

Reimagining an employment program for migrant women: From holistic classroom practice to arts-informed program evaluation

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how arts-informed program evaluation contributes to the understanding of an employment program, which was reimagined holistically, for women with immigrant and refugee experience who face barriers entering the Canadian workplace. My practitioner inquiry focuses on a program I managed at an urban community college in partnership with a local community organization. The program supports the development not only of job skills, and English language and literacy, but of social identities that can contribute to success in the search for employment. The decision to launch a women-only program allowed me to surface the experiences and additional burdens conventionally carried by women—for instance, the challenge of childcare as well as periods of absence from the workforce. I used collage-making workshops to learn how these women experienced the program in order to gather knowledge that does not come into focus in the usual standardized evaluation forms or surveys. These arts-informed evaluations enabled students to reflect on the possibilities that the program had afforded them. Informed by theories of social capital and imagined communities and futures, my analysis of their stories showed me that a caring, localized context was paramount for learning. As a practitioner-researcher collaborating with an inquiry community of researchers and drawing on multiple sources of observational, group, and interview data, I was able to explore how, for these migrant women, investment in language and literacy learning in an employment program contributes to the development of confidence, identity, and social relationships, which enables them to overcome barriers. I also argue that a broadened access to an imagined community and imagined future opened up possibilities for the women, which impacted positively on their investment in language learning and their social identity as employable but also as mothers, citizens and community members.

Keywords: practitioner inquiry; employment programs for migrant women; arts-informed program evaluation; investment; capital; imagined communities; imagined futures

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My course work and study through Simon Fraser University (SFU), and my professional employment has primarily taken place on the unceded, ancestral lands of the kʷikwə́ləm, sə́lilwə́taʔt, sk̓wxwú7mesh, xʷməθkʷə́yəm, stó:lō, and lílwat. I recognize the 2012 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls for action*, and I seek to honour the intent of that document by sourcing, reading, referring to and citing Indigenous scholars in my writing and research. I feel a responsibility to engage in the ongoing process of decolonizing my own practice, and to work alongside others who share this responsibility.

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To my students.

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List of Acronyms

ATM	Automatic teller machine
BC	British Columbia
CCLB	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
CEU	Community engagement unit
CERB	Canadian Emergency Response Benefit
CL	Critical literacy
CLBs	Canadian language benchmarks
CoP	Community of practice
LLD	Lifelong Learning Department
EAL	English as an additional language
EI	Employment insurance
ESL	English as a second language
EHCW	Entry to Hospitality Careers for Women
EWP	English for the workplace
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LCL	Languages, cultures and literacies
LLD	Lifelong Learning Department
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NOC	National Occupational Classification
OSLT	Occupation specific language training
PIRS	Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
RFP	Requests for proposals
SFU	Simon Fraser University
TFWs	Temporary foreign workers
UBC	University of British Columbia
UBI	Universal basic income
WCC	Westcoast Community College
WHMIS	Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System

Chapter 1.

Situating my Practice and Research

In this first chapter, I outline the chapters contained in this dissertation. Chapter 1: *Situating my practice and research* locates my positionality in relation to my educational practice. I am writing myself into the story. In Section 1.1, I locate myself as a practitioner-researcher and state my positionality. This is important because who I am and my lived experience influence how I see the world, my values, my decisions, and my actions. Therefore, I believe that who I am and what I have experienced influence my research—the questions that I ask, my beliefs about knowledge, the methods and the theoretical framing that I use. In later chapters, particularly Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I counterbalance my own narratives and reflections with the stories, lived experience, and narrative of the participants in the Entry to Hospitality Careers (EHCW) program, which is the site of my inquiry and I describe in detail in Chapter 2. In Section 1.2 I state my overarching research question up front, which I will address throughout the dissertation. Next, in Section 1.3, I provide an overview of the professional context of the work that I do—my professional practice. I describe the location and mandate of my workplace, the history of my own career trajectory, and some detail about the current work that I and my team do. In Section 1.4, I outline the doctoral journey that I have been on for the past 5.5 years, including my change part-way through from the EdD program in Educational Practice to the PhD program in Languages, Cultures and Literacies. This blended influence from two different program areas is revealed through my focus on my practice, the layering of theory onto my practice, and the centrality of language, discourses and texts to my research analysis (Block, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991; Norton Pierce, 1995; Weedon, 1997). I provide a narrative interweaving my professional work and my emergence as a scholar. As part of this doctoral journey, I define and describe both my individual research practice, my inquiry community, and the importance of each to my development as a researcher-practitioner. This narrative about my doctoral journey also serves to introduce some of the factors that are important in interpretive approaches to qualitative data analysis, such as local knowledge (in Section 1.5), arts-informed research processes, and how we know what we know, which I further elaborate on in my

literature review in Chapter 3. I end Chapter 1 by providing an outline in Section 1.6 of the remaining seven chapters in the dissertation.

An important function of Chapter 1 is to situate my practice and research, to locate myself as a practitioner-researcher, and to state my positionality. Through this, I state my understandings of gender, racialization, ethnicity, and migration as these terms pertain to the fields of study that I bring into this dissertation. I also present understandings that are theoretically essential for my data analysis, provide an outline of the dissertation for the reader, list my research questions, describe my professional practice, and use the metaphor of a journey to overview my experience as a doctoral student.

I begin by presenting a poem that I wrote in which I think about and reflect on the newcomers to Canada with whom I have interacted and had the privilege to teach over many years (see Figure 1.1). I wanted to use poetry to put human faces and names on global migration from the late 1980s to about 2006, the years that I was a practicing classroom instructor. I use my poetry and narrative writing as representations of the reflection and learning I have experienced through my doctoral journey. I offset this text outlined by a box to draw the reader's attention to these moments. Starting with my practicum as a pre-service teacher, I realized how much I learn from my adult immigrant students about culture, world events, family support, resilience, determination, and loss. Most significantly, I have learned how teaching and learning are interconnected and represent an ongoing co-creation of identity, knowledge and practice over time.

Where are you now?

Many call a place they are no longer living in and may never see again "home." Do you live there now? Or is this place your home? Or, do your children call this place home?

Polish ship jumpers? Macek, you were granted a ministerial permit—afraid to go back to Poland because of martial law. Are you still here in solidarity?

Where are you now?

Hong Kongers? Ivy? Did the insurance plan work? Have the horrors of Tiananmen Square faded? Do you astronaut back and forth? Are you part of the boomerang migration?

Where are you now?

Somalians, Eritreans, and Tigreans? Suhaila, your country was decimated by war and famine. Your march to Sudan. Your years driving truck and your long journey here. So few Black faces on the streets of Vancouver to welcome, to accompany you. So cold, so damp.

Where are you now?

Su Ling? You came from China to join a man you were married to but barely knew. Have you had children, have you a welcoming home? Do you still laugh easily and make handmade noodles?

Where are you now?

Kurds—from Iraq, from Turkey, from Iran, from Syria. Karvan—your dancing in a circle, arms linked with the other men, your wife’s generous meals laid out on carpets on the floor, your desperate VHS videos smuggled out showing the gassings. Trying to get anyone to listen, to learn about, to help, Kurdistan.

Where are you now?

Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovars, Yugoslavs. Kamal? Only a few years after watching Gaétan Boucher win four medals in the picture-postcard beautiful Sarajevo Winter Olympics, I saw your burnt-out city, heard sniper shots. We learned of criminal leaders, ethnic cleansing, monstrous crimes against humanity, rape as a tool of war.

Where are you now?

Filipino domestic live-in caregivers? Jovelyn, do you still send remittance to support half the village back home? Have you finally been able to bring your own children to join you? Can you take a break, put your feet up, enjoy a meal made for you, relax because your elderlies are well-cared for?

Where are you now?

Colombians—Alejandro—so cosmopolitan, so smart, such an elegant tailored suit and a mind full of engineering expertise. I know where your son lies and why you and the rest of your family came here. Without him.

My students, are you rooted in this place? Is this your home? Or, is home invisible and portable? Values, beliefs, smells, friendships, tastes, memories carried with you wherever you go.

Tanis Sawkins, October 2015

Figure 1.1. Where are you now?

I needed to do some research when I wrote this poem, as I wanted the structure to accurately reflect the waves of immigrants to British Columbia (BC) in chronological order through the years that I was teaching. I remembered the stories, names, and faces of my students in each of these waves, but not necessarily the order of their arrivals or the precise time of the events that led to their migrations. I began teaching occupation-related English as an additional language (EAL) to adult immigrants in the late 1980s, and this poem starts at that time and continues to about 2006 when I stopped teaching

full-time and moved into administration. Occupation-related English is an umbrella term I use to describe not only knowledge of the terminology related to an occupation, but also competency in the skills required to use this language, as well as sufficient understanding of the social and occupational communication contexts within which it is situated. In the educational literature, the terms English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for the Workplace (EWP), and Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT) are commonly used.

I wrote this poem to illustrate the profound impact that my students have had on me. That I still think and wonder about them. That I cared about them. Spending many hours of each day in either a classroom or a workplace as the only first-language English speaker in the room and thinking about how I represented Canadian culture and values, either implicitly or explicitly, has also impacted my thinking and shaped who I am. Teaching and learning are deeply relational and reciprocal.

Note on language: I use the phrases (or variants) *immigrant and refugee women*, or *women with immigrant or refugee experience* in this dissertation. For me, they are not strictly interchangeable. The first phrase is most commonly used and accepted; however, it labels women through emphasizing the process by which they came to Canada. When does the experience of migration cease to be a key identity marker? After a decade, after acquiring citizenship, after a generation, after three? Except for the Indigenous people of Canada, we are all immigrants. Why am I, born in Canada but of Anglo heritage, not referred to as an *immigrant woman*? Is it because my first language is English, or that I am White? Is *immigrant* the definition of a person's identity, or part of an identity, or a legal term used as part of a migration process? Whose right is it to claim or ascribe the term *immigrant* and for how long? These questions lead to more, particularly about the need to understand the privileges and unearned benefits associated with my own settler colonial identity, and to develop programs for newcomers to Canada in the context of the ongoing colonialization and oppression of Indigenous peoples. Settlers in Canada, whether of multiple generations or of first generation, are the beneficiaries of colonialization which is often unseen and unrecognized by us. I acknowledge that I need to learn more for myself and do more in my work with migrants to bring an awareness of colonialism and oppression, and to deter its perpetration.

I also use the phrase *women with immigrant and refugee experience*, even though it is stylistically somewhat clunky and not as commonly used in the public discourse, to decentre the experience of immigration as the sole identity marker. The phrase also reframes the immigrant experience as valuable and contributory. This shifting language use may be similar in practice to using the phrase *women of colour* as opposed to *Brown women* or *Black women*. It leaves open space for multiple and changing identities. I also use the term *migrant* which is most often used in the public discourse and in the academic literature in Europe, the UK and Australia, but is not as widely used in Canada. I sometimes use the term *newcomer* which is often used in Canadian government policy and program documents, and to me is more neutral in some contexts than the term *immigrant*.

1.1. Locating myself as a practitioner–researcher and my positionality

I am aware of the importance of locating myself in the theoretical framing, methodological approaches, and rationale for the selected research methods this project uses. Who I am and who I have become in my lived experience influence how I see the world, my values, my decisions, my actions, and, of course, my research. Making my positionality visible is, therefore, paramount because theorizing and discussions of language, gender, race, class, migration, and other dimensions of identity will arise during an inquiry process that involves reflection. This statement of positionality addresses who I am, how I see the world, and my relationship with the participants and my research.

I am currently an urban, well-educated, professional; a White, middle-aged, middle-class cisgender woman; straight, married and a mother. I sponsored my husband to come to Canada as an immigrant, and I hold dual citizenship. I have no discernable religious background and was raised in a secular household. I identify as a feminist, am the daughter of a second-wave feminist, and my father also identifies as a feminist. I was raised in the 1970s by parents who were concerned with social inequity and environmental issues. I am essentially a monolingual speaker of English and view this as a deficit. I started elementary school in 1971, the year Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau brought the Multiculturalism Act into law, and I came of age in a family and social community that positively embraced that view of Canada. I studied French

throughout my elementary and secondary school life, but grew up in Vancouver with limited opportunities to use French, so my reading skill surpasses my speaking skill. In my twenties, I studied and immersed myself in the Indonesian language to a modest level of language proficiency, and I have had the chosen experience of living and working in several other countries (Japan, Belize, Hungary, Indonesia, and England) for extended periods of time.

I share some aspects of identity with some of the students in the Entry to Hospitality Careers for Women (EHCW) program, which is the site of this inquiry. EHCW is an employment program that I manage in my professional practice, and is the site of inquiry for my arts-informed program evaluation, and for my inquiry community (see Chapter 2: *Background*). Examples of shared aspects of identity are that I am female, heterosexual, of working age, have children, and value literacy education which supports the social and economic integration of newcomers. Most of the women in the EHCW program seemed to identify as heterosexual and had children. However, my identity also contrasts significantly with the EHCW students in other ways such as socio-economic, where I come from a background of relative affluence and many of the women faced financial precarity; attachment to a faith community, where I lack that attachment and many of the EHCW participants saw their faith community as a strong identity marker; and linguistic resources, where most of the women had a minimum of two language communities they could draw on, but I am impoverished and use only one dominant language. I have had the privilege to attend many years of tertiary-level education, and very few of the EHCW students had been afforded that opportunity. However, my observation is that we shared a belief in the value of education as key to social mobility.

White privilege has obscured my acuity to issues of racism. For instance, in Chapter 6 I relay the story of a student's experience of a racist microaggression in an interview for her practicum placement. These 2-week work experience placements are part of the EHCW curriculum. In the future, I will support building better relationships with employers and collaborating on anti-racist workshops before the practicum placements start to ensure safe worksites. Similarly, my affluence has likely obscured my alertness to issues of poverty. I did attempt to mitigate this by budgeting for uniforms, safety shoes, transit passes, and snacks during the EHCW program. In the future, I will explore paid practicum placements, wage-subsidy or other options the women could draw upon during their job search after they had completed the program. In this project, I

intentionally chose to partner with an organization and colleagues who shared values of equity, diversity and inclusion, and I ensured my hiring choices included those who shared more aspects of identity with the students than I did.

I recognize that none of these identity markers can be understood in isolation, and I have benefited from reading about intersectionality while working on this dissertation (see Chapter 3). The EHCW program sought to provide holistic supports to help women overcome barriers and enter into the labour market. In spite of intentional inclusion practices in the program, there remain systematic biases of race, gender, and ageism in the hospitality sector workplaces where the women were seeking employment.

One of the main goals of my research was to gain a better understanding of the learners' lived experience within an entry level, employment training program in the hospitality industry. My positionality implies that some aspects of identity are made visible and others obscured. For example, as the *Director* of the CEU, I am conscious that my job title, bearing and way of moving, manner of speech, and mode of dress function as a semiotic system communicating a certain level of status and power within the institution in which I work. I am aware that I amplified this communication during the "graduation" ceremony at the end of each EHCW program in order to show the respect and formality anticipated by the funders, the women and their families that such an occasion warranted. In the more casual, hands-on environment of the collage-making workshops I used this same semiotic system of bearing, speech and dress to turn down the volume on my occupational status and power. When discussing race, ethnicity, gender, social class, age or migrant position it is indeed difficult to discuss one aspect of identity without mentioning others.

My fundamental values, a growing understanding through my doctoral reading, combined with how I see the world, indicated that arts-informed program evaluation might offer a good fit for a relationally based program such as EHCW. Although there is not one specific set of attributes attached to arts-informed program evaluation, there is general agreement that qualitative evaluators use direct observation, recognize meaning as socially constructed, and value situational inquiry (Patton, 2015). This aligns with my epistemology. The range of research methods that I utilized in my practitioner inquiry—analysis of an institutional document, focus groups, direct observation and field notes,

unstructured interviews, and arts-informed research—are associated with qualitative approaches to inquiry and specifically practitioner inquiry. In this practitioner inquiry I see myself as a change energizer, rather than a change imposer or a guardian of the status quo. One program may not change the world, but creating space for significant learning in one localized context can build hope and possibilities for individuals. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) posit, “Most versions of practitioner inquiry share a sense of the practitioner as knower and agent for social change” (p. 37). Inquiring into my practice compels me, as I believe in adult education’s transformative possibilities for contributing to, creating and sustaining a socio-economically integrated, healthy, diverse and inclusive society.

In terms of how I relate to the participants and my research context, I locate myself as a practitioner-researcher. Della Fish (1998) conceptualized a practitioner-researcher model in which practitioners learn to integrate observational skills and hypothesis testing into their practice as a way of continually checking research and theory against their experiences and those of their participants. Practitioner-research challenges educators and practitioners in other disciplines such as social work, law, and nursing to become critical and reflective thinkers about their practice.

Pedagogically, I am informed by those researchers who argue that literacy is a social practice, and critical literacy instruction should guide adult literacy students towards making sense of their everyday lives (Darville, 1995; Freebody, 1992; Freire, 1970; Janks, 2013; Lau, 2013; Lin, 2014; Luke & Freebody, 1999). As a researcher and educator, I am committed to equity, diversity and inclusion: my research practice is socially committed, I use accessible language to present research that has practical implications, I use interdisciplinary approaches to address complex problems, I work alongside those groups that I research with, and I try to make my positionality transparent (Lin, 2014).

My perspective is that the experiences of migration and unemployment for those who identify as women may share some similarities but are different from those experiences of migration and unemployment for those who identify as men. I also accept that we live in a racialized society, that racism exists and manifests in different ways, and that we are all shaped and impacted by racialization and racism in various ways and degrees. Racialization, to be sure, is a contested and

contentious term, one that carries a variety of meanings for different people. Racial identity can be positioned by others and be self-positioned. Racialization has been defined as racial categorization, “a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically” (Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 102). As an example of this type of categorizing, Block and Galabuzi (2011) neutrally describe groups of people in the Canadian labour market in the following way:

the data show first generation racialized Canadian men earn only 68.7% of what non-racialized first-generation Canadian men earn, indicating a colour code is firmly at play in the labour market. Here, the gender gap — at play throughout the spectrum — becomes disturbingly large: Racialized women immigrants earn only 48.7 cents for every dollar non-racialized male immigrants earn. (p. 4)

Racialization involves labelling based on “race,” which I view as socially constructed. Diangelo (2018) elaborates on race as a social construction with unearned benefits or privileges for White people and entrenched power dynamics that maintain racial inequity. Racialization is the practice of ascribing race to different groups, a practice of power that privileges some groups and marginalizes others. Miles and Brown (2003) define *racism* which “necessarily functions as an ideology of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 104). As such, racism is embedded in our culture and we are socialized into it. This understanding of race and my positionality is important to my program planning and research for several reasons:

1. It holds me accountable to better recognize and challenge my own oversights on racism, and to struggle with “the discomfort of racial humility” (Diangelo, 2018, p. 14).
2. It compels me to listen and continue learning about systems of oppression and their influence on my practice and my research.
3. It asks me to support a learning environment where systemic racism is acknowledged and discussed.
4. My position of privilege acknowledges that racism is institutionalized and requires profound systemic change over time.

Finally, there are a few caveats to my positionality and to locating myself in my research. Positionality, like identity, is neither fixed nor static. We are continuously evolving in our understanding of self and the world and we are continuously shifting

positions within relations of power. Likewise, the relationship between researchers and participants is fluid, and not one-sided. Each is influencing the other through their interactions. Thus, we must continuously engage in the process of critical reflection and examine both oneself as a researcher and the research relationship.

1.2. Research question

Overall, my research question is: How can I, as a practitioner-researcher using an arts-informed research approach, gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of a program in order to increase their investment in learning, improve the program, and develop my own practice?

Throughout this practitioner inquiry I use various methodological approaches to enhance and extend my ways of engaging in more meaningful communication, gathering data, and understanding a program that I manage. I summarize this as learning-oriented program evaluation. I describe analyzing a workplace document which provided me with the rationale for exploring arts-informed program evaluation. I detail the experience of being a part of an inquiry community which also explored the ways immigrant and refugee women navigate employment integration in Canada through the EHCW program.

I engaged in an individual inquiry (my arts-informed research) and was part of an inquiry community (collaborating with a group of researchers) to better understand the women's experience in the program. In my individual research, I shine a light on possibilities for arts-informed program evaluation in an employment training context. The idea to adopt an arts-informed research approach was initially disruptive for me, as most of the applied vocational or employment programming that I am familiar with is short-term, focused on outcomes or competencies, and evaluation is instrumental to these goals. I found it intriguing to imagine alternative ways of understanding the participants' experience of a program. My individual inquiry provoked me to think about how I might create space for dialogue with instructors, students, and others about using arts-based possibilities. To move my practice as a program manager and evaluator forward, I focused on the experience and application of arts-informed research. The collaborative research will be discussed in detail in Section 4.3: *My inquiry community*.

1.3. My professional practice

I am the *Director*¹, the key strategic and leadership role, of a department called the Community Engagement Unit (CEU) at Westcoast Community College (WCC), a pseudonym for the name of a community college located in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. As part of the ethics approval process for my research, I stated that I would not refer to the name of the institution where I worked to safeguard the identity of the learners with whom I conducted my research. Part of the mandate of the CEU is to seek partnerships with government, industry, and community organizations to develop educational programming for students who face barriers to employment and who are underrepresented in the institution. I am privileged in my professional practice to be entrusted with considerable latitude and creativity. I work with a team to scan government bidding sites for requests for proposals (RFPs) for employment programs, curriculum development projects, and research opportunities, and respond with a research proposal. The websites typically list guidelines for applications and budgets, project criteria, and eligibility requirements for program participants. Many of the new adult education programs that I conceptualize with others draw on my 25-year career as an adult educator (primarily as an EAL instructor with newcomers to Canada), program manager, and curriculum developer specializing in employment-related language training. Some examples of the partnerships and resulting programs that I have developed in the last few years include English language and communication training (including assertiveness training, intercultural competency, etc.) for casino employees, English language combined with short-term technical training for internationally educated engineers to find work as fire-protection technicians, those who inspect fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems, and other programs.

The CEU is a small team that nurtures and maintains a network of potential partners throughout Metro Vancouver, conceptualizes projects, writes proposals, develops budgets and manages projects. The CEU collaborates with content-area specialists such as dental hygienists, culinary arts faculty, or Applied Business instructors within the college to ensure that the needed expertise and the capacity to support and deliver a project is available. Typically, our projects receive short-term

¹ I capitalize and italicize my role and the role of others in my inquiry community. An explanation for why I do this is presented in Section 4.3: *My inquiry community*.

funding, and the CEU is continually seeking funding throughout the year as part of an ongoing cycle. At any one time, we deliver programs, and have multiple proposals in the pipeline seeking funding approval. Concurrently, we are monitoring, managing, and evaluating numerous existing contracts for programs.

The CEU is a team of seven people; we each hold multiple and interdependent roles. At varying times and in various ways, I may be a project conceptualizer, researcher, proposal writer, program coordinator, hiring manager, mentor, instructor, trouble-shooter, budget monitor, curriculum developer, program evaluator, and more as the need arises. I am passionate about and have a strong sense of agency in the work I am called to, but I also have a profound sense of responsibility. To be fiscally accountable is imperative. However, my primary role is not that of an accountant; I am first and foremost an educator and value quality programming, which I am continually seeking to define and refine. Most importantly, my role requires strong leadership skills and responsive recognition of program quality. For this reason, I am increasingly interested in learning-oriented program evaluation, developing my research skills, and developing an evaluative culture in the CEU that centres on continuous learning and improvement.

1.4. My doctoral journey

Journeying is a common metaphor for doctoral students and their learning process from application to enrolment, through coursework and research, writing a dissertation, and leading to graduation. A journey can be scheduled according to a firm timetable with no ability to change the route or timing, like when travelling by rail, or a meandering wander to eventually arrive at the destination. I liken and envision my own doctoral journey as long-distance walking where I walk alongside others, walk alone, rest, stop, evaluate different routes or paths, and at times leave the main path for important lookouts. There are times when the route is straight, and times when it is winding. There are ups and downs and potholes along the way.

This metaphor reminds me that the destination is not my only goal, and is tied to the concept and identification as a traveller, embedded in a story in which the self comes alive and transforms. I experience the doctoral journey as a fluid and iterative identity-development process; my professional life and my emerging scholarly identity as a

researcher intersect. This is not always an easy process, particularly as I choose to hold both these identities concurrently and to consciously not transition from one to the other as doctoral students on a career trajectory toward academia might so choose. This duality in my identity-development is a key aspect of my practitioner inquiry and reflexivity as a researcher. An understanding of my practitioner-researcher identity is an integral part of my doctoral journey, and is of intrinsic interest to me, but is not the key focus of this dissertation.

What is also meaningful to me as a practitioner-researcher is the commitment to research alongside others. Thus, I learn about my practice through my individual research and my collaborative research as part of an inquiry community. Shifting identities for me, my staff and my students are an effect of the research in terms of what this work enabled and materialized. My intention with this research is to merge and extend existing theories and methodologies in the context of my work and to use that research to impact my practice. I work concurrently as a program manager and evaluator (my professional practice), and now as a researcher; my emergent scholarship and evolving identity as a practitioner-researcher are located within a qualitative paradigm. My identity as a practitioner-researcher has practical and ethical implications. My position as the *Director* of the CEU, an insider, is one of relative power and some distance. Therefore, the students and teachers may have been unlikely to speak overly negatively about the program. Students may also have resisted being critical of the teachers or the *Community Outreach Workers* in a face-to-face setting. To attempt to mitigate this power imbalance, I spent time developing relationships and trust with all involved. My communication with colleagues and students and in the arts-informed workshops was to reassure and focus participant contributions and feedback on the betterment of the program, not on the evaluation or assessment of an individual's performance.

I started my doctoral journey in September 2015, one week after my 50th birthday, in an Ed.D. program in Educational Practice at Simon Fraser University. I was attracted to a cohort model composed of other mid-career professionals from a wide range of disciplines as I believe strongly in the co-creation of knowledge and the social support that can be provided by collaborating with others. We were a heterogeneous group: counsellors, social workers, K-12 teachers, post-secondary educators, school principals and nurse educators. I was somewhat intimidated by this accomplished group

and not deeply familiar with their professional contexts, but felt confident in my own professional practice and knew that I could contribute my perspectives and experience to the group. As someone who had completed a master's degree almost 20 years earlier, I felt anxious about my study skills, but exhilarated to embark on learning new ideas. Our professors were challenged to make their courses relevant to this disparate group, and I appreciated the broad themes and perspectives that they brought in. I was excited about the range of intellectual ideas we were exploring, such as indigenization, critical theory, neo-liberalism, and knowledge representation and dissemination in our technological age.

In one of the courses that I took in the Educational Practice doctoral program, our professor, an arts-based researcher, asked us to correspond via email to the rest of the cohort using e-postcards. E-postcard pedagogy is based on the idea described as the “tug on the sleeve” or the “stop moment” that invites us to open a space to reflect and listen to others in a new way. Fels (2012) describes this idea as the moment that calls us to an understanding of the arts as an action site of inquiry (p. 51).

An e-postcard has five features; it expresses a stop moment, is a page or less in length, has one quote cited, shows an image, and includes some personal writing. This use of arts-based pedagogy inspired me to consider the potential of using arts in my qualitative research. Further, I was introduced to the work of Michele Searle and the use of an arts-informed research approach to better understand and evaluate educational programs. The e-postcard presented in Figure 1.2 is my reflection on the process of starting a new program—the first cohort of the EHCW program—and surfaces some of the ethical tensions I feel in my professional life.

“By identifying and attending to stop moments that call us to attention, we may reflect on why these moments matter; what issues, assumptions, perspectives and practices (economic, political, social, communal, personal, cultural) are embodied within the stop moment; and why we chose (or failed to choose) to engage in a particular choice of action.”

Lynn Fels (2005) *Performative Inquiry*

Hit send – the proposal is in.

Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait.....High importance.

Funding has been approved.

Three, two, one....**roll out**. Design marketing **collateral**.

Strategize with the community partner. Hire a teacher. Hire an Arabic speaking Outreach Support Worker. Hire a child minder.

Develop the program outcomes. Create a syllabus.

Submit the course descriptions. Order the course books. Set aside lockers. **Reserve** kitchen labs. Book a classroom. Find an office.

Deploy computers. Source office furniture. Get the carpets cleaned. Move in play equipment. Put up posters. **Blast out** emails. Begin **recruitment**. Hold information sessions.

Will anyone turn up?

Get some more chairs. Can everyone see? Some with friends, some with case managers, some alone. 23 refugee women translating, chattering. A sense of belonging tentatively growing. 23 women officially described as vulnerable sharing this room with us. Facing barriers – trauma, adaptation, low language skills, low literacy, no Canadian work experience.

We've got funding for 16 – how do we choose?



Tanis Sawkins 28.09.2016

Figure 1.2. E-postcard

When writing the e-postcard, I set out to convey the process and recreate the sense of timing and pressure that my colleagues and I feel as a result of the public bidding process. Once I had written the first draft, my attention was drawn to two things: the deep caring and responsibility, as evidenced by the ethical choice of selecting the women for the program, but also, paradoxically, the militaristic language that I had used.

The ethical choice is one we face when selecting participants for most government-funded employment programs. Due to the “success” of our programs being measured by the number of participants who complete the program and secure employment, there is the undeniable motivation to select those most likely to do so. Often our programs are assigned a per participant cost (the total budget for the program divided by the number of participants securing work) that must fit within a specified range. As a result, the selection process is skewed towards selecting those less in need of the program, rather than towards those who face multiple barriers, have more difficulty finding employment, and are most in need of a well-supported employment program.

Re-reading the e-postcard, I noticed that I had used militaristic language, such as collateral, deploy, and recruit. I chose to bold these words to indicate that I am aware of the sad, inappropriate irony; many of the women in the program fled from war, and in some cases, had their own education interrupted by war. I also recognized that this language which I have absorbed and use is the bureaucratic terminology associated with short-term government-funded programs. In these fast-paced, outcome-measured programs funded through a competitive, public bidding process, there is limited time for reflection. In Section 2.1, I summarize the critique of these programs as firmly residing in a neoliberal context which emphasizes market economics, and the role of collective responsibility is reduced. Nevertheless, deep caring and dedication is evidenced in these programs daily.

In my professional practice at WCC with the CEU, I am privileged to work with part of a small team where collaboration is our norm. However, the purpose of our CEU collaboration is typically oriented toward task-completion. As we are contracted to provide education services, we follow timelines and meet deliverables. While we do reflect on our work, we have built common purpose and joint responsibility over time, and our reflection may not always be as critical or in-depth as optimally required.

This dissertation focuses on one of the programs that I manage as part of my professional practice. The site is a shared site where I have collected data for two concurrent research projects: my own individual arts-informed program evaluation, as well as the broader inquiry community. In Chapter 2 Section 2.1, I present a brief overview of immigrant training and services in Canada. In Section 2.2: *The program context: Entry to Hospitality Careers for Women* (EHCW), I further describe my

professional practice, my role in the conception and implementation of the EHCW program, and my ongoing engagement with our partners, the teachers, staff and students. I provide a detailed description of the EHCW program, which provided the research site for my individual research, the research I engaged in with my chosen *inquiry community* and my research into my own professional practice (see Figure 1.3: *Site of my practitioner inquiry*). My individual research focuses on how arts-informed program evaluation (Searle, 2013; Searle & Shulha, 2016)—a specific type of arts-informed inquiry—can advance our understanding of pedagogy and programs. This is the methodological “core” of my dissertation. As the inquiry site was a program I managed as part of my professional practice, I was able to provide access to the other researchers in my inquiry community. The shared purpose was to deeply inquire into one program, a rare opportunity that my CEU work colleagues and I are not often able to fully realize in our schedule-driven, time-crunched, work lives.



Figure 1.3. Site of my practitioner inquiry

Appendix A: Summary of research activities, outlines both my individual research activities, and a collaborative research project that I was a part of from September 2016 until June 2019. Practitioner inquiry is not an isolated activity. My inquiry community emerged out of a research project with a collective of researchers from local universities and from the community (see an in-depth description in Section 4.3: *My inquiry*

community). Being a part of an inquiry community was essential in developing a new network, some of whom I had not known before, that crossed academic and practitioner boundaries and proved key to achieving my practitioner-researcher goals. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) affirm, “Variants of practitioner inquiry also foster new kinds of social relationships that assuage the isolation of teaching and other sites of practice. This is especially true in inquiry communities structured to foster deep intellectual discourse about critical issues” (p. 37). Although some aspects of the theory and research methods we explored in our inquiry community differed from my main interests, the influence on my thinking, the understandings gained, the co-construction of knowledge, and my growth as a practitioner-researcher were significant.

The following words of teacher educators can aptly be applied to researchers when they describe the need that my inquiry community met for me:

We need the richness and the surprise of sustained intellectual conversation. We need the pleasure of each other’s company. We need the sense of solidarity that comes from respectful face-to-face interaction and that emerges not from homogeneity but from collective aims within a recognition of difference. We need new ideas and new words and new images and new visions to sustain us in our daily teaching lives. In the face of dehumanizing economic forces and depressing institutional realities, we need comrades. (Himley & Carini, 2000, p. 211)

As part of our sustained conversation, our inquiry community committed to bringing the voices of the women with immigrant and refugee experience involved in this program to others who work in similar programs. I also commit to this – in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 I have photos and verbatim quotes from the women’s art projects and their discussion about the program. Through our inquiry community, we sought to engage in a dialogue about the ways immigrant and refugee women navigate employment integration in Canada, and bring that dialogue to a larger audience. In varying combinations, our members presented at three different conferences, where I also described my arts-informed program evaluation (see Appendix A: Research activities summary). Disappointingly for us, we did not have the funding to bring students to the conferences, so worked with a volunteer filmmaker to create a short video, which featured some of the women talking about their experiences, and we showed that at the conferences. Ultimately, the strength of my inquiry community was the facilitating and valuing of collaboration and reciprocal knowledge creation. The experiences, knowledge,

strengths, and insights of our inquiry community members were valued as equal regardless of academic or professional stature.

