Instagram account. He was one of the participants who had the most challenge with the bus and had pointed out that anywhere that wasn’t on the SkyTrain line and only had buses such as Surrey, Port Moody and Langley were difficult to get to. He was aware that the Evergreen SkyTrain line had now been extended to Port Moody, but still felt like he would want to drive there when he went for the first time. Being in his vehicle gave Roberto a sense of security that he didn’t have when finding his way on the buses. However, this lack of a sense of security was not consistently shared by participants. In contrast, Aman told me about the comfort she took in letting the bus driver take her somewhere as they are going that way anyway. Regarding
driving, she spoke of the complications of potentially getting lost, so it wasn’t something that brought her a feeling of ease. Julia seemed pleased that she had now gained the experience to criticize the options that Google Maps gave her and make her own choice on which route to take depending on the combinations of buses, SkyTrains and stations that were involved.

A sense of adventure, accomplishment, and desire to seek the unknown appeared to be a guiding motivation for many of the participants to venture further in their travels. Julia told me how once her husband got a car, they were able to go to some other places like Alice Lake in Squamish as well as Chilliwack. Indeed, a sense of freedom and independence arose on numerous occasions for different participants. For the participants who came from Brazil, they enjoyed that they could travel on the SkyTrain and not have to be concerned about their safety. For participants from China, they appreciated that there were fewer people here and they could travel to locations, like the beach in White Rock, where they felt like they were the only ones there. For Aman, she was grateful for this experience to learn how to travel here, because as she said, “in India we were not independent. We were always dependent on our parents.”

One prospect that appeared to provide participants with a positive experience was the notion of expanding the options in their own personal travel repertoire. Aman, while generally being content with the transit system, wanted the bus service in Surrey to be more frequent than every thirty minutes. Other participants spoke of wanting to expand their routines. Roberto was the only participant who mentioned that he rode a bicycle regularly and he was interested in getting his motorcycle license. After our bike ride together, I texted him that I had taken the Central Valley Greenway from Holdom Station back to Commercial Drive and he responded, “maybe next time I will try it lol.” Mary was considering the car-sharing systems after her Airbnb host had suggested it could be useful for her. She was also interested in getting a vehicle with her sister and brother-in-law because they had a dog they wanted to take places for walks other than just in front of their house. Anna was in the process of taking driving lessons and really wanted a vehicle so she would be able to predictably get home to Coquitlam from her late shifts at a hotel in North Vancouver. Codi had access to a vehicle through her parents and had started studying to get her driver’s license. Julia had moved downtown during this project and told me how she wanted to get some rollerblades and start
cycling around the seawall for fun – but not for commuting as she had some fears after being hit by a car when she was younger.

3.2. Developing Travel Meaning and Fulfillment

Through this project, a wealth of information arose about what participants liked and didn’t like, how they reacted to the challenges they faced, and how they appeared to be determined to master their travel experiences and to seek out the diverse experiences that were of interest to them. These experiences provide a point of departure to discuss how the activity of daily transportation was meaningful for them. Hazel, who appeared to experience the most anguish due to her limited travel abilities, spoke of a range of emotions and concerns regarding her daily travel. On the trip to campus that I joined her on, she appeared to effortlessly weave her way along her route, saying “good morning” to all the characters along the way. My observation was that she was now at a point of “thriving” on this trip to school while at the same time being a bit stressed because she had slept in and was running late. Her ability to master her route had improved greatly by the time I joined her compared to the challenging transition period she had experienced when she first arrived. She had encountered difficulties getting oriented to her new surroundings, had trouble finding her way based on the maps on her phone because she didn’t think the locations look like they do on the map, felt overwhelmed and stupid because she didn’t think she was good with directions, and felt like a bother because she was always relying on her friends and roommates for directions. She was also exhausted with her work and school schedule, which left her with no days off to rest or catch up on her laundry. Because of her rigorous schedule, she also didn’t have the “luxury of time” to get oriented to the downtown Vancouver area where she works or do any of the exploring in nature that she wanted to. She thinks her work is too far away from where she lives but isn’t going to leave her job until she’s been there for a year. She believes she would have more time to rest and do laundry if she had a car but she doesn’t want to have to pay for it. In addition, she is happy to have the experience to be able to study abroad, and when I asked her if there is anything that she particularly enjoys about her daily travels, her response was, “everything.”

Hazel’s example illustrates that understanding participants’ experiences as they adjust to their daily transportation in the region is complex and there are multiple dimensions involved with respect to whether it is a positive transition for them. Hazel has
experienced a sense of despair due to her concerns that she will get lost, yet meanwhile she really enjoys the opportunity to interact and chat with people along the way. She feels that she is still learning and is trying to find time to go to some of the places she’s found on Instagram, such as the Vancouver Art Gallery.

To continue this discussion about participants’ personal senses of enjoyment (or lack of), I return to DeVos et al. (2013) and the five areas of travel they connected to subjectively experienced well-being. They noted the feelings experienced during travel, the activity participation that travel enables, specific activities undertaken while travelling, travel as the activity itself, and motility, or the capacity to be able to travel (p. 422).

Looking at Hazel’s experiences with reference to these five areas provides an additional tool with which to consider her experiences. With regard to the feelings she encounters during travel, her sense of uncertainty and unease has arisen when she has been ‘on the go’. She has been uncertain of her own abilities to complete her journeys without getting lost and appears to have a difficult time when she is in unfamiliar locations. She spoke about taking classes at the downtown campus and being confused as she exited the building in the evening because everything looked different and she didn’t know where to go. Instead of this being an adventure that she embraces, it has been a source of fear and apprehension. She also encountered another negative experience in getting home from IKEA when she needed to buy a closet organizer: in short, she felt like she was overcharged by the taxi driver because he could tell she was new to the area. With regard to the activity participation that travel is supposed to enable, her schedule has been the primary factor restricting her from going to places she wants to reach. For example, she would like to go to church but has instead been watching the services online. Regarding the activities undertaken while travelling, she noted that when she is on the train she enjoys organizing herself for the day, resting if she needs, or talking with fellow passengers. With respect to travel as an activity itself, she mentions liking all of it and is grateful for the experience. Reflecting on her motility, or her capacity to travel, she appears content with the Canada Line and the bus options available to her, even though she would prefer the time-savings permitted by a car, if she had access to one. Her statement below illustrates there was more complexity within her thought process on the topic of wanting to drive.

*Hazel: Ya, I’d rather drive then, but I’m getting used to the routine so maybe not. ‘Cause I was thinking since I don’t have any family members*
here so maybe my mom or dad they're gonna ask me to pay for my own car, gas, I was like, maybe not. I would take advantage of my Compass Card\textsuperscript{15} because it's part of the tuition already, so I'm just going to use it. Maybe in the future.