In this dissertation, I have given the members of our inquiry community titles rather than using their names (see Section 4.3: *My inquiry community*, Table 4.2), which both ensures confidentiality, and provides an indication of the background they brought or role that they played in the inquiry community. Confidentiality was an ethical requirement for our research approval process. The titles, which I capitalize and offset in *italics*, loosely correspond to their roles in real life.

1.5. Representing and sharing local knowledge

One of the key questions that emerged through my doctoral journey and as I was initially writing this dissertation, was “how do I represent my learning?” As I was creating collages and learning from stories alongside the women in the program, it felt incongruous to represent that new knowledge solely in a report-style text. Their creativity inspired me. I want to honour their work by also choosing to present, represent, and share what I was reflecting on and learning through a creative interpretive approach. I include my own photographs, narrative and poetic writing in this dissertation as part of my commitment to arts-informed research. I indicate personal narrative writing by off-setting it in a text box. I hope to convey insights and meanings that might not otherwise be available. As MacIntosh (2010) muses,

There is an insistence that professional, academic and research writing should remain objective and factual in order to be credible. And yet what is it that attracts us, and touches us at a human level, in art, literature and music than can in no way be matched by literal or factual text? (p. 85)

In this dissertation, I have interwoven narrative that I have written, scholarly theory, photos of the collages that the women and others created in the collage-making workshops, and quotes from the participants. I hope that by interweaving the participants’ voices with my own, text with images, everyday language with the academic, and fragments of more traditional social science research with narrative, I have created a richer, and more fulsome representation of what this employment program has meant to the lives of these migrant women and to me.

Knowing oneself, telling stories, and inviting others to share their own, builds relevant, locally developed knowledge. Local knowledge is often conveyed through stories and lived experience. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) reinforce, “Teachers learn when they generate local knowledge of practice by working within the context of inquiry communities to theorize and construct their work and to connect it with larger social, cultural, and political issues” (p. 250). Local knowledge can illuminate the complexity of a particular setting, and help others to relate the experiences to their own experience and possibly to their contexts. In Figure 1.4, I use narrative to illustrate how I have come to value of locally developed knowledge.

Local knowledge

My two teenage sons are dinghy sailors. Our family has been involved with BC Sailing and on the BC racing circuit for over 10 years now. Whenever sailors are in a new location, they look at the setting and ask themselves questions—What are the waves like? Are there whitecaps? What is the configuration of the geography? What kinds of clouds are in the sky? Where are the clouds moving? Where are the mountains? Which direction are the trees or flags blowing? How vigorously? How consistently? What is the temperature? What time of day is it? Will the temperature change? Which way is the tide flowing? Is there a current?

But, as much as this information is available to the sailors who have the skill to look for it and to learn from it, they will always seek out a sailor from the host club and ask for “the local knowledge.” The local knowledge is not immediately visible; it is gathered by the sailors living in the area who sail the waters in all weather conditions, at all times of the year, and have accumulated experience over time. They know those waters by sailing them, not by analyzing them. It is embodied knowledge. By talking to each other, sailors share and affirm that experience.

In Squamish, all the local sailors know that you don’t launch your boat before noon. You have to wait until Whistler heats up and the warm air rises up over the mountains. Then the cool air sinks low over Howe Sound, is whipped up, and then the winds start blowing. You find a local sailor who has sailed near those cliffs to the east, in the shadow of the giant granite batholith Stawamus Chief, and they also know that the river dumps its heavier freshwater into the Sound right there and your boat sits lower and moves slower.

Tanis Sawkins November 2015

Figure 1.4. Local knowledge

In academia, local knowledge has been undervalued in comparison to theoretical knowledge. Common wisdom in social science research used to be that localized knowledge—for example, a single case study—could not contribute to scientific development. Many felt, and some still do, that

within a society that values evidence, facts, general knowledge, and grand theories, contextually sensitive and empirically embedded knowledge sometimes meets hostility. Expert, scientific knowledge is claimed to be objective, general, and abstract, as well as to be superior to what is then called subjective, emotional knowledge. Local knowledge is underprivileged: It is associated with anti-modern traditionalism with backward parochialism. (Niessen et al., 2009, p. 393)

Certainly, there is local knowledge that is theoretically questionable or even harmful. However, localized knowledge is not simply opinion; it is the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over time, and continue to develop. It is:

- Based on experience
- Tested over time
- Adapted in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals
- Held by individuals or communities
- Considered dynamic and changing, not static (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d.).

My view is that context-dependent, tacit knowledge needs to be valued at least equally with theoretical knowledge in educational research, hence my valorization of localized perspectives. In Chapter 3, I describe how I use theory and practice to inform each other in my professional work and my emerging scholarship. Figure 3.1: *Mind-map – Guiding my inquiry* will illustrate my conceptualization of the nexus between praxis and theory in the contexts of my research. I see the valuing of local knowledge as a modest way to redress the persistent dualisms in educational research between science-art, theory-practice, or quantitative-qualitative research, and bring balance to provide a level of trustworthiness into the research.

Over my career I have spoken many times at conferences, often about curricular innovations or programs in which I am involved. I have felt confident in describing the “doing” of my practice. The experience that was new for me as a doctoral student, was building an identity as a practitioner-researcher, as an emerging scholar. When our inquiry community presented at the Metropolis conference in Calgary in March 2018, it was only the second time that I had identified myself publicly in a scholarly context as a doctoral student. The first time had been at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Summer Institute in 2016 where all the presenters and most of the audience were other graduate

students. In identifying myself as a practitioner-researcher, I felt a greater need to refer to theory, and to describe my researcher positionality in a way that I might not have before when representing myself solely as a practitioner.

As a practitioner, particularly working with under-represented populations in a mainstream institution or working in the community, there is an inherent legitimacy with “doing” the work. This legitimacy may be unspoken, but is represented in our language through metaphors such as “having your boots on the ground” or “being in the trenches” or “having earned your stripes.” Curiously, these metaphors are again militaristic – differentiating and honouring the common soldier, not the commander or one who is outside or above the action. Paradoxically, broader society has traditionally placed a higher value on the theoretical or research-based work of academics or scholars than on the work of practitioners. As an academic’s legitimacy “in the field” is questioned, a higher level of theoretical knowledge is demanded to establish credibility. I attempt to both represent and redress this tension through identifying as a practitioner-researcher. Nganga (2011) posits, “All K–20 educators, including emerging scholars, will face identity tensions in schools and other institutions of learning today” (p. 240). These tensions and questions that I sit with led me to doctoral work.

As a mid-career professional, re-entering the academy after a 20-year absence, which co-occurred with a period of intense theorizing in the social sciences and humanities, I felt I had a lot of reading to catch up on. This is contrasted with an accumulated competence and confidence in my professional practice, resulting in a feeling akin to going to physiotherapy to build up the weakened side following a stroke—it is both painful and inspiring. Pilkington (2009) summarized this dichotomy felt by doctoral students by paraphrasing Lave and Wenger’s theory of situated learning as “in one community they may feel a confident, successful leader central to the community of practice; yet in the academic sphere they may feel a novice, peripheral to a community of learners” (p. 157). Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger, 1998) contend that learning involves shifting participation patterns in various communities with shared practices, and is not just a cognitive process of acquiring a set of skills and knowledge. This theorizing frames my experience as a doctoral student, and seems to frame the experience of the participants in the EHCW program.

1.6. Outline of the dissertation

Engaging in research maintains the currency of my practice within a rapidly changing world, brings in the voices of the participants, and contributes to the theoretical and the applied body of knowledge in adult education. In Chapter 2: *Background*, I first provide an overview of immigration streams and patterns in Canada since the mid-1960s. This overview touches on policy shifts and responses, regarding the settlement and integration of newcomers into the Canadian society and economy which have implications for adult education and employment training. I follow this overview with a brief illustrative inventory of employment programs primarily focused on programs for immigrant and refugee women in Canada. I do this to provide a context for the EHCW program, which I then describe in detail. I tell the story of the inception of the EHCW program and the needs and capacities of the students that the program seeks to address. I outline the specifics about the program in a chart, which shows a comparison with conventional vocational programming.

In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature review*, I situate my work within a qualitative research paradigm and I provide a mind-map (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.1) of the praxis and theory that inform this dissertation. On a macro level, I describe my research as *practitioner inquiry*, an overarching category of qualitative research which refers to a wide array of educational research methods, genres, and purposes that I will define and refine throughout this dissertation. I am employed as a program manager in an urban community college, and I research one of the programs I manage. I outline my guiding principles.

I define myself as a practitioner-researcher inquiring into one of the programs that I manage—EHCW. My practitioner inquiry is to learn more about the program in a collaborative way that is both engaging and relevant for me, my students and the people I work and research with. This practitioner inquiry is overarching in that it brings together my individual research, my inquiry community and my professional practice. This I refer to throughout the dissertation as a learning-oriented evaluation. My intention is to articulate and report on my learnings in this dissertation, to inform my own practice and possibly the practice of others. I use the term “learnings” to disrupt the notion that research outcomes in social sciences are generalizable truths, and to focus on contextualized knowing. For me, the term “learnings” emphasizes the more general

learning that results from being involved in a process. Learning-oriented evaluation focuses on “process” use as opposed to “findings” use. Process use is greatly enhanced in learning-oriented evaluation where the purpose of the evaluation is ongoing learning, internal improvement, and program development rather than generating summative judgments for external audiences or accountability (Patton, 2015). As a researcher, I use artmaking for a dialogic purpose to stimulate questioning and reflection and to spark dialogue and deliberation in community with others.

I examine theories that have informed my practitioner inquiry relating specifically to language, and language teaching and learning. Language is a social practice. This perspective and the theory illustrated in the third chapter provides a lens for the analysis of the data gathered through the arts-informed workshops that I used with the participants in the program, and through the inquiry community that I was a part of. I turn to Darwin and Norton’s (2015) revised model of investment, as a key interpretation of Bourdieu’s economic analogy to language learning and teaching, particularly with migrants. To better explicate their concepts of capital, and investment, I trace the theoretical lineage from Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), a French sociologist, philosopher, and public intellectual who focused on the roots of social inequality and used the analogy of the economic market for describing social practice. I refer to other scholars in the field of language and literacy teaching and learning who have also been influenced by Bourdieu, and weave in their perspectives. Finally, I describe and theorize with the concepts of imagined communities and futures as important for language teaching and learning with migrants.

In *Chapter 4: Methodology, methods and research activities*, I describe how I integrated arts-informed approaches into the broader frame of learning-oriented program evaluation. A framework of qualitative learning-oriented evaluation and layering in arts-informed methods holds the possibility for creating new ways of engaging with the field of evaluation in my praxis. In Section 4.2: *Doing arts-informed research* I detail the positioning, principles, and practices of arts-informed inquiry. I describe arts-informed program evaluation as a frame to understand how to improve the program for myself, the staff, program participants, and by extension, the program funders. I outline the procedures and timeline for how data were gathered, list issues that arose, and address how I represent my findings. My data gathering took part during two overlapping processes, which I describe throughout the dissertation in an over-arching way, as my

practitioner inquiry. As I moved through my doctoral journey, I became increasingly interested in reading more theory and working with researchers who were also working with immigrants and language learning and teaching. I became a part of an inquiry community with researchers from another university and based in the community, who were also interested in the learning more about the EHCW program. Next, I describe in detail the ethical issues and limitations that I encountered while researching in a program that I manage. I had to balance several tensions, including maintaining confidentiality of the participants while disseminating knowledge about research, and doing arts-based and other qualitative research in a professional environment that values evidence-based and quantitative research. Finally, I provide exemplars of the tensions I feel between my professional identity and that of an emerging scholar: the tension of fulfilling contractual obligations and concerns with maintaining funding while shifting the program activities to respond to the participants' needs, capacities and interests, the tension of doing arts-informed research in a context that values evidence-based research, and the tension between researching in my own program and my role of program manager. I thus illustrate my evolving identity as a practitioner-researcher.

In Chapter 5: *Experiencing Stories: Two collages*, I describe and include photos of two different collages. I descriptively summarize each of these two collages holistically. My intention is to step back in this chapter, provide an overall sense of these women's perceptions, and invite the reader to hear their voices. I honour the voices and stories of the participants in the EHCW program by presenting unanalyzed data. Researchers (Harris, 2006; Takei, 2015) advocate for this approach claiming the accumulation of details of everyday life can assist to scrutinize and interpret cultural formation.

In Chapter 6: *Expanding social and economic capital – Research analysis Part I*, I describe and analyze some of the data that emerged through my practitioner inquiry. I primarily draw on the data that I gathered through my collage-making workshops. I foreground the lived-experience of other women, and I use quotes from discussions about several women's collages that took place during gallery walks. I include images of the collages to bring the research process to life and to show rather than tell about it. My analysis looks at how the EHCW program potentially supports the acquisition of social capital, by using pedagogic practices that open spaces for positive identity formation which may help to build cultural and linguistic capital. Although the EHCW program is

funded as an employment program, I look at the language and literacy development of the women. Language is a social practice, and the practicum site and experience is a significant source for social capital acquisition. Finally, data gathered through my practitioner inquiry shows how the development of economic capital relates to the employment experiences of the women in the EHCW program. At the end of the chapter, I synthesize and provide a concluding argument.

In Chapter 7: *Addressing identity, investment, and imagined communities and futures – Research analysis II*, I again explore the data gathered through my arts-informed research and my involvement with the inquiry community, primarily through the theoretical lens of Darvin and Norton's (2015) revised model of investment. I look at how the EHCW program supports the women's investment in learning through the onsite childminding, and building social relationships. Investment in English is also an investment in a learner's own social identity. As Wenger (1998) observed, "Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity" (p. 215). Identity development for EHCW students is ongoing and fluid through a classroom culture of sharing stories and inter-cultural learning. Building social relationships as a theme emerges from the discussions centred on the arts-informed workshops I facilitated. The research forefronts the voices of the women, providing insight into their perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Finally, I layer on data gathered from the other participants in the program, such as the instructors, the *Community Outreach Workers*, and the program managers.

In Chapter 8: *Reflections and conclusion*, I critically reflect on my work as a practitioner-researcher. Initially, I reflect on my engagement in the inquiry community. I recount my experiences as an emergent researcher, our questions and goals, the alignment between my epistemology and my inquiry, and the potential contributions to knowledge. Second, I reflect critically on integrating arts-informed inquiry into program evaluation. In both cases, I focus on the impacts of the pedagogies and practices on the program. Next, I describe the limitations and the strengths of the research methods I used. I conclude with a recap of the implications of the research and a discussion of the findings for immigrant employment training practices, and point to areas of future research.

Chapter 2.

Background

2.1. Immigration and employment training in Canada

In Chapter 2: *Background* I overview immigration patterns and streams in Canada since the mid-1960s. This overview touches on policy shifts and responses regarding the settlement and integration of newcomers into the Canadian society and economy which have implications for adult education and employment training. I follow this overview with an illustrative inventory of employment programs primarily focused on immigrants and refugee women in Canada. This provides context for the EHCW program, which I then describe in detail. EHCW is one of several programs that I manage in my professional practice, and is the site of inquiry for my arts-informed program evaluation, and for my inquiry community. I describe the inception of the EHCW program and the students' needs and capacities that the program seeks to address. I outline the specifics about the program and the design considerations that we reimagined in a chart which compares conventional vocational programming with EHCW. Finally, in this chapter, I analyze an institutionally based document. My practitioner inquiry is generated out of this analysis of the course-evaluation form which is used regularly in my workplace, I find problematic, and which incites further research. Dorothy Smith (1987) instructs us to focus our research attention on puzzles emerging from everyday life, as actual people experience them. I see my research interests directly relating to my everyday professional life and the everyday realities of the students' lives.

Historically, Canada privileged White Europeans. The introduction of the merit-point system in 1967 for independent immigration applications, led to changes in the law that aimed to abolish ethnic and racial discrimination. The point system grants potential immigrants numerical points based on factors such as their work experience, age, educational background, and English or French language proficiency level (and the minimal requirement has risen over the years) needed for immigration to Canada. Given aging populations, similar demographic baby boom retirement pressures, and decreasing birth rates that North America, Europe and Australia currently face, the

majority of immigrants to Canada today come from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These regions have growing populations of well-educated young people seeking economic opportunity. Powerful global changes in the past three decades have impacted national governmental responses for immigration and the integration of immigrants. In the Canadian context, policy changes to the immigration system include increasing or decreasing the numbers of those accepted, and prioritizing specific streams of immigrants, in order to respond to demographic or labour market needs or to meet Canada's humanitarian commitments. Recent examples of Canadian policy changes responding to the emergent global context include the following: creating the Express Entry System in 2015, which favours highly skilled young singles with no dependents; increasing the numbers of those who enter Canada as temporary foreign workers (TFWs) to respond to seasonal labour shortages in the agriculture and hospitality sectors amongst other; benefitting international students with work visas—Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Canadian Citizenship John McCallum announcing at the Metropolis 2016 conference that international students are the “ideal immigrants” (McCallum, 2016); and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau supporting a massive, public response to the Syrian refugee crisis. These policy changes have been met with various levels of public support.

In regards to language policy, both the Immigration Act of 1976 and the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 re-affirmed the commitment by the federal government to help migrants to acquire at least one of two official languages and to integrate into Canadian society. According to Jezak (2017) the structure and content of language training for adult immigrants is subject to immigration-policy priorities such as economic integration (access to the labour force) and social cohesion (citizenship participation). In general, there is a high level of public support for immigrants to Canada who either already know or commit to learn English or French as our official languages. This linguistic knowledge is viewed as providing both cultural and economic capital for newcomers (see Section 3.7 for further discussion about Bourdieu's, 1977, forms of capital). There are growing movements to also make Indigenous languages and visual languages for the deaf, official languages. Might this provide different language programming policy for immigrants in the future? Currently, learning English for those immigrants who choose to settle in British Columbia, and for a smaller proportion in BC

learning French, is seen as important for obtaining cultural, linguistic and economic capital.

The expansion and standardization of the federally funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) settlement English language program and its French-language counterpart has co-occurred alongside this increase in immigration. For those of us who work in adult education, it is vital that we position English language and literacy instruction to serve adult learners' long-term integration goals and help them access education and training in English beyond learning basic communication and life skills. I recognize that not all newcomers learn English with plans to enter the workforce. Others contribute to Canada's cultural capital as leaders in their communities, artistic creators, and volunteers. While these are important and valuable activities that build and sustain Canadian social life, my professional and research interests focus on education and employment as the key avenue for social and economic integration.

Paradoxically, the shift in Canadian government policy towards more highly skilled immigrants has been accompanied by a downturn in their financial outcome, especially for racialized immigrants, despite their higher educational and occupational backgrounds (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). For example, immigrants entering Canada in the late 1990s earned 28% less than Canadian-born adults (Cukier & Stolerick, 2019, p. 4). The situation for immigrant women has been even worse. Migrants in the humanitarian class stream or family members who are not the principal applicant (typically a female spouse), often arrive with lower proficiency in one of Canada's official languages and lower employment skills. Underutilization of immigrant skills, regardless of immigration stream, costs the Canadian economy in the billions of dollars (Reitz et al., 2014) and results in extreme hardship for those impacted and their families.

In their recent study, Cukier and Stolerick (2019) used data from international assessment surveys administered by the OECD in 2016 which measure the key cognitive and workplace skills needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper. The data collected was for all women in Canada, not just immigrant women and they found that women are significantly less likely to participate in the labour force, and are more likely to be employed part time than men (Cukier & Stolerick, 2019, p. 11). Cukier and Stolerick (2019) also found that lower literacy and numeracy skills scores relate to higher rates of unemployment for everyone – male and

female, Canadian born and immigrant. However, after a wider variety of demographic factors (such as gender, age, parental education, number of books in the house, etc.) were accounted for, they found that being an immigrant with low literacy and numeracy scores results in a much higher probability (3.5 times) of being unemployed (Cukier & Stolerick, 2019). One policy implication they identify is that rigorous and specific assessments of skill testing outcomes could increase accountability of service-providing organizations that have uneven outcomes in terms of supporting immigrant skills development to improve employment outcomes.

As a program manager, I recognize that comprehensive, holistic measurement of immigrant employment skills outcomes for those with low literacy levels is complex and underdeveloped. I acknowledge the potential positive impact on program development of using reliable competency-based assessments which fully integrate English language and literacy, and are based on occupational standards validated by industry. Since the early 2000s, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has been involved in the development of resources to align the Canadian language benchmarks (CLBs) and the essential skills developed by the department then known as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC; Senior, 2017; see Section 2.3 for more discussion on the CLBs). The current revision of the essential skills framework (publication of the Skills for Success framework is anticipated in 2020 or 2021) and alignment with the CLBs could provide a way forward for practitioners. This stance may seem incongruent with some of the localized, qualitative approaches I advocate for given that the standardized framework of the CLBs is contested, particularly as applied to the federally funded LINC program. However, in the over 20 years of their existence, other educators (Jezak, 2017; Senior, 2017) find the CLBs a practical, fair and reliable platform which learners, employers, teachers, assessors, and program developers use for assessing, teaching and evaluating English across Canada. I maintain that competency-based assessment which can quantify and “credentialize” the varied linguistic, social and other skills and capacities that low literacy-level migrants bring with them, can be used to identify gaps which can then be efficiently and effectively addressed in a caring, holistic learning environment. This aligns with my fundamental belief in adult education of “starting where the learner is at” rather than requiring students to take courses when they already have the knowledge, skills or competencies,

or by measuring learning through the number of hours a student is in a program. Neither approach honours prior learning.

Earlier research (Beiser & Hou, 2000) also shows employment barriers for refugees are gendered illustrating an established pattern: upon arrival in Canada female refugees had lower levels of either official language in comparison to their male counterparts. In Australia, low-skilled, female-majority, service positions in retail, domestic help, care of the aged, catering and cleaning, were identified as employment enclaves (Colic-Peisker & Tillbury, 2006), where the benefits of low unemployment rates have not economically benefited refugees. Further, Beiser and Hou (2000) note women benefited more than their male counterparts from opportunities such as English as a second language (ESL) classes. This relates again to later findings (Cukier & Stolerick, 2019) that higher literacy skills are associated with greater probability of employment. As women who arrive as refugees initially have lower rates of employment than men, they are underrepresented in workplaces where opportunities for informal language learning build linguistic capital. Additionally, higher levels of English-language ability improve the likelihood of staying in the labour market. Beiser and Hou (2000) assert the male linguistic advantage on arrival in Canada was still evidenced a decade after arrival. They conclude, "If government assumes the responsibility to provide appropriate programs, women may be even more likely than men to benefit, and to use this benefit to contribute to the common good" (Beiser & Hou, 2000, p. 327).

Successive Canadian governments have funded services and training to integrate immigrants into Canadian society and the economy since the early 1970s. Initially, federally funded immigrant settlement services were provided through provincially run public agencies. However, since the mid-1990s, non-governmental organizations, such as immigrant-serving organizations, neighbourhood houses, school districts and community colleges have delivered immigrant settlement, language, and training services through competitive contractual arrangements with the federal government (Sadiq, 2004). Provincially funded employment programs, also procured through public bidding processes, in some cases include programs specifically for newcomers or other populations which face barriers.

For the most part, 21st-century Canadian workplaces may require that employees have more complex language skills in either English or French, and higher

levels of digital literacy, problem-solving, and collaboration skills than in previous decades. Job tasks change quickly, and that change often relies on communication. Less complex and repetitive job tasks are at increasing risk of being automated. According to the Business Council of British Columbia (Williams, 2018), 42% of jobs in the province are at high risk of being automated over the coming years. Another 37% are at moderate risk of being replaced by potential automation. “Technologies are increasingly capable of performing routine, repetitive and rules-based tasks, and tasks requiring simple social interactions” (Williams, 2018, p. 3), reads the report. Further, it lists positions such as retail salespersons, food counter attendants, kitchen helpers, cashiers, transport truck drivers, food and beverage servers, general office support workers, and cooks as some of the positions with a higher risk of being automated. Therefore, low-income workers may bear a disproportionate share of these risks.

At the time of EHCW program completion, the Government of BC (2018) *British Columbia Labour Market Outlook: 2018 Edition* predicted that there would 903,000 job vacancies between 2018 and 2028. Of these vacancies, 27% would need to be filled by 24,400 immigrants to BC each year. The need for these individuals in British Columbia to find work, and then rapidly adjust to ever-changing job demands, requires strong English language and literacy skills. Using technology, following written directions, participating in discussions, producing written reports, or conducting online research to solve problems may form some insurance against unemployment for individuals in the future. Therefore, many adults in British Columbia pursue learning English as a stepping stone to entering the labour market, starting their own businesses, moving into better-paying jobs, and securing economic self-sufficiency.

Immigrant training and employment services in Canada, particularly for women, have been implicated by some researchers as perpetuating social, cultural, and economic hierarchies (Diamini et al., 2012; Maitra, 2015; Maitra & Maitra, 2015; Maitra & Shan, 2007; Ng, 1988), for example by providing workers to be exploited in low paid precarious jobs. Immigrant employment training in Canada is constrained by the contract-based and public bidding process as well as the emphasis on labour market outcomes (McCoy & Masuch, 2007; Ng, 1988; Sadiq, 2004).

The hospitality industry in Canada is a gendered and racialized sector. Allen (2017) argues that employers in the hospitality sector, primarily hotels and restaurants,

mix together a worker's appearance and how the worker performs with the product being sold. She argues that one consequence of this, is that work in the hospitality sector tends to be stratified based on personal attributes such as race, gender and age. Allen (2017) comments, "The colour of a worker's skin, the thickness of a worker's accent, how tall or attractive the worker is, or how charming a worker is with customers all affect where a worker fits within the workplace hierarchy" (p. 11). Women migrants, particularly those who have limited English, precarious citizenship status, or who are older, are easily channeled into lower-end of the hospitality sector—working in the back-of-house positions such as kitchen helper, housekeeping, and laundry. Once employed, they may become vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, limited career mobility as well as work-related health and wellbeing problems (Allen, 2017; Liladrie, 2010).

Other researchers (Fursova, 2013; Gibb, Hamdon, & Jamal, 2008) suggest employment training can also be used to contest this reproduction of social, cultural, and economic hierarchies. While working within the mandate to supply labour to the hospitality industry, the EHCW program tried to balance this with identifying and serving the needs, capacities and interests of the women. There were no costs for participation in EHCW to increase the chances for the women to join, complete the program and secure employment. The *Community Outreach Worker* ensured that workplace placements were arranged based on women's needs, in terms of location and type of workplaces. How could we work with the women to support them to find employment in the hospitality sector, while concurrently educating them about the challenges inherent in working in the sector?

In my view, as a response to the critiques that employment training in a neoliberal context serves to funnel newcomer women into low-paid and precarious work, the potential exists for employment training programs to not only provide vocational skills, but also knowledge about workplace cultures and rights, and pathways to employment mobility. Integrated language and literacy learning and identity formation in employment programs, provide a rich context for investment in the language (Norton, 2000) and the motivation for learning it. Employment training programs can also provide workplace experience and "increased participation in communities of practice" (Toohey & Norton, 2003, p. 59). My ethos, verified in the literature (Gibb et al., 2008; Sallaf & Greve, 2004), is that employment programming holds potential for limited social

transformation. This latter perspective was the inspiration to reimagine employment programs for women with immigrant and refugee experience.

2.2. The program context: Entry to Hospitality Careers for Women (EHCW)

The Entry to Hospitality for Careers (EHCW) program was the result of a partnership between WCC, a large metro-Vancouver public post-secondary institution, and PIRS a non-profit community organization supporting women migrants and their children. WCC has offered well-respected vocational education in areas such as Automotive Trades, Practical Nursing, Health Care Assistant, Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management and others for over 55 years. PIRS has offered English language, integration, and employment programs since 1975. The *Community Program Manager* at PIRS and I, the *Director* of the CEU at WCC, met at a Vancouver Immigration Partnership meeting hosted by the City of Vancouver and discussed our observation that a lack of FoodSafe certification, the minimum requirement needed to enter a food-related training program or secure employment in food service outlets, was a significant barrier for newcomer women seeking employment. Following multiple meetings and discussions, EHCW was conceptualized to meet the learning needs of migrant women who faced barriers to employment such as lack of Canadian credentials or work experience. We decided to explore funding opportunities to address this and other such needs. Our focus was on developing a workforce preparation program in which participants would acquire vocational skills and relevant content knowledge, career guidance and job search skills, while at the same time developing literacy and learning to communicate in English.

In this partnership, the college provided the core teacher, vocational instructors, classrooms, training sites, and administration, registration, and coordination. PIRS coordinated outreach support such as hiring the *Community Outreach Workers*, recruiting immigrant women, providing ongoing referral and support services during the program, and providing childminding services for women enrolled in the program who have children under 5 years of age. Employers provided sites for practicum/workplace experiences.

EHCW was funded by the provincial government in British Columbia, which supports short-term employment training programs for defined populations who face barriers to employment. When writing the proposal to deliver training through a public bidding process, we were asked to list the National Occupational Classification (NOC; Government of Canada, 2020) codes that we would target our training for and to support our proposal with labour market data verifying shortages of workers for these positions. We identified the following occupations for EHCW: NOC 6731 – Light duty cleaners (including hotel cleaner and nursing home cleaner) and NOC 6711 – Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations (Government of Canada, 2020). In doing so, we discussed pedagogical choices needed in an employment training program to counteract the further marginalization of racialized women into low-skilled positions (Allen, 2017; Liladrie, 2010); how can we work with employers and provide them with the intercultural supports needed in the workplace? How can we raise consciousness and identify career pathways for and with the women and employers? In other words, how can we reimagine conventional employment training programs to better support low-literacy-level immigrant and refugee women?

Prior to recruiting students for the first class, we agreed that our conception of gender was not strictly a binary of male-female, and we focused selection into the program on those who identified as female. There are programs in the settlement sector that are set up for specific newcomer populations that are based on sexual orientation such as LGBTQ youth, or transgender refugees. For EHCW, sexual orientation was not seen as a relevant marker of identity to be used as a criterion for program selection. In addition, we recognized that there has been a steady increase in the migration of autonomous women who depart from their countries on their own, leaving their dependents in their home countries, and migrating for financial reasons (Sánchez & Serra, 2017; Shan, 2015). These autonomous women, who are typically better educated with higher levels of English due to their selection, and who enter into Canada through the point system or Live-in Caregiver Program, were not the target population for the EHCW program. We distributed posters and flyers about EHCW to community health clinics, neighbourhood houses, and other community-based programs where we thought that the women (with lower English language skills and limited work-experience) for whom the EHCW program was designed might see them. Due to the availability of childminding, there was a self-selection process. The result was that all of the women

participants had migrated as a part of, or re-united with, a family, and almost all of them were parents.

Just as women have different migratory and settlement experiences to men, I am mindful that women have heterogeneous migration, settlement, education and employment experiences when compared to each other. As Sánchez and Serra (2017) observe,

The experience of every woman in migratory processes may be very different: from empowerment to loss of status. Some become independent and achieve significant autonomy in comparison with the situation in their community of origin, others renegotiate gender relations within the family, while still others experience losses and additional burdens. (p. 81)

This reinforces that migrant women's settlement processes are "affected by intersections of gender, race, sexuality, class, and other social divisions, including their immigration status, family status, and access to social networks...[and] systemic barriers such as sexism, racism and homophobia" (Brigham et al., 2018, p. 110). The implication for me as a program developer is to attempt to fully understand the needs and capacities of the population the program is best designed for.

2.3. Reimagining employment training

The EHCW program was designed to provide a holistic response to reducing barriers to employment that the women with migrant experience encounter, while recognizing the needs and capacities of the learners within an employment training context. Few had any work experience in Canada. Most were also mothers, wives, and primary caregivers who held significant social capital and resources from their countries of origin. These indexes of identity were sometimes contradictory and often shifting. Refugees may, though not always, face additional barriers to economic integration: a lack of financial resources, housing insecurity, discrimination in finding and retaining employment, possible mental and physical health complications due to the refugee experience such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety, and negative impacts of racism, sexism, or accent discrimination. Through my experience working with refugees and immigrants for over 30 years, I am aware of the heterogeneity of their life experiences despite the common experience of migration (forced or chosen). As a goal of the program, we intentionally established an appreciative pedagogical approach

where the women’s strengths were acknowledged in order to counter the increasingly negative public discourse around refugees and immigrants. The design of the program positioned learners as autonomous and competent. We resisted the deficit subject positioning of “unemployed woman” in favour of the appreciative “employable woman.” A goal of the program was to establish learning activities and experiences where the participants claimed their agency and, perhaps modestly, their right to speak.

Accordingly, we embedded unstated and unmeasured, but holistic program outcomes for participants such as improved English language and literacy skills, increased self-confidence, stronger social relationships, parenting skills, conflict-management skills, knowledge of Canadian employment law and workers’ rights, workplace safety, and so on. As program developers, we also sought to explore the pedagogical and practical potentials for the learners’ social transformation within the curriculum. The reimagined design that we proposed can be contrasted with that of a conventional vocational training program such as culinary arts (adapted from Hegarty, 2004), which is illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Reimagining employment training: Illustrative comparison

Conventional vocational training model (Exemplar: Culinary arts training)	Reimagined Entry for Hospitality Careers for Women (EHCW) model
Program goals	
Primary relevance to needs of industry.	Primary relevance to the needs, capacities and interests of the students seeking to enter industry.
Comprehensive vocational training leading to a recognized credential (e.g., a red seal trade through the Industry Training Authority (ITA)).	Limited vocational training leading to entry level positions in industry.
Length of the program typically 8-12 months.	Program length is 12 weeks.
Limited acknowledgement of or modification of program for the family needs of the student. Family needs assumed to be “taken care of” outside of the program.	Recognition of supports needed to enable women to attend the program (e.g., onsite childminding is available for children aged 18 months to 5 years; bus fare, uniforms, and healthy snacks are provided, etc.)

Conventional vocational training model (Exemplar: Culinary arts training)	Reimagined Entry for Hospitality Careers for Women (EHCW) model
<p>Limited attention to the physical and mental health of the student. Assumed to be the responsibility of the student. If challenges arise, referral to student services available at the institution.</p>	<p>Decision to approach the program relationally and with an ethic of care. Maintenance of physical and mental health integrated into the curriculum. Employed <i>Community Outreach Workers</i> to leverage and provide specific supports for students (e.g., referrals to community organizations providing housing for newcomers to Canada, or to the Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture, etc.)</p>
<p>Costs for the program covered by the student. Government student loan programs available.</p>	<p>Costs for the program including tuition, registration fees, childminding, equipment, uniforms are covered by the program.</p>
<p>Typically, gender not specified for training.</p>	<p>Decision to offer gender-specific training to build community and a support network intentionally, and to enable focus on employment-related issues confronting women.</p>
<hr/> Curriculum <hr/>	
<p>Curricular philosophy – tending toward a science or technical orientation, and task-based instrumentality required by industry.</p>	<p>Curricular philosophy – tending toward experiential learning and a feminist, care-based ethic.</p>
<p>Achievement of short-term occupational credentials (e.g., WorldHost, FoodSafe, etc.) are typically required for admission into training. Students are required to pay for and do the training prior to admission into the program.</p>	<p>Achievement of short-term occupational credentials (e.g., WorldHost, FoodSafe, etc.) are integrated as part of the curriculum. Content is made more comprehensible for learners through a variety of pedagogical techniques.</p>
<p>Replication of the workplace environment in the classroom (e.g., 8-hour days scheduled 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 40-hour weeks) with an emphasis on punctuality and needing to report absenteeism, focus on production, speed, and performance in work tasks, etc.</p>	<p>A high level of accountability for punctuality and reporting of absenteeism, but program design intentionally supports extracurricular needs (e.g., class times from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm to accommodate drop-off and pick-up of school-aged children).</p>

Conventional vocational training model (Exemplar: Culinary arts training)	Reimagined Entry for Hospitality Careers for Women (EHCW) model
<p>Focus on experiential learning. Practicum is an integral part of the program. In many vocational training programs the students either find their own practicum placements, or they are assigned.</p>	<p>Focus on experiential learning. Practicum is an integral part of the program. Practicum placements are found for the students, with much consultation to accommodate their needs (e.g., close to their home, part-time hours, on a convenient bus route, etc.).</p>
<p>Assumption of job readiness at completion of program and limited job search support integrated into the curriculum.</p>	<p>Exploration of job readiness, Canadian workplace law, and extensive job search support integrated into the curriculum with an intercultural perspective.</p>
Pedagogical Approach	
<p>Focus on complex technical skills taught in-depth by vocational instructors with a strong industry background.</p>	<p>Necessary but limited technical skills taught by vocational instructors.</p>
<p>Students meet language proficiency requirements for program admission (e.g., Grade-10 English and Grade 10 match). Limited pedagogical focus on language, literacy, or study skills integrated into the program.</p>	<p>Lower language proficiency requirements for entry (e.g. CLB 2-4) Focus on English language, literacy, study skills, workplace health and safety skills, etc., by the core teacher who integrates and supports the teaching of vocational skills through techniques for making input more comprehensible.</p>
<p>Vocational instructors teach alone.</p>	<p>The vocational instructors collaborate with the core teacher who is present in their class and provides pedagogical strategies around language and literacy instruction.</p>
<p>Vocational instructors partially simulate the role of “workplace supervisor” with the students.</p>	<p>Core teacher takes on the role of “supporter” or “guide” with the students.</p>
<p>Vocational instructors identify and meet outcomes in terms of workplace competence, standards of performance, and practice with performance-based pedagogical strategies (e.g., demonstration, repetition, accuracy, product-focused, competency-based assessment, etc.).</p>	<p>Core teacher identifies and meets program outcomes, including language and literacy, based on a holistic range of pedagogical strategies (e.g., dialogic, reflective practice, interactive teaching practice, process-focused, formative assessment, etc.).</p>

The 12-week program was mandated to equip immigrant and refugee women with the skills to obtain entry-level employment in Metro Vancouver’s hospitality sector; however, we endeavoured to provide holistic, empowering educational opportunities that could enable immigrant women to move beyond entry-level positions. The program ran on a cohort basis. In total, five cohorts ran between August 2016 and October 2018. The following chart (illustrated in Figure 2.2) shows the countries of origin of the participants aggregated from all five cohorts.

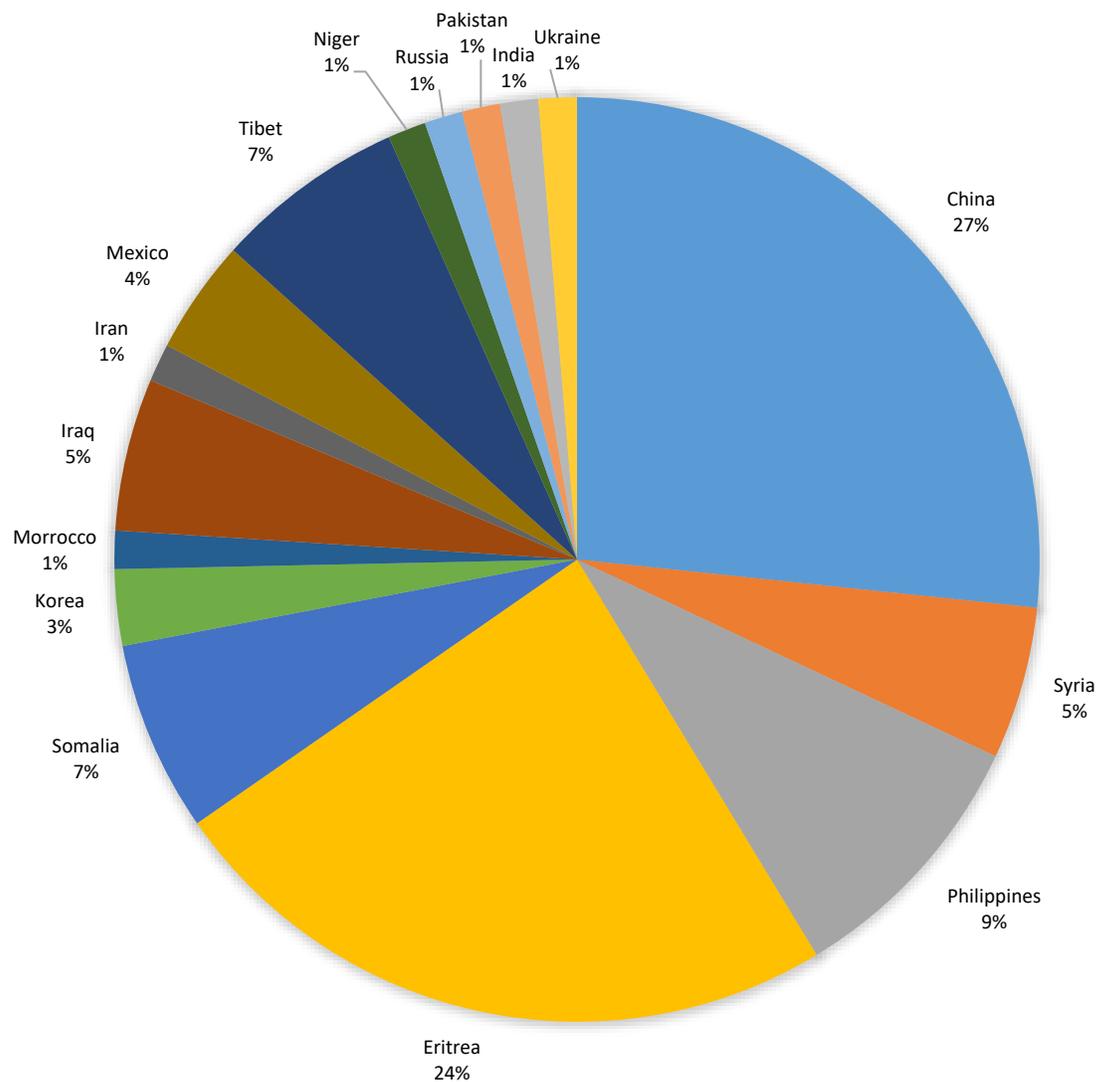


Figure 2.2. Countries/places of origin of students in all five EHCW cohorts aggregated

As per the program proposal, the funding covered participants' full tuition fee, college initiation fees, materials, and supplies. Given that most of the participants lived economically precarious lives, additional supports were built in to the program, such as nutritious snacks for the women and their children every day, transit passes (up to three zones), uniforms, childminding, non-slip safety shoes, and other industry-recognized training such as FoodSafe, WorldHost, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). Conventional vocational training programs do not typically cover these comprehensive supports (see Table 2.1: *Reimagining employment training: Illustrative comparison*). I provide this information not to define the participants in terms of deficit, but to emphasize the supports needed to overcome barriers and contribute to success.

To be eligible for selection into the EHCW program, the funder mandated that potential participants needed to be Canadian citizens, Permanent Residents, or legally entitled to work in Canada. Unusually, EHCW accepted refugee claimants who possessed valid work permits. Often there are scant services for women refugee claimants (Tastsoglou et al., 2014, p. 71), and few employment programming options due to eligibility requirements. EHCW participants needed to be either unemployed or underemployed (working fewer than 20 hours per week). Other eligibility requirements, which we established as program developers, included a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) English Level of 4 for speaking and listening, and Level 2 for reading and writing.

The CLB document (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012) is the nationally recognized set of language standards used in federally funded language programs by learners, adult ESL instructors, assessors, materials and curriculum developers, academics, program funders, regulatory bodies and others. As such, CLB levels are often used for program entry levels as newcomers can get their language levels assessed at no cost, or because those who have previously studied in the federally funded language program already have evidence of their CLB levels. Some sample language tasks at the CLB 4 level in speaking and listening that a learner can do are as follows: request a review of a paycheque because overtime hours are not included, give directions to a co-worker or classmate on how to get to the lunchroom, listen to a friend or co-worker describing plans for the weekend, or listen to an exchange between a sales clerk and a customer to determine the nature of the transaction (Centre

for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012). Some sample language tasks at the CLB 2 level in reading and writing that a learner can do are: read and follow onscreen instructions for withdrawing money from an automatic teller machine (ATM), identify details on a monthly credit card or utility statement to make a payment or check for accuracy; copy the company name, address, application deadline, and contact information from a simple job ad; or complete the personal identification sections of an application form for an apartment rental or job benefits (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012).

These much lower reading and writing entrance requirements in comparison to those for other employment programs or conventional vocational training programs, were set to make the program accessible for women with lower levels of literacy in English. More typical language entry levels for an employment program might be set at a CLB 5-7 level for different skills areas and these higher levels posed a barrier. The English language entry requirement for the 8-month Culinary Arts program leading to Red Seal certification is Grade 10 English (and Grade 10 math). The length of the training also posed a barrier for some and the 6-12 months that conventional vocational training programs require would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, for some of the women to navigate. Mei Ling, a student with one adult child, described the challenge of going back to school after many years of not being a student, and spoke appreciatively of her classmates with young children doing the same:

It was so hard for me, to say yes for program for three months, Monday to Friday! [laughter] So, I know myself, when I decide to do something, I will say yes, I will do it. I can't say no, I'm not feeling well today. Whatever I had I can't go home, I can schedule my life to be this time available to come here. Even for us who don't have school children, but for women who have school children, I say my God, I was one of these. How can I take my son or my daughter every day, every morning with all this? So, I am so proud of those ladies! [laughter]

Mei Ling from China – Gallery walk

I consulted with the women in the first cohort who confirmed that 12-weeks was the right length of time – long enough to cover the curriculum but not too long to prevent participation. The surplus of candidates for the EHCW program, which was well above

the number we could accept, demonstrated both the lack of employment programs available to women with lower levels of English, and recognition of the program as beneficial, even though preparing them for potentially precarious or low wage work. An approach to pedagogy and the curriculum where teacher talk, written texts, and content learning was made more accessible and comprehensible (Hellman et al., 2019, pp. 44–48) was identified as optimal for the EHCW program.

The staff from both PIRS and WCC had previously worked in various capacities with refugees and refugee claimants, which comprised approximately half of the students in each cohort. The *Community Outreach Worker* started building relationships with the women from the beginning. She promoted the program via posters and emails to multiple immigrant-serving organizations, community centres, and neighbourhood houses to reach those for whom the program was designed. She held information sessions to recruit women and selected those who would eventually be in the program. There were many more applicants than the 16 spaces available for each cohort. Unsuccessful applicants were provided with feedback on their application and information about other programs or options. Often applicants could not be accepted into the program because they did not meet the eligibility requirements. The *Community Outreach Worker* also described the physical requirements of the target jobs – we recommended that the women be prepared to work 8 hour shifts on their feet, have no previous back injuries, and be able to lift 15 kilograms. This description of physical condition was based on a scan of job postings for the types of positions the EHCW program was training for. She also provided orientation for the women, supported them with community connections for housing or government services, connected with guest speakers, and liaised with industry partners. Depending on the needs and capacities observed in each cohort, guest speakers were invited to share different types of information and knowledge with the women.

Prior to the start of the program, I had conversations with the core teacher and the vocational instructors about the needs and capabilities of the student demographic in EHCW. We discussed and reviewed approaches for working with students who may have experienced trauma, and provided pedagogical strategies for enhancing English language and literacy. I asked for the vocational instructors' curriculum beforehand, which is standardized, and gave that material to the core teacher about a month before the program started, so that she could review it, break it down into smaller chunks and

make it accessible. The EHCW program was designed so that the first four weeks were with the core teacher only, and she could work through the vocational content in a supported way, prior to the students meeting with the vocational instructors.

As WCC is a large, publicly funded institution, the students, accompanied by their vocational instructors, had access to professional kitchens and a mock hotel suite as facilities for experiential curricula. Through the program, participants also obtained FoodSafe Level 1 and WorldHost customer service certification, which are provincially recognized and highly desired qualifications in the sector. In addition to this vocational skill training, the program also offered job search support with résumé and cover-letter writing, and extensive role-rehearsal practice of interview skills.

Towards the end of the program, participants completed a two-week practicum at a hotel, residential-care home, or restaurant kitchen. In EHCW, the *Community Outreach Worker* sourced the practicum placements in discussion with the women. She identified residential care homes as workplaces with a high demand for hospitality workers as Housekeepers and in the kitchen as Dietary Aids. Over the five cohorts, it became clear that residential care homes were desirable workplaces for some of the women. These sites were preferable for several reasons: they were often located close to the women's homes as opposed to large hotels located near the airport or in downtown Vancouver, the clients in the residential care homes were stable so that relationships between them and the employees developed, senior care homes typically had calm and supportive atmospheres, and the worksites were often unionized. For some individuals, residential care homes met familial and cultural expectations about appropriate work environments for women. Also, while all the practicum placements involved physical labour, the residential care homes did not always require the same speed required by the hotels in bed-making and room cleaning, which had time pressures and demanding expectations due to quick guest turnover. It tended to be the younger, physically stronger women who preferred to seek employment in the large international hotel chains as the earnings could be higher with tips included.

A final key feature of this program was that childminding spaces were provided for women with children between 18 months and 5 years old, and the childminding area was physically located next to the primary classroom for the women. For the college, this was a new and innovative component of a program offering. At WCC, I had to work

closely with our facilities and security departments to ensure that we had an appropriate and safe space for the children, and for the multiple strollers and rain covers that needed to be stored each day. We had to purchase a refrigerator to store the fruit, vegetables, hummus, cheese, and other healthy snacks which we ordered weekly for the children and their mothers, and the room needed to be located near a water source and washroom. A higher level of cleaning standard was provided by WCC over the usual classroom cleanliness level, as the children and childminders were sitting on the carpeted floor. As a side note, I met multiple times with the cleaner who worked the evening shift about different issues, and she said she found extra joy and pride in cleaning the childminding room because it was different from the usual generic college classrooms and children were using it. At the end of each cohort, we made a giant thank-you card with children's art on it for her, for which she showed appreciation.

There were many new protocols we had to develop including an identification system for the children and childminders, drop off and pick up processes so that it was orderly and not disruptive for nearby classes in session, and emergency evacuation procedures. Figure 2.3 provides a glimpse of the colourful transformation of a large, but dull former office into a safe, and child-friendly space.



Figure 2.3. Childminding space at WCC

It is difficult and expensive for students who are parents to find childcare generally, and it is extremely difficult to find for a part-time or short term period. Most daycares have long waitlists and prioritize families who have ongoing needs for care, not for a short-term period only. As a solution to this barrier (and to reduce costs) we decided to locate childminding services on campus.

Childminding is a provincially legislated term and activity in BC, and is different from babysitting or daycare. Childminding is for children between 18 months and under 5 years. A parent must be onsite, but not in the childminding room, at all times, and there are specific ratios of early childhood educators to children. Childminding is also limited, by legislation, to three hours, which in turn determined the length of our EHCW classes to correspond. This proved to be ideal though, as a daily 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. schedule allowed the students with school aged children to prepare them for school and pick them up from school at the end of the day. In an interview conducted by one of the researchers in my inquiry community and later published in a journal article, the *Community Program Manager* explained,

Our staff [at PIRS], our childcare staff here, like they're professional early childhood educators and ... [the ECE worker] really helped [the women] with the parenting piece too! You know, like because [for] some of them it might be the first time that their child is in a childcare setting and to [make them] feel good about leaving their child there, and they ... are learning something.

Program Manager from PIRS (Shan et al., 2019, p. 13)

This support with parenting was an unanticipated learning outcome. In Chapter 7, I address how providing childminding not only enabled the women to attend the program, but also served to prepare the children and their mothers for Canadian childcare contexts, support family literacy and build the women's investment in their own learning.

2.4. The core teacher and her pedagogical approach

The same core teacher taught each of the five cohorts of EHCW. Along with the *Community Outreach Workers* and students, she prioritized building social relationships within each cohort. I define this pro-social approach in the EHCW context as the group being united while working towards their goal of learning about and finding employment, helping each other learn English and attending to the emotional needs of the group. The

first three to four weeks of each EHCW program were taught solely by the core teacher, before the vocational instructors from WCC began to provide classroom-based training and hands-on training using facilities at WCC. One of her goals for the early part of EHCW and all through the program, was to build social relationships and enhance the women's confidence level. Maria, the core teacher, described it this way:

It's so clear to me that the social piece is really, really important and we all try to do it in our classrooms, to create a climate that is conducive to learning, but it's become even more pronounced in my teaching... to create a group, to create the bonds between the group that helps to facilitate the learning. And that's really, really important, because when you come out of it, it is the group that brings you back in and sustains you when you're low.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

One of the learning activities that she did to build social relationships and pro-social behaviour was to develop community learning agreements with the students each cohort where they agreed as a group how they would be respectful and support each other. Typical guidelines would be things like: we check-in with each other to see if anyone needs help or support; we listen to each other respectfully; if someone misses class we will phone them and let them know what they missed. With Maria, the group would develop and review this community learning agreement over a few days, and once completed, it would be posted on the wall where each student would take a photo of it. As Judy, a student in Cohort 3, later said at the end of her program:

[On the first day...] when teacher say to present ourselves to the class one by one, I was just thinking in my mind ... what am I going to say and suddenly I saw on her face this contagious smiling! From then on I feel myself confident, because she make me feel that way.

Judy from Korea – Gallery walk

I observed that Maria validated the women's knowledge in class, creating what I thought was a respectful, relaxed and fun learning environment. She varied her learning activities, and alternated one-on-one time, peer work, small group work, and talking circles to enhance women's comfort in communicating with others. Maria had been trained as an EAL instructor, who organized her classes to focus on challenging workforce preparation content and language objectives; she integrated strategies for learning to communicate using English and developing literacy skills. For example, she described a peer-teaching strategy that she used:

So, if we had a few minutes here or there ... for example, okay, tell your partner about one thing that was maybe a little confusing for you, or maybe one of your weaker points, and then have your partner teach you about it. So, that became the learning of “this is where I’m stumped, this is where I’m not really sure,” and then the other person could teach it and then they’d learn from each other. And the process of telling each other about what this particular process or concept was about, it would really help them use and remember the vocabulary.

Maria – Core Teacher – Interview

Maria implemented learning activities which required team collaboration, problem-solving, and task planning which also replicated workplace communication in a classroom setting. The learning activities directly served the learning objectives, as well as the personal goals of each adult learner in her class.

In addition to her own classes, Maria was present in all the vocational training classes too. She would take notes and review texts. Her role was to support the students and the vocational instructors. When she and the students returned to her classroom, she wrote vocabulary on the whiteboard to explain meanings and review pronunciation. She would also provide teaching strategies and suggestions to the vocational instructors to modify their speech rate and word choice, pause more frequently, and avoid idiomatic language to increase comprehensibility for the students. She would suggest they incorporate language review into their teaching by writing key words on the board and keep an ongoing vocabulary list collated on flip chart pages to facilitate learning for the women.

Maria was a graduate student in counselling and a certified yoga instructor in addition to being a trained and experienced EAL teacher. This multi-faceted professional background was evident in her teaching. For example, one or two class sessions each cohort, she opened a space for the students to focus, not on caring for others such as children, partners, customers or clients which most of the women did regularly, but on caring for themselves. She invited the women to share their stories and ideas instead of presenting her own knowledge and practices of self-care. These sessions provided the women with an opportunity to articulate themselves in English—everyone had something to share—and a social space to connect with each other and reconnect with the self. There was laughter and tears as they described their experiences. Maria told me later that, even though *self-care* seemed an abstract concept and perhaps overly

individualistic, or from a Western cultural orientation, and that not all the women could immediately relate to it, she persisted and brought the concept forward in each cohort.

Due to her background and experience, and by drawing on the ideas that the women had offered, the core teacher brought to the program what she described as “the connection between mind, body and spirit.” Her views were non-secular, and she built-in physical and emotional wellness activities into the class. Throughout the 12 weeks of the program, time and space were made available for stretching, to share and build connections with each other, and lessons on physical self-care and safety such as how to lift heavy objects properly and how to stay relaxed. Correct lifting techniques and proper back-care was directly linked to the physically demanding job tasks the women were training for such as vacuuming, pushing housekeeping carts, moving laundry bins, and making beds at their practicum worksites. The women said they better understood later, following the practicum, the importance of the safety and self-care activities they had practiced in class. As one student appreciatively described,

We did a lot. Inhale, exhale. How to do mindfulness ... to take care of yourself ... exercise [laughter] ... wash your hands ... hospitality ... and healthy, you get like healthy things ... and snack time [laughter].

Esmeret from Eritrea – Gallery walk

In some of the hotels and residential care homes where the EHCW students had their practicum placements, the supervisor at the worksite would start the shift with breathing and stretching sessions too. In other placements, supervisors would provide strategies for protecting one’s back.

To help support their personal goals, Maria and the *Community Outreach Workers* knew the learners well. For example, they had information about the students’ families—in some cases, they knew their children too because they saw them in the childminding room every day. They also shared stories about themselves and their identities—all three had immigrated to Canada but had learned English as children. Maria spoke Spanish, the first *Community Outreach Worker* spoke Gujarati and some Arabic and the second *Community Outreach Worker* spoke Mandarin and some Cantonese. Sharing stories and facilitating intercultural learning helped to create a classroom culture in which the students were comfortable. At WCC, inter-culturalization is part of the institutional discourse and is listed as one of the institutional learning

outcomes. For WCC, this idea of interculturalism entails organizational and individual behavioural change to understand and interact effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts, support cross-cultural dialogue, and challenge self-segregation. It attempts to move past tolerance and the passive acceptance of diversity towards promoting engagement and dialogue with appropriate and effective interactions. I believe that we initiate cross-cultural dialogue and ultimately make deep connections through sharing our stories. These connections help us to understand our histories and shape our futures, and lead toward positive individual change.

2.5. EHCW Employment Outcomes

The employment outcomes for all five cohorts of EHCW were comparable. The following summary on employment outcomes covers the data gathered with Cohort 2 (Shan et al., 2019, pp. 10–11). All 16 women completed the program, and eight women obtained employment immediately following completion. Of the eight accepted job offers, four came from practicum hosts, three from employers who recruited from the EHCW program, and one through an online job search. Five of these positions were as Kitchen Helpers, two Dietary Aides in residential care homes, and one as a Housekeeper at a large Metro Vancouver hotel. Due to childcare, family, and constraints with social assistance, six out of the eight employed women from EHCW Cohort 2, accepted part-time roles with hourly wages ranging from \$12 to \$17/hour. Only one woman (one of two hired full-time) received health care benefits as a part of her work package.

The remaining eight women who completed the program did not directly enter the labour market immediately after completion. They related several reasons for not doing so ranging from lack of affordable childcare, challenges transitioning off social assistance (earning more than \$200 per week through employment results in a claw-back of social assistance), plans to focus on learning English, and opportunities to join other skills-training courses. Given the scarcity of employment training programs such as this available for newcomer women and the over-supply of those wanting to be selected for the EHCW program, almost all the applicants had stated that their goals were to seek employment immediately after completing the program when they applied to enter the program. In my experience and through conversations over time, it is likely that the women also had other goals and needs (e.g., seeking community connections, improving English, seeking entry into further study, enculturating into Canadian

employment practices, etc.) After completion of EHCW, one student from Cohort 2 took and successfully completed a Culinary Arts program which led to full-time employment. Interestingly, almost all the students indicated wanting to join the workforce in the future once they felt more able.

Over the five cohorts, we found that approximately half of the women secured employment at the end of each program, and about half did not. The reasons given were similar to those described above from Cohort 2. This employment rate is significantly lower than a typical government-funded, short-term training program WCC delivers where the employment results are typically above 85%. The lower employment rate for EHCW was anticipated as the students faced complex barriers to employment, but was also cause for some concern as we knew that our program funding was dependent on employment rates. In regular government funded employment programs, almost all the participants have a track record of employment in Canada because the eligibility requirement for being in the program is receipt of employment insurance (EI) funds, so they are looking to upgrade skills or train for a new sector. In EHCW, almost none of the women had experience in the Canadian workforce, and most of the participants had been out of the labour market for 5 years or more due to migration and family responsibilities. In each cohort about a third of the women had never participated in a formal labour market in any context. The EHCW program afforded an opportunity to explore their career readiness, and the impact of employment on their and their families' lives, to learn about other options, and to do a rudimentary cost-benefit analysis of their options in a structured environment with others. This career readiness exploration proved to be an important aspect of the program and likely would not have been revealed through typical standardized course evaluations forms. In Chapters 6 and 7 I elaborate on the learnings and positive outcomes other than immediate employment that the EHCW program provided for the women.

Three highly successful quantifiable program outcomes that were reported to the funder but were arguably less valued than employment, and which attest to the commitment of the women and the staff, were attendance, lack of attrition and high pass rates. Of the 81 students (four cohorts of 16 students and one of 17), we had only three students not complete—two because of illness (in both cases mental health issues related to the trauma of migration), and one because of a child's illness. Attendance rates were above 87% for all five cohorts. There were several participants in each cohort

who never missed a class. This is a very high rate, and is likely partly attributable to having onsite childminding available. The EHCW program was comprised of several courses, and students were graded (successful or unsuccessful) on each course. It was a requirement to complete the practicum to complete the whole program successfully. We had only one student who was not able to complete the practicum component of the program due to pregnancy and her decision to not engage in heavy labour. Collaboratively, the core teacher, myself and the student, devised an experiential alternative. The student completed a worksite observation in several sites at the college where there are multiple industrial kitchens and retail food outlets open to the public. She prepared a reflective project and presented it to the other students so that she successfully completed the program. We had anticipated much lower attendance and retention. These extraordinarily low attrition rates and high attendance and pass rates were a key reason for this inquiry to better understand the students' experience of and investment in the EHCW program.

2.6. Rationale for my inquiry: Analysis of an institutionally based document

This type of employment programming for women immigrants and refugees holds immense potential for complex, holistic learning. Providing English language and critical literacy instruction (Janks, 2013; Lau, 2013; Lin, 2014; Luke, 2013), and consciously creating an environment for positive identity formation (Norton, 2000) were other learning outcomes we sought to integrate in EHCW. These holistic outcomes are often not captured or articulated through the methods commonly used for measuring or evaluating employment training outcomes. Typically, at the end of a course or program at the college, a standardized course evaluation survey consisting of multiple questions and a Likert scale for response is distributed to students to provide feedback anonymously. As mentioned earlier, this type of employment program is solely assessed by the funder based on the percentage of students employed following program completion. I have long felt that this type of measurement is entirely inadequate for making visible the stories, the struggles, the sense of belonging, and the hopes and dreams that employment programs also generate.

The challenges and successes in our program may also have significant impacts on employment and career development over the longer term, but we were not required

to measure these impacts through our government-required, predominantly quantitative reporting processes. A narrative report is required by the funder, but given its secondary importance to the employment statistics, the data gathering processes are often ad hoc or anecdotal. The following questions arise: Which qualitative evaluation methods might be used to understand the richness and complexity inherent within such a program? And how can this knowledge be folded into future programs? This motivation to increase participants' investment in learning, improve the EHCW program and develop my own practice drives my research: How can I, as a practitioner-researcher using an arts-informed approach, gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of a program?

When I initially decided that my doctoral research would focus on the EHCW program, I collected and reviewed relevant institutionally based documents (some of which I had written) and materials such as the program proposal, program schedule, curricular materials, syllabi, policies and procedures, the course evaluation form, the practicum observation checklist, and the student work, classroom posters, and textual displays to which I had access. I did a selective analysis of these institutionally based documents and materials to contrast the dominant practices in vocational training programs with the practices that we were developing in our reimagined program model for refugee and immigrant women. The detailed textual analysis of the course evaluation form (see Appendix B) is my starting point as a practitioner-researcher to exploring alternative forms of program evaluation. These forms enact powerful discourses in our institutions and can influence what counts as teaching and learning, the hiring of faculty, and decisions about the fate of programs.

Discourse analysis is a broad collection of methods for studying language in action and looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used. Discourse analysis is often used with concrete texts or institutional social practices, but generally focuses on analyzing language phenomena occurring above the sentence level. As a novice in the practice of textual analysis, I took the opportunity with one of my doctoral course assignments to critically consider a document I use in my professional practice. I did not consider a broad range of approaches to discourse analysis, as my intent was not to become expert in discourse analysis. My goal as a practitioner-researcher was to deeply consider and critically reflect on one authentic document with which I work, that has been problematic for me as a practitioner. I wanted to explore my

resistance to the mandated use of this document, and to understand its place in the EHCW program.

My intention in doing this analysis was likewise not to provide an in-depth analysis of the design, use, ethics, or efficacy of course evaluation forms. The academic literature critiquing course evaluation forms is extensive. According to Hornstein (2017) and Steyn et al. (2019), the inadequacies of these types of instruments are numerous, they

- have validity and reliability problems,
- do not legitimately assess teaching competence,
- do not measure what they say they measure as there is not consensus on what effective teaching is,
- often have multiple biases (e.g., gender, race, cultural, etc.), and
- may not provide information useful to improve the design and delivery of the course.

My primary purpose in undertaking this analysis was to gain some training with textual analysis as a novice researcher, to explore the appropriateness of the course evaluation for use in evaluating EHCW, and to provide a rationale for considering alternative forms of program evaluation. Based on decades of experience in my educational practice using similar types of forms, I hypothesized that the document that I selected (the course evaluation form) would not be useable in its intended mode with this group of learners in this specific context—the students in the EHCW program. Steyn et al. (2019), when summarizing the research on course evaluation forms, conclude,

The majority of course evaluations take the form of quantitative surveys, but research suggests that a reliance on survey data alone can be problematic from a teaching and learning perspective. Qualitative course evaluations have been cited as a viable alternative to quantitative evaluations, but less research has been conducted into their efficacy when compared to quantitative evaluations. (p. 1)

My professional experience, a reading of summarized research on course evaluation forms, and encouragement from one of my professors, led to my textual analysis. I was guided by one of my professors, Dr. Angel Lin, to consider the early work of Peter Freebody (1992). Freebody outlines four components of successful reading based on his perceptions of what our culture expects. He uses the metaphor of “role” to

describe these components, and focuses on the learned aspects of the social role as a reader. I use his metaphors of four related roles (code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst) to ask questions of and analyze an institutionally based document—a course evaluation form (see Appendix B) from my workplace. To do this, I prepared a series of questions based on these four roles (see Appendix C), which I used to interrogate the text. These questions served as a means to methodically consider the text.