Her comment points to the sense of access she has with her U-Pass BC transit pass that provides her with the freedom to use the transit system for a price that she hasn’t paid much attention to. Proximity is also a concern for her as the distance between her work and her house is too far for her taste. Additionally, as she reflected on her experience with the cab, she saw it as an opportunity to become more independent and learn how to take the train or the bus instead – thereby expanding on her own capacities to be mobile.

The travel options that participants relied upon to get them to school and work were clearly important. For those who were working late nights and weekends these were often inadequate to connect them to their employment opportunities. What also really stood out during this project was participants’ reliance on transportation to support them in their pursuit of leisure, and recreational activities. It was evident that the activities of sight-seeing and ‘seeking the unknown’ were personally fulfilling to them and were important as part of their settlement experience. Aman explained it well after telling me about her attempts to find a bus to the Vancouver Aquarium in Stanley Park. Travelling with her sister and her friend, they ended up instead just walking from Waterfront Station and then spent the day walking ten kilometres around the SeaWall:

\begin{quote}
Aman: So, like, some places that doesn’t have transit service, right, it’s like hard for us because like, whenever you came to a new country, you should, you want to visit some tourist places, so I usually look for transit whenever I have to travel to different places.
\end{quote}

While Aman spoke of this experience as a frustration, she then went on to laugh about it and mention how it was a good opportunity to walk and take pictures along the way, which they wouldn’t have been able to do if they were on the bus.

\textsuperscript{15} A Compass Card is the re-loadable fare card that allows users to access the TransLink system. In Hazel’s case, she is referring to her U-Pass BC explained earlier in footnote \#6, which she would load onto the Compass Card through a website that will recognize her as an eligible student.
3.2.1. The Relationship Between Travel Confidence and Travel Knowledge

As I observed, participants’ sense of confidence in their abilities to navigate around the region factored greatly in the development of their skills and their desires to continue learning. Their positive experiences and freedoms were a motivating factor to continue learning and their negative experiences and frustrations constrained their desires to go further. Anna, who appeared to be one of the most adventurous travellers in the project told me about a time recently when she was talking with a friend about how she never had the feeling of being scared to go anywhere. Instead, she would see people fumbling around with maps and their phones and show them where they should go. In contrast, during Aman’s initial adjustment period, she mentioned her concerns:

Aman: I was facing too many difficulties when I was travelling the first time, even for the first three months, … and I was worried at night before that when I have to travel throughout the day so I was worried, like how I’m going if nobody’s, my friends are not going to come with me, how will I go there?

Aman’s sense of unease as she was developing her travel skills and understanding of the region caused her concern about how she would manage if her travels extended into the evening when it was dark. This example points to her being constrained and restricted due to her lack of familiarity and experience travelling at night. These restrictions in travel based on negative experiences were especially pronounced for Hazel. After getting lost multiple times, she developed a fear of leaving her apartment and had constrained her local travel for a few months until she started her school program downtown. Steven has never understood the buses and said that the numbers just don’t connect for him. He has a vehicle now and still doesn’t know how to use the buses. He feels that he doesn’t need to learn because he only needs to use the SkyTrain.

Again, how individual participants reacted to uncertainties in their travels was connected to their personality, disposition and experience, to the extent where for some the challenges were almost laughed off. For example, instead of prompting despair for Anna, her challenges in getting around became a motivating factor to obtain her driver’s license. While Steven complained about how long it took to take the bus to Walmart in Langley and the difficult time he had trying to get a chair home, he also laughed about
the experience and now saw it as a good memory. It appeared to me that with access to
the region’s SkyTrain, commuting to school was the simple part of participants’ travels
and more importantly, was, how they were going to get to Stanley Park, to Lynn Canyon
to go hiking, to Koreantown at the Lougheed Station, or as one participant’s friend had
mentioned to them, to Abbotsford to take their family member to the tulip festival.

The focus of this project is on how participants developed their travel skills. The
connections I make regarding their travel well-being is facilitated by what they shared
with me regarding their thoughts and feelings about their daily transportation. I have
been able to suggest that understanding the skills and tactics they used as they made
their way around was closely connected to understanding their confidence in
accomplishing their daily mobility. From what I observed, these processes were not
mutually exclusive. As participants became incrementally more familiar with the urban
environment and their transportation, their levels of comfort and confidence also
improved. Julia explains her situation of coming to Metro Vancouver by herself for a
month in 2014 to study English, and then returning in 2016.

*Julia: So I can compare the first time when I came in 2014 - very
uncomfortable, especially because I took just one bus every time … and
my level of comfortable was like 0/1 till when I came in 2016 I stayed in
Brentwood close to SkyTrain station, so it’s ok, it’s easy, and I think it was
like 5/6. Now, I’m pretty comfortable. I can, whatever I need to go I know
how to get there. Using apps, planning the trip, estimating the time, yes,
considering all the options that I have.*

During this time, Julia has developed a thorough knowledge of the region. She has also
lived in the Marpole neighbourhood in South Vancouver, Brentwood Station in Burnaby,
King George Station in Surrey, and is now living in the West End neighbourhood in
Vancouver. While living in these locations, she had commuted to Templeton Station in
Richmond for work, then Commercial Drive, and now downtown. She told me about her
travel between King George Station in Surrey and Templeton Station in Richmond. As
part of her attempts to improve her travels, she would discuss with her co-workers about
which routes were faster, and would then experiment and test out this information. Her
application of travel knowledge suggests an inter-relationship between continual learning
and improving comfort and confidence when she became better equipped with the
additional skills and information.
Participants appeared to have a guiding motivation to develop their travel confidence so they could then tailor their travels to suit themselves and find enjoyment in them. In making this suggestion I turn again to Ingold (2011) who stated that “wayfaring is our most fundamental mode of being in the world” (p.152) and note that participants appeared to develop their expertise as a personally rewarding activity.
Chapter 4.

Travel as a Social Skill in a Social Landscape

4.1. A Range of Social Support

I consider the social landscape that supported participants in their development of travel knowledge and acquisition of travel resources to be one of the more interesting findings of this project. Ingold’s statement, “that technical skills are themselves constituted within the matrix of social relations” (2000, p. 289) provides a starting point to understand the rich social fabric present in the development of travel skills in this study. What really stood out during this fieldwork is the extent to which learning to adapt and adjust to travel in a new city was a social activity – bound up in a set of tips, suggestions, recommendations and information about how to go about it. These “social facts” (Hall, 2015) included: perceptions of safety; friendly bus drivers who facilitated the process on finding one’s way; the kindness of fellow passengers; the initial orientation tours provided by family and hosts; participants’ reliance on their friends as they developed their skills in navigating the region; and then the re-production and distribution of travel knowledge through information-sharing. This study illuminated how navigational and wayfinding skills are shared between people as a social activity and how having once acquired this information, participants were inclined to pass it on and help others. For example, I was a participant in a willing information exchange while waiting for Mary to arrive at the bus stop.