First, I considered how the text is used. The reader (and responder) of the course evaluation form is expected to engage with it in what the authors of the document imagine to be a straightforward way by: filling in the information at the top of the page, briefly reflecting on the course they have just completed, circling the numbers beside the statements that best describe their opinions, and filling in the information at the bottom. However, this interaction is not straightforward, and the document concretizes a power relationship. The text objectifies the lived experience of those in the program by prescribing an institutional view using standard statements, an inflexible format, and a numerical rating system. For example, as depicted in Figure 2.4, only three choices are provided to summarize opinions about the course.

I thought this course was:						
1. Well organized	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Sufficient in terms of length.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Clear in its objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Figure 2.4. Excerpt #1 from the course evaluation form

In Chapters 6 and 7 I analyze the women’s stories about their experience of the EHCW program, which I gathered through my arts-informed workshops. Many described the strengthening of social relationships—pro-sociality—which was encouraged and built through the program. For example, in EHCW Cohort 3, Angie from the Philippines said, “In this course we share our life to each other.... We are very supporting to everyone.... We are one family.” There is no space in the statements, format or rating system on the course evaluation form to invite this kind of personal reflection. The text asserts a particular view and experience of a course through its limiting structure.

As a program manager, I ask instructors in programs to use course evaluation forms to collect information at the end of a course or program. Typically, this process is done on the last day of class before the students receive their marks and before an end-of-class celebration. The timing of this is not explicitly described in the document; however, the timing and delivery of using course evaluation forms have become an accepted, ritualized, organizational practice. The established process for using the course evaluation form, in the wide variety of programs at WCC, is as follows:

1. The instructor identifies a “lead” student who will be responsible for the course evaluation forms and explains the process to the whole class.
2. The instructor gives all the forms to the lead student and asks them to distribute one form to each student in the class.
3. The lead student also fills in their form and gives time (usually no more than 10 minutes) to all the students in the class to fill in their forms. Typically, the students do not talk to each other during this process.
4. As each student completes their form, they give it to the lead student, who collects the forms and puts them into an envelope.
5. The lead student then signs their name over the sealed flap of the envelope and is responsible for returning the sealed envelope to the administrative office.

The process is set up this way so that the instructor can leave the room while the students are filling in the course evaluation forms, thus providing anonymity.

This course evaluation form (see Appendix B) was in use at my workplace across programs in the Lifelong Learning Department (LLD) when I was doing my research in EHCW. There is no authorship indicated on the document, and I do not know who wrote/crafted this text. However, from the prominent display of the institution’s logo, the document is presented as authoritative. The file name at the bottom of the document indicates that it dates from 2012. I expect that a committee drafted this form—probably consisting of administrators, instructors or coordinators from different program areas in LLD, and possibly staff from the administrative area who have the responsibility of collating the collected data. It likely went through several drafts and may have been piloted, with comments and feedback requested, and then reviewed by the committee again. I surmise that the committee or team who wrote it were likely in alignment with the

stated objective—to collect feedback or input. What I cannot surmise is the ideological positioning of the committee and how this impacted the design of it.

The imagined audience for this text consists of students in LLD courses. At WCC this can range from students doing a three-hour culinary workshop on Italian cooking, to students taking multiple courses in a 2-year part-time for-credit certificate program in Early Childhood Care and Education, or a full-time Fashion Design diploma. The level of topic knowledge required to read this document is somewhat specialized; there is terminology such as course objectives, instructional tools, and student testimonials, that is specific to educators or to those enculturated in post-secondary institutions. Overall, the kind of person who could unproblematically and acceptingly understand such a text is likely a student with an extensive background in school systems where this type of document is used, who has a relatively high level of literacy and English language, and who has completed similar types of surveys or evaluation forms before.

For the first-time reader/user, even if literacy or English language were not a barrier, some contextual explanation such as an overview of the genre of course evaluation forms and a description of their purpose would be necessary. The reading skills required to engage with this text successfully are significant. The easily found readability measure in the Microsoft Word program rates this text as “fairly difficult” (at the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level = 7.1) which confirms that this document is not written in plain language. Following the typical, time-limited, ritualized process for using this form, the linguistic features of the text would not be easily accessible for the students in the EHCW program. I can envision them needing to speak to each other and read aloud segments, and using their phones and electronic dictionaries to translate at the word level. The time constraints would not permit the students to engage with the text fully, or limit students to passive language-learning strategies such as reading and writing to find the “correct” answer or “ignoring” linguistic features. For example, there is no explanation on the form of what N/A means (see Figure 2.4 above), thus I suggest that readers might ignore this column.

Some of the features of the text seem to enable what Luke and Freebody (1999) describe as code breaking. For example, the amount of text is limited, which might ordinarily provide accessibility. I suggest, though, that because the amount of text is typical for the genre, an understanding of the context and genre outweighs word- or

sentence-level meaning. Over the years, I have seen filled-in evaluation forms where the reader (who presumably was satisfied with the course) has circled “1 – strongly disagree” for statements #1 to #14 and then ticked “yes” to #15 (see Figure 2.5) and written a positive comment at the bottom. This indicates to me that the reader understood the genre, but perhaps de-emphasized the word-/sentence-level meaning through haste, confusion over the rating scale, or overgeneralization based on experience with similar forms.

15. Would you recommend this course to others?
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Figure 2.5. Excerpt #2 from the course evaluation form

Due to predicted challenges with reading and with the process for using it, the core teacher and I chose not to distribute the course evaluation form at the end of the program. We felt that challenges for the students engaging with this text may have had an affective consequence of confusion, frustration, or self-blame, leading to disengagement. Throughout the previous 12 weeks in the first cohort of the EHCW program, the curricular and pedagogical model reflected a positive, appreciative and caring attitude toward the students. The design of the program positioned learners as autonomous and competent. With careful language scaffolds and guided support, use of first language in small study groups, as well as classroom activities and conditions that facilitated open and critical discussions of real student concerns, the women had successfully mastered cognitively challenging literacy work. For example, they had worked together, studied, and passed the test, in English, to receive a provincial credential (FoodSafe) that is required to work in food-service outlets.

Given the established, ritualized process for using course evaluation forms that I outlined earlier, the reader is expected to complete with the evaluation form in isolation, and with limited context about the genre provided. Working with this text is culturally dependent and not as straightforward as its authors assume. Bourdieu (1991) writes about the privilege that is accorded to the legitimate use of language and the social foundations of this privilege, particularly in the educational market. He states, “All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, i.e., the practices of those who are dominant” (p. 54). He further notes while linguists have focused on descriptions of linguistic difference regarding pronunciation, diction, and grammar,

sociologists look at the social implications of these distinctions. As students who are not privileged with a legitimate use of language, engaging with this text would likely have been frustrating for the EHCW students, and contrary to the pedagogic approach the instructor used.

The three stated goals for this document are: to gather input as we strive to meet your expectations and provide a high-quality experience, to give feedback to instructors so that they too can benefit from your input, and to collect testimonials for marketing purposes. The interior meaning is that the data collected through this document will be put to constructive use: to revise and improve courses, for instructors to reflect on the comments from students and improve their practice, and for positive comments to be used for marketing purposes. The literal interpretation of the information being asked for in the course evaluation form sends the message: You, as a student, are valued and empowered here to provide your thoughts and ideas to collaborate with us to build a better course.

However, it is a mistake to treat a text as transparent. I suggest that specialized forms such as this primarily serve an administrative function. Many argue that the standardized statements and consistent format, can be used efficiently, equitably, and rationally with most student groups and across program areas. They claim that the data received can be easily compared among different students, teachers, and cohorts, and across time. I expect that these types of forms remain persistently popular partly because of the ease of collecting and collating the data, particularly when done electronically, and because, paradoxically, they appear to provide objective quantitative data, when they collect opinions within a narrow, prescribed set of parameters. However, others (Hornstein, 2017; Steyn et al., 2019) summarize that these types of forms are not equitable and often have multiple biases (e.g., gender, race, cultural, etc.). Filling in this course evaluation form is not a neutral undertaking, but one in which organizational practice and a variety of taken-for-granted assumptions are brought into the interaction.

Our lives are embedded in what Darville (as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2008) calls “organizational literacy” (p. 12). This is defined as the way that large organizations employ written materials of all kinds to get their work done. Darville’s (1995) concept stems from his work in institutional ethnography. My perspective as a literacy practitioner working with adult immigrants is that those who have low levels of English literacy are

disadvantaged in urban, contemporary Canada. This is not to imply that they are deficient, as they have extensive prior knowledge and abundant linguistic and cultural resources to draw on, but it is a recognition that they are generally located as outsiders to organizational literacy. The course evaluation form is an organizational procedure for making certain aspects of an educational course visible, but also for exercising organizational power. Far from being in the service of the student and the teacher, as the form states, the text is in the service of the organization. By using this specialized text, we (the students, the teacher, the program manager) are complicit in constructing a standardized and limited version of the classroom. The text focuses and organizes our interest toward certain information. For example, there seems to be an over-emphasis on the instructor being timely and well-organized. Five out of a total of 14 statements refer to this (#1, #8, #10, #11, #13). What does this mean for teachers? Is this a message about what is valued in the institution? If the activities or work that they do in the classroom are not represented on this form, are they either not valued or not attributed as valuable?

Systematized information-gathering texts such as this course evaluation form are a mainstay in educational administration, and can serve a purpose. Text-based strategies are put in place to improve organizational efficiency. Practitioners know that teaching is complicated and messy, but an institutional form such as this lists teachers' work as tasks that can be defined and limited (e.g., "used helpful instructional tools" or "set useful and appropriate assignments"). However, due to its standardization, a form cannot capture the multiplicity of activities and richness of learning experiences that occur in a classroom. This standardized form funnels the student experience into a set of descriptors which are prescribed. The text-mediated process subordinates the student's, teacher's, and program manager's interests to those of the organization.

As I have shown, this text has stated administrative purposes and unstated purposes. When students read a form such as this, and teachers read the "filled-in" forms, they view the practice of teaching in an organizationally driven way. They may begin to think about the classroom environment in the terms that they are given on the form. It draws students into the dominant practices of post-secondary educational culture, and likewise, the text draws instructors in as complicit agents. For example, a teacher may intentionally create and value a pedagogy of care in his or her practice (see Section 3.6: *Care-based pedagogy* for further discussion), but this aspect of pedagogy is

not represented in the course evaluation form. A student may feel supported by that ethic of care in the classroom, but is not likely to report that because it is not addressed in the course evaluation form. Is it not valued by the organization? My analysis suggests that the priorities or ideology of the organization may be different from those of the student, the teacher, or the program manager, and the text reflects the structure and relationship as administrative power.

Finally, I surmise that the request to use the collected information for marketing purposes is the most authentic goal for the document. Commodification of the requested information about courses where students are treated as consumers is evident. This is clearest in the statements about the course in which the attributes of organization, length, and clarity of objectives are the only three suggested. Figure 2.5 presents the final statement on the form.

If you are willing to have your name and comments appear in our marketing material, please print your name and sign here.

Figure 2.5. Excerpt #3 from the course evaluation form

WCC along with most other post-secondary institutions often use student testimonials for marketing purposes. The format of this text relates to similar genres or cultural discourses often found in commerce—for example, a hotel questionnaire sent electronically after a stay, or a quality assurance telephone survey done at the end of a conversation with an airline company after a traveller is making changes to tickets. The inferential interpretation sends the following message: We need information from you, as a consumer, to create a better product and help us market the product better.

In my position as program manager, using this course evaluation form with students who have low levels of English language and literacy poses an ethical dilemma. My ethos as an educator values supporting adult literacy students towards making sense of their everyday lives, and yet my analysis of this document demonstrates that its primary purpose is to meet an organizational mandate. With such a text-based strategy in place, the organization may feel justified that “students were consulted” and the “program evaluation was done,” thereby effectively reducing or eliminating the need to reflect, have authentic discussions between students and teachers, or to examine the

program in depth, and the extent to which it addresses the needs and capacities of the students and the community.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I described an overview of the EHCW program context, the inception of the program, and the needs and capacities of the students that the program sought to address. I have outlined the specifics about the program and some of the considerations that we implemented in the design of the program. I created a chart that contrasted EHCW with conventional vocational programming to show how the EHCW program was reimagined to meet holistic needs. Program outcomes for participants such as stronger English language and literacy skills, increased self-confidence, stronger social relationships, parenting skills, conflict-management skills, knowledge of Canadian employment law and workers' rights, and workplace safety were embedded. I described that the funder requires measurement of the employment outcomes that were achieved through the EHCW program, but there was limited space to explore the pedagogical and practical potentials for the learners' social transformation within the curriculum. As a practitioner–researcher, this possibility for transformation inspired my inquiry.

Based on many years of experience in my professional practice at WCC, I was aware that one of the documents in regular use is the course evaluation form (see Appendix B). I analyzed the document, and demonstrated its inappropriateness for data-gathering with low level English language and literacy students such as those in the EHCW program. Filling in forms is more than a technical task. The shortcomings of this quantitative course evaluation approach inspired me to seek alternative qualitative evaluation methods which may have the potential to overcome these shortcomings. In this doctoral journey, I describe my practitioner inquiry with an arts-informed program evaluation approach to better understand the EHCW program. This approach is a starting point to enable reflection, authentic discussions between students and teachers, examination of the program in depth, and the extent to which it addresses the needs and capacities of the students and the community.

Chapter 3.

Framing my Inquiry – Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1: *Situating my practice and research*, I introduced my practitioner inquiry by describing the related professional context of my work and research. I located myself and described my role as a practitioner-researcher, and outlined my doctoral journey. In Chapter 2: *Background*, I provided an overview of employment programs for newcomer women in Canada, and described in detail the EHCW program, which is the site of my inquiry. I showed how the EHCW program is a holistic reimagining of conventional vocational training. I analyzed a workplace document and demonstrated the inappropriateness of a course evaluation form for formative program evaluation. This analysis provided a rationale for exploring alternative ways to evaluate the program.

In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry- Literature review*, I provide an overview of the praxis and theoretical framework that I use to explore and come to a deeper understanding of both my own practitioner-researcher experience and the women's experiences in an employment training program. These theoretical foundations are situated within a qualitative research paradigm. In my professional work and my emerging scholarship, I allow theory and practice to inform each other. As the time-worn saying goes—there is nothing as practical as a good theory, and nothing as theoretical as good practice. Figure 3.1: *Mind-map – Guiding my inquiry* below illustrates my conceptualization of the nexus between praxis and theory in the contexts of my research.

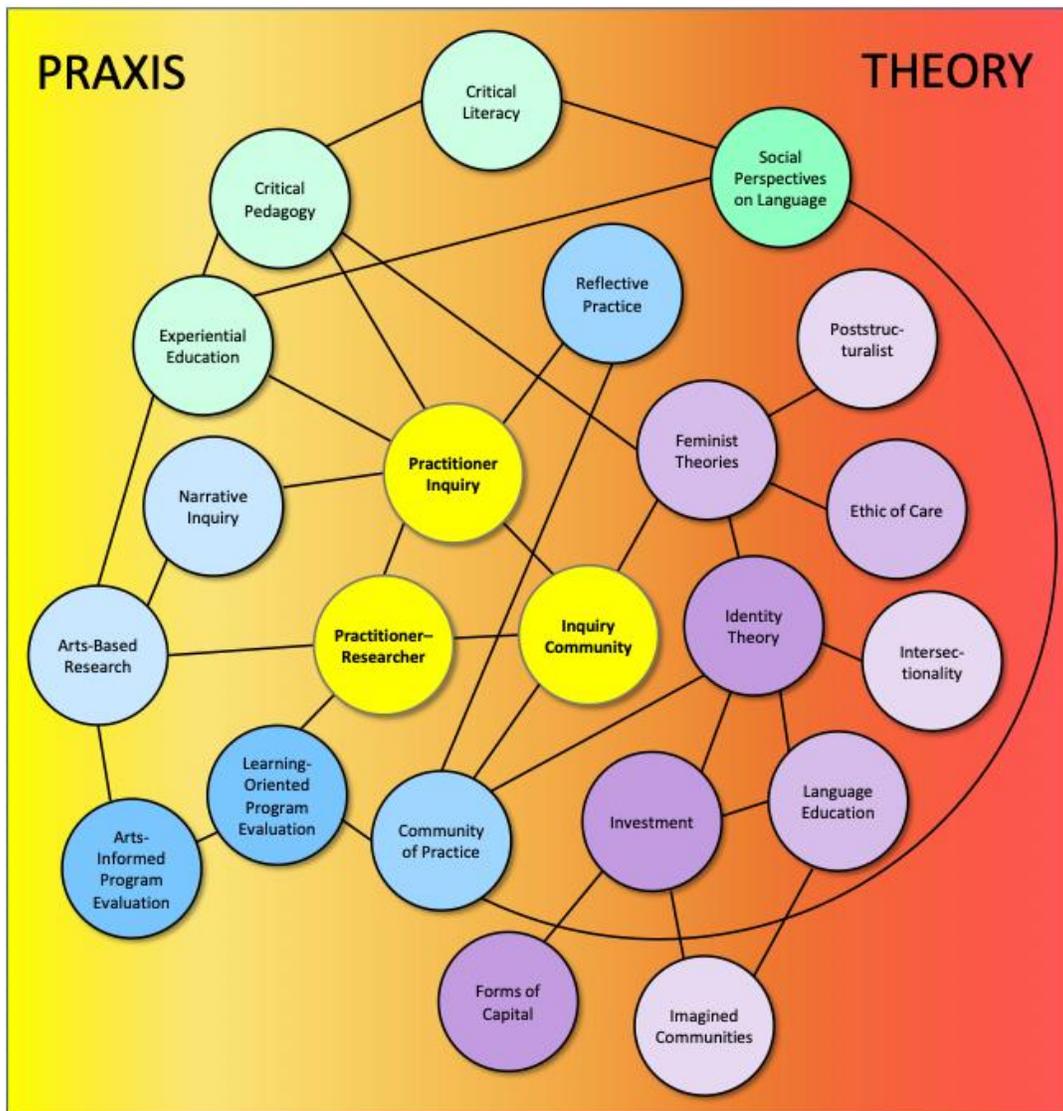


Figure 3.1. Mind-map – Guiding my inquiry

This mind-map provides an overview of the key terms and concepts in relation to the theories and practices that guide my inquiry. I provide the mind-map in Figure 3.1 as a guide to my literature review, as my approach to practitioner inquiry is not linear. I connect the terms with lines to illustrate some of the conceptual relationships, for example among learner identities, language education and investment, and imagined communities. I use intensity of colour to indicate the depth of influence. The darker the colour the greater the contribution. I have loosely grouped the terms and concepts into three broad interconnected categories: methodological (blue), philosophical (green) and theoretical (purple), and my thinking moves among these. I have listed *praxis* on the left side and *theory* on the right side, but in doing so I am not suggesting a binary; the two

drivers of my analysis work together as a DNA strand, intersecting in key places. In an attempt to show this intertwining, I have used a background colour gradient—yellow and red intermingling to orange at the nexus—to visually represent this interconnectedness and interdependence of praxis and theory. It is at the nexus between praxis and theory where I explore and come to a deeper understanding of both my own practitioner-researcher experience and the participants' experiences in an employment training program for women with immigrant and refugee experience.

In the mind-map above, I centre practitioner inquiry. As a qualitative researcher, I am part of the research. I am a practitioner-researcher inquiring into one of the programs that I manage where I also do my individual research. The EHCW program is the site of my inquiry. However, my practitioner inquiry is not done in isolation; I question alongside others—the students in the program, the teachers, staff—in a collaborative, participatory process, and with other researchers as part of an inquiry community. The use of colour yellow indicates the centrality of these modes of inquiry to my work.

I use blue to illustrate the defining qualitative research paradigm: the blurring and overlapping of individual and participatory knowledge building in a particular context. I describe a part of my professional practice as a learning-oriented program evaluation. The purpose of this program evaluation is to explore, articulate and extend the understanding of EHCW, for myself and others. Knowledge about teaching and learning is not purely objective; practitioners interpret knowledge and apply it in ways that are influenced by our values and interests. My epistemology and scholarly disposition value practitioner experience and reflection. Using qualitative methods allows me to explore and thereby gain a deeper understanding of my practice and the role arts-based research plays in making program evaluation a more meaningful process. For me, participatory research and evaluation is an orientation that shares characteristics with the creative processes involved in arts-based research.

I identify and define arts-informed program evaluation as a subset of learning-oriented program evaluation and branch of arts-based research. Arts-informed program evaluation is the key research method I use to understand how to improve the EHCW program for myself, the staff, program participants, and by extension, the program funders. In this dissertation, the following is central to my broader research question: How can arts-informed processes invite those with low levels of literacy and language to

establish a trusting and authentic relationship contributing to the improvement of a program? Several researchers have claimed that general arts-based research is a direct descendant of narrative inquiry or storytelling. I value and use storytelling in this dissertation as a way of learning and an expression of it for both myself, my co-researchers and the participants in my program. If I am asking others to make art or tell their stories, I need to also do so to build trust and relationship.

In my practitioner inquiry, using art is intrinsically linked to a critical reflective practice. In the mind-map I indicate these linkages. Art can both illustrate practice, and generate thoughts on practice. Arts-based approaches critically challenge conventional approaches to program evaluation. In this practitioner inquiry, critical reflection is done individually and as part of my inquiry community, where I worked alongside others in a community of practice (CoP). Practitioner–researchers have a dynamic relationship with knowledge, as ideas about practice depend on the context, must be interrogated and change over time.

I draw attention to my work on the philosophy of education on my mind-map with the colour green. Philosophically, I align my practice and emerging research with an aspiration for social equity, and as a site for potential social transformation. For those educators who focus on language as a system, adult literacy refers primarily to teaching those who have not learned to read and write to do so. While literacy learning and language learning are different, in my praxis I approach teaching literacy and English language as inter-related because of the learning needs demonstrated among the EHCW participants. English is not their first language. I believe that literacy is both a social construct (made by human beings) and a social practice (carried out by human beings). Literacy in this context is broader than reading and writing, but also refers to digital, financial, informational, family literacies and more. This social perspective on language and literacy maintains that researchers need to concern themselves not only with language learning as an individual and primarily cognitive process, but also within broader historical, political and ideological contexts. In this view, language and literacy learning is never neutral. Critical literacy and critical pedagogy are interconnected in my research and praxis through feminist theory and language education (see further discussion of language and literacy in Section 3.7). Critical literacy pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Janks, 2013; Lau, 2013; Lin, 2014; Luke, 2013) aims to reveal social inequalities,

and guide adult literacy students towards making sense of the reality of their everyday lives. As Freire (1970) states in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (p. 69)

To come to know reality, adult literacy students do this through making sense of and creating texts. My educational philosophy also prioritizes experiential education and learning through doing. I am influenced by John Dewey's (1958) thought on learning through experience and his belief that artistic creativity is a means of both doing and comprehending experience. Art is not just a matter of representing an experience, it is more a grasping of the whole experience itself—a more complete and intensified experience (Dewey, 1958, p. 45). I believe that much experience, learning and embodied knowledge is gained through working with our hands and bodies. This connection between arts-based research and experiential education is realized through my arts-informed program evaluation activities such as the collage-making workshops.

I use the colour purple to highlight some of the key theories that I use as a lens to analyze the stories the women participants in the program tell based on the collages they made. Some of these theoretical concepts also provide insight on the EHCW program, and how I conceptualized it. I needed to locate my inquiry in an understanding of broader historical, political and ideological contexts. Following some introductory reading in feminist theories (such as Nel Noddings, bell hooks, and Chris Weedon), I became increasingly engaged with their ideas and their application to my practice. Noddings' theorization of an ethic of care compelled me to foreground the lived experience of the research participants and to make a critical commitment to reimagining the program to meet their holistic needs and capacities. In the mind-map, I show my indebtedness to bell hooks' reading of Paulo Freire's work on critical pedagogy. I can trace the linkages from critical pedagogy, through feminist theory, to an ethic or pedagogy of care. Freire (1970) reminds us that "it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love" (p. 3).

bell hooks also looks at intersectionality where, for example, race or gender cannot be studied in isolation from other markers of identity such as ethnicity, sexuality,

age, nationality or social class. For many, intersectionality implies multiple oppressions and an inability to separate markers of identity. There is a criticism of single-issue movements that conceal and marginalise these various standpoints and struggles. Intersectionality is not only about analysing how aspects of a person's identities might combine to create unique experiences of discrimination but also of concurrent privilege, and the ambiguities that such contradictions might entail. Cho et al. (2013) ask us to build on or adapt intersectionality to specific contexts, including, as an example that is relevant to my practitioner research, analyzing the multiple ways that race and gender interact with class in the labour market. Further, they maintain that intersectionality is not just an academic pursuit but that "praxis has been a key site of intersectional critique and intervention" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 786). Generally, the intersections of relevance to the participants in EHCW students are gender, ethnicity, migration status, education, and social class.

Identity theory is a construct for social scientists who subscribe to a generally poststructuralist view of the world, and has been influential in language education for the past three decades or so. A poststructuralist approach to studies in the social sciences challenges clear boundaries, social stability, and biological determinism. Poststructuralist perspectives of identity as derived from the work of Weedon (1997) implies fluidity and intersectionality, as presented in Section 1.1, where I discussed my positionality. I draw from the work of these theorists and others to describe the impact of identity theory on language and literacy education generally, and on the EHCW program specifically.

Later in this dissertation, I describe language learning as a way to acquire social capital. Bourdieu's metaphor of capital as the resources one has in relation to others that contribute, or not, to one's power and authority in society, is central in my analysis of the participants' experience of the EHCW program. I use the concept of investment, central to Norton's work (1997, 2013; see also Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton Pierce, 1995) in language education, to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalence to learning and using it. I look at the concept of investment in greater detail in Section 3.8 of this literature review, and also make linkages between student identity and investment in language learning in Chapter 7 as part of my data analysis. In Chapter 7, I contrast investment with motivation, which was traditionally viewed as an ahistorical, fixed, personality trait of an individual learner. I see investment, and imagined communities and imagined futures

as key concepts which can compel learners to act or not act. In my mind-map I highlight the connections between how a person envisions possibilities for the future and their future community, and how these future imaginings intersect with the histories, experiences, and relationship to the acquisition of language and workplace skills through investment and identity. These notions become central to my work for engaging the women in employment training and for analyzing their experiences of the EHCW program.

My mind-map shows my practitioner inquiry as an imbrication of theory and praxis. There is more to practitioner knowledge than the application of abstract theory. There is the need for skills, sensitivities and capacity to engage in practical activity. The exploration and blending of the theoretical and the praxis that I describe, specifically in collaboration with others, provide the possibilities for creative and reflective learning and potential transformation of an employment program for migrant women.

3.2. Practitioner inquiry and guiding principles

In *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) describe some of the ways that practitioner inquiry has surfaced in the academic literature on education, has informed teacher education and has influenced doctoral dissertations. They posit that practitioner inquiry seeks to “work out research agendas that involve practitioners in equitable roles and relationships and that aim to influence practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 31). Practitioner inquiry ideally seeks to enhance democratic participation, disrupt boundaries between the traditional roles of “teachers” and “students”—empowering them all as agents of change—and locates educational issues within broader social and political contexts. Practitioner inquiry demands a reflective practice. How can we look at our practice and ask questions of it? Critical reflection, as described by Steven Brookfield (2010) is “grounded in a set of values concerning what kind of learning and education is inherently most valuable” (p. 216). Furthermore, Brookfield states, “Critical reflection often involves the experience of questioning, and then replacing or reframing, an assumption that is unquestioningly accepted as representing dominant common sense by a majority” (p. 220). For example, I could not continue the commonplace practice of using a standardized course evaluation form with this group of students after critically questioning and analyzing it. Through my research and working together with those

involved in the program, I see patterns and notice learnings that interrogate my professional context and contribute to reimagining a conventional vocational program for women with immigrant and refugee experience. Practitioner inquiry is a method of pursuing self-directed questions related to scholarly reading and my own professional practice. In this sense, practitioner inquiry focuses on both self and others in relation to practice—practice is thus the “unit of analysis.”

By sharing my scholarship publicly, I contribute to and broaden the research and analysis practices in a community college setting. Opportunities to share my scholarship, in terms of the possible outcomes of my research and how/where it might be mobilized, may arise as I continue with this doctoral work and with my research practice. I cannot predict what impacts, if any, my research may have on the institution or its policy. Pilkington (2009) found that for her doctoral students in education, “organizational transformation seems a distant aspiration, particularly at an early stage in the research process” (p. 167). However, in her research, Pilkington also reported doctoral student increases in self-confidence and in developing new networks that crossed academic and practitioner boundaries, which proved key to achieving practitioner-researcher goals.

Throughout my practitioner inquiry, I have crossed academic and practitioner boundaries, developed new networks, and increased my self-confidence. As I have grappled with problems and wrestled with ideas, sometimes unconsciously, while doing tangible work, I have learned and continue to learn. As a program manager, I want to support and provide opportunities for this kind of experiential learning for the staff I work with and, by extension, our students. If I am asking others to make art or tell their stories, I need to also do so with them to build trust and a relationship. There is vulnerability required to do this both on my part and on my students’ part. We need to embody the process together to capture the learning, which leads me to establish some guiding principles.

The guiding principles I adopt in my practitioner inquiry are:

- People have stories, tell stories, and learn from stories (Cajete, 2005; Chambers et al., 2008; Quintero, 2009).
- The value of a program for the participants in it is shaped dialogically (Freire, 1970; Patton, 2015; Quintero, 2009; Searle, 2013).

- Realities are constructed within social-relational processes, for example through language and literacies (Bourdieu, 1977; Brinkmann, 2013; Freire, 1970; Luke, 2013; Norton, 1995; Pennycook, 2010; Quintero, 2009).
- Language, discourses and texts are central to research analysis (Block, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991; Norton Pierce, 1995; Weedon, 1997).
- The need for revisions, alterations or re-imaginings of an educational program are best determined by those most closely involved, and not by an external researcher or evaluator (Dahler-Larsen, 2009; Patton, 2015; Quintero, 2009).
- Practitioners, and others involved, should engage in deliberative dialogue about their practice, the meaning of it and changes that are needed (Brookfield, 1995, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Patton, 2015; Searle, 2013).
- Although one group should not take precedence over another in dialogue, the voice of those marginalized or oppressed within intersectional relations (in this inquiry, the unemployed, racialized, women students) should be foregrounded (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Norton Pierce, 1995; Patton, 2015).
- Ideally, the end-users (e.g., teachers, participants, etc.) should be legitimate partners in the curriculum design or revision process (Dahler-Larsen, 2009; Patton, 2015; Quintero, 2009).

These guiding principles evolved and became better buttressed by references to the work of other researchers throughout my doctoral journey. However, at this point in the journey, when evaluating different routes or paths, I continue to look for signposts, and to integrate these guiding principles as a practitioner-researcher.

3.3. Learning-oriented program evaluation

In my experience, traditional notions of program evaluation stem from an accountability perspective and a decontextualized view of learning. Traditional program evaluation involves bringing in a third-party evaluator, someone who is presented as neutral and objective about the program and expert in evaluation, to observe and collect data and then compare or measure it against some prescribed standards. The information is then transmitted to those stakeholders in the program with the intention that the program stakeholders then learn from the information and implement recommendations as strictly as possible to improve the program. The kinds of terminology used in this worldview (accountability, measure, transmit, implement, implementation fidelity, etc.) show its instrumental orientation. This view of learning sees

evaluation primarily as an act of knowledge acquisition by individuals; both for the evaluators and for those involved in delivering the program. The phases in this type of traditional program evaluation are stepped and disconnected: the evaluation is conducted, the report is written, the information is imparted, and the knowledge is acquired.

Those who view practitioner learning differently—those who see knowledge as being co-constructed and shared relationally rather than residing specifically within individuals—are part of a different paradigmatic worldview. Cochran Smith and Lytle (2009) describe it this way: “all of the participants in inquiry communities are regarded as knowers, learners, and researchers” (p. 42). Practitioners do not have a static relationship with knowledge. Ideas about practice change over time and depend on the context. Knowledge about teaching and learning is not purely objective; practitioners interpret knowledge and apply it in ways that are influenced by our values and interests.

Evaluation (Scriven, 1991) is described as the process of determining the merit, worth and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process. Developmental or formative evaluation is used to develop and improve ongoing activities, persons, products, or programs. I am interested in ways that we can nurture healthy, evaluative thinking that focuses on and articulates what is of value in our programs. Using Patton’s *Typology of research purposes* (Patton, 2015, p. 250) I categorize this research as formative: my inquiry was limited to this one program, I hoped to learn about more about those involved in the program, I assumed that we would use the information to improve what we were doing and that its primary use was for those involved in the program or similar types of programs. Indeed, I achieved my goal of facilitating arts-informed research and using it for program evaluation and learning for myself what it looks and feels like.

The arts-informed workshops that I developed took place at the end of a cohort and can be seen as summative for that particular cohort, but the data I was gathering was intended to further a developmental understanding of the overall program and to be considered in making changes or adaptations to subsequent cohorts. Evaluation, from this perspective, is then perceived as a means for understanding rather than judgement and then practiced as a process rather than a one-time event. Ideally, this work is undertaken by a participatory evaluation team and is used to guide, shift, and direct

program refinement, improvement, and development. This approach to evaluation values focusing on the perspectives and deliberative dialogues between practitioners in the evaluation setting. *Evaluation* is thus defined as a dialogue or conversation with all those involved about the value and meaning of a particular program or practice as a vehicle for learning, understanding, and improving (Patton, 2015; Searle, 2013).