As I walked up to the bench there was a man at the stop who said to me, “It’s a’ coming” and I said that I was waiting for someone. As the bus arrived he stood up and started chatting with another woman at the stop, “one time I waited for an hour in the snow, but usually it’s every five minutes.”…. “Just show that to the driver.” It seemed that he was very interested in helping others through this experience.

When viewed as a larger system of cumulative experiences within the region, this example suggests an intricate skill network of “in-person” learning and social support akin to a shared capacity of mobility knowledge amongst Metro Vancouverites. To reflect on the depth of the social landscape in the discussion that follows, I outline four dimensions: others met along the way; tour guides; travel amongst friends; and the re-production of travel knowledge.
4.1.1. Others Met Along the Way

The first dimension of the social landscape observed in this study includes what Ulf Hannerz (1980) would term “trafficking relations” – strangers met in passing in the urban environment, encounters which at first glance could appear to not even be about relationships at all (p.105). For some of the participants who had arrived from Brazil, this included their perception of the comparative safety found in Metro Vancouver. Based on their experiences in Brazil, where they would expect that a mugging could occur, they had become accustomed to being extra attentive when out in public. In fact, two of the three participants from Brazil only had previous mobility experience that involved driving or riding in a private vehicle in their home country because they didn’t deem it safe to be out walking or on transit. Their expectation when they arrived in Canada was that it would be safe and they wouldn’t need to be concerned about having their belongings, such as cell phones, visible. For other participants, there was also a perception that Metro Vancouverites weren’t as judgemental of what they were wearing as they were in the Philippines or in Brazil. Instead, they mentioned how people wore whatever they wanted on the Skytrain, including their pyjamas.

The social travel landscape also included others on the system that participants saw as people they could turn to if they were lost or confused. For Mary, this included the security guard who she asked for directions when she had lost her way enroute to Waterfront Station. For Roberto, this included a fellow passenger who pushed the door open for him on one of his first bus trips when he didn’t know how to get off the bus. For many of the participants this also included the assistance provided by bus drivers. Anna, who had gotten herself stranded out in Belcarra was “rescued” by the bus driver who picked her up even though she still had an entire route to complete before Anna would arrive back at her desired location. She also told me of another occasion where she ended up on a NightBus that didn’t have a stop where she needed and the bus driver had helped her out by letting her off where she needed to go.

Most participants had positive stories to tell about the people they met along the way. Hazel, who seemed to have, perhaps, the most challenging adjustment period and got lost multiple times, exhibited exceptional grace when I joined her on her school commute. She told me about knowing the people who hand out the daily newspapers, greeting them daily and bringing them cake. She told me how one day the bus driver
recognized her and waited for her when she was walking down the street toward the bus. In re-enacting this story for me, she said flippantly: “oh, were you waiting for me?” For Julia, it was also how some of the social happenings that occurred on the train were a welcome break during the long trip home to Surrey after her late shift where she said everyone is usually just on their phones. Instead, the event she told me about resulted in others on the train starting a conversation and made the trip “light.” She had been on the train on the way home from work and a guy from Ireland, who she thought may have been drunk, had started talking to another couple who found out they had things in common. When the guy left the train, there was then a common topic of discussion that brought other travellers from the train together and they spent the rest of the trip talking. She reflected positively on this experience as one of her highlights of travelling here. She noted that it was enjoyable because it was so unpredictable and had passed the time quickly.

The social travel environment was less positive for Steven who first lived in Langley when he arrived in the region. Returning to his experiences of being pulled over by the police, he had felt like it wasn’t fair that one officer had accused him of making up the fact that he was a student, taken his license and towed his car. The framework for navigation that Amit and Knowles (2017) propose extends not only to the physical world, but also to how individuals find their way through complex social relationships (p.10). This can be applied here to Steven’s situation. He was caught off guard by the accusations that he didn’t have the correct driver's license and then needed to develop his experience interacting with the police, ICBC, and driver’s licensing staff as he transitioned to a “full” BC driver’s license. Not only was he acquiring the skills to navigate to the physical locations in which he was going, but he was also gaining the skills to navigate through multiple layers of authority and bureaucracy in Canada. Interestingly, he also told me about how during one of the two times he spent waiting overnight at the ICBC centre, he had met another individual from India who was also on stand-by to take his driving test and they had become friends after the hours they spent talking.

4.1.2. Friends, Family and Hosts as Travel Guides

A second dimension of the social travel landscape involves the elevation of the degree of interaction with those met in passing to more meaningful and substantive interactions. These interactions occurred between participants and their friends, family
and hosts as they passed on helpful information and acted as travel guides upon their arrival. This included the investment that hosts, friends and family members made to ensure that the participants were provided with support and information to get oriented and acquainted with the transit system or other suggestions such as how the car-sharing options might be suitable for them. This form of social learning was instrumental for participants in helping them get oriented to their travels. Similar to the navigational lore passed on by Micronesian sailors that Amit and Knowles discuss (2017, p. 10) there was a wealth of specific information passed on that was tailored to the participants’ individual scenarios and was not the kind of information that would be as easily retrieved from the internet. Tips such as, “always plan your route the night before” or to be aware that weekend schedules are different than weekday schedules were repeated back to me as some of the most important tips that participants received. Participants were told about pressing the yellow strip on the SkyTrain if they encounter any safety concerns, how the fare cards work, how to push the door open, and that you need to pull the cord if you want the bus to stop because it doesn’t necessarily stop at every stop as might be the case for buses in their home countries. For some participants, this included being accompanied on a journey on the transit system or even being driven to get groceries and then having their future transit routes pointed out along the way.

4.1.3. Travel Amongst Friends

A third aspect of travel information-sharing and support occurred amongst friends on an ongoing basis. Some participants made friends early on with people who had vehicles and were able to get driven around as part of the learning process. Anna, who had one of the most challenging commutes because she needed to get home to Coquitlam after late shifts in North Vancouver had a network of co-workers around her so that depending on the end-time of her shifts, she was sometimes able to get rides to a SkyTrain station. She much preferred this option to the uncertainty of trying to time the last SeaBus and the last SkyTrain to make it home and was surprised to find that the car trip only took twenty minutes compared to the one and a half hours that the transit trip would sometimes take her. Similarly, other research on transportation and immigrants has found that carpooling is a strategy to help them get around (Bose, 2014).

Codi’s development of travel capacity was closely connected to her friend and family networks. She told me how when she first arrived in Canada her SkyTrain travel
was always with her friends, and that there were constraints on her travels if she didn’t have her family around. If her family was in town, she would go with them by car to Koreatown at the Lougheed Station, but if they weren’t available, she wouldn’t undertake this trip alone on transit. She told me the route was “kind of difficult” to get to, and she didn’t want to walk around in the area with the car and train traffic. She even used the research process as an opportunity to go somewhere she hadn’t been before. I suggested that maybe I could join her on one of her morning trips to school on the SkyTrain and instead she texted me, “I found a nice cafe in downtown! If you’re ok with this instead of waking up earlier n go to school together.” She told me how this was a place she had wanted to go with her friends but they weren’t able to find a convenient time. Instead, the opportunity of having me join along provided her with the ability to be the guide.

This is kinda fun having a guide. She responded, “it’s also my first time to lead the way.” She said that she’s normally with her friends and explained and demonstrated how she follows them, “I will just follow your behind” and shifted to shuffling her feet and looking down at the ground as she walked.

Through having to be the ‘mobile agent’ (Buhr, 2017b) of a trip with me following along, she mentioned how she was learning a new route that she wouldn’t otherwise have known in the same way because she would have just followed along with her friends. She indicated a similar contrast between a trip in a car downtown and a trip on transit by herself or with friends. In her map (below in Figure 9) she distinguished between the places she went when she first arrived here in 2014 (marked in black) and the places she goes now (marked in pink). While she was explaining her map to me she pointed to the pink area and told me how in 2014 she didn’t go downtown and that the “first” time was with friends. She then contrasted this to the other “first” time she went downtown, with her family, “but just in a car, so I didn’t know the road.” She makes a distinction worth noting that speaks to the difference in skill acquisition as a passenger in a car compared to the skill and knowledge acquisition when she was actively taking the trip downtown with her friends and having to experience the route as she walked it.
Hazel has also relied heavily on her friends and roommate during her process of learning to travel around the region.

Hazel: …So, so what I do is it’s either I call my friends or classmates to hang out with me and then they help me ‘cause they’ve been here for more than two years … And it’s also fun to travel with them ‘cause it makes me mem, not remembers me, familiarize with all the places.

She also added:

Hazel: …’cause I always ask and, “oh where do we go? where do we go?” Like, they know which one is shorter route, which one is faster or shorter, ya. And then there was also one time that last week, we went to my classmate’s house and then we all had to leave early because the next day we had work, so I said like, oh there’s two routes and how to go home, so which one’s easier, so my Thai friend taught me how to go the faster way, so I was like, ok, this is good. And then she said if you get lost you can just call me, I was like, oh thank you so much.
Hazel's strategy if she didn’t know how to get somewhere was to ask her friends to hang out so that she could use their knowledge of the region to help her get better acquainted. Her comments above also point to one of the areas of tension that she mentioned. She is trying to be more independent, to take her own initiative, organize her travels herself, and not rely on her friends. However, since her arrival, her friends and roommates have been integral to helping her get oriented. By always being there to help and answer her questions, they have almost discouraged her from figuring out what she needs to by herself. Interestingly, when I visited classes to invite students to participate in the project I was approached by a group of three students who were all newly arrived in the region who thought this would be a good opportunity for me to help them get to Deep Cove in North Vancouver.

This dimension of the social travel landscape also included the social media sphere. Instagram was the platform that participants mentioned most often. For some of them, their desires to go to new destinations were fuelled by the images on their friends’ Instagram accounts, as well as the prospect of being able to share their own travels. Codi took me to a café she found on Instagram. When we arrived an hour before it opened, she was still determined to wait in a nearby park, since we had already made the trip. As we were chatting, I asked her if this was also because she wanted to share the photo of her milkshake on Instagram, to which she said that it was. After speaking to her more about some of her future goals, I became aware that this location had other importance for her. She was taking the Culinary Arts program because she wanted to be a food designer in the film and television industry and she was interested in the extravagant displays of the milkshakes at this specific café. Anna, who told me the story about getting stranded out at Buntzen Lake showed me the photo she posted on Instagram of the dark path she had walked down. Her caption under the photo read, “it’s better not to be alone in a place like this.” Hazel’s process of learning more about the city included a scan through Instagram for the hashtags #Vancouver and #Broadway and she would then save screenshots of the images as a reminder for places to visit in the future. As previously mentioned, Roberto had determined that he would like to eventually move to Port Moody because of the view of the ocean and the mountains he saw in an image on his friend’s Instagram account. My understanding of the connection between travel and social media evolved as the project unfolded. This phenomenon speaks to an increasing motivation to travel to new destinations for the resulting ability to
then project that mobility amongst social network channels. In this sense, the “network capital” that Elliot and Urry (2010) note as the tools and resources that allow individuals to accomplish their mobility is being broadcast almost as a form of status and achievement that participants wanted to make known to others.

4.1.4. The Reproduction of Travel Knowledge

The fourth dimension in the travel landscape involves the re-production and sharing of travel knowledge. Once participants had acquired travel expertise, they were very willing and interested to share their information; they were keen to help others because they had been through the experience themselves. This was most evident in Steven’s case, after he had arrived in Langley and needed to go to Walmart to buy clothes hangers for his closet. One of his teachers had connected him with another student who had a vehicle, and he was able to get a ride in a car to Walmart. To reciprocate this, he said, “so when I have a car the first thing I do is to help the other people. Cause I always got helped.” He told me about how he drove his classmates to Surrey if they needed to go somewhere that wasn’t available in Langley. He also told me about how he spent time teaching a friend to drive on the “road test” routes in Langley so that she was prepared when it came time for her to take her driver’s license test.

On another occasion, Julia had a friend from Brazil in town studying and she gave her a tour to help her. She told me how through taking her friend around her new neighbourhood in the West End she expanded her own understanding of what was available to her and found a new grocery store that she didn’t know about yet. Between her and her friend, she was now the resident expert. As she was finishing an errand at the post office she explained to me how she had helped her friend to get oriented to Vancouver and sent me screenshots from their “WhatsApp” conversation. The image selected below captures Julia’s tip of how to navigate with Google Maps when her friend will lose her internet connection.