I am interested in program evaluation that is grounded in participatory research methodology and helps us to learn how to improve the program for myself, the staff, and the program participants. Initially, I used different terms for types of program evaluation—*developmental*, *formative*, or *responsive*— as keywords to search and approaches to consider. With continued reading of the literature, and as I think back on my practice over time, I recognize that the types of program evaluation I am interested in share features and are pragmatically described by Dahler-Larsen (2009) as learning-oriented evaluation (p. 313). Dahler-Larsen states that the focus of these approaches is on practical change, rather than on broader social transformation. In my inquiry, practical programmatic, curricular and pedagogical changes to meet the needs and capacities of the women in the EHCW program are foremost; the potential within the curriculum for the learners' social transformation is a part of my inquiry. Dahler-Larsen summarizes that learning-oriented evaluation approaches share all or most of the following characteristics:

1. A belief that *learning* is the essential purpose of evaluation;
2. For learning to happen, the evaluation should be relevant for practitioners;
3. To enhance relevance, ownership or deep involvement by practitioners in the evaluation process is necessary; and
4. Because this approach requires personal contact and some degree of trust, the appropriate site for this type of involvement is often a local group, community, or institution (Dahler-Larsen, 2009, p. 312).

These four characteristics align with my praxis as a program manager and in my emerging practice as a researcher. This perspective permits me to gather data by exploring a variety of research methods relevant to a specific program. In Section 2.6, I analyzed an institutional text (see Appendix B: The Course Evaluation Form), which I determined to be inappropriate for the participants in the EHCW program. I also summarized academic literature (Hornstein, 2017; Steyn et al., 2019) on the

ineffectiveness of standardized evaluation forms. As an administrator, with the influence and power that the position holds, I have opportunities for introducing innovation and exploring alternative processes. This is the thinking behind my research question: using an arts-informed research approach to gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of the program in order to increase their investment in learning, improving the program, and developing myself as a practitioner-researcher. In my professional practice I make decisions that mould and impact the programs I develop. I continuously encounter and resolve dilemmas in collaboration and dialogue with others that require just-in-time evaluations and decisions.

3.4. Arts-informed inquiry

Arts offer a distinct way of seeing (Barone, 2008). The art is central in *arts-based research* (Barone, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Eisner, 1991; Rolling, 2010, 2013), and *arts-based educational research* (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Arts-based research is defined as the systematic application of arts-based activities and the creation of art during all phases of the research, from initial conceptualization to final representation of findings (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 1998, 2008). Arts-informed research, related to but different than arts-based research, is the central theoretical and methodological foundation of my inquiry. Cole and Knowles (2008) explain, "Arts-informed research is a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts, broadly conceived" (p. 59). Arts-informed inquiry is different in that the artmaking is playing a supportive role within a holistic inquiry (Brigham, 2011). The quality of the art is less important than the ways that the art informs understanding (Fish, 1998); these two modes of inquiry share a commitment to artmaking, but they are enacted in different ways.

Several researchers have claimed that general arts-based research is a direct descendant of narrative inquiry or storytelling (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and educational criticism (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Both narrative and educational criticism (Flinders & Eisner, 1994) have helped legitimate arts-informed inquiry as a research approach in education. Although there is no single accepted way to define arts-informed inquiry (Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. 9), the following elements are widely accepted in the relevant literature:

- the use of expressive, contextualized and vernacular language as appropriate;
- the promotion of empathy or engagement with the audience;
- the presence of an aesthetic form or forms (literary, visual or performing) in data collection and/or analysis and/or representation and dissemination of the research findings;
- the meaningful relationship between the research topic or issue and its form;
- the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives around the research question;
- the reflexive and personal signature or presence of the researcher/writer, even though the researcher may not be the subject of the research (Barone & Eisner, 1997, pp. 73–78; Knowles & Cole, 2008, pp. 61–62).

Arts-informed inquiry has the potential to extend the boundaries of more established qualitative research traditions further. There are a wide variety of arts-based research practices that offer qualitative researchers alternatives to traditional research methods, such as *autoethnography* (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004); dance or movement as a methodology (Snowber, 2002), performative inquiry (Fels, 1997), or poetry as a way of knowing (Leggo, 2008). In each, artmaking is an integral part of the inquiry process. The art is never merely ornamental or decorative. Dewey (1958) writes, “Artistic creativity is not just a matter of describing or representing an experience, but a means of grasping a whole experience itself” (p. 45). Art is used to both explore and represent what one has perceived about the phenomena being researched.

The engagement with artmaking is about the artistic and aesthetic exploration of problems that might be otherwise neglected or overlooked in traditional qualitative research methods. The types of artmaking and genres generally recognized in art history, and therefore used in arts-based research, have included novels, graphic novels, novellas, diaries, vignettes, fables, poetry, prose, plays, photography, performance, drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, quilting, batik, film, dance, movement, mime, music, video. As Michelle Searle (2013) states, “Arts-informed inquiry draws from creative strategies in the arts, where art is produced for the sake of inquiry” (p. ii). In arts-informed research, the researcher’s use of art or artmaking is a dialogic one: to stimulate questioning and reflection, and to spark dialogue in community with others. Barone and Eisner (2012) argue that diversity in research is paramount and “in the preparation of social researchers, diversity pertains not only to social categorizations

or the use of a variety of theoretical structures; it also pertains to the medium that a social researcher chooses to employ” (p. 62).

Arts-informed inquiry acknowledges that what we need to know and how we present it cannot always be solely dictated by or expressed in the language of the academy or numbers (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Arts-based representations in a dissertation can transcend literal and linear interpretations. Indeed, they can sometimes speak “even beyond their maker’s means” (Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. 41). As Knowles and Cole (2008) observe, “The language of the academy and all that it symbolized fell short in its ability to capture and communicate the complexity of human experience in all its diversity” (p. 57). The multifaceted nature of arts-informed inquiry can reveal a depth of understanding and communication arguably not possible using one semiotic system (e.g., language) alone. Perhaps language and some language forms have too easily been perceived to be normative by the academy. The use of a multiplicity of modes or artistic semiotic systems holds significant possibility for educational research. If, as McNiff (1998) contends, we continue to follow the standard behavioural science methods of establishing what we plan to do before we do it, we undermine our ability to offer something distinctly new and useful to research. In my inquiry, the art is not an end in itself—it forms an integral part of the research as a process or activity to stimulate, gather and represent data. The distinctions between arts-based research and arts-informed research are not always clearly defined in the academic literature, but for both approaches, artmaking is an integral part of the inquiry process.

I wrote the following narrative (Figure 3.2: *Working with my hands*) after a doctoral class discussion about the privileging of text. Carl Leggo (2008) advocates for writing autobiographically in the academy: “We need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living—professional, academic, administrative, social and political” (p. 91). I contend that by including narrative writing, I convey my value of storytelling and personal narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Nash, 2004) in research and as a form of experiential learning. As a practitioner-researcher, my perspective and experience are embedded in my inquiry and this writing responds to Barone and Eisner’s insistence on exploring problems artistically and aesthetically, reflecting my belief in the power of working with my hands in theory and praxis.

Working with my hands.

I've always felt most satisfied working with my hands. The satisfaction of repairing or making something tangible is profoundly engaging and incredibly rewarding. As a young child, I was prolific in my artwork—gluing, cutting, drawing, painting, papier maché. As a “tomboy,” I was never concerned about getting my hands wet or dirty, or scraping or cutting myself. “Doing” and “making” were the focus.

In our first family home, there were three drawers built into the pony wall of our upstairs attic. The wooden drawers and flat round knobs were painted Pepto-Bismol pink, in a vain attempt by my mother in the 1970s to tie in the 1950s floral wallpaper and the 1920s linoleum imprinted with huge cabbage roses, posies, and bouquets. My mum set aside one drawer for each of us three kids, and she saved the artwork that we brought home from school in those drawers. Mine was stuffed with fading construction paper projects, and giant sheets of yellowing newsprint with flaking paint peeling off. There were: painted hand-print turkeys brought home at Thanksgiving; clunky clay ceramics lovingly presented at Mother's Day, and red Valentines with tiny tissue paper florets made by twisting them around the eraser end of a pencil and gluing them onto the folded heart. There were cotton ball winter scenes, and gold spray-painted macaroni picture frames; puppets with painted heads made from papier maché around old light bulbs; flower vases and pencil holders made from tin cans encircled with colourful wallpaper remnants. Soon my mother had to collapse my sister and brother's paltry collection into one drawer as mine kept expanding like an uncontrollably foaming sourdough starter.

I was the oldest child and the tallest. By grade 7, I was almost the same height as my father and taller than my mum and sister. Only my brother surpassed me in height by late teenagehood. As such, I was always my dad's workmate. Holding the end of the piece of wood steady as he sawed through with the power saw. Keeping the ladder stable and handing up screws as he attached the light fixture. Using the long-handled roller brush to paint the ceiling. Our old house was in a constant cycle of renovation. Once one room had had its wood trim painted, the air bubbles sponged out of the newly hung wallpaper, and the fir floors sanded—the room beside it looked shabby and in need of renewal. And so, we'd begin anew. The furniture would be moved out and dispersed through the rest of the house, and the old shower curtain would be hung in the doorway with masking tape in a futile attempt to keep the dust from spreading from room to room.

In high school, my favourite class was graphic arts. I had the freedom to roam around Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside with a manual Pentax K-1000 camera taking black and white photos of congested electrical wires strung on wooden poles in back alleys, and of neon signs out front. My dad called the area “skid row” – a legacy from BC's logging history - and asserted that The Only café had the best oysters in Vancouver. This was the early 1980s when punk rock had thrashed its way over the sea from England and up the coast from Los Angeles. Joey Shithead and DOA were hometown heroes. Pointed Sticks played at the Smiling Buddha Cabaret. I developed my photos in a red-lit darkroom, patiently waiting for the images to appear on paper magically. With chemical-smelling hands, I hung dripping photos proudly or disappointedly on clotheslines.

Disco sucked and so did buying wide-leg jeans at Bootlegger. My friends and I would go to Army and Navy to get no-name workers' jeans. In the Home Economics room after sewing class, we'd run them in from ankle to thigh to get the narrowest stove-pipe jeans we could. We'd buy old men's shirts and cut off the collars, mandarin style, to belt them up and blouse them over. A green army surplus parka with a Who target from Camden Town in London stitched on the back, became a coveted Quadrophenia item. We'd scour thrift shops in

Bellingham for vintage pointy-toed shoes with kitten heels from the 1960s. We'd cross the border back into Canada with garbage bags full of damp, musty, moth-ball scented tax-free treasure. We called them dead-people's clothes.

Through university, I had a job framing pictures. Lots of decisions - Acid-free mattes for museum quality. Non-glare glass. Arctic White #3297 with Golden Harvest #6938. I still remember those numbers. Measuring for matte boards, foam core dry mounts, hook-and-wire hanging. Lifting sheets of glass onto the glass-cutter and cracking off the excess. Doing the bevel-cut inner edge with perfect corners and no overcuts. Protective glasses, calloused hands. Perfect 45-degree angle cuts and the power saw burr sanded off the metal frame for a nearly seamless mitred corner. A firm stomp down on the foot lever of the big green industrial German wooden frame chopper. Strong hands hold it in tight; a loose hold causes the molding to slide and the corner mitre to be off.

By my early twenties and the start of my teaching career, I was still working with my hands. Bugly, short for Butt-Ugly, was the nickname of the house that my siblings and I bought in East Vancouver near Commercial Drive. It was a vast 1911 house, wrapped in a colourful quilt of moss-covered asphalt roofing tiles, butter-yellow vinyl siding, rust-red stucco with bits of broken beer bottles in it, and single-pane aluminum frame windows that welcomed in the cold drafts, yet sealed in the condensation. Each decade of its life was marked by different building materials, aging it like the rings of a tree. My brother and I bought commercial-sized buckets of white paint to store in the garage and pull out to redo rooms and suites each time a tenant moved. We whitewashed over the recent history—arguments, lovemaking, and cooking smells—to restore rentability. We ripped up old carpeting, tiled bathrooms, and re-roofed the garage. For 18 years we maintained Bugly and her concrete-encased Italianate garden through countless combinations of people, including ourselves, who called it home.

Tanis Sawkins, November 2015

Figure 3.2. Working with my hands

Working with my hands is an inquiry into my beliefs about learning and particularly experiential learning, and my experience with reflective, creative, arts-based research. At some point in our lives, we are told or absorb the message from society that some can do art, and some cannot do art. Why is it that? If we think about creative processes as another way of learning and knowing, why would we hold our selves back? Why would we cut off this avenue? Given this fundamental belief in “doing,” I have spent my career as an educator embedding experiential learning into my praxis for myself and those I teach and manage. Dewey (1958) enfolds arts-based inquiry into experiential learning and views it as a kind of knowing; learning that must be explored, reflected on and represented. Dewey's theory attempts to shift the understanding of what is essential about the art process from the ‘expressive object’ to the process itself. This process, whose fundamental characteristic is no longer the material ‘work of art,’ becomes the development of an ‘experience.’ Dewey's theoretical focus on experience is something that personally affects one's social and educational life. Just as my research provides an

opportunity for students to express a depth of understanding and communication through their art, my personal writing provides an opportunity for me. Narrative inquiry, the experience of “doing” art as part of my practitioner inquiry, becomes art-as-research and informs my understanding of arts-based research.

3.5. Arts-informed program evaluation

I contend that arts-informed inquiry can deepen our understanding about programs. The methodological “core” of this dissertation focuses on how arts-informed program evaluation (Searle, 2013; Searle & Shulha, 2016)—a specific type of arts-informed inquiry—can advance our understanding of pedagogy and programs. As described above, arts-informed research methodologies are increasingly used in a wide variety of professional fields such as: teacher education (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Ewing & Hughes, 2008; Fels, 1997; Flinders & Eisner, 1994) and community development (Barndt, 2008; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009), with marginalized youth (Delgado, 2015) and in health (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1997) as researchers seek more innovative and relevant approaches.

Using art to collect, analyze, or represent data, privileges our imaginations, and allows us to engage creatively as we develop new understandings about who we are as teachers, learners, practitioners, and researchers. In the words of Maxine Greene (1995):

[To] tap into imagination is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or ‘common-sensible’ and to carve out new orders in experience. (p. 19)

For the past several decades, scholars have maintained, and it has become increasingly accepted that a shift in methodology towards infusing arts into research can bring tremendous insight, revisit problems and create solutions that may not be possible through descriptive and linear language (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

While arts-based research and pedagogy is well-established, using arts-informed research in program evaluation is more emergent. I was unable to find examples of its use in employment programs in the academic literature, which opened an opportunity to

explore the possibilities, and perhaps make an innovative and important contribution to adult education. Searle (2013), Searle and Shulha (2016), and Simons and McCormack (2007) document how arts-informed inquiry draws from artistic processes to broaden perceptions, make meaningful contributions, and expand evaluator skills. Although there is not one specific methodology or set of values attached to arts-informed program evaluation, there is general agreement that qualitative evaluators use direct observation, recognize meaning as socially constructed, and value situational inquiry. Searle and Shulha (2016) confirm,

Eisner's contributions related to the arts and evaluation appropriately address evaluators' need for continual methodological innovation. The use of practices drawn from the arts is not proposed as an alternative to other qualitative approaches, but as a complementary methodology that can be used to develop understanding in program evaluation. (p. 35)

Using a framework of qualitative learning-oriented evaluation and layering in arts-informed methods holds the possibility for creating new ways of engaging with the field of evaluation in my praxis.

3.6. Care-based pedagogy

As an emergent researcher collaborating with others, I was drawn to working with new theories and ideas introduced to me. I loosely group these theories through using the colour purple on my mind-map in Figure 3.1. My inquiry community (see Section 4.3) presented bountiful learning opportunities, but also a need to define and refine my values by determining what I was comfortable aligning myself with. For example, two of the researchers had a robust interest in the “pedagogy or ethic of care” (hooks, 1994) two seemed neutral towards it, and two of us were, perhaps, less interested in this perspective. Initially, my engagement with the ethic of care was limited due to lack of familiarity; however, after I had done some reading in feminist theory (initially bell hooks and Nel Noddings) I became increasingly engaged with the ideas and felt the lens might provide insight on the EHCW program. The planning and delivery practices were clearly centered on women's holistic needs and well-being. While the teachers and staff did not explicitly characterize the program's pedagogies and practices as *feminist* to the participants or others, the design principles for the program arose from values relating to feminist theory and care-based pedagogy. Indeed, an ethic of care compelled me to forefront the lived experience of the research participants and to make a critical

commitment to reimagining the program to meet their holistic needs and capacities. I was encouraged to read more.

Nel Noddings (1984), a feminist educational philosopher, proposes that caring is foundational to education. She describes an ethic of caring and explores liberatory pedagogy as a way to oppose oppression on the bases of race, class, gender, and other relations of difference. She argues, regardless of location, we need to engage in collective and reflexive negotiations and border crossings. She characterizes caring as acts of engrossment whereby the one caring receives the cared-for on their own terms. For Noddings, caring is relational, not just a personal quality, or a principle, or a form of ethical deliberation. This notion of relationality held promise for care-based pedagogy and for understanding the EHCW program, and our inquiry community was drawn to it.

Noddings' ideas about caring, and particularly about the obligation to care, have raised criticism and are considered as not critically feminist. The theme of gender, which permeates most of the concepts that Noddings has developed, particularly in her earlier writing, has provoked controversy and criticism. Hassan (2008) argues that Noddings seems to encourage caring as the sole basis of ethics which hinders a woman's ability to be autonomous, and encourages traditional gender roles. Another criticism is that Noddings' ethic of care "underestimates the significance of personal agency" (Alexander, 2003, p. 493). Furthermore, Hoagland (1991) argues Noddings attaches little importance to the caring of oneself, and that this one-way emphasis on caring can reinforce systemic oppression. However, it should be noted that, as stated by Noddings, an ethic of care perspective challenges individual autonomy by emphasizing the relational nature of human existence, such as being a parent, teacher/student, nurse/patient, or belonging to a particular culture, language group, historical era, and so on. I accept these critiques of Noddings' work, yet her ethic of care continues to resonate for me with her emphasis on relational practice, and underlies my conceptualizing of employment programs which are inclusive and caring for marginalized women. Jeffries et al. (2017) draw our attention to the learning needs of women with refugee experience:

the trauma experienced as part of a refugee woman's forced migration to Canada can impact the student's abilities to participate, recall information, attend classes, and do well on tests and assessments. When instructors are unfamiliar with the impact of trauma on student learning, they often misread symptoms as disengagement, poor effort, and incompetence. Furthermore, students who have experienced trauma may be re-

traumatized by policies and practices that do not create inclusive classroom learning. (p. 24)

As a program manager working within an ethic of care perspective, it was imperative to hire and ensure support for the core teacher, vocational instructors and other staff working with the EHCW students who had experience with trauma-informed practices and had a care-based pedagogy. In so doing, this enabled support and caring for the EHCW program participants. Hassan (2008) concludes her critique with the observation that Noddings' ethic of care makes a positive contribution by incorporating care into moral behaviour which may guide our professional practice as educators (p. 162). There is a growing community of post-secondary educators who advocate for integrative and relational pedagogy and a compassionate axiology in research. Palmer and Zajonc (2010) also invite us to "greater reflection, dialogue and commitment to uncover and inhabit this vital and renewable heart of higher education" (p. x).

Through our inquiry community, I was also introduced to the work of the critical feminist bell hooks (1994). Her work, a feminist analysis of Freire's (1970) work, also provides valuable insights. Freire's work is geared towards emancipating people who are in a "culture of silence"—a culture of acceptance and resignation—from the culture of dominance. Freire (1970) reminds us that "love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (p. 89). Inspired by Freire's work, hooks (1994) describes engaged pedagogy as a reciprocal process for both teachers and students that involves caring, shared risk-taking and responsibility. In addition, hooks's work echoes ideas around the ethic of care with its emphasis on building relationality, responsibility, reciprocity, and connectedness among teachers and students. However, she does not position teachers, who care for the others, and students, who are being cared for, in a binary as does Noddings (1984). Also of importance to program developers, hooks points out that educational institutional structures tend to compartmentalize domains of lives, such as the public and the private, and do not encourage us to see the complexity of lives and experiences. She suggests we need to start regarding "one another as 'whole' human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Both Noddings and hooks identify participation or experiential learning as crucial for effective education. Feminist and care-based pedagogy informed the EHCW program by emphasizing a relational approach. This opened up space for dialogue and the social perspective on language.

3.7. Social perspectives on language

Historically, and still for many today, language has been seen as a subject to be studied—linguistics. Language is thus seen as a system or structure that is relatively fixed, rule-bound, knowable through rigorous individual study, and separate from the context in which it is used. Accordingly, linguistics should concern itself with the structure of language, that is, *how* language is used and less so *why* people use language in different ways in different contexts. More recently, applied linguists in the field of education and sociologists such as Bourdieu ask us to think about language in a different way:

Practical competence is learnt in situations, in practice: what is learnt is, inextricably, the practical mastery of language and the practical mastery of situations which enable one to produce the adequate speech in a given situation. The expressive intent, the way of actualizing it, and the conditions of its actualization are indissociable. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 647)

Here I turn to theories on the social perspective of language, which in the academic literature is variously referred to as “socially-situated” or the “social-practice” of language use, and this change in perspective is sometimes referred to as the “social turn.” The social turn implies a need to consider language learning not only as an individual and primarily cognitive process, but also embedded within broader historical, political and ideological contexts.

The New London Group (1996) reframes our understanding of literacy practices. Given our increasing cultural and linguistic diversity, and using many different forms of texts, media and images as a part of identity and membership in a community, they conceptualize this as multiliteracies. Images have power and are directly linked to what can be observed, yet they can also be highly symbolic—images are loaded with meanings and memories. This is revealed (New London Group, 1996) in our increased attention to visual representation (e.g., photos, videos, or symbols in digitally mediated contexts) as a dominant mode of meaning-making. Multiliteracies or multimodal literacy theories recognize images alongside texts as integral to meaning-making. Traditionally, in education, we have privileged text, and as Sanders-Bustle (2003) summarizes, “Visual images remain on the outward fringes of curricula” (p. 25). The data analysis methods that I employ in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 place the women’s images alongside their words or text; the images themselves are content.

In recognizing that images as texts are integral to meaning-making, the traditional definition of literacy is extended (Kendrick & Jones, 2008). Hilary Janks (2012) comprehensively defines what students need to be able to do to be fully literate:

to decode print and visual material; they need to be able to interact with text, take meaning from the text and bring meaning to the text; they need to use literacy for a wide range of social purposes and to master the genres needed to accomplish these purposes; in addition, they need to be able to read critically, to question the interest at work in texts and to evaluate their likely social effects. (p. 235)

Along with other practitioners, researchers and theorists who share a social perspective on language—I accept that language learning is not neutral, and through critical pedagogy power relationships must be attended to. Power exists at the micro-level of everyday social encounters and is produced within language between people with different levels of access to symbolic and material resources (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Gee, 2008; Janks, 2012; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Norton Pierce, 1995; Pennycook, 2010). Bourdieu (1991) asserts that legitimate speakers possess linguistic capital that is the product of social determinants which may be outside consciousness or control, but nevertheless provide material benefits which are seemingly objective to those who hold it. Local relations of power can be idiosyncratic; literacy as a social practice is subject to the power relations of local contexts. Pennycook (2010) writes,

To talk of language practices therefore, is to move away from the attempts to capture language as a system, and instead to investigate the doing of language as social activity, regulated as much by social contexts as by underlying systems. (p. 114)

This social perspective on language and literacy is important to my practice and research with migrant women in employment programs because workplaces are local contexts, and as such a part of a habitus. *Habitus* is the term that Bourdieu uses to define the social spaces we inhabit. The language one uses is determined by one's relational position in a habitus. Bourdieu argues that linguistic interactions are manifestations of the participants' respective positions in the habitus and categories of understanding. The collective habitus of dominant social groups is typically constituted as the cultural capital of social value, and that of dominated or marginalized groups is not (see p. 88 for more about *habitus*). In each cohort, there were discussions about discrimination and racism in the EHCW program. In Section 6.6, I relate a story the core teacher, Maria, told me about a student being questioned about wearing a hijab. How

does habitus shape this incident? How might a similar incident be perceived differently by individuals with varying identities of power? In the analysis of the women's stories depicted in their collages in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, they describe their growing sense of identity as a social group and their apprenticeship into workplaces. For them, meaningful employment is key not only to economic integration, but is also a site for language and literacy use in identity formation.

The EHCW program, the site of my research, is not primarily a language program and was not funded as such; it is an employment program for women with immigrant and refugee experience. However, I contend that in addition to vocational training, this type of programming also creates space for and holds rich opportunity for language and literacy learning. There are, perhaps, greater opportunities for language and literacy learning in an employment training program than in a language classroom. The EHCW program was designed to provide a holistic response by reducing barriers and recognizing the needs and capacities of the students within an employment training context precisely because there is a focused, higher goal—employment. This provides a complex sociocultural context, rather than a general language class where the goal may be less contextually demanding such as learning English to get a higher score on a standardized language test, or progressing to the next level. The social turn which focuses on the everyday “doing” of language (Pennycook, 2010) has profoundly shaped my thinking as a language educator and program manager with a focus on occupational contexts.

A key issue that will emerge in the analysis of the data in Chapters 6 and 7 from the women participants is the question of language and legitimacy, not only in terms of the language they can produce in different situations, but also how their language is received and perceived by others. The question of language and legitimacy is a central focus of the works of Pierre Bourdieu and two scholars who have built upon his work in Canadian contexts, Bonny Norton and Monica Heller.

For Bourdieu and other poststructuralist theorists such as Chris Weedon language is given a central role in the analysis of the relationship between the individual and the social. Bourdieu (1977) defined the concept of legitimate language as

uttered by a legitimate speaker ... uttered in a legitimate situation ... and addressed to legitimate receivers ... formulated in the legitimate

phonological and syntactic forms ... except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer. (p. 650)

Central concepts that Bourdieu has introduced into the current social sciences lexicon and discourse are the concept of legitimate language use, habitus, social field, symbolic violence, various forms of capital, and cultural reproduction. Being perceived as a “legitimate speaker,” and the linguistic capital this confers, determines who has a “right” to be listened to, to interrupt, to ask questions, and to lecture, and to what degree. Bourdieu (1977) elaborates,

A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e., to the legitimate language, the authorized language which is also the language of authority. Competence implies the “power to impose reception”. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648)

Bonny Norton, a Canadian academic in language education and applied linguistics, has been significantly influenced by the work of Bourdieu. In turn, Norton’s work has been an influence both directly and indirectly on my work. Norton’s ground breaking work was published in 1995, and 20 years later she co-published an update of her thinking and a revised theoretical model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Norton’s influence in language education is associated with “the social turn,” where a wide variety of educational researchers (Belfiore et al., 2004) have drawn on developments in social theory in their attempts to make sense of language and literacy practices and language learning.

According to Monica Heller (2001), a Canadian academic primarily interested in French/English bilingualism, the core of Bourdieu’s legitimate language centres on the view that “who we are constrains to whom we can speak, under what circumstances, and ... how” (p. 382). Moreover, it is the discourse practices of dominant groups that both construct and legitimate dominant language forms. Heller (2010) views bilingualism from a social perspective that allows us to see other non-linguistic issues, such as cultural authenticity or the commodification of language for the tourism or customer-service sector, being negotiated within local areas, within nations themselves, as well as across diverse global communities.

Norton builds on this notion of legitimate language use in her work on identity. For her, power operates at the macro level of powerful institutions such as the legal

system, the education system, and the social welfare system, but also at the micro-level. An example of this power differential at the micro-level was revealed in the analysis of the course evaluation form that I presented in Chapter 2. As Norton defines it, this would be a commonplace social encounter produced through language, symbolising the power differential between the larger institution and the individual – in this case the women in the EHCW program as potential users of the form. I concluded that the form required linguistic resources to access it, that the women did not hold.

Bourdieu uses the metaphor of types of capital (e.g., cultural, social, linguistic, symbolic, etc.) to describe the resources one has in relation to others that contribute, or not, to one's power and authority in society. Bourdieu's concept of various capitals functioning as symbolic resources is linked to the view of human social practices operating in a symbolic marketplace. According to Marshall (2005), writing about Bourdieu:

[His] view is that the most powerful market in the symbolic economy is the linguistic market, as linguistic interactions reflect and produce social structure, particularly in exchanges involving agents who occupy asymmetric positions in the distribution of the relevant capital.... Dominated groups are seen to lack symbolic capital in this market, thus limiting their ability to progress. Education is seen to be the key field, a form of "social space," due to its central role in reproducing the linguistic market. (p. 83)

Bourdieu's contributions to our understanding of capital and his impact on the work of Norton has been influential in the field of teaching English language and literacy. Socio-economic success is associated with greater social capital. Norton sees social capital as the sum of expectations and obligations of trust and reciprocity, and considers it as part of a broader exploration of the nature of social structures. There is no clear definition of social capital, as different researchers and theorists interpret Bourdieu in different ways. For example, Raza et al. (2012) describe social capital as features of social organization, such as participation in community organizations, trust, and norms that produce coordination and cooperation and their associated benefits. When looking at the economic integration of immigrants and refugees, reducing economic disadvantage may depend upon how individuals network across ethnic social circles. Given that social capital is based on networking, it may be challenging for immigrants to penetrate some existing social networks, particularly if their language use is not deemed fully legitimate. Despite variations in conceptualizations, there seems to be an

agreement among scholars that social capital resides in the structure of social relations, and the social relations of trust, reciprocity, and networking are instrumental for economic action. It will be seen that Bourdieu's metaphor of different forms of capital is one that I use in Chapter 6 through my analysis of the EHCW program participants' stories about their lived experience.

For Bourdieu, capital is not a fixed accumulation, but is dynamic and continually shifting within the social relations of the particular habitus or field that one is positioned in at any time. Individuals are positioned in the habitus based on the volume, composition, and trajectory of their capital. One of my professors (M. Ling, personal communication, September 22, 2019) provided a simple working definition—habitus is an internalized system shaped by ideology, the system by which people make sense of the world. Habitus is the social and cultural experiences that shape individuals' views of the world, which form an orientation to social action. Habitus predisposes people to act and behave in specific ways. As the rules vary and continually evolve, the value of one's capital also shifts as it travels across time and space. One can extrapolate that the experience of migration, which for some might include crossing borders into new linguistic or unfamiliar cultural environments, and adjusting socio-economic status, can "shake up" a person's habitus. It is important to highlight the recursive nature of the habitus; it is recursively shaped by and shaping the objective and subjective social and cultural conditions surrounding it. An individual's social action generally reproduces, rather than transforms, existing norms and practice. Cultural capital, such as social networks or club memberships, and linguistic capital, how closely one's language use aligns with the legitimate language or the prestige dialect as expressed through accent or word choice, can be leveraged into particular social networks, thus accumulating social capital. As we will see in my data analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, I look at how the EHCW program helped to expand social capital and cultural capital for the participants through a women-only program and actively building social relationships.

Finally, one factor that brings together issues of language and legitimacy in the context of the EHCW program is that the process of gaining legitimacy through language is inherently linked to the communities of practice in which they operate. Adult education theorists Lave and Wenger (1991) situate learning in certain forms of social participation. Rather than asking what kinds of cognitive processes or conceptual structures are involved in learning, they ask what kinds of social situations provide the proper context

for learning. This social practice view of literacy (Jackson, 2004) sees literacy as an integral part of everyday cultural knowledge and practice that is situated within everyday practices. Learning that takes place as a result of individuals' engagement in immediately accessible communities—that is, communities of practice. Developing a community of practice was intentional in the development of the EHCW program and positive focus on identity and investment.

3.8. Language education, identity and investment

From my reading, it appears there has been inconsistent agreement over the last three decades about which analytical approach most fittingly explains the relationship between language and identity. My practice is informed by the poststructuralist view that identity formation is closely related to issues relating to language use, the social position of languages, communities of practice, power relations and access, legitimacy, and investment (Block, 2007, 2015; Bourdieu, 1977; Norton Pierce, 1995; Weedon, 1997, 2004; Wenger, 1998).

From a poststructuralist perspective, language is not seen as a neutral medium of communication but as a much broader social medium. Theorists explore how identity and power relations between individuals, groups, and communities affect the life chances of individuals in time and place. In her early work, Norton Pierce (1995) foregrounds the role of language as

constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's social identity. It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. (p. 13)

Norton is interested in social identity as distinct from cultural identity. She defines *cultural identity* “to refer to the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world” (Norton, 1997, p. 420). In my research, I too am more interested in social identity and the relationship between the individual and the broader social world, as mediated through institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, and community-serving organizations. I see this emphasis on social identity over cultural identity as

important to explore through my research and the extent this relationship must be understood through one's race, gender, class, or ethnicity.

As Block (2007) relates in his book, *Second Language Identities*, social scientists are interested in identity because it bridges the gap between the micro-level of the individual and the macro-level of the social order. Identity allows for the investigation of an individual's membership in particular groups, affiliations to cultural customs and practices, and representations of self and others. Scholars (Block, 2007; Norton Pierce, 1995; Weedon, 2004) have come to see identity as fluid, multidimensional (including gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, age, religion, etc.), intersecting, and socially constructed. These views have taken hold in applied linguistics.