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16 WhatsApp is an online messaging platform that functions through an internet connection with the users’ mobile phone number and doesn’t result in long-distance phone charges.
This correspondence she sent me illustrates how she is now in the position to pass on what she has learned to her friend who is newly arrived in the city. As we were standing at the bus stop Julia told me she knew how it felt to be in a position where everything was still unfamiliar and confusing. She mentioned how hard of a time she had when she was first here in 2014 and didn’t have a phone with internet, so she would go to the Starbucks to check her route. But then, once she was disconnected from the internet connection, she wasn’t able to receive any updates if she encountered delays. Additionally, as part of the re-production of travel knowledge, participants also shared their travel suggestions with me. On a trip to Surrey with Aman, I stood up early to gather my belongings after she told me we would need to switch trains at Columbia Station. Once we were out of the train, she noted how she prefers to wait for the train to slow down before she stands up, in case the train needs to come to a sudden stop.

This social landscape that emerged and became more evident through this study included a breadth of support for participants and was an instrumental as they became
acquainted with travelling in the region. Other than Steven’s experience with the police, participants spoke of a supportive environment where they felt they could fumble through their attempts to get to new places with the trust and assumption that the strangers along the way would be there to help. I suggest that the acquisition of travel skills equates to a community of practice as Lave and Wenger (1991) propose it – that the fundamental process by which people learn is through their engagement in a social practice. This study has shown that information about the practice of daily travel is a capacity that is acquired, held, and shared amongst Metro-Vancourerites and is constantly evolving and being passed on. These findings also reinforce the suggestion of Shove et al. (2012), that acts such as daily travel are social practices that feature an inter-relationship between materialities (technologies and infrastructures), competencies (skills and know-how) and meanings (understanding). Moreover, this study also reinforces Manderscheid’s claim (2014), that mobility is relational and that social networks, not isolated individuals, are the origin of mobility decisions.

4.2. Mobile and Social Settlement Experiences

Building from my examination of the social landscape of participant’s travels, their travel competencies, and a deeper understanding of what appeared to matter to them with respect to their travels, I now shift my analysis to the relationship between their daily mobility and their arrival experiences. This research provided an opportunity to investigate how their daily transportation experiences might be related to the federal government’s goals to support the integration and adaptation of newcomers. Early in the research, it was apparent that these terms did not seem to be pertinent and did not appear to reflect the experiences I was observing. The term, “adaptation” did not seem to be the most appropriate term during the period of arrival and instead “adjustment” seemed to be a more accurate term. Instead of “adapting,” participants seemed to make the minor “adjustments” required to enable them to execute their daily transportation.

The term “social anchoring” proposed by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016) as an alternative way of entering into conceptual discussions on integration and adaptation provides a more flexible and dynamic approach for thinking about transportation and integration. She suggests that as people are in the process of settling, they are finding “footholds” and grounded points to give form to their own sense of meaning and belonging. In the context of this study, I observed this concept in action as participants
developed the travel experiences that suited them. Steven rattled off the places where he did karaoke at KTV with his friends in Richmond, ate Korean bbq in Coquitlam, played bowling in Burnaby, went food shopping at H-Mart in Langley, or went for sushi in White Rock. These activities appeared important to him and he had designed his mobility repertoire to situate himself in Surrey where all of these activities were a 20-30-minute drive away. He told me how he liked living in Surrey because it was “near to go everywhere.” But Steven is nonetheless, thinking about moving downtown with his girlfriend because she will be going to school at UBC. Some of his “places,” as he had had inputted them into his Google Maps app, appear in his map in Figure 11 below.

**Figure 11. Steven’s Travel Map**

Steven did have more time available to him than did some of the other participants while he was waiting for his work permit to arrive before he could find a job. Looking at his map above indicates that the travels he conducts in the region are intricately connected to social activities. His most enjoyable travels (not noted on his map) are the trips he takes with his friends to Harrison Hot Springs and Kelowna. He said that there would be
eleven of them and they would take three cars. It was the freedom of driving and seeing
the mountains that created the experiences he enjoyed most.

Mary’s current travel scenario in her map below in Figure 12 also exhibits the
concept of “anchoring,” as it is connected to her choice of housing location. She was
very pleased with the house that she, her sister, and brother-in-law had found with the
assistance of a “Brazilian guy” who has a company helping other Brazilians find housing.
She was happy that it was both conveniently located and pet-friendly. The primary
benefit for her was the flexibility of multiple bus options (circled in red) that were helpful
for connecting her to where she wanted to go. She mentioned that if she was running
late and missed one bus, she could run to the other bus stop. She also pointed out that
she likes to go shopping at the outlet mall in Richmond and she can get there without
going downtown because the #25 bus connects to the Canada Line Train that she takes
to get there. Interestingly, she noted that if she’s doing this trip with her sister, they take
the Expo Line SkyTrain downtown and then transfer to the Canada Line because her
sister likes to see Waterfront Station.

Figure 12. Mary’s Travel Map: Current Places

The “anchors” discussed above are connected to physical places and a
participant’s relationship to them. Some of the examples of “anchors” I present below are
related to participants’ mobility practices and activities that appeared to provide them with positive experiences. While these activities could be viewed as simply aspects of their travels they enjoyed, there was often a connection to their experience in their home countries that appeared to amplify their enjoyment and create what Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016) would term a subjective or objective “foothold” (p. 1133). Julia lit up when I asked her about whether she would ever rent a bike, as she had told me about doing when she was here in 2014 by herself. She told me that she had friends coming in May, and she had already planned a thirty-two-kilometre route: from Coal Harbour, around Stanley Park, to Sunset Beach, and over the bridge to Kitsilano. When I appeared shocked at the distance, she said it was not that far and then went on to tell me how, on the weekends in Brazil, she used to ride fifty kilometres to go visit a bakery in a nearby town. The activity of cycling appeared as something she was fond of doing, and she seemed very happy to have planned this activity for the near future.

Ken’s interest in shopping at Walmart and Metrotown also appeared to serve as a “foothold” as he was orienting himself to Metro Vancouver. He told me a story about how when he was in Brazil, his family, and other Brazilians generally, would fly to Florida to shop for items they didn’t have in Brazil. Going to these malls here gave him a feeling of nostalgia. He felt like he could now conduct the shopping activities he enjoyed without having to reconcile what he thought was a strange practice of travelling so far by plane to go shopping. He said that his homestay host brought him to Metrotown on the second day he was in Metro Vancouver and he knew this would be his “go-to place.” As we walked through the mall, he told me how he was afraid that places like this wouldn’t exist in ten years. These shopping places were significant in supporting his settlement experience as these were where he spent his “downtime”, and they held positive memories of his past experiences from Brazil.

Upon further reflection on the concept of “footholds,” numerous examples arose. In response to my question to Aman if there were any parts of her travels that she particularly enjoyed, she mentioned a specific stretch of road on the #503 bus route to Langley:

_Aman: So like I feel so good like wow, the way that comes between, it’s like very good, there is like a forest kind of thing and that road is so good, it’s like a little bit tiny but there is just one road and then one way coming and then one way are going. … I feel so good, like I’m travelling in_
mountains, … like I’m going to some hill station and that kind of comes in my memory.

Aman appeared calm as she mentioned this location and the memory that it elicited for her. Dispersed throughout participants’ travel routines were sometimes small, but not insignificant experiences, that reminded them of their home countries, or previous travel experiences, and appeared to provide them with moments of comfort and enjoyment. At other times, these places were just locations they enjoyed on their own merits. Roberto mentioned how one of his favourite places to go was River Road in front of the airport in Richmond, where he would sit and eat Chinese food take-out. As he said, “I still like the Chinese food.” In her discussion about other potential “anchors” during the adaptation and settlement period, Grzymala-Kazlowska (2018) notes that leisure activities and access to nature might be significant activities that need more investigation (p. 10). Leisure activities were important during the arrival period for participants in this study as they spoke variously of walking on the Sea Wall, going to the Capilano Suspension Bridge, or driving to Alice Lake in Squamish. One potential activity that could have acted as an “anchor” for Anna was skiing. She would like to go skiing here but was disappointed that it would take her more than two hours to take transit since there is no transit from Burnaby to any of the mountains. She said there was a private bus that could be taken for more than ten dollars but she didn’t want to spend that amount. During the research, she appeared pleased to tell me that she had added a new trip to her routine on the Evergreen Line to the aquatic centre at the Lafarge-Lake Station because she loves swimming.

What I observed throughout my interactions with participants was that there were locations, activities, and aspects of their daily mobility that they chose for themselves out of personal interest and enjoyment. These activities appeared to provide participants with the “socio-psychological stability” that Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016, p. 1131) proposes can be fostered through the “social anchors” and “footholds” that migrants adopt in new locations. This line of analysis, that suggests that there are activities that participants enjoy that can provide an “anchor” for them, has similarities with De Vos et al.’s (2013) claim that travel increases well-being by enabling activity participation. I suggest that instead of thinking about how participants’ transportation practices enabled them to integrate and adapt to life in Metro Vancouver, it is more accurate to think about
how their mobile practices are the activities through which they are finding a place for themselves in Metro Vancouver. Their travel activities to new destinations allow them to become familiar with what the region has to offer, and assist them as they construct positive settlement experiences for themselves (even if only slowly and incrementally, one new location at a time, as was the case for some of them).
Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Through this examination of participants’ stated mobility practices, I conclude that with the support of the region’s transportation systems, their daily travel has enabled them to realize and enrich their individual lives here. For all participants, urban mobility in a new country has been a dynamic process of seeking the activities and travel experiences they desire and thereby aiming to situate themselves in the region. Their travel activities were key to connect them to their chosen destinations and were an undertaking they embraced. During their individual learning processes, they have faced surmountable challenges; some of which continue to be a burden they endure regularly, such as their commutes to work. Others, such as the trips they undertake for leisure, are more of an adventure and an opportunity for freedom and independence. It became apparent that even before acquiring the specific techniques of how to get around in the region, there was a powerful motivation on the part of participants to want to know more about the area, a desire that fueled the inspiration to go places. Buhr (2017b) makes the claim, “we do not learn to make our ways through cities by internalizing a compendium of ready-made information and applying [it] to everyday life situations. Rather, it is our practical needs, our daily tasks and desires that direct us into exploring our urban environment and into finding in it the resources and experiences we look for” (p. 4). This desire that Buhr spoke of was extremely prevalent in this study — especially in relation to participants’ recreational travel. Buhr’s use of the term “mobile agents” (2017b) appears to accurately capture how participants exhibited a motivation to master their routes, and go to unknown destinations.

This research captured the wide range of how participants responded to the demands of travelling during their arrival periods. Some of them were very comfortable with the transportation here when they first arrived. Their experiences travelling in other cities in the world appeared to provide them with a set of skills that made the transition to travelling in Metro Vancouver easier. Mary, who had spent time living in London before
coming here, was pleased that the the CityMapper\(^{17}\) app she used there also worked here. Approaching her travels in the region was as simple as filling in the empty field in the app that says, “get me somewhere.” Other participants did not have this same level of comfort but are slowly becoming familiar with the unknown locations in the region and thereby gaining more confidence in their travel abilities. All participants used the transit system upon arrival and two of them now use personal vehicles for trips other than their SkyTrain commutes to campus. For some participants, there was an acute adjustment period that they usually adapted to after a few days. The region’s SkyTrain assisted in making this adjustment period relatively easy for most of them. However, the bus network was especially challenging for the participants who had limited English skills when they arrived and the NightBus system is still confusing for many of them.

Meanwhile, they were resourceful and adept at finding solutions. As I have outlined in this thesis, they adopted a wide range of strategies, skills, and tactics as they became acquainted with their travels in the region. In the short-term, they picked up tricks to help them get oriented such as understanding the East-West orientation of the region or leaning heavily on their friends when they needed to go somewhere. Part of developing their navigational skills also included adapting to their most recent mistakes. Sometimes this meant ending up in Coquitlam after mistakenly taking the Production Way train when they should have taken the King-George train to Surrey – a mistake they only made once. In the longer-term learning, they refined their route choices, began to master the options available to them, and adopted ways of travelling and new locations that brought them enjoyment. What was observed by witnessing nine persons reflect on their individual histories of learning the region was that spatial understanding and urban navigation appeared to become almost a common language that transgressed the different languages that participants spoke. Amit and Knowles’ (2017) statement that, “[s]pace, in other words, becomes legible in its distinctiveness and through the navigational practices involved in negotiating it” (p.12) is helpful here in analysing the development of geographical knowledge for getting around in Metro Vancouver.

Their travel experiences, however, were not without difficulty. The practical realities of being able to get to a job presumably indicates successful economic integration. The extent of economic success for the participants in this study who relied

\(^{17}\) CityMapper is a navigational travel app for a mobile phone.
on the public transit system was limited by their ability to access workplaces. This was manageable when their work hours occurred during the week, but they encountered problems with more limited transportation service hours during weekend and holiday schedules. The lack of available public transportation options for these individuals working in the service industry was a barrier for them to access employment. Some participants spoke of their appreciation of understanding and accommodating employers who were flexible, while others spoke of employers who were not. Some participants lost work hours so they could get home from shifts that would have otherwise gone later or that of necessity started later in the morning when they were supposed to be scheduled to begin earlier.