Since Norton's influential work, there has been increasing interest in identity and its relationship with language learning in applied linguistics, not only because it connects the individual to the social world but also because it frames the perspective that language use is a social, rather than cognitive, enterprise. Zotzmann and O'Regan (2016) summarize this as follows:

The concept [of identity] sensitises us to think about the reasons for and the conditions under which people use language, the way they are perceived by others as users of language, the meanings they want to convey in particular situations and the resources they draw upon in order to do so. (p. 113)

Preece (2016) writes that Block, Blommaert, and other scholars distinguish between the identities that people inhabit or choose for themselves as *achieved*, and those which are imposed or given by others as attributed or *ascribed*. They suggest that achieved identities often position individuals as non-normative and limit their rights to participation. Achieved identities are often constrained by access to the types of social or discursive spaces in which identities are "constructed, constituted, negotiated, accomplished and/or performed" (Preece, 2016, p. 6). For example, migrants may imagine access to social mobility will be higher once gaining citizenship (achieved identity of belonging); however, access to material resources, including income, property and employment status derives from social class positioning in society and may continue to be limited (ascribed identity of otherness). Galabuzi (2006) states that systemic discrimination leading to "differential access to the labour market, ... a growing gap in economic performance and the incidence of poverty along racial lines" (p. 19) illustrates

the persistence of inequities after citizenship. Block (2015) suggests we need to pay closer attention to social class in research on identity, particularly when investigating “migrants as bilinguals” (p. 6). These issues are relevant in Section 6.6 when I suggest that the women participants’ identity formation processes relate to powerful social discourses that position them as lacking in ways that can potentially constrain their agency and their desires to achieve their future imagined self. Some of Norton’s explications, such as that identity constructs and is constructed by language, or that language use and notions of social identity are inextricably linked, now seem commonplace. However, other aspects of her work, including her call for issues of language, power, and identity to be addressed in pre-service teacher training and integrated into pedagogy, are less consistently practiced.

Norton drew on the ideas of Bourdieu, applying them specifically to the field of language and literacy learning and teaching, as well as aspects of feminist poststructuralist theory summarized by Chris Weedon (1997). Although not the main focus of my work, feminist poststructuralist lenses do have clear implications given that the EHCW program was intentionally developed for women, and was primarily (though not exclusively) taught, supported and managed by women. Weedon (1997) describes how social identity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power. A person takes up different “subject positions” (e.g., teacher, child, feminist, manager, or critic), which is her term and loosely equates with identity, a term which she generally does not use in her early writing. The subject, in turn, is not conceived of as passive; the subject is conceived of as both the subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community and society. Weedon’s (1997) view of power is “constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p. 32). Relations of agency and power are always shifting, creating constraints in some relations and opportunities in others accorded to positionality in discourse. The subject has a constrained human agency. Within a given discourse, a person may be positioned in a particular way. However, the person might also resist the subject position, or even set up a counter-discourse which positions them in a powerful rather than marginalized subject position. In arguing that subjectivity or social identity is multiple, contradictory, and a site of struggle, feminist poststructuralism highlights the dynamic quality of a person’s social identity.

In her 1997 work, Weedon focuses more on *subjectivity* as opposed to *identity* in her later works. This shift in emphasis is relevant for my analysis in Chapter 7, which uses identity theory as a lens. In Weedon's (2004) later work while she includes class, gender and sexuality, her major focus is on the mobilization of forms of ethnic identity in societies still governed by racism. Furthermore, issues of identity, such as gender or migration status, cannot be studied in isolation; intersectionality requires us to also look at identity from other perspectives, such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, nationality or social class. The central concept for identity theorists, is that identity is emergent not determined. As Weedon (1997) argues, "The political significance of decentering the subject and abandoning the belief in essential subjectivity is that it opens up subjectivity to change" (p. 32). This idea of change is crucial for teaching and learning as the subject positions that a person takes up within a discourse are open to contestation which, in turn, opens up possibilities for learning and education. This has implications for my professional practice where programs may provide the space for positive identity formation. Some women may have more investment in learning English if they identify with it as a language of empowerment or feminism, and a means to seek gender equity.

Indeed, many language researchers and critical theorists see profound links between literacy and social processes and extend these concepts further by linking critical race theory with language education and identifying language discrimination issues (Han, 2014; Kubota & Lin, 2006). Recent writing on linguistic racism (De Costa, 2020) asks us to consider two forms: linguistic invisibility (where first language use is implicitly or explicitly prohibited and speakers become invisibilized), and linguistic privilege as exemplified in an Australian university where a "monolingual English ideology resulted in an appreciation of ... English" (p. 2) leading to a profit or privilege for native English speakers. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore critical race theory, language discrimination, or linguistic racism in detail. However, I do recognize the importance of this work, particularly as it relates to women with low levels of literacy in workplaces. Norton's construct of investment, while useful for much of my analysis, does not explain everything in the data I gathered.

In calling for a critical examination of language acquisition, Darwin and Norton (2015) write that we must look at the power structures of systemic patterns of control, which are mostly invisible. Again, they refer to Bourdieu (1987), who defines ideology as a symbolic or world-making power that has "the power to impose and to inculcate

principles of construction of reality” (p. 13; see also Darvin & Norton, 2015). Darvin and Norton (2015) also suggest that work sites such as public and private institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) become “ideological sites” through the management of resources and the legitimization of regulatory systems. I see this in my workplace and in the immigrant settlement context, where federal policies regarding international students have shifted towards an immigration pathway. This shift foregrounds issues relating to language proficiency tests for entry to programs, admissions requirements, expectations and pedagogical practices of faculty, and regulatory body requirements post-graduation, which, in turn, take on increasingly high stakes for learners.

When people move across borders, the linguistic capital they bring with them is subject to what Blommaert (2010) calls “different orders of indexicality”—that is, their styles and registers are measured against a value system that reflects the biases and assumptions of the broader sociocultural context. While opportunities for migration and international education have become increasingly accessible, on closer critical analysis we see that people are positioned with reference to these different orders of indexicality including accent, word choice, and grammar, that define norms of language use and social expectations. Darvin and Norton (2015) posit that “it is by casting a light on the constructed nature of what is held as normative that one can find the interstices that enable critical inquiry” (p. 42). Perhaps increased mobility has led not to greater acceptance, but to greater linguistic inequality?

As stated, central to Norton’s work is the concept of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2013; Norton Pierce, 1995): “The notion of investment conceives of the language learner, not as ahistorical and unidimensional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires” (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 9). She argues that the right to speak intersects with a language learner’s identity (Norton Pierce, 1995). The term investment is used to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalence to learning and using it. Identity issues form part of many migrants’ stories. The experience of displacement, the search for a new place to belong, the learning of a new language and an identity transformation in which the culture, languages, religion, politics, customs and practices of what was left behind enter into a changeable and fluid combination of what is and what may be yet to come.

Norton problematizes the concept of motivation and cautions that the investment she advocates for is not equivalent. Kramsch (2013), in describing Norton's notion of investment, suggests,

[It] accentuates the role of human agency and identity in engaging with the task at hand, in accumulating economic and symbolic capital, in having stakes in the endeavor and in persevering in that endeavor. (p. 195)

For example, English language teachers in China may have seemingly motivated students who study to get a high mark on the *Gaokao* examination. However, the students may not have any interest in speaking English for other purposes, so their investment and (possibly) their language learning is low or not enduring. Alternatively, we may see *Joual*-speaking Quebecers who are invested in their language use for political or cultural reasons, and will resist learning or using English despite possible economic motivations to do so. Pierce Norton (1995) states the "conception of instrumental motivation generally presupposes a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers" (p. 17). In this view, instrumental motivation is a fixed personality trait of the language learner. Norton's notion of investment, on the other hand, attempts to capture the relationship between the language learner and the changing social world.

Darvin and Norton (2015) summarize the changes that the world has experienced in the previous 20 years, redefining native speaker/language learners and communicative competence (p. 41). They refer to the exponential increases in the ability or requirement to cross transnational spaces due to affordable airline travel, mobile communication, Internet connectivity, and social media. These changes in global dynamics have created shifting power relations and changes within multilingual and multicultural communities, which have resulted in reshaping language use and linguistic capital. I would argue that the rise of world Englishes as ubiquitous in global business and academic communication, the widespread use of Chinese language among global diasporic communities, and the loss of minority or Indigenous languages, are specific illustrative language-based impacts of globalization. The demands and realities of our globalized world are characterized by mobility, fluidity, and diversity. In this revised model, Darvin and Norton (2015) locate *investment* at the intersection of ideology, capital, and identity. They posit that in language learning theory, investment holds a significant place for demonstrating the socially and historically constructed relationship

between language learner identity and learning commitment. This concept of investment holds particular resonance for my practice and research. The participants in the EHCW program had various reasons for taking the program, which were not always in direct alignment with the stated outcome of the program—employment in the hospitality sector. I will say more about this in Chapters 6 and 7.

Norton's concept of investment is best understood regarding the types of capital that Bourdieu (1977) uses in his work, particularly the notions of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) use the term *cultural capital* to refer to the intellectual or social assets of a person (e.g., education, artistic pursuits, style of speech, style of dress, etc.) to characterize social classes and different groups. They argue that cultural capital can promote social mobility in a stratified society, and some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange value than others in a given social context. Most language educators take the position that if learners invest in an additional language, by so doing, they will also acquire a broader range of symbolic and material resources. Norton Pierce (1995) refers to symbolic resources as language, education, and friendship, whereas she uses the term *material resources* to include capital goods, real estate, and money. The acquisition of both will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital. She posits that learners will expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to previously unattainable resources and that “this return on investment must be seen as commensurate with the effort expended on learning the second language” (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 17). It will be seen that language, identity and investment are central concepts when I use these theoretical perspectives as a lens for analyzing the data I have gathered from the participants in the EHCW program in Chapters 6 and 7.

3.9. Imagined communities and imagined futures

In later scholarship, Norton (2013) refines her definition of identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 45). Norton (2013) states that investment indexes issues of identity and imagined futures. She talks about how language learners often adopt *imagined* subject positions in *imagined* communities of speakers of the language they are learning. The role of investment in English language learning and the teaching of English is further

explicated through how people understand their possibilities for the future—the notion of imagined identities and imagined communities. Benedict Anderson, who used the term *imagined communities*, believes that a nation is a community socially constructed, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of a group. He argues, “What we think of as nations are imagined communities, because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

This concept of “imagined communities” has application to my theorizing and research, and resonance for me for two reasons: problematizing the notion of the nation state, and extending the idea of imagined communities to other groups beyond the notion of the nation state. As a critique of the traditional criteria for defining a nation state—matching a piece of geography with a culture, a people, or a language—the concept of imagined communities provides an alternate paradigmatic view. Fleras (2015) supports this alternate view and contests the traditional notion of a nation state when describing Canada as a postnational society reflecting postmodern principles (p. 380). He states,

Reference to Canada as a nation—an entity with a shared history, geography, or ethnicity—is displaced by the “notion” of Canada as an ongoing socially constructed convention, created and evolving, relative to a particular time and place, and subject to reformative change. (p. 381)

I too see national identity not as an objective or a stable construct, but as an ongoing project, even for those who are born, raised and educated in a particular locality in a particular state. This view of national identity as an ongoing project provides hope and sustenance for my professional practice as it affords some space for individual agency via this discourse, for newcomer students to opt to see oneself as part of a national identity, but also to retain and develop cultural, social, political and economic links with a homeland in a transnational context.

The notion of imagined communities has resonance for my scholarly work beyond the conceptualization of a nation state or Canada specifically, but to other imagined groups of people and communities of practitioners. Imagined communities extend both spatially and temporally. As Etienne Wenger (1998) suggests, direct involvement with community practices and investment in tangible and concrete relationships, is not the only way in which we belong to a community. For Wenger,

imagination—“a process of expanding oneself by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (p. 176)—is another vital source of community. I contend that what is socially imaginable and the range of identities available to community members can be extended and enhanced through educational and workplace activities to become part of their imagined futures and imagined identities. Kanno and Norton (2003) specifically examine “how learners’ affiliation with imagined communities might affect their learning trajectories” (p. 242). They describe such communities as including future relationships that exist only in the learner’s imagination, but are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement. Further, they suggest that these imagined communities might have an even stronger impact on their current actions and investment than their local sets of relationships do. Kanno (as cited in Norton & Pavlenko, 2019) found, “It is the least privileged bilingual students who are socialized into the most restricted imagined communities, when it is precisely this group that would benefit from an education that promotes a wider set of options for the future” (p. 4). The possibilities for nurturing imagined communities and imagined futures with a group of women who felt their employment options for the future were limited seemed to hold promise.

The women with whom I work in the EHCW program can be viewed as a community of practice, and the employment context that they aspire to—working in hotels, restaurants, or residential care homes—as their future imagined communities. Darwin and Norton (2015) describe it this way: “Imagination allows learners to re- envision how things are as how they want them to be” (p. 46). In my analysis in Chapter 7, I ask of the data: What are the participants’ expectations for the future? How do these future imaginings intersect with their histories, experiences, and with their relationship to the acquisition of workplace skills and literacy?

Struggles with identity—between stable and dynamic self, between definition and redefinition of self—often characterize what migrants experience through the migration process and settling in a new environment. Some of the EHCW participants expressed imaginations about their future in their collage-based stories, relating to employment, language, and literacy skills. This educational context seemed to inspire an engagement in the process of looking to the future. As Wenger (1998) described, “Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple and seed and seeing a tree” (p. 176). While I would not

suggest that what is socially imaginable is always socially available, imagination can be an integral part of ongoing identity work through employment programs.

3.10. Summary and implications

I provided a mind-map (see Figure 3.1) at the beginning of this chapter as a guide to my literature review. I visually represented and described my approach to the practices and conceptual relationships that inform my practitioner inquiry as an imbrication between theory and praxis. It is at the nexus between praxis and theory where I explore and come to a deeper understanding of both my own practitioner-researcher experience and the participants' experiences in an employment training program for women with immigrant and refugee experience.

In the forthcoming analysis of the data that the women participants in my study provided through my arts-informed workshops, it will be seen that key themes of identity, investment, imagined future selves, and language legitimacy will be of most relevance to my theorizing, methods and data analysis. Underpinning this data analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, which is brought through the women's words (dialogue) via the arts-informed research, is the power dynamic illustrated through theories such as Bourdieu's (1977; 1991) capital and language theory, and Norton's, (Pierce Norton, 1995; Darvin & Norton, 2015) investment and identity theory. In my inquiry, these theories are brought into conversation with critical pedagogists (Freebody, 1999; Janks, 2012, 2013; Lin, 2014). I believe that focusing attention on and making visible the relations of power that language and literacy learners and teachers navigate in diverse classrooms and communities can lead to a greater sense of agency and resilience for learners.

Employment programs for newcomers can often be a first introduction to a range of people with different identities inscribed by age, race, creed, ethnicity, gender, educational background, and socio-economic status in Canada. Darvin and Norton (2015) encourage practitioners working with learners to recognize:

How power flows in different directions ... [and how] learners operating in different fields perform multiple identities. Their habitus, shaped by prevailing ideologies, predisposes them to think and act in specific ways, but it is through desire and imagination that they are able to invest in practices that can transform their lives. (p. 46)

This theorizing leads to an educational change at the classroom level and addresses broader social inequities. The potential exists for employment training programs to provide a productive environment for language learning and identity formation, thus providing the context for investment in the language and the motivation for learning it (Norton, 2000). Employment training programs can provide “increased participation in communities of practice” (Toohey & Norton, 2003, p. 59). It is this latter perspective that is the inspiration to reimagine employment programs for immigrant and refugee women.

In my role as a practitioner-researcher, I face the challenge of developing program evaluation methods that reflect this complexity and which honour the work of students in the institution. My primary method for engaging with EHCW students and for gathering data as a shared participatory method to learn with them was through arts-informed program evaluation. In the next chapter, I will describe the methods and methodologies I have used in my doctoral research, and particularly how I crafted an arts-informed participatory research project to better understand the participants’ lived experience and their views of the program.

Chapter 4.

Methodology, Methods, and Research Activities

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe my methodology, exploration with research methods, and research activities. Throughout this dissertation, I have situated my emergent scholarship and evolving identity as a practitioner-researcher within a qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research typically examines smaller and more focused phenomena or samples in greater depth, detail, and context. The researcher is involved relationally and in co-constructing knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Philosophically, qualitative researchers place significance on subjectivity. The ontological assumption is that there are multiple realities for any phenomenon.

To explore the subjectivity of the program for the EHCW participants, and the multiple realities, I needed to do so dialogically. My perspective, as listed in Section 3.2: *Practitioner inquiry and guiding principles*, is that this subjectivity of experience is often expressed through story. I wanted to provide a space for the women to tell their stories, and I wanted to be able to forefront those in my analysis. Arts-informed methods provided this relatively open-ended space, as I was not coming in with a positivistic point of view and approaching the research with specific questions about what I wanted to know or needed to find out about the program. For me, there was a little discomfort using art because I did not have control over what my emerge. As a qualitative researcher using art-making, you have to let that go. There is an element of openness, or critical theory, when you allow others to take control of the data, and of the story. In comparison, the numerical data gathered from larger sample sizes is of primary interest to quantitative researchers seeking more general or universal truths or applicability. In my workplace, this perspective is exemplified through the use of a standardized course evaluation form to collect data with virtually all programs over many years, which I interrogated in Section 2.6: *Rationale for my inquiry: Analysis of an institutionally based document*.

I address both advantages and disadvantages of a qualitative research approach. The first criticism is a lack of objectivity. Due to the interpretive nature of

qualitative research, researchers acknowledge their subjective stance and its influence on data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), researchers must reflect on this subjective stance and adapt different paradigms to their investigation because the subjective stance changes as they interact with their participants. The authors explain the interactive process as follows: “Research is an interactive process shaped by [the researcher’s] personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). In the contexts of my research, my subjectivity is shaped by being an insider (e.g., the program manager and developer, relationships with the students, and working alongside them in the workshops) and presenting an emic perspective. My emic perspective is highlighted in Chapter 5, where I present two stories “unmediated by analytic and interpretive interventions (Harris, 2006, p. 171). This inclusion of the participants’ stories resulting from their collages is crucial, as Harris (2006) claims that stories are

meant to offer the reader a deep “feel” for the nature of the kinds of social formation under investigation, prior to the making of strong and neat interpretive judgments, which perhaps constitute a more customary, and I would argue, premature procedure. (p. 171)

In other ways, I am an outsider (e.g., researcher, imbalanced power relationship, different levels of capital possessed by us) and I use theory to analyze the participant’s data more customarily, from an etic perspective, in Chapters 6 and 7. In Section 4.3: *My inquiry community*, I discuss these tensions between the emic-etic perspective which I experienced in more detail.

For my research, because I wanted to understand better the participants’ lived experience of a program to increase their investment in learning, improve the program, and develop my own practice, qualitative research seemed to offer more possibilities for providing a multi-faceted and comprehensive understanding. In the mind-map (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3), I described my research on a macro level, as *practitioner inquiry*, an overarching category of qualitative research which refers to a wide array of educational research methods, genres, and purposes. A further goal as a practitioner-researcher was to explore using an arts-informed research approach for program evaluation.

The data qualitative researchers gather may take the form of field notes written by the researcher in the course of or post-observation, interviews, audio or video

recordings carried out by the researcher, documents of various kinds (publicly available or personal, paper-based or electronic, already available or elicited by the researcher) and even material artifacts. Various methodological or philosophical assumptions inform the use of qualitative data, and in Section 3.4, I provided the rationale for why I include my narrative and poetic writing in this dissertation as part of my commitment to arts-informed research.

In this chapter, I describe how I integrated arts-informed inquiry into the program's ongoing learning evaluation. Art-making as a part of program evaluation helped to understand how to improve the program for myself, the staff, program participants, and by extension, the program funders. Following the analysis of a course evaluation form as described in Chapter 2: *Background*, I determined that this conventional method of gathering feedback from students was inappropriate for the EHCW program participants. I identified arts-informed research as having the potential to create complex, reflective, and interpretive images to represent participants' lived experiences, bring their voices and agency into the research, and to deepen my understanding of the program. I wanted to infuse arts activities into my research and intentionally gathered data being mindful of what could be presented in this dissertation. My laptop contained photos of collages and recordings of stories, my office housed art supplies and collages that participants had made, and my notebook pages were covered with observations, comments, insights, and quotes. Inspiration was pulled from many sources as the research and learning-oriented program evaluation unfolded.

In *Appendix A: Summary of research activities*, I list the research activities I undertook in chronological order. The summary compiles the activities that I led as part of my arts-informed research, and those that I participated in as part of a collaborative research project with others and the resultant inquiry community I was a part of. However, the learning that I experienced as a result of the overall practitioner inquiry that I describe in this dissertation felt neither orderly in a chronological way nor delineated into two separate research projects. The research methods I used individually and as part of the inquiry community, were interwoven and iterative. The insights gained were not linear or, in some cases, even anticipated, but the "messiness" of this process led to richer understandings. In his description of mess in social science research, Law (2004) asks the following questions:

If much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have much of a pattern at all, then where does this leave social science? How might we catch some of the realities we are currently missing? (p. 2)

Likewise, a group of doctoral students (Brook et al., 2010) published an article about their experiences doing research referring to the messiness and non-linearity of research, and how they came to 'know.' Their experiences resonated with me and my experiences through my doctoral journey. They contested the view "that learners are autonomous intellectual agents, that knowledge is a private possession, that cognition is an individual process, and that learning is a static and singular path" (Brook et al., 2010, p. 657). As they questioned that view of learning for themselves as doctoral students, they proposed instead "an understanding of learning as pathmaking—a richly textured, relational and passionate process through which creative possibilities emerge" (Brook et al., 2010, p. 657). I too see learning as a part of a dynamic, collaborative process, that eludes tidy description. How can I winnow or sort what I have learned from my doctoral readings, from my individual research project, from my inquiry community, or from discussions with colleagues in my professional practice? As I described in Chapter 1: *Situating my practice and research*, I use the term *learnings* to emphasize the ongoing and unfinished nature of learning that results from constructing knowledge and being involved in a process. It is now my challenge to capture this messy, collaborative learning journey on paper in a way that makes it clear for a reader to follow but does not reduce this richness.

In my professional context, I value research as an essential component of professional and personal development for educational practitioners to ensure that real-world challenges remain central. I have used this exploration to develop and become skilled in several research methods and to apply them in my professional practice. Research ethics documents, for which I am the principal investigator, were submitted and approved by SFU and WCC to begin facilitating my collage-making workshops. Researchers in my inquiry community had also sought and received ethics approval through the University of British Columbia (UBC) and WCC, to gather other data for the UBC research project. I was approved to use the secondary data collected through the UBC project in my own doctoral dissertation at SFU.

During my individual inquiry, I primarily used the following methods: classroom participation and observational field notes, analysis of an institutionally based document, arts-informed research (collage-making workshops with students and teachers), and semi-structured interviews with the core teacher and *Community Outreach Worker #1*. I had frequent and consistent access to the EHCW program and had been involved from its inception. I was a part of conceptualizing the program, forming the partnership, writing the proposal, and operationalizing it. In many cases, I worked alongside the participants, including students, teachers, practicum coordinators, childminders, employers, and other researchers, and I developed relationships with them. The data that I present in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will be mainly from my arts-informed research, which I carried out individually. However, at times I will supplement the data presentation with relevant excerpts of data from my inquiry community, which involved collaborative research as a team. Where I do this, I remind the reader that the data excerpt is from the *inquiry community*.

As the *Director* of the CEU, I provided access and support for the other researchers in my inquiry community to navigate the institutional processes required at WCC. Likewise, I was supported by my inquiry community in securing secondary access to data that the whole team gathered. Over an approximately two-year period, various researchers in our inquiry community participated in or facilitated interviews, led or participated in focus groups, transcribed recordings, and directly observed classes. We also shared relevant research literature, discussed the EHCW program, participated in several conferences, and co-wrote and published a journal article.

4.2. Doing arts-informed program evaluation

My primary method for engaging with EHCW students and gathering data as a shared participatory method to learn with them was through arts-informed research. I was introduced to this methodology in my doctoral coursework, which resonated with me, so I read more and wanted to explore further. I had two main, interconnected goals for my inquiry project. First, I crafted an arts-informed participatory research project to better understand the participants' lived experience and views of the program. Barone and Eisner (2012) assert, "Arts-based research can capture meanings and relationships that measurement cannot" (p. 167). I wanted to explore this assertion. I was interested to learn what would emerge when students were given the freedom to express their

opinions visually and then describe their images. How might this process amplify their voices? As many of the participants struggled with communicating in English, how might the use of art prompt reflexivity and enable broader expression? I was curious about what might be revealed, and what might be opened up in a dialogical way when literacy and text were not privileged.

Simultaneously, as a practitioner-researcher, I used participant observation to gather data when I visited and joined in the EHCW program, during the arts-informed workshops and particularly during gallery walks. As Patton (2015) has pointed out, “The extent of participation is a continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as full participant to complete separation from the setting as spectator” (p. 336). Given that there is considerable variation between these two end points, the participant observation that I carried out in the study could be best described as “fully engaged in experiencing the setting (participation) while at the same time observing and talking with others about whatever is happening” (Patton, 2015, p. 336). I was not as immersed in the program as the core teacher, the vocational instructors, or the *Community Outreach Workers*, but I developed close relationships with them and some of the students. Not including the collage-making workshop which I undertook following cohorts 2, 3 and 4, I visited each of the five cohorts while in session six to eight times. My classroom visits were for a variety of reasons: giving information sessions, participating in student selection, welcoming them to the program, drinking tea and having informal conversations on their breaks, dropping in to the childminding room, staying to listen to guest speakers, joining them for social activities, participating in role-rehearsals as an employer in job interviews, listening to their debriefs about their practicum experiences, and hosting the celebration for family and friends at the end. This participation led to important insights and understanding about what it was like to be in the program. Sometimes I took detailed field notes as an observer while I participated in classroom-based activities (e.g., during information and selection sessions or while simulating the role of an employer in a mock interview), but I often waited until later to record field notes. However, I do not delude myself into thinking my participation was complete, or that there was no bias or awareness of power and privilege differences.

Using a dialogic approach with those who had low levels of English language, I also applied the skills of participant observation in the collage-making workshops. Artistic strategies provide an opportunity to generate holistic forms of knowing. As Simons and

McCormack (2007) note, "When participants have the opportunity to portray their experience through different art forms, they often reveal insights that they cannot articulate in words" (p. 296). Although there was a thematic focus in which I generated guiding questions along with the women, the creative and experiential nature of arts-informed inquiry created space for my participant observation. During the collage-making workshops, I encouraged the participants to make connections with one another while exploring ideas and developing interpretations. During this time, as the learning-oriented evaluator, I was in the role of a focused observer. When conducting direct observation, I discovered that I needed to skillfully engage, listen carefully, and be attentive to nuances, body language, and visual cues. In my opinion, applying these skills generated a deeper understanding and richer program description.

Secondly, as a researcher into my own practice, I intended to reflect on the use and value of arts-informed research to reimagine current and future program development. How could using art open up space and create the opportunity to talk about a program in a new way? Could arts-informed processes invite the participants in and establish a trusting relationship in a way that would contribute to the improvement of a program? How could I both explore and represent this exploration in a way that was congruent with learning-oriented program evaluation? Barone and Eisner (2012) exhort: "To deny the potential role of artistic attention and artistic representation in investigations of educational issues is to limit our approaches to knowledge" (p. 43). How would using arts-informed methods have an impact on my own practice as a program developer and manager? How might using arts-informed evaluation contribute to the learning of the students?

I was looking at how arts-informed research could add value to evaluative processes and influence program outcomes. It was important to identify an arts-informed activity that could be integrated into classroom pedagogies, that would encourage active and accessible participation and not create a barrier by demanding technical skills or equipment. I do not possess a substantial experience in making art, but for many scholars working as arts-informed researchers (Knowles & Promislow, 2008) what is paramount is

a willingness to come to know the art form (or forms) in some depth and to the degree that makes inherent sense for the purposes of the project at

hand ... [and] ... knowing how artists of a specific genre engage with and represent subject matter. (p. 10)

Initially, I considered Photovoice (Delgado, 2015; Wang & Burris, 1997) but eventually moved away from this methodology for both technical and research reasons. I determined that taking and then uploading photos and later printing and analyzing the images was not sufficiently immediate and would require at least two sessions with the participants. Rather than waiting for digital projects to be processed, I wanted to focus on the dialogue that emerged. Secondly, Photovoice uses photography in the hopes of influencing social policy and aims for systems-level change for its participants (Brigham et al., 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997), whereas I was more interested in a method that promotes reflection, dialogue and learning among the participants. Unfortunately, benefits that the EHCW students might have gained through using and learning digital literacy in Photovoice were outweighed by the need for real-time dialogic interaction. I also briefly considered drawing as it invites immediate participation, and does not require expensive or technically demanding equipment. Drawing has been used extensively in arts-informed research (Sanders-Bustle, 2003; Theron et al., 2011). However, I decided against it, as some people have negative associations with drawing based on their previous experience. They may feel that they are not artistic or creative or do not have the skill needed to portray a concept.

I explored collage-making as a possible activity for my workshop. Collage-making using posterboards, magazine images, and other resources raised possibilities for generating discussion, being accessible for all the students, and providing immediate data. Conventional ideas about creativity suggest that it is an innate gift enjoyed by a privileged few. Collage-making seemed democratic. I took a collage-making workshop on Hornby Island, BC with an arts educator who had us explore our relationship to the environment. I liked that collage-making provided space both physically and psychologically to create, was tangible and concrete, and invited the maker to interpret their work. My experience in the Hornby Island workshop was that collages are not always immediately understandable by the viewer, and thus provide a catalyst for dialogue between the maker and the viewer. I thus experienced collage-making as a compelling means of doing collaborative research. Butler-Kisber (2008) described the history of collage-making, its modern foundation in Cubism, which opposed the notion of a single reality or truth, and artists' use of collages to portray multiple realities.

Proponents advocate for collage-making as a research activity enabling time for individual reflection, the collective articulation of experiences, and to create a space for exploring lived experience. As arts-based research, collage-making (Butler-Kisber, 2008; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Theron et al., 2011) is firmly positioned within the broader qualitative research scholarly community. In Chapter 8 (see Section 8.2: *Practitioner inquiry*), I reflect on integrating arts-informed inquiry into learning-oriented program evaluation and further describe how collage-making functions a research activity.

I facilitated the 3-hour arts-informed program evaluation workshops using collage-making with three different cohorts in the EHCW program. I took two to three pages of field notes following each workshop. In total, 21 collages were produced, the three gallery walks resulted in audio-recordings of participants describing their collages, and I also did two semi-structured interviews (one with the core teacher and another with *Community Outreach Worker #1*). Each workshop was held within two weeks of the completion of the program. I sought volunteers (students, teachers, and staff) to participate. About a third of the participants in each EHCW cohort voluntarily attended the collage-making workshop that I had invited them to: five students from Cohort 2, five students from Cohort 3, and six students from Cohort 4 (see Table 4.2). The core teacher and the *Community Outreach Worker* participated in the workshop with the student volunteers from Cohort 2. I made a collage alongside the women in each of the three collage-making workshops.

Table 4.1. Participants in the arts-informed program evaluation workshops

Participants	Stated place of origin	Age	Children
Program evaluation workshop following Cohort 2			
Mei Ling	China	54	1 adult child
Nadimah	Iraq	34	3 school-aged children
Li Fen	China	33	2 school-aged children
April	China	26	1 child in childminding
Jamila	Syria	36	1 child in childminding, 4 school-aged children
Tanis	Canada	53	2 adult children

Participants	Stated place of origin	Age	Children
Maria (Core teacher)	United States	45	No children
Community Outreach Worker #1	Tanzania	26	No Children
Program evaluation workshop following Cohort 3			
Penny	China	31	1 child in childminding, 1 school-aged child
Fatimah	Eritrea	42	2 school-aged children
Winnie	China	34	1 school-aged child
Angie	Philippines	38	2 school-aged children
Judy	Korea	34	1 school-aged child
Tanis	Canada	53	2 adult children
Program evaluation workshop following Cohort 4			
Cindy	China	32	1 school-aged child
Rinzin	Tibet	38	2 school-aged children
Esmeret	Eritrea	32	1 child in childminding, 2 school-aged children
Eman	Eritrea	29	1 child in childminding, 1 school-aged child
Senait	Eritrea	27	1 child in childminding
Tenzin	Tibet	31	1 school-aged child
Tanis	Canada	53	2 adult children

Over the three workshops, there was a range of ages, linguistic or ethnic groups and family statuses who attended. I had spoken with each cohort prior to its completion to let them know about the upcoming workshop and my doctoral research. I followed up with an email letting them know the time and location and attaching the consent form so they could read and discuss it with family members or others if they wished. I initiated each workshop with a brief presentation. I explained to the group that the artmaking was not about artistic skill, but rather that the participants were each expert on their own lives and experiences in the program. The artmaking process was intended to create a

shared experience and become a catalyst to engage in dialogue to help amplify insights. I established the norms of confidentiality amongst the group and in my research project.

In each workshop, we formulated a question together in plain English based on the inquiry theme:

- What is my experience of the EHCW program?
- What does the EHCW program mean to me?