For the most part, participants were able to connect with members of their social networks by use of the transit system. More of the problems they encountered seemed to occur as a result of the general rigour of some of their schedules and a resulting lack of time for activities beyond work, studying and chores. Isolation and exclusion, are often noted in other studies about transportation options (Cass, Shove and Urry, 2005), but these did not appear to be key issues for the participants in this study. This could also have been because they were surrounded by peers in their school programs. What was instead a barrier was the size of the region and the amount of time it took to get between Richmond and Surrey, or downtown Vancouver to Surrey, a factor that limited some of the visiting that participants would have liked to have done with their relatives.

A key finding of this study is the nuance and extent to which learning to get around in a new urban area is a social activity woven into the social fabric of the region through interaction with helpful strangers, the preparation of personal orientation guides, and opportunities to imagine future exploring that happens with others. This study has uncovered an informal but effective information-sharing culture in Metro Vancouver with respect to travel knowledge. While websites and travel apps such as Google Maps were especially helpful for participants, the assistance provided by hosts, friends, family members, and strangers was invaluable and prompted some participants to reciprocate generally by sharing their newly acquired knowledge with others. I suggest that it is important to recognize the role of this transfer of travel information in making these individuals feel welcome in the region. For some of them, it was as simple as being shown around by someone who knows the way to a particular place, or being given directions by a stranger when appearing lost. There is the potential for this in-person
knowledge transfer to be a re-producing system that creates a strengthened public understanding of urban navigation through building and sharing capacity.

I have also had the opportunity to reflect on and advance Buhr’s (2017b) concept of “spatial integration.” I suggest that the processes of integration occur when individuals undertake activities outside their homes, thereby building on Buhr’s definition of spatial integration of, “building and maintaining relations of use and knowledge about the city and its resources” (p. 5). I have also endeavoured to develop this concept further by recognizing that in developing familiarity, there is also the potential for developing comfort, ease and arguably, a “sense of belonging” in the urban environment. Spatial integration could therefore be viewed as a precursor to other components of integration in the sense that someone’s practical ability to be able to make their way through the city will impact their capacity to find in it what is meaningful and fulfilling for them. I have also suggested an alternative and more dynamic way of looking at the role of daily mobility during the settlement period by drawing on Grzymala-Kazlowska’s (2016) concept of “social anchoring.” This approach identifies “grounding” factors and activities involved in mobile practices and the spaces of mobility that have appeared to support participants as they set up their lives in a new and unfamiliar location. For their own individual reasons, participants have carefully selected places to go, and activities to participate in, as they find a place for themselves in the region. I believe this is an area for further research that can add a nuanced understanding to how mobility in an urban environment is connected to the settlement experiences of newcomers.

On this topic of the travel behaviour of newcomers, context matters. The findings of this study present new empirical evidence within the limited research available that seems closely related to the reasonably well developed public transit system in Metro Vancouver. One factor of this study that hadn’t appeared in other studies I reviewed is that participants had a subsidized transit pass provided as part of their school program. I believe the impact of this pass is not to be underestimated. Their access to the transit system enabled them to view the region as one urban area that did not require considerations about different transportation costs if they chose to live in areas further from downtown Vancouver, such as Richmond, Coquitlam, or Surrey. Their experience with unlimited transit access also appeared to inform how they spoke about their future options. Anna told me how the SkyTrain will continue to be the most convenient option
that she will use to get downtown, but she would still like a vehicle to get home from work.

This study, which included participants who were students on various pathways to immigration, differed from another one that focused on the self-identified immigrants and refugees who participated in the recently released report by Fresh Voices (2018) regarding their integration experiences in Metro Vancouver. This study does, however, reinforce the recommendations of that report to provide a subsidized transit pass to new immigrants and refugees, consider settlement services to create a transit orientation process, and increase transit service in areas outside of Vancouver. Because participants in this study already had a subsidized transit pass, there was instead an opportunity to learn about how their ability to get around was related to their experiences of arrival and settlement without focusing too much on cost factors. While the Fresh Voices report found the cost of transit to be the primary concern, the fact that the individuals in this study had an available subsidized transit pass removed this component from the discussion and allowed for a focus on the development of their competencies and comfort in navigating the region.

I suggest that the extent to which this study captured some of the social aspects of developing competencies in urban navigation is one of the primary arguments for supporting a qualitative ethnographic approach. For example, the recent study finding reported by Fresh Voices (2018) that 60% of respondents were very comfortable taking transit does not explore what some of the reasons might be for the other 40% who are not as comfortable. This project provided an opportunity to explore this discomfort further and show that in Steven and Roberto’s case, for instance, this had to do with not understanding the bus system, or in Codi’s case it was because there was a large flock of crows near the station.

One of the guiding principles behind the methodology employed in this study was to allow participants to elaborate on what was important for them. It was through this approach that I took the opportunity to observe and inquire about the role of transportation in supporting their arrival and settlement in the region. This study has illuminated a certain “choreography” of regional settling-in as participants attempted to reconcile the distance they need to travel by re-locating either their housing or their job depending on how much choice and resources they had to do so. This finding could only
be captured in such detail by an in-depth, ethnographic approach. The methods I have used in this project have enabled specific information to come to the forefront – especially the individuality of each participant's travel routine and their travel preferences that would not have otherwise been known through methods such as surveys.

Specifically, joining participants on their travels was valuable in adding to the depth of understanding of their mobility. As I conducted the interviews, I had a sense that what participants had told me and shown me through their maps was sufficiently detailed to provide a rich picture of their respective travels. Travelling along with them on their routes did have the immediate benefit of providing another opportunity to ask questions about something they may have mentioned during their interview. As I began to follow along on their travels, I questioned whether there was much more to gain from this approach due the seemingly mundane quality of the activity (as well as the time required to meet up with them). However, it was at the time of writing this document that I found myself continually drawing on material from the trips together. Any time I was reviewing material from their interviews, their scenarios became live in my mind because of the experiences I had with them on their routes. After having seen some of the locations they had described to me, I feel confident saying that there is much to be gained by both hearing about these places and also experiencing them firsthand. Not all aspects of mobility practices are easily explainable in words. There is a discernable difference between hearing from Anna that she is confident in her abilities to get around the region and then observing her body language as she stands comfortably in the back-door area of the bus. From here, she will be first to hop off and will be ahead of the crowd on her way to the SkyTrain platform. There is a difference between Julia telling me that she finds her commute to Surrey to be long and tiring and then having her ask if we can sit down on the only bench at the SkyTrain, exhaling with exhaustion as she slumps over a bit. The textural, embodied nature of daily mobility lends itself to investigation both through description and experience. Employing mobile methods for the examination of this physical activity greatly assisted in understanding participants' travel. Not adding this method to the project, to my mind, would have been equivalent to ignoring the difference between how a map appears on a screen and what a location looks like in person.

As stated earlier in this thesis, one of my interests in conducting this research arose from the realization that there was limited research on the topic of transportation
and newcomers, and that Canada does not have a federal department or agency connected to transportation that would support similar research into urban mobilities, in all their variation. I was interested in whether there was an argument to be made that transportation concerns, and especially public transit concerns, warrant attention as they are connected to the goals of the federal Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. This study has shown that the need and that their desires to be mobile were central to the arrival experience for this set of participants. With this in mind, I hope that this project is an impetus for continued and expanded research in this area that uncovers the complex relationships between travellers and mobility systems. I also take this opportunity to note that the federal Department of Transportation could support such research and continue to focus on achieving the goals set out by the federal Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship that newcomers be supported to integrate and adapt to life in Canada. I argue that public transportation systems are essential to meeting national goals of supporting increasingly diverse global populations and are therefore a federal concern.

Metro Vancouver’s population is growing rapidly. As new residents arrive, the region’s transportation systems, particularly the public transit systems, will be integral in supporting their adjustment to the region. The salience and relevance of what this study has uncovered is that transportation services and spaces can themselves be supportive by virtue of the kindness and assistance provided by fellow travellers who share information and help others get to the places to which they need and want to go. Since global urban regions are composed of an active network of flows of people, the business of attempting to settle in a region such as this inevitably includes a great deal of moving around. In this context of ubiquitous movement, the presence of frequent and reliable transit services, particularly in rapidly growing areas such as Langley and Surrey, are incredibly important for providing viable transportation options for those who are arriving in the region.

Proximity to transit service was also a key criteria as participants searched for housing. This study indicates that enhancing affordable housing options near transit, particularly in the context of rampant gentrification (Jones, 2015), will be helpful for people who are arriving in the region. On a system level, I hope that this research is helpful for TransLink, the regional transportation authority, to understand the experiences of some of the customers who are new to their system.
I do find it concerning that so much of the weekend travel patterns of participants in this study would not be captured by TransLink’s Regional Trip Diary as it doesn’t collect data for weekend trips (TransLink, 2013). It would be extremely valuable to ensure that there is data collection during these times as the system was full of people who appeared to be commuting during the times observed in this study. Indeed, the first SkyTrain arriving at Burrard Station at 7:45 a.m. on a Sunday was packed with people who appeared to be on their way to work. It was standing-room only by the time it arrived at the Nanaimo Station platform when I was waiting with Ken as he made his way to his job at a hotel downtown. Moreover, he told me that the NightBus he needed to take on the weekends to get to his new job in North Vancouver was full of construction workers. The absence of weekend commuting patterns presents a large gap in the Regional Trip Diary, especially since it serves as one of the key data sources outlining regional travel patterns that is used to inform future transportation planning. At a policy level, I would argue that for newcomers arriving in the region and often working in the hospitality and service industry, taking steps to offer better service levels during evening, weekend and holiday hours would constitute a valuable and supportive condition for their settlement process. Indeed, public transit schedules that don’t provide sufficient service for shift-workers to access employment highlights the forms of exclusion to the means of mobility raised by Sheller (2016) in her concept of mobility justice.

The primary focus of this project centered on my research question of how participants developed and acquired the navigational skills and resources to accomplish their daily mobility. I didn’t ask overly directive questions, such as, are you happy here? Instead, I observed this phenomenon by speaking to participants at length, having them prepare personal travel maps, and then by accompanying them on journeys to see how comfortable and confident they were getting around. This inquiry also included conversations about what they highlighted as areas of difficulty, challenge, and enjoyment (or lack thereof). The focus of this study was not to ask each participant to talk about their levels of happiness as they arrived in Canada; however, I believe that this might, perhaps, be a valuable next step for further research to extend this direction of inquiry regarding settlement experiences and transportation.

To conclude, this project has comprised an in-depth study of how nine participants got to know a new urban region. In doing so, it has documented the diverse daily travel experiences of individuals with different backgrounds, scenarios and
experiences as they went through the learning process of settling in to Metro Vancouver. By reflecting on their arrival period, participants provided insight into the acquisition of their individual travel expertise, some of the challenges they encountered and even some advice and suggestions for improvements. What this study also captured is just how pervasive and significant mobility is during the time-period of approximately five years that was under review in this project. It has also showed that making use of a city’s amenities can be both complicated and rewarding. These nine cases are not intended to be statistically representative of any general newcomer population, but the stories elicited through them do illustrate the role that the public transit system has played in facilitating their mobility throughout the region. In accepting the position of Kaufman et al. (2004) that “spatial mobility is not an interstice or a liaison between a point of departure and a destination. It is a structuring dimension of social life” (p.754), then integration or social adjustment can be seen to occur in these spaces of mobility. In looking more closely into the mobile lives of these individuals, life in a new region that requires travelling and mobility appears as a key component of the settling-in process.
References


Appendix A.

Interview Guide

Participant Background:

- What program are you studying in?
- When did you arrive in Metro Vancouver?
- Where did you come here from?
- Could you tell me what it was like travelling around in the city that you came from?

Questions:

- Could you tell me what it was like arriving in Metro Vancouver and trying to figure out how to get to the places that you needed to?
- How did you feel about your ability to get around when you first arrived?
- Do you feel confident in your abilities to get around now? How did it change?
- Could you describe how comfortable you were travelling around in the region when you first arrived? Has this changed now that you’ve been here longer? How did it get better?
- Do you feel that you’ve learned anything about your daily transportation now that you’ve been doing it for a while?
- Do you have any experiences where you’ve been stuck or had a difficult time getting somewhere that you needed to? How did you manage? What did you do?
- Are there any other parts of your daily transportation that are particularly difficult?
- Are there any parts of your daily transportation that are particularly enjoyable?
- Are there any landmarks or guides that you’ve used to orient yourself and find your way around?
- If you had a friend moving here from somewhere else, would you have any advice, or tips to help them with their daily travels?
- Is there anything here that could be better?
- Is there anything that is important to you about your daily transportation?
Instructions for Mapping Exercise:

• Could you draw for me the places that you travelled to when you first arrived in Metro Vancouver?

• Could you draw for me the places that you go to now on a regular basis? It doesn’t have to be exact and can be general about where your home location is.