The workshops' inquiry theme was intended to be open-ended enough to avoid being overly constraining but structured enough to provide a meaningful focus for reflection, artmaking, and constructive discussion. A dialogic approach such as this centred the learning process of the participants (both staff and students), and my research practice as a learning-oriented (Dahler-Larsen, 2009, p. 313) program evaluator. I told the participants in the collage-making workshop that my program evaluation goals were ongoing learning, internal improvement, and program development.

I liked that the materials for collage-making were commonplace, from everyday life, and did not appear to be intimidating to the participants. 'Art' is often something which is provided to us by others who are skilled at something. It is often somewhat mysterious or inaccessible because of our lack of access to the materials, equipment or talent. Therefore, the banality of the materials I provided, relied on the maker to imbue the collage with meaning. I gave each participant a posterboard and laid out art materials, including glue sticks, felt pens, pencil crayons, scissors, stacks of magazines, pages ripped out of old magazines, and stickers purchased at a dollar store, on a central table. There was a wide array of materials available to spark the imagination. The fundamental and embodied skills of selecting, cutting, ripping, placing, and sticking required no instruction with this group, so their engagement with the artmaking had the immediacy that I sought.

Collage-making is doable with any range of materials, but my workshop primarily relied on the participants using magazine pictures, and I made the decision to tear out pictures photos, illustrations, and graphic images from magazines in addition to providing whole magazines for the women to look through and to select their own pictures. In Figure 4.1, you can see that I laid out hundreds of images on the tables for the women to look through to focus on picking the image itself rather than flipping

through magazines endlessly looking for pictures. There was an intense and vast range of images – from everyday photos (and I ensured as much as I could that there were images of people of all socioeconomic types, ethnicities, age ranges, family groupings, body types, and abilities) to the fantastical or abstract. There were scenes from nature, industry, built environments of all kinds, and images that were attractive or repellent or evocative. I had explicitly purchased magazines, old calendars or art books from thrift stores or got donated used magazines from the college library, which generally had images that were not of the kinds found in magazines at the supermarket. I tended towards photography magazines, National Geographic type magazines, and science or travel magazines.



Figure 4.1. Participants in the arts-informed program evaluation workshops

I had set a few guidelines for myself when selecting images that further created limitations in the women’s choices. I did this intentionally because I wanted to select images that, as much as possible, were not pre-loaded with meaning or symbolism. My guidelines were: no easily recognizable or “famous” faces (no Donald Trump or Oprah Winfrey) and no overtly recognizable products or product logos (no McDonald’s golden arches, or no Nike swoosh). Also, no overtly commercialized or idealized imagery, such as stereotypically “beautiful people” standing beside their Porsche while wearing their high-end watches. For the most part, I did not include images solely with written text;

however, I did not explicitly tell the women that they were not to use text, and some chose to do so.

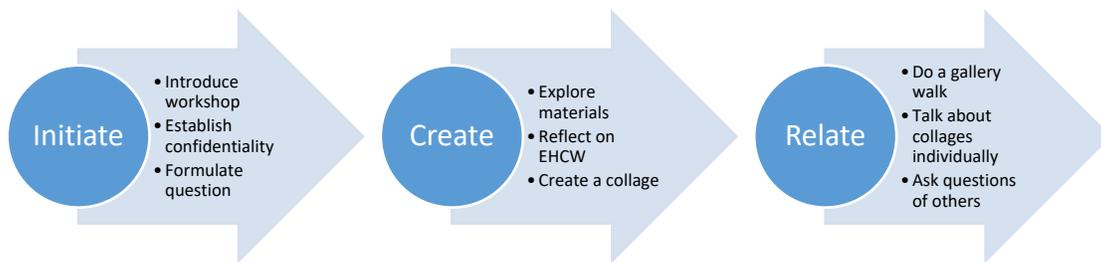
My rationale for these choices was that I wanted the women to create collages that elicited their own stories, rather than selecting one or two images that already contained an easily communicated message. I recognize that my act of tearing out these images meant that I had curated them, instituting a subjective selection on my part, thereby reducing participants' agency and choice. To give them more choice, I could have created a workshop where they selected their images online. However, using Google images can also have a limiting effect as women with lower levels of English and digital literacy might have a narrower use of search terms, and the search algorithms limit choices and are racially and class biased. Consequently, a large number and range of images were essential to present women with the broadest possible spectrum.

Collage-making is not inherently feminist. However, in the context of the EHCW program the holistic reimagining of the program design (e.g. making it accessible, providing additional supports and, being intentional about building different forms of capital) collage-making was aligned with a feminist perspective. The core teacher had created a caring environment which conveyed a feeling of safety and of being welcomed. The collage-making surfaced issues and stories relating to gender, parenting, and representation. I reproduce images of several collages in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In Figure 6.3 *Cindy's collage*, I notice that none of the women in the images that Cindy selected look like her. Her collage comprises several photos of White women, many of whom are exercising or demonstrating their physical fitness. However, selecting only photos of White people to include in the collages was not the norm, and a wide representation of images of bodies, race and gender identities were selected by the collage makers. For example, in Figure 5.1 *Mei Ling's collage* there is an Asian female dancer. In Figure 6.1 *Eman's collage* there are no realistic images of people at all. In Figure 6.2 *Fatimah's collage* there is what looks to be photo of a Latinx women in a bakery, and an Asian woman walking through a public square. In Figure 6.4 *Judy's collage* there is an Asian family, a variety of ethnicities shown, and a cartoon-like image of a male superhero. In Figure 7.1 *Community Outreach Worker's collage* there are two Asian siblings and two women wearing hijab and a cartoon-like image of a 1950s suburban White woman. When looking at all the collages made in the arts-informed

workshops, what was more striking to me was that most had images of women and children, perhaps reflecting the population of the program and the participant's life stage.

The workshop participants appeared to enjoy looking through and sourcing images that spoke to them. They seemed to enjoy creatively working with their hands. Eisner (2008) suggests that while creative forms of research can be pursued, the novelty of the approach or method should not outstrip its utility. If so, the artmaking may serve no purpose other than the aesthetic. The simple tactility of working with everyday materials provides a meditative joy for me, which I hoped to share in my workshops. Some might view collage-making as a simplistic, basic activity. However, I think precise planning and explanation about the purpose of the artmaking as a process for a way of knowing, representing and understanding the world and people's lives, circumvented this concern.

In the workshops, I did not show a model collage to the group, and the students were free to create their collage in whatever way they wanted with the materials provided. The diagram in Figure 4.2 depicts the collage-making workshop I developed.



Three stages: Initiate, create, and relate

Figure 4.2. Collage-making workshop

I also participated in making a collage alongside each group. I believe that it was critical for me to participate as sharing in the process—to struggle with making the art, to laugh with participants, and to disclose part of my personal story. McIntosh (2010) in summarizing the ideas of Della Fish (1998) describes the ethos needed as an arts-based researcher:

To enter into the traditions of the artistic paradigm, the (practitioner-) researcher does not need to produce real quality art, such as fictions or paintings. It is more important for them to have an interest in artistry, being

willing to think like (or more like) an artist, attempting various portrayals of practice, themselves artistic investigations. It is not the quality of portrayals that is important, but the quality of insights across a number of drafts that capture practice, and the critical commentary applied to them. (McIntosh, 2010, pp. 92–93)

After the brief introduction and question formulation in the *initiate phase*, I led the participants into the main part of the workshop. The *create phase* (see Figure 4.2) provided time for the participants and me to work on our art. There was soft music playing in the background. We worked on our own collages, and roamed around the room looking at each other's and talking about them. The women were given about 60 minutes to make the collage. I let them know this beforehand so that they would not feel rushed, but would have an awareness of time. Some took a little while to get involved in the process, but most often, after initial light discussion and chatter, people would settle into their individual work, and a period of quiet flow would settle over the group. At the end of the hour, I gently and sensitively reminded the group so that we left sufficient time for the third phase.

Once most had completed creating their collages, we moved into the *relate phase* (see Figure 4.1). I suggested we do a *gallery walk*, where we put our collages on the wall and walk from art piece to art piece as a group, with each creator discussing her piece. The idea of a gallery walk emerges from visual ethnographic methodology relating to place and placemaking (Pink, 2008) and also to ideas of movement. Although not a main focus of this dissertation, these two factors are important to consider in the gallery walks. *Placemaking* and *walking* show how knowledge may be produced in ways that differ from a traditional interview in ways that are a result of physical movement, embodiment and finding routes (Lee & Ingold, 2006) around learning spaces. Pink (2008) builds on and involves the ethnographers' reflexive engagement with what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as "knowing in practice" (Wenger, as cited in Pink, 2008, p. 2), where she interprets the visual ethnography process with theories of place and place making. Pink (2008) describes the method of audio/video recording research participants while "walking with" (p. 2) them creates place, and that "place might be constituted similarly through a wider range of 'shared' and multisensorial experiences and collaborative productions (between researcher and research participants) of (audio) visual ethnographic representations" (p. 2).

The relationship between walking and the making of place, primarily through urban walking, is established in the social science literature (Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008). Although the walking in my research was not long-distance, I suggest that the *gallery walk* enables this relationship between the making of place and walking. This process of displaying our artworks on the walls around the classroom, and gathering to walk together, creating a new place—a gallery—where each artist became the “knower” in turn as she stood alongside her collage and described it. The rest of our group became the audience in turn, which enabled us to see each collage as an artwork. As an audience we looked with each other, literally shared a point of view, questioned with curiosity, and engaged in dialogue.

The gallery walk was not obligatory, and some women were initially reluctant to volunteer to talk about their collage, but in all three workshops every woman eventually chose to talk about her collage. There may have been a slight pressure to conform (and perform), but I also sensed that, despite some reluctance possibly due to shyness or lower English language skills, the women welcomed this opportunity to contribute their perspective about the EHCW program. I provided time for each woman to discuss the program insights brought forward through their artmaking process. The collages provided a structure for their verbal meaning-making, and a way to share joint experiences. Images, or the placement of different images, often revealed a little-remembered detail or an insight, leading to a creative discussion for all. Others in the group, or audience, had the opportunity to ask questions and probe for more insights in a supportive manner. Overall, it became a collaborative conversation about their program experience and aspirations, but the focus on each artwork as we walked along, in turn, gave each woman the space to tell her story. I also participated in this process by discussing my collage and what I had learned from and valued about the program; but I was cautious, holding back until at least half the group had participated, to not influence the conversation in any direction. In each workshop, I kept my discussion about my collage short.

The gallery’s environment and experience of the walk and talk was one of curiosity, openness, and respect. As Lee and Ingold (2006) have observed, face to face interaction can be perceived as confrontational or less companionable than walking. I suggest that walking, then standing to the side while looking at a collage and pointing to features and talking, leads to a kind of full-body experience of social interaction. By not

needing to address each audience member through eye contact or direct engagement, the artist's experience seemed less like a static presentation, and more like an ongoing, rambling conversation combined with movement.

Each woman was an expert on her collage, and we asked questions like: "I like the way you put that image in the centre. Can you tell us why you chose to do that?" Sometimes, the answer was "because I liked it," but other times a thoughtful symbolism was explained. For example, Penny described four photos of two boys in her collage (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.1). She emphasized the changes between the two photos (each younger and then older) as a representation of the transformation that she had experienced going through the EHCW program. At the end of each workshop, I photographed the women's collages. A few women asked if they could take their collages home, which suggested to me that they valued the experience and perhaps wanted to talk about the workshop with their families. However, the majority of women left them behind. My impression was that the participants had appreciated the process of meeting each other, making the collages, and discussing the EHCW program, but placed less value the collage that they had made as an art object.

After each workshop, I needed to complete individual work without the participants. I had audio-recorded the gallery walk and summary conversation, and I took field notes immediately after each collage-making workshop to capture my observations and impressions of the event. Where relevant, I include excerpts from these field notes in the upcoming data analysis chapters. Following the first workshop, I listened carefully to the audio recordings and transcribed each audio recording verbatim and completely. For the next two workshops, I made choices about which or how much of the recordings to transcribe. I tended to transcribe those recordings of students who were comfortable with the questions and at ease with expression and comprehension—but not necessarily students with higher levels of English language proficiency. Alternatively, I transcribed those discussions which provided unique insights into the program.

After transcribing the audio recordings, I analyzed the transcripts of the comments the participants had made about their lived experience in the program. There was a rich body of data, including metaphors both in their collages and text, which I could later explore: "Metaphors are helpful in bringing an imaginative conceptual

language to describe the quality, character, and movement of the research process” (Donald, 2011, p. 11). These low-level-literacy students sometimes used metaphors to communicate what cannot be expressed literally, or what they might not have the words for. Maxine Greene (1992) says, “We feel less powerless when we can name and explain” (p. 15). We attempt to make the world familiar with metaphor.

As an emerging arts-informed program evaluator, I was satisfied with my decision to develop a workshop based on collage-making. I felt confident with collage-making and enthusiastic about the process, which was undoubtedly conveyed to the participants. This is not to say that the experience of doing this was unproblematic. My intention was not to create an “art class,” so I was satisfied with the level of technical knowledge that the students and I had. Moreover, as they knew their works were not going to be displayed publicly, they were perhaps not overly concerned with the aesthetic of their work. I was never interested in evaluating the women’s collages. For instance, I did not feel the need to develop the workshop technically to build their understanding of colour, texture, size, space or position in composition; nor did I feel the need to bring in additional art materials such as paint, glitter, or varnish to “improve” them, nor to provide a history of collage-making with examples of the genre. Focused attention on the collages’ compositional details might have created more discussion as a group, but I was satisfied with the amount of discussion generated.

For me, the collages were more valuable for their contribution to the analytic process, rather than using them as a final representational form. Although, when looking at the variation in the collages produced, one can gain an overall sense of the women’s lived experience of the program. For my work as a qualitative researcher, I might have taken more classes myself in collage-making, but I intentionally did not do so. I felt that remaining a novice myself, created a space for the women participants to engage regardless of their skill level, and to rely on each other. For example, in each workshop, students who had artistic talent or skill emerged and they inspired or supported others. It was important that leadership was spread around the group and not concentrated in me.

In our gallery walks, we made limited comparisons between our collages. Through this process of movement and embodiment, I noticed that there was often a murmuring of agreement when a student would point to an image and describe their experience. In retrospect, however, I can see that we could have used an iterative

process of viewing and discussing to tease out commonalities and differences across the collages. Perhaps after everyone had described their collages, I could have facilitated a dialogue on what was shared or different in their experiences of the program. I did not ask the women to analyze multiple responses to the same question that their collages revealed. Since the workshops and looking at their collages, I have had that opportunity, but it might have been more interesting to hear their analysis, insights and commentary.

When reading through the transcriptions of the descriptions made by the women about their collages, I identified themes or metaphors which emerged. I clustered similar themes. After categorizing these themes, I further elaborated on and analyzed them by drawing on and iteratively reading the theories and concepts that I presented in my literature review (see Chapter 3). To more fully describe the EHCW program, I drew on other sources of data that I had also gathered, through notes of meetings, individual interviews with the core teacher and *Community Outreach Worker #1*, and observational field notes—the latter two will be included as relevant in Chapters 6 and 7. The interviews followed a semi-structured approach that allowed me to focus on key issues while giving scope for freer discussion. In this sense, the interviews matched Kvale and Brinkmann's (as cited in Brinkmann, 2013) view of a co-constructed *interView* through which knowledge is co-constructed by interviewer and interviewees.

There was some congruence with the themes that had previously emerged in the research I had been doing with my inquiry community. However, new themes and insights also emerged through the arts-informed workshops and my analysis as I used a different method to gather data, and different theoretical lenses to analyze the data. For example, in their descriptions of their collages, the women referred to the impact of having onsite childminding more often than they had in their interviews with researchers in my inquiry community. By weaving the data that I had gathered through my arts-informed research with the data and discussions gathered through my inquiry community in this dissertation, I expand my understanding of the EHCW program.

A shortcoming of my arts-informed research was its reliance on transcribing the dialogue. Inevitably, verbatim transcripts, no matter how carefully edited or contextualized with description, fail to reproduce the fullness or the embodiment of the complete experience of listening to the speaker. Direct transcription is never fluent

regardless of the speaker. Roberts (1997) claims “all transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written“ (p. 168). I made an ethical choice in representing the EHCW participants’ stories about their collages in the ways that they expressed them which do not represent standard English. Does doing so enact a power difference between my text and theirs? However, is “fixing up” their nonstandard English not also an imposition of my power? My intention is to show the language as the women use it, and not to appropriate it so that it aligns with the standard form. Finally, I decided to only slightly edit my transcriptions for readability, and retain the women’s voices through their words in English, while respectfully portraying the rhythms and cadence of their voices as part of a whole portrait. In our current era of YouTube and multi-modal museum displays, the results may feel somewhat frustrating and flat on paper.

I made the decision when designing the workshop, that I would not set up a public display of the women’s collages beyond our gallery walk. I wanted to prioritize the dialogic function of the collages for ourselves. However, I could have given more thought to how women’s images themselves are content or text, and how that could have been better presented and understood. I could, also, have given more thought to how the collages may have provoked dialogue with and among different audiences. Later, I asked myself: What might have emerged if we had discussed sharing the stories with others and held an exhibition of the collages? Researchers (Brigham et al., 2018) have reported when migrant women participants in arts-informed projects share their experiences with audiences, new spaces and possibilities for individual and social transformation open. They suggest arts-informed research be used to advocate for and create social change (Brigham et al., 2018, p. 112). An exhibition by the EHCW students need not have been for the general public but could have been for other students, teachers, staff, or employers. In retrospect, I reflected that perhaps I had missed an opportunity to support the women’s empowerment, bring their voices to the forefront and position EHCW as a site of resistance or activism. What if we had invited funders to hear the stories the women told about their lived experiences and the choices they had made about seeking, or not seeking, employment? Might the funders have better understood the impact of the program in a visceral way? Could the stories of the women’s experience of the program impact on future programs or policies at WCC or in other organizations?

While I did not conduct conventional interviews with any students in the EHCW program, instead using arts-informed research to gather their dialogic input, I interviewed *Community Outreach Worker #1* and Maria, the core teacher in the EHCW program (see Appendices D and E). It had not been my original intention to do this. Discussions or themes relating specifically to the English language learning potential of the program had not emerged either in the data gathered through the arts-informed workshops, or through the research with my inquiry community. Due to my interest in language education, literacy, and the social perspectives on language, I recognized that interviews were a data collection method well suited to focused questioning and probing on these themes. I created interview questions that specifically targeted language and literacy teaching in the EHCW program.

4.3. My inquiry community

As described in the introduction to the dissertation and to this chapter and in Appendix A: *Summary of research activities*, I undertook a variety of research activities as part of my practice mainly using arts-informed research, but also those that I participated in as part of a collaborative research project with others in my inquiry community. I summarize these learnings as my overall practitioner inquiry. As a novice researcher and doctoral student, I had the opportunity to join a community of practice (CoP; Lave & Wenger, 1991) with a group of researchers who worked in community-based organizations or were connected to the UBC. My involvement with this group, this inquiry community I was a part of, continued for about a 2.5-year period. Early in the delivery of Cohort 1 (approximately September 2016) the *Community Program Manager* from PIRS who was a recent doctoral graduate with an academic and practitioner focus on trauma-informed instruction and co-conceptualized the EHCW program, contacted one of her former professors suggesting EHCW as a possible site for inquiry. She described the EHCW program and invited the *Professor* to learn more about it. As described in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3: *Reimagining employment training*), we reimagined an employment training program for women with holistic characteristics which were quite different in comparison to a conventional vocational training model. The *Professor* was interested to learn more. She was interested in the institutional partnership and how staff such as the core teacher, the *Community Outreach Workers*, and the vocational instructors, negotiated their respective responsibilities and ways of

communication and collaboration. The *Professor* arranged to meet with all of us and suggested that two of her students, the *Doctoral student* and the *Master's student*, also join our inquiry community.

In Table 4.2, I list the members of my inquiry community. I have given the inquiry community members capitalized titles and italicized their roles throughout the dissertation, rather than using their names, to ensure confidentiality and to indicate and differentiate their involvement within the inquiry community. Our inquiry community was initially mentored by the *Professor* who supported and encouraged us to observe, interview, reflect, organize our data, write and present about our experience. She did this with a very light touch in which she respectfully valued our contributions as equal to hers, while being transparent that her goal was to work alongside and support our community initially with the intention of moving her involvement to the background over time as different members of our group stepped forward.

Table 4.2. My inquiry community

Role	Description
<i>Professor</i>	An Associate Professor in Adult Education
<i>Community Program Manager</i>	A recent Doctor of Education graduate and program manager at Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (partner in EHCW program)
<i>Doctoral Student</i>	A doctoral student in Adult Education
<i>Master's Student</i>	A Master of Arts student in Adult Education
<i>Community Outreach Worker #1</i> (Cohorts 1–3)	The practicum coordinator and community outreach worker
<i>Director</i>	Me, a doctoral student in Languages, Cultures & Literacies, and a program manager at Westcoast Community College.

As a doctoral student, I was keenly interested in engaging in the project and joining a community of researchers. This provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on my own and our collective practices. We agreed that we shared a similar outlook and values. By engaging collaboratively within a distinct research project and forming a resultant inquiry community we created synergy to learn and effect changes for newcomer women through education. As a group, we wanted to explore alternative practices, and we knew the EHCW program could potentially offer such a site. We held

additional meetings to discuss our views on research and pedagogy, and to begin preparing research questions and research design. Not all staff in the EHCW program were involved in the inquiry community. For this reason, I refer to the core teacher using a pseudonym and not solely by her title. Although Maria had been invited to participate in our inquiry community and declined, she continued to play a key role in the EHCW program and the curriculum development. She participated in discussions with me in a professional context and I interviewed her as part of my research, but she was not a part of the inquiry community with the others listed in Table 4.2 above. *Community Outreach Worker #1* chose to participate in our inquiry community, and *Community Outreach Worker #2* did not.

I am aware that by assigning titles or roles to those listed in the inquiry community, I create a hierarchy and suggest a power imbalance. This imbalance was initially discernable in our inquiry community, but over time as we worked with each other and discussed our relationship in a transparent way, this was significantly reduced. After planning the research design, separate ethics approvals were sought (two for my individual research, and the other two for the research proposed by our inquiry community). After two to three months, we received these approvals. We agreed that all the researchers would have access to the raw data collected through the inquiry community research project, in which participants were identifiable only by number, and then referred to by pseudonyms.

Initial research for both my individual research and the inquiry community research project took place following EHCW Cohort 1 and just prior to the start of Cohort 2. This timing was ideal for some evaluation of what had been learned about the program initially, and occurred early enough in the series of cohorts to make modifications to later cohorts if needed. In our inquiry community, we studied the curriculum and initiated conversations with employers about the kinds of literacies and skills needed in the hotel industry. Research team members set up interviews, both in-person and on the telephone, with employers to provide the *Professor* and others on the research team with the background needed to understand the job tasks, the working conditions, and the labour market context of the hospitality sector. This labour market data built on the earlier research that I had done for the EHCW project proposal.

A series of interviews was conducted by members of our inquiry community with participants and staff at various stages of their involvement in the EHCW program—pre-, mid- and post-program. Researchers asked about experiences of learning and perceptions of how the program may have helped and/or might help better and the skills that are important to learn in the program. The participants were also asked how they might have benefited from the program socially, culturally, and economically, and what aspects of the program worked for individuals. After repeatedly listening to the interviews and focus group recordings, and transcribing them, our inquiry community collaboratively reviewed the transcriptions for themes.

Key themes emerged which addressed a range of aspects of the program and the following were identified: multi-dimensional development of women at the individual level, expansion of social spaces, expanded social and economic outcomes, leveraging resources and expertise across institutions, and negotiating mandates and catering to women's needs and capacities (Shan et al., 2019, pp. 9–13). There was a focus group discussion where researchers and other program staff discussed the challenges (e.g., institutional, social, cultural, familial, and individual) and accomplishments that the program staff and the learners encountered. We discussed and learned about the women's social and cultural needs, interests, prior knowledge, expectations, and learning preferences. We also brainstormed ways to leverage the strengths of the program and perhaps ways to do things differently. Finally, the inquiry community reflected on how we had all worked together and how the partnership between WCC and PIRS could be improved.

As part of the ethics approval process for my arts-informed research, I had stated that I would not refer to the name of the institution where I worked. In hindsight, this proved to be impracticable, as the ethics approval for the UBC research had not likewise stated this and, while I honour my commitment in this dissertation, the name of the institution that I work for can be easily found online, in conference proceedings, and associated with publications. The names of the other institutions that we partnered with or that the researchers were affiliated with are authentic and traceable. What did prove to be a better safeguard for the EHCW program participants was ensuring their confidentiality. All researchers were rigorous about this, and I am confident that even though I used quotes of their words and reproduced their social use of language as an essential way to honour their voices and experience, their identities are not revealed.

Throughout the approximately 2.5 years that I collaborated with this inquiry community, a significant portion of my doctoral journey, my growth as a practitioner-researcher was stimulated. I had opportunities to participate in a variety of qualitative research methods. The inquiry community afforded a detailed examination of the EHCW program, which brought in the perspectives of others (etic) that I might not have gained if I had only done my arts-informed workshops (emic). Emic and etic refer to two kinds of field research done and viewpoints obtained: emic from the perspective of the subject within the social group, and etic from the perspective of the observer from outside (Patton, 2015, pp. 337–339). I accumulated learnings that directly aligned with my doctoral research question in several ways. I gained a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of the EHCW program. I engaged in deep discussion with my inquiry community and recognized ways the women could increase their investment in learning. Through readings, discussions and presenting together at conferences, I was brought into a more critical consciousness of some of the systemic issues facing immigrants and employment programs for immigrants. Through our research activities, analysis and collaborative reflection, I pondered ways to mitigate these and improve the program. We had multiple meetings, provided much thoughtful input, shared laughter and feedback, and wrote collaboratively. We agreed that everyone in our inquiry community would share authorship on the article we submitted and later published in an academic journal. Several of the quotes in Chapters 6 and 7 from EHCW participants in Cohort 2 are reproduced directly from the published article and cited accordingly. Throughout the 2.5 years of collaborating as an inquiry community, my critical awareness relating to feminist educational practices developed, we encouraged and supported each other to continue questioning, present at conferences, and publish in academic journals to inform theory and praxis related to immigrant settlement.

4.4. Ethical issues and limitations

I experienced several ongoing tensions throughout my doctoral journey that spoke to ethical issues and limitations for me as a practitioner-researcher. The primary tension was the challenge of researching in a program that I also manage. This tension related to maintaining the participants' confidentiality, reducing barriers to their participation in the research, and mitigating power issues related to my role as *Director*. The second area of tension was meeting my professional obligations as manager of the

EHCW program, while experiencing a shift in values emerging from my research towards a more critical perspective, which impacted practices. As the *Director*, who had written the proposal for government funding, I was responsible for fulfilling our contractual obligations and meeting the EHCW program outcomes while making changes. The third area of tension existed between my professional identity as a practitioner and my emerging identity as a scholar and researcher. As an emergent researcher, collaborating with others, I was drawn into working with theories and ideas requiring me to define and refine my values. This shift to a new orientation required reflection about what I was comfortable aligning myself with professionally. Finally, there was an implicit ethical tension about the overall design and delivery of the EHCW program itself—do employment programs function to steer migrant women into lower-paid, entry-level positions in the labour market, or do they provide positive opportunities for the acquisition of different forms of capital and transformational learning? Overall, these four ongoing tensions required management and the confidence to articulate my values as a practitioner-researcher, which I further describe below.

While doing research in a program that I also managed, I tried to anticipate operational or ethical challenges. It was my obligation to mitigate risks for students in the program, mainly as some were vulnerable. As the program manager, I was concerned that the women might face barriers to voluntarily participating in the collage-making workshops, or feel that there was no direct benefit to participating. I was concerned that my research might cause some minor hardship or inconvenience, and I wanted to minimize this. To reduce barriers for the women to participate in the voluntary collage-making workshops, snacks such as crackers, fruit, nuts, and vegetables, and coffee, tea, and water were available at each session. Cost-free childminding was available for participants with children under the age of five, and the workshops were held midday so that women with school-aged children could also participate. Participants were compensated for public transportation costs. This access to food and drink, childminding, and transportation was not intended to be a benefit, but rather a reduction of barriers. Direct benefits for the women participating in the collage-making workshops were limited and mostly altruistic. Their participation in the research project contributed to the advancement of knowledge about this type of employment program, particularly for future EHCW cohorts, and some participants said that they were motivated by this possibility. Participants were provided with a safe and hopefully enjoyable place in which

to engage in artmaking and reconnect with their classmates that they might not otherwise have had. They had an opportunity to reflect and tell their stories, and offer their opinions in a safe environment. Perhaps they also learned and adopted strategies that helped them deal with or articulate their current situations. The experience may have contributed to their confidence-building and sense of agency.

I followed the research principle of “do no harm.” If the artmaking process triggered an emotional response, the *Community Outreach Workers* for the program, who were knowledgeable about community-based supports for immigrant and refugee women, could make referrals if needed. Some of the women had experienced trauma through their migrations. There were also registered clinical counsellors available at WCC that I could refer students to if needed. To minimize the risk of students feeling pressured to participate in the research, they were reassured in the consent process that their participation would not impact the support, workplace assignments, or assessment they received in the program. This is one of the key reasons I decided to hold the workshops following the program’s completion, even though I saw my program evaluation as formative or developmental and not summative. I felt that the women might feel more pressure to engage, be positive about the EHCW program or feel they had to provide information they thought I might want to hear if I had held my workshops in the middle of the program. Overall, there were no other foreseeable risks to participating in this study or conducting the research in this study. Participants were free to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality was guaranteed. As a result, this research project was designated as minimal risk.

Despite this minimal risk, the power relationship between me as the *Director* whom the students knew and them as students was imbalanced. I was mindful of the possibility that challenges could surface given this power relationship. I also expected to spend time navigating and building the researcher-community relationship and being held accountable for addressing ethical concerns inherent in collecting stories and other data from what could be considered a marginalized community. The students in each cohort had met me multiple times. I was involved in the information sessions, selection process, and multiple classroom observations. The power that I held was reinforced in symbolic ways—I was brought in for simulated job interviews as the employer, signed the students’ statements of completion, made a congratulatory speech at the end of the program, and presented them with their documents. My style of clothing was slightly

more formal than that of the teachers or other program staff. I often visited the class with questions for the teachers, or accompanied by other personnel from the college or PIRS. Despite this, I made a genuine effort to build a relationship with the women. I cultivated an approachable demeanour and got to know them. I learned their names and sat on the floor and interacted with the children in the childminding room. I joined them for tea and snacks and talked about some of my personal stories. I brought food to their potlucks, and we shared food together. In discussions with my inquiry community and for my own arts-informed research, I planned not to interview any students individually. I felt the power imbalance might pressure the women to be overly positive about the EHCW program or cause them some anxiety at being singled out. These genuine efforts at building relationships were necessary, as trust was needed to learn more from the women about their experiences in the program, including negative experiences.

The power imbalance may also have existed with the teachers and the *Community Outreach Workers*, who might have felt compelled to agree to being interviewed by me as part of my research. I felt this was less of a concern for several reasons: their involvement was voluntary; we had already established positive professional relationships where their expertise was acknowledged, respected, and different from mine; I made assiduous efforts to minimize impacts on their time; and they had the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the betterment of the EHCW program, which appeared to excite and motivate them.

The second significant tension between holding the role of *Director* and researching in a program that I managed was with concerns about meeting deliverables and maintaining funding. The EHCW program is funded for and evaluated by a government ministry, which provided the funding on the measurable outcome of employment rates. At the end of the 12-week program, how many of the women have a job? As I stated in Chapter 1, this requirement for quantitative outcome measurement can lead to ethical challenges towards selecting participants who faced fewer barriers (e.g., did not have children, had already gained Canadian work experience, or had higher levels of English and literacy) and were most likely to find employment at the end of the program. This tension could sometimes lead to a kind of reasoned cowardice when I worried about not securing future funding due to not achieving high enough employment rates for EHCW. This undesirable outcome could mean, ultimately, losing jobs for the staff in the CEU.

Having this auditing type of evaluation model (e.g., how many students have secured jobs?) can lead to cherry-picking the students most likely to succeed in the recruitment process, not those most in need of the program, and can also discourage risk-taking and innovation. An auditing type of evaluation can inhibit experimenting with pedagogy or trying new things by enforcing a type of conservatism of imagination where we fear risk-taking and affirm homogeneity by repeating previously successful programming. Over time, we may become reluctant to reimagine programs because we are hesitant to take broad or bold actions because of the fear of taking risks and failing. I looked to arts-informed research to promote what Barone and Eisner (2012) describe as a kind of epistemological diversity, one that “rais[es] significant questions regarding stale, tired, commonplace ways of viewing the world” (p. 47). In the EHCW program, the partnership between WCC and PIRS sought a holistic orientation to overcome barriers through the program design. In our reimagining of conventional vocational training, we proposed several significant institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes (see Chapter 2, Table 2.1). Given that the ministry chose to fund the program for the delivery of five cohorts, we felt that our rationale for holistic programming was heard and that our programming risks were supported. As a practitioner-researcher, I was conscious of how I might present and represent the data we gathered about EHCW as a promising practice or being in the process of learning, rather than being highly critical of either conventional vocational training models or aspects of government funding for employment programs. As a result, I saw this work as gently disruptive.

The CEU has a solid track record of delivering and managing programs, allowing for some latitude and trust with senior leadership at WCC and with the funder, to be innovative and to take risks. In many ways, we see ourselves as an incubator for new programming and responsive to new ideas. As I was conscious about being critical or jeopardizing our relationship with our funder, I described this concern with the researchers in my inquiry community, and we discussed this dilemma. As my inquiry community was made aware of this dilemma, I perceived that they also felt a certain responsibility to research and inquire within the context of improving the program rather than contesting it. We were mindful that programs such as EHCW are innovative, provide much-needed learning opportunities for migrant women, and are at risk of not

being consistently funded. This vulnerability to lack of sustainable funding often occurs in pilot or project-based funded programs.

As a doctoral student, I was aware of and grateful for the support and encouragement from the community of my doctoral program and my inquiry community to do arts-informed program evaluation and other qualitative research. However, my professional context at WCC generally values evidence-based and quantitative research, which created a third significant tension. In post-secondary and higher education in Canada, the current dominant narrative uses *evidence-based research* as a term that implies there is an objective, absolute reality that can be aloofly measured. The discourse in post-secondary places a high value on pursuing evidence-based research and following, what are claimed to be, best practices in programming. I felt conscious that for some colleagues, my research methods and approaches might seem “lacking in rigour” or “unusual.” It became important to be better able to articulate my practices in a clear and concise way.

As mentioned earlier, I prefer to use the term *promising practice* to indicate that our knowledge is not absolute, that we are always in the process of learning, and that practices require adaptation and adjustment for different, often localized, contexts. The Public Health Agency of Canada (as cited in Canadian Public Health Association, n.d.) provides the following definition:

An intervention, program, service, or strategy that shows potential (or “promise”) for developing into a best practice. Promising practices are often in the earlier stages of implementation, and as such, do not show the high level of impact, adaptability, and quality of evidence as best practices. However, their potential is based on a strong theoretical underpinning to the intervention. (para. 4)

I use this term to contrast with the term *best practices*, which implies an ultimate standard has been achieved. Further to the definition above, promising practices imply innovation, have a demonstrable basis for claiming effectiveness, have the potential for use as a model for others, and may be further refined, improved, and developed. Thus, promising practices are defined not only in terms of their effectiveness, which can be described and exemplify successful outcomes or impacts, but also for the potential to become more effective. This outlook aligns with my learning-oriented evaluation approach which focuses not only on identifying promising practices but also on analyzing

and sharing features that can be adapted and used in my own practice and in other contexts. Of course, promising practices have likely faced challenges in their early implementation, and these challenges are critical to describe, consider, and analyze so that others can learn from these experiences.

In conclusion, by consciously choosing to explore a variety of qualitative methods, such as analyzing an institutional document (the course evaluation form), participating in an inquiry community, conducting semi-structured interviews, and using arts-informed research methods, I expanded my repertoire as a practitioner-researcher. My practitioner inquiry required that I look at the ethical issues and limitations that surfaced. Palmer (2010) offers this insight: "Every epistemology, or way of knowing, is implemented in a pedagogy, or way of teaching and learning, tends to become an ethic, or way of living" (p. 31). This consideration of ethics and the range of methodological experience I accrued, built my confidence as a researcher: to learn experientially and from my fellow researchers, and to represent and disseminate this new knowledge to others. I realized soon after embarking on my doctoral journey that I might not know, anticipate, or direct exactly what my learning might be. I have had to become comfortable with the ambiguity of feeling confident around my own knowing and expertise as a practitioner, while remaining humble and curious as a researcher to fully learn from and with others. I claim the work that I have done, my learning moments, and am recognizing how these moments will inform my inquiry and praxis as a practitioner-researcher in the future.

Chapter 5.

Experiencing Stories: Two Collages

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, I include photos of two different collages: Mei Ling's collage (see Figure 5.1) and Penny's collage (see Figure 5.2.) and I descriptively summarize each of these two collages holistically. My intention is to step back in this chapter, provide an overall sense of these women's perceptions, and invite the reader to hear their voices. This approach is used to honour the voices and stories of the people they researched with by presenting unanalyzed data (Harris, 2006; Takei, 2015). As I mentioned, Harris (2006) advocates, "to emphasise the unspectacular, commonplace, everyday nature of the informants' self-representations" (p. 41). He indicates that one of the most effective ways to interpret language use is through "the accumulation of formally unanalyzed detail" (Becker, as cited in Harris, 2006, p. 41). Harris (2006) believes that the accumulation of details of everyday life can assist researchers to scrutinize and interpret cultural formation. In my guiding principles, I stated that bringing forward the EHCW participants' voices is crucial because they need to have direct input into the development and reimagining of programs that serve them. This chapter aims to reconstruct two participants' stories about their experience in the program using both their language and my written summary. What follows in this chapter are the "unanalyzed details" of the two participants' daily lives and the way they describe their everyday experiences of a program. I intentionally make no references to theory, but while trying to capture the essence of each woman's authentic story, my bias and perspective are inevitable in the process. I hope this emic approach creates a richer, view of two participants' perspectives that I felt were insightful and lay a foundation for understanding the EHCW program. The data in Chapters 6 and 7 is presented in smaller excerpts which do not provide the entirety of an individuals' perspective.

In my initial reading of the collages, some of the images the women selected to include seemed stereotypical to me. Different women chose hearts or rainbows as metaphors to represent their dreams and hopes for the future, or butterflies to describe their transformation in the program and their adaptation to new lives. Perhaps this

stereotyping resulted from me providing the images from the magazines rather than encouraging them to look for images themselves. Indeed, I had a role in leading and actively co-constructing the workshops where the participants may have been performing for me to a certain extent. However, once they began telling their stories, I recognized that poignant and unexpected choices depicted complex ideas that I did not immediately understand, or that did not seem to relate to the EHCW program directly. In writing these holistic descriptions, I relied on my field notes about the women, and the transcriptions of their words used when describing the collages. In the exemplars below, I provide summaries of two women's stories that were sparked by collage-making: Mei Ling's metaphor of the panda (see Figure 5.1), and Penny's metaphor of the horse (see Figure 5.2). My accompanying descriptions are the result of a combination of retrospective field notes taken after the sessions, and memories of the events that came to me as I was writing. I accept that my descriptions could be construed as being analytical in nature, to some degree; however, I attempt to limit any straying into the realms of analysis to my own ideas and interpretations, not to those that I have reviewed in Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry - Literature review*. I include images of the collages to bring the research process to life and to show rather than tell about it.

5.2. Mei Ling's collage

Mei Ling did not fit the average profile of a student in EHCW for several reasons: she was the oldest student that we had in the program (aged 54), she had been in Canada the longest of all the students (11 years and was now a Canadian Citizen), and she was one of the few who had completed post-secondary education in her country of origin. She had worked as a journalist in a small provincial city in China before immigrating to Canada with her high school-aged son and husband. I do not know under which immigration stream she entered Canada, but I would guess her husband was the principal applicant. Mei Ling had not worked for 6–7 years when she first immigrated to Canada, as her primary role was then raising her son, who she proudly told us was now an engineer living in Toronto. Mei Ling lived alone in a small 1-bedroom apartment, having divorced from her husband several years previously.

Mei Ling had salt and pepper hair, dressed plainly, and radiated health. She told us she did Tai Chi every morning, and she was an enthusiastic participant in stretching or breathing sessions and discussions about back safety and self-care. Her English

levels coming into the program were moderate (Listening CLB 4, Speaking CLB 5, Reading CLB 5, and Writing CLB 4) but higher than many of the other students' levels, and she had studied English many years previously in the federal government funded program. Given her CLB levels (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012, p. 52) her spoken fluency and use of grammatical structures was adequately fluent for moderately demanding contexts, but her vocabulary and pronunciation impeded communication at times. She needed to be encouraged occasionally by questions and prompts from supportive listeners. Mei Ling's digital literacy skills were low, and she was not used to working with a computer. She often communicated with family in China and expressed concern about her elderly mother who still resided there. While using non-standard English, Mei Ling seemed self-assured and the other women looked to her for insight and advice about integrating into the Canadian workplace. She was the one who brought out the tea box with the cups and the kettle every day, and busily prepared the supplies for the break.

Mei Ling told us that for the past 5–6 years she had worked in a variety of survival type jobs mostly with other Chinese speakers, such as housecleaning for a large company and a variety of other restaurant positions mostly with Chinese-speaking co-workers. This situation was also unusual in the EHCW program, where the significant majority of participants had no Canadian work experience. I intuited that her financial situation was challenging. Mei Ling had been precariously employed, and she was unemployed when she enrolled in the EHCW program; but highly motivated. Her sights were set on getting a unionized position in a large hotel chain, perhaps in the banqueting department.

Having worked in Canada, Mei Ling was familiar with Canadian workplace law and had stories and insights on discriminatory and unfair work practices she had faced. Mei Ling was keenly interested when we had a guest speaker from one of the locals from the hotel workers union. I noticed that she asked many questions about their hotel's environmental program, which the union said encouraged hotel guests to refuse housekeeping services by rewarding them with a \$5 coupon for each day they refused service. The union representative claimed the result had been savings for the hotels because of a cutback in shifts for workers, and extra hard work for housekeepers when they got back into guest's rooms after 3-4 days with no service. The union disputed that the program was as environmentally friendly as the hotel chain claimed, because

housekeepers ended up using more chemicals, more water, and more electricity to clean mounds of dirty linens, towels, filthy bathrooms, garbage and spoiled food left behind in the room.



Figure 5.1. Mei Ling's collage

Mei Ling had created a collage with a large image of a panda bear in the upper right-hand corner; her collage also had two images of forests and a large image of the ocean in the centre of the posterboard. Initially, I thought that she might talk with nostalgia about her previous life, possibly in rural China and then her experience migrating overseas to Canada. What emerged though was a deep thinker tying together and making connections between toxic cleaning chemicals and fragile eco-systems in danger all around our delicate planet. Mei Ling emphasized our roles in protecting the environment and ensuring our health and quality of life in the future. In the gallery walk, she described her collage and what she had learned and valued about the EHCW program like this:

I thought on this earth the food, and the lifestyle is very important for humans in the future. So, this class is very important for us. I stay in this class, and I learn more skills about the cleaning for the restaurant and the hotels.... Sometimes maybe change my mind. For example, before I couldn't know which one can clean, and which one is the natural cleaning liquid. And if everyone notice their job and their environment, and their social, they become better and better. They can know about their good

environment. How about the safe water, how about use the natural cleaning, for cleaning every corner. So, look like a forest and the environment have wilderness, and the forest, and everyone can enjoy a better life. So, the world become better and better.

Mei Ling from China² – Gallery walk

Mei Ling is making connections between the chemicals we use in our homes and workplaces and their impact on the environment. In the EHCW program, the vocational instructor and the women had worked through WHMIS data sheets on cleaning chemicals and discussed implications for occupational health and safety. They had struggled with the terminology and made the linkages between the chemicals and health and safety issues. They had also reviewed how to discard cleaning chemicals safely. During our collage-making workshop, Mei Ling talked about the importance of clean water for growing food. She described the importance of living a healthy life not only for the planet but also for our bodies. In her collage, she has multiple pictures in the bottom half of the posterboard of people using their bodies in physical and active ways to depict health and happiness: cycling, playing hockey, dancing, and embracing a partner in front of a sunset. She has hand-drawn images of stars and flowers near the photos to emphasize the positivity. Her skills as a journalist in China and her capacity to make connections to show relationships and tell a compelling story are evident. Mei Ling describes her experience in the EHCW program this way:

This skill [knowledge about food hygiene from the FoodSafe course] can make us organization. Not just for the job, but for the family, for myself, every co-worker, for each other. Now I know. I think they can give me a better life. The details. If your kitchen is very clean, you can enjoy a better life with my family members. It look like this. [She pointed to the stylized dinner plate and the hand holding a glass of wine in the upper left corner.] If everyone has more and more skill, they can enjoy their salary and enjoy their life.

Mei Ling from China – Gallery walk

Mei Ling discusses the importance and value of training. She refers to the benefits of doing the FoodSafe program, not only for finding a better job but also for the knowledge that helps everyone, including family members and co-workers, keep safe.

² See discussion of transcription in Section 4.2 *Doing arts-informed program evaluation*.

5.3. Penny's collage

This second collage (see Figure 5.2) was made by Penny, a student from China in the third cohort. Penny was, perhaps, a slightly more typical EHCW student in that she was younger (aged 31), had not worked in Canada, and had younger children – one had just started kindergarten, and the other was in the EHCW childminding. In China, Penny had finished basic bookkeeping training following high school and had worked for several years prior to and following her marriage, but stopped working when she and her husband immigrated to Canada. He was the principal applicant, a skilled immigrant, and now had a well-paying position as an accountant. This apparent financial stability was atypical in the EHCW program. Penny had studied English for several months when she first arrived in Canada but stopped when they decided to have children. Her CLB levels were modest (Listening CLB 3, Speaking CLB 3, Reading CLB 4, and Writing CLB 4), and I partly attributed these lower scores specifically in Listening and Speaking, to lack of confidence and opportunities for use. Initially, Penny was a quiet contributor to the group, who I intuited was quite socially isolated living in Vancouver. Over the 12 weeks in the program, I watched a friendship grow between her and Winnie, a similarly-aged woman from China with young children. I also noticed a growth in self-confidence over time and an interest in accessing other resources in the community, perhaps joining mum-and-tot type programs at her local community centre or neighbourhood house. Penny was one of the mothers who engaged with the childminders, discussed parenting and borrowed books to read with her son.

Initially, Penny's employment aspirations seemed vague, and she was not able to clearly articulate her goals. My impression was that she was learning about the Canadian workplace and job search skills, figuring out how she could transition from caring for her children full-time to how she might find some kind of part-time work in the future. Her youngest child was 3 years old, so perhaps Penny was looking ahead to when both her children were in school.

When I first looked at Penny's collage I noticed that she had not trimmed the images, and many of them were glued onto her collage unaltered from the way that she had found them on the table. Several images had text on them, which did not initially seem to have much relevance to the EHCW program. I thought perhaps she had found some images and affixed them to the posterboard with limited care about placement or

aesthetic quality. I was curious about what she might say, as I had the impression that perhaps the collage-making had not resonated with her as an activity. She started her discussion by pointing at the image in the upper right corner and emphasized how enjoyable she had found the EHCW program.



Figure 5.2. Penny's collage

First is for this course beginning with course, we learning, study and the study hard, and we get fun. [laughter]

Penny from China – Gallery walk

Next, she pointed at the four images of the two boys on the middle-lower left side of the collage. She moved her hand from right to left, emphasizing first the young boy

and then the older boy. Penny emphasized the changes between the two photos as a representation of the change that she had experienced going through the program.

We have a big change. Yeah, big change. And we thinking, and looking, future, that way, get a future... We ... nice, thinking nice. Uh, changed, yeah, changed a lot. Maybe I find a job. I ... comfortable to finding a job. Yeah, and I speak. Have good dream and nice ... future together. And it's better life.

Penny from China – Gallery walk

Her conversation turned next to the photo of the horse in the bottom right corner. I had noticed this image of the horse and rider but was mystified as to what it might mean for her. I could not immediately see a connection to the EHCW program, or presumably her life although she may have had experiences with horses that I was not aware of.

And a horse ... and ... ride the horse. It's ... it's successful. [laughs] This ... this good life. Yeah, beautiful life, yeah. You study, for, in the [?] [laughter] Horse. A horse is like a ... height. Maybe in future I ... is tall, and fast, and a horse ... a horse is ride fast, and tall [laughs]. High. See the..., Yeah. See the future. Yeah, speed, yeah. [laughter]

Penny from China – Gallery walk

In listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts, I heard Penny carefully choosing her words, and conveying this powerful image with her metaphor of sitting up high on a horse. She describes gaining a vantage point with which to view her imagined future and gallop towards it. She helped me to understand the importance of imagination and collective identity development. As Penny elaborated:

I think that the horse, like the woods, horse skipping. Horse keep going! [laughter] Like imagination. [laughter] Yeah! Horse keep going, like our housekeepers! [laughter] Imagination. Yeah.

Penny from China – Gallery walk

These women may have come into the program ostensibly seeking vocational skills or employment, but perhaps through EHCW they gained the space to imagine, dream and hope.

5.4. Conclusion

My intention by presenting, in their own words and relatively unanalyzed, Mei Ling's and Penny's storied, shared and envisioned futures, is some insight of the meaning of the EHCW program for them. Their images and words were powerful for me and initiated the process of discovering commonalities and uncovering themes between the women's experiences. Of course, this noticing of metaphors and selection of quotes, was done by me and is influenced by how I see the world, and who I am. In this regard, I accept that I am playing a role in the chapter's authoring and am "analyzing" in some ways, albeit descriptively and without reference to the literature that I have reviewed in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, I offer this chapter as a platform of sorts for the women's stories and their voices.

I felt excited and grateful that the dialogic method of the arts-informed program evaluation enabled and empowered women to tell the group and me what was important to them about their learning and experiences in the program. I saw the opportunity to impact the curriculum based on the participant's input. For example, Mei Ling's story directly provided the data to learn from and reimagine short-term employment programs by introducing or reinforcing curriculum topics. I related Mei Ling's story about the importance of cleaning chemicals for the environment and our personal safety to the vocational instructor who, in subsequent cohorts, put greater emphasis on using environmentally friendly cleaning products and minimizing quantities of harsh chemicals in the workplace. We also recognized from her and other's comments about how the importance of vocational training for finding work and improving their family's lives, could lead to greater investment for the students in the EHCW program.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I use a more conventional etic approach to analyzing the data. I decided that there would be many repetitions if I summarized each of the 16 collages made in my three workshops as I did with Mei Ling and Penny. As a result, I employ a thematic approach, showing images and selecting verbatim quotes from discussions of the different collages to illustrate themes that I identified as common to multiple women's stories, or unique insights. In Chapter 6, I identify broader themes of capital (economic, social, cultural, etc.) following Bourdieusian theorizing. In Chapter 7, I analyze the dialogue that stemmed from the collages for themes of investment, and imagined communities and imagined futures.

Chapter 6.

Expanding Different Forms of Capital – Research Analysis I

6.1. Analyzing the collages

In this chapter, I present and analyze data assembled through three sources: primarily my arts-informed research, some data gathered as part of my broader inquiry community, and some through semi-structured interviews with the core teacher, Maria. In Chapter 2: *Background*, I provided the rationale for using an alternative method to generate data through the collage-making workshops by demonstrating the inappropriateness, for this group of participants, of the course evaluation form. In my individual research, I used collage-making workshops to gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of the program in order to increase their investment in learning, improve the program, and develop my skills as a practitioner-researcher. Once the collages were made, and the stories told and transcribed, my analysis was undertaken by looking for themes and applying the theories and concepts that I described in my literature review in Chapter 3.

The themes which pertain to the participants in EHCW are organized in this chapter using the various forms of capital as theorized by Bourdieu. Since originally conceptualized, these have been further refined or extended by other theorists. Different forms of capital may be difficult to discern or disaggregate from other forms. For example, being a member of a social group and achieving a significant amount of social capital may depend on the acquisition of economic capital and linguistic capital. A common criticism of Bourdieu is that "his sociology is often regarded as a (class) deterministic one, having little to offer to contemporary feminist theories and debates" (Bilge, 2006, p. 1). While I have used Bourdieu's lens of different forms of capital in this chapter for my analysis, and I have referred to other scholars (hooks, 1994; Noddings, 1984; Shan, 2015; Weedon, 1997) in this dissertation to incorporate a feminist perspective.

As part of my data analysis process, I extended my own reading of literature using different forms of capital as an interpretive lens and worked iteratively back and forth. I looked at how these different forms of capital were actively built through pedagogy, and thereby contributing to expanding economic capital. I read the transcripts of the women's stories, thought about them, read more theory and found concepts or passages in the theory which then circled back to comments that the women had made about their experience. I examined how the EHCW program helped expand social capital and cultural capital through a women-only program and developed a sense of social connection among the participants.

After I held my first arts-informed workshop with the students, I realized that the students were not providing details about the core teacher's pedagogical approach. Perhaps they were not attuned to it, or perhaps they were viewing the program from a broader perspective. The stories they shared related mostly to their own accomplishments, concerns and learnings in the program. After reading through the transcripts of the Gallery walk, I recognized that I also wanted to learn more about the adaptations and strategies that the core teacher had applied. As the students were generally not bringing these stories forward through their collages, I needed to ask her directly. Appendix E shows the interview questions that I used with the core teacher, Maria, and her insights—particularly on English language and literacy teaching and learning—which further informed my understanding of the program and the lived experiences of the students in EHCW.

6.2. Developing social capital

In my initial listening to the transcripts, I identified common themes the women described such as their growing self-confidence and sense of agency, their expanding social relationships, and their increasing sense of hope. I wanted to theorize these stories and intangible perceptions to more clearly describe and analyze them in a rigorous way. The students were vocal in expressing their appreciation of the EHCW program. From their perspective, the program contributed to their personal development, expanded their social networks, and enhanced their social and economic capital and opportunities.

Eman, a student in Cohort 4 and a young mother from Eritrea with two children, made a collage that primarily had images of nature with many that looked to me like they could be photos of Canada (see Figure 6.1). Eman candidly described her experience of using artmaking to tell a story when she said: “This is the first time for me to look at picture and find my thinking....”



Figure 6.1. Eman’s collage

In her gallery walk, she pointed at the image of a painting on the upper right-hand side below the photo of the bedroom, and described her feelings about finding employment in Canada prior to entering the EHCW course this way:

...And, like this, nothing and no hope. This is like jump in the water and you don’t – you don’t know how to swim. ...

Eman from Eritrea – Gallery walk

And then she pointed at the photo of the bedroom. I assumed that she had chosen the bedroom image because it related to the vocational training aspect of the EHCW program but she did not say why she had chosen it. Instead, she pointed at the vase of purple flowers on the bedside table and said:

And this course, make me know how to smile, make me lots of things to...to survive. And I have now friends. And...the spring, it's coming. And I think my life's now....like flowers in the spring.

Eman from Eritrea – Gallery walk

Eman commented on the social and relational aspects of the program. Social capital is based on networks of relationships that emerge through membership in groups. Bourdieu states that social capital is not something given, but acquired. For Bourdieu, this network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships. Bourdieu (1986) uses the term “usable” (p. 251) referring to the establishment or reproduction of material or symbolic profits either short or long-term, which is contingent upon relations such as those of the neighborhood, workplace, or family. These relationships are both necessary and elective, implying durable obligations are subjectively felt as feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship or belonging. This notion of building social relations was intentionally addressed in EHCW. We were aware that as one's social network becomes broader, more influential, and more conducive to opportunity, other types of capital are correspondingly further enhanced. As an employment program, EHCW focused on individual human development as critical to employment readiness, in contrast to other programs which are more interested in technically “upskilling” workers and productivity. In the next section, I describe cultural capital, a subset of social capital, and how we attempted to create space for building it in a women's only program.

6.3. Cultural capital and a women-only program

In specifying a women-only program, we intended to create a comfortable learning environment for a culturally heterogeneous group of women. In doing so, we actively attempted to support the formation of social relationships, or, as Bourdieu might term it, membership into a “club.” At every information session, we had many more women attend and fill in applications than we had space for in the class. Acceptance into

the program itself conferred a kind of cultural capital. The following quote from Evelyn was taken directly from the data gathered by a co-researcher in my inquiry community and later published in the journal article we co-wrote. Evelyn was an EHCW student in Cohort 2, and she also participated in my collage-making workshop. As Evelyn described:

[It] is my big opportunity to go into this course ... I'm happy because it's not easy to stay in the house with your daughter. You have no idea what will be your future.... I go to this course, wow [I'm] so happy because all of us [are] women.

Evelyn – from the Philippines (Shan et al., 2019, p. 2)

The decision to design a women-only employment program acknowledges that while there are important differences in individual women's work and learning histories, there are gender-based commonalities in the migration experience that impact employment. Scholars argue that we need to fill the gaps in our collective understanding of the gendered realities of immigration (Brigham et al., 2018; Tastsoglou et al., 2014) Some constraints, such as concerns about financial support, lower levels of educational attainment in country of origin, isolation and having to develop new social networks, lack of fluency in English and lack of Canadian work experience, were barriers many participants shared leading to lower levels of social and cultural capital that we addressed in our participant selection process. Many women also carry the burden of invisible or emotional labour as a result of migration such as learning new ways relating to parenting and food-related household routines (Shan, 2015, p. 53) and maintaining communication and financial support with family and friends in other countries. We accommodated these realities in our program model (see Chapter 2, Table 2.1: *Reimagining employment training: Illustrative comparison*). As the capital that each woman carries differs, so too does her social mobility in a stratified society. As part the program design we attempted to address these various, constraints, needs and capacities.

At an individual level, the women reported expanded knowledge of the hospitality industry and Canadian work experience. In the discussions about their collages and their experience in the program, multiple women said they valued the formal learning through gaining the Food Safe, WorldHost certificates, the WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) training, and the Statement of Completion (the certificate)

they received from WCC at the end of the program. These certificates were meaningful as cultural/economic capital, especially to the women who did not have previous education beyond elementary school or whose education was interrupted by war or displacement, migration, or motherhood. As Rinzin described it,

And, also, with certificate training, it's more, it gives you more power than all those who don't have certificate. I have certificates. I have more opportunity to get a job easy. And, also, experience. Canadian experience...it's also part of power.

Rinzin from Tibet – Gallery walk

While educational qualifications are an exemplar of symbolic or cultural capital, they never function exactly as currency. Qualifications are not entirely separable from their holders. Their value rises in proportion to the value of their holder (and grantor), and changes over time and location. There has been much reporting in the media about the challenges immigrants face based on lack of foreign credential recognition. The implication of this for my practice as a program manager developing programs, particularly for marginalized populations, is to explore ways to recognize or formalize prior or informal learning into formal or transferable recognition at the post-secondary level through such means as the granting of micro-credentials, credits, credentials, or other systems which have traction with educational institutions and/or employers. Given that some of the informally acquired knowledge and skills of women were not highly valued in the Canadian employment market, we challenged ourselves to create a program that helped them to see their skills as valuable, and more importantly for employers to do so.

Perhaps most importantly, almost every woman in the EHCW program explicitly mentioned that they had developed confidence in themselves and increased comfort in communicating with others in English. For many of the women, this increase in self-confidence was ascribed to both the increase in knowledge, social connections and an increase in cultural capital as signified by the certificates they earned. Fatimah, a student from Eritrea in Cohort 3 who was slightly older than the other Eritreans in the class and had suffered from social isolation, illustrated this clearly. Her home life was challenging - her husband had not found any work, their marriage was under stress, and she had two young teenagers who were struggling to adapt to Canadian high school. She had made some strong connections with the other Eritreans in the group, and, I think, saw the

EHCW program as providing options. During the gallery walk portion of the collage-making workshop, she directed our gaze to her collage (see Figure 6.2) and said,

Those are the stars! [pointing to stickers of stars on her collage in the upper right-hand quadrant] [laughter] That's the part, will make us belong in this program, we feel more comfortable in the end... more... and knowledge. And challenge your life. If you don't, you will not go out, and you don't have anything. Now you can go out and feel, yeah, I have my back. I have lots of skills with me. I have my certificate. I can change my life. I can fight and go working and go back. Before you feel, maybe I couldn't. That's... I don't have certificate, don't have knowledge, don't have education, it's make you like weakness, right?

Fatimah from Eritrea – Gallery walk



Figure 6.2. Fatimah's collage

Through the arts-informed activities, Fatimah and others eloquently described the importance of certain aspects of the program that were of high symbolic capital for the women. What, then, were the implications of this for my professional practice? In proposing EHCW to the provincial government, I had included items in our budget, such as uniforms and safety shoes for the women. I had discussed the cost and whether to include them with the other staff in the program. In a competitive bidding process, we must keep our costs down to secure the contract successfully. My decision to keep the uniforms in the budget focused on their instrumental value: to ensure that the women had something appropriate, safe and hygienic to wear in the teaching kitchens and at their practicum sites. That said, I had not fully anticipated the symbolic capital these uniforms represented. I will further discuss the importance of the uniforms at the college and workplace practicum sites in Section 6.6: *Building capital through a relational approach and care-based pedagogy*.

6.4. Recognizing the workplace practicum as a site for capital acquisition

Very few of the women in each EHCW cohort had worked in Canada. Therefore, a critical component, perhaps the most crucial aspect of the EHCW program, was the practicum placement. Not only did the women gain Canadian work experience that they could put on their resumes, symbolic capital, which has broad recognition in society in terms of its value for progressing in the labour market, but they also gained networking and social experiences that enhanced their cultural capital.

In this example below, Cindy, a student in Cohort 4, refers to a two-week practicum placement in one of the large, luxurious international hotel chains. The practicum placements at some of the sites were well organized and structured. For example, Cindy was buddied up with a regular employee who showed her how to do things and answered her questions. Cindy said that her buddy or mentor seemed to enjoy the recognition she got as a “trainer” and the help in reducing her workload. Perhaps it was also a welcome change in her work routine. In other practicum placements, the EHCW students could choose to work in different departments for a week each (e.g., as a room attendant, or in housekeeping, or as a kitchen helper, or in banqueting, etc.). And in other sites, there were training sessions with videos provided by the HR department that were typically used as a way of onboarding new hires. At

Anyways, I work, and I remember the manager gave the soup to me. Soup, and gave to me! Okay, thank you very much, this is practicum too...Remember and work and watch [group laughter].... At the end, you can do it!

Cindy from China – Gallery walk

Cindy seems to validate her sense of self-worth in the workplace through recognition from others. She acknowledges a growing acquisition of social capital which she had gained through varied experiences in her practicum placement, and in turn, encourages the other women in the cohort. As a program designer, the practicum has importance as it represents the “novice’s” apprenticeship into a community of practice. In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature review* I referred to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of a community of practice, and the extension to imagined communities. Wenger (1998) views “imagination” (p. 175) as a form of engagement with communities of practice, and this perspective is intentionally aligned with pedagogy and practice around practicum placements in EHCW. Wenger’s situated learning theory presents imagination as both an individual and social process. A two-week practicum placement is enough time to learn some skills and practices, but more importantly, it is sufficient time for a student to imagine themselves in that employment situation and begin to make shifts (or not) in their identity accordingly; it also provides the opportunity for their co-workers and employers to do so. In Wenger’s view, the future imagined self is a distinct form of belonging to a community of practice and a way in which “we can locate ourselves in the world and history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives” (p. 178).

For some of the women, as illustrated by Judy, a student from Korea in Cohort 3, doing physical labour was discouraging, and she perceived it as a loss of status. With the EHCW students, we had explicitly discussed the challenges of being in entry-level positions, the potential for exploitation, and we illustrated pathways and career trajectories into better paid, more secure or more rewarding employment as part of the program. We brought in WCC advisors to discuss various program options and prerequisites required for additional training, and invited guest speakers (typically supervisors or managers in the Hospitality field) to describe their own career and educational pathways. Many of these guest speakers were immigrants themselves who addressed the concern about the possibility of unsatisfactory employment conditions, and provided strategies to mitigate it. These initiatives helped to provided positive

emotional support for identity development, and were attempts to alleviate valid concerns about being “stuck” in entry-level positions. For almost all the women, the work was physically demanding, and they felt stiff and sore for the first couple of days on their practicum placements. When describing one of the images on her collage (see Figure 6.4), Judy described her initial feelings about doing manual labour:

This is clouds [pointing to an image of a cloud with the sun shining through.] Sometimes, I feel discourage myself to learn about cleaning tasks for two weeks....now I overcome...struggle with my feelings which made me not comfortable. So, I'm more confidence to this job now. It was really hard for me...but, I think we're a good team to support each other.

Judy from Korea – Gallery walk



Figure 6.4. Judy's collage

As cultural capital is comprised of a person's social assets which promote social mobility in a stratified society, the practicum placement had to be highly legitimized in the view of mainstream Canadian employers. Therefore, the implication for my practice is that this could not be viewed as simply a "bit of volunteer work," but as a well-organized, rigorous learning experience. For some of the women who, like Judy, initially felt discouraged at doing manual labour we needed to ensure that the practicum placement was a credible learning experience to avoid affirmation of a reduced sense of cultural capital.

Employing the arts in research was enjoyable and deceptively powerful, more powerful than I had imagined before engaging with it. Even though deep, personal, or emotional responses did not necessarily emerge through an arts-informed practice, I had to be both prepared and well-equipped to respectfully and skillfully facilitate this should strong emotions arise. Clover (2016), a feminist, arts-based adult educator, states when using arts that "they are at times gentle, nurturing, and therapeutic; they are also, at times, provocative, oppositional and explosive in their power to activate the critical and defiant imagination" (p. 4). My experience was primarily the former, but Judy's revelation shows the power of arts to express contested opinions. No response on a course evaluation form would have revealed this initial disillusionment, and resulting identity shift from discouragement and loss of status, to a demonstration of collaboration and support. As an emergent arts-informed researcher, I will continue to build my repertoire, take more risks and develop skills so that I can work with "the provocative, oppositional and explosive" as I continue to explore these methods.

We can understand the cultural capital being illustrated as the identity shift for each participant from "having no Canadian work experience" to "having Canadian work experience" as represented by the Statement of Completion provided by a well-respected public institution. Judy, the student from Korea whose collage I discussed above (see Figure 6.5), did not point to or discuss this small image of three medals that she had glued onto her collage tucked between two larger images.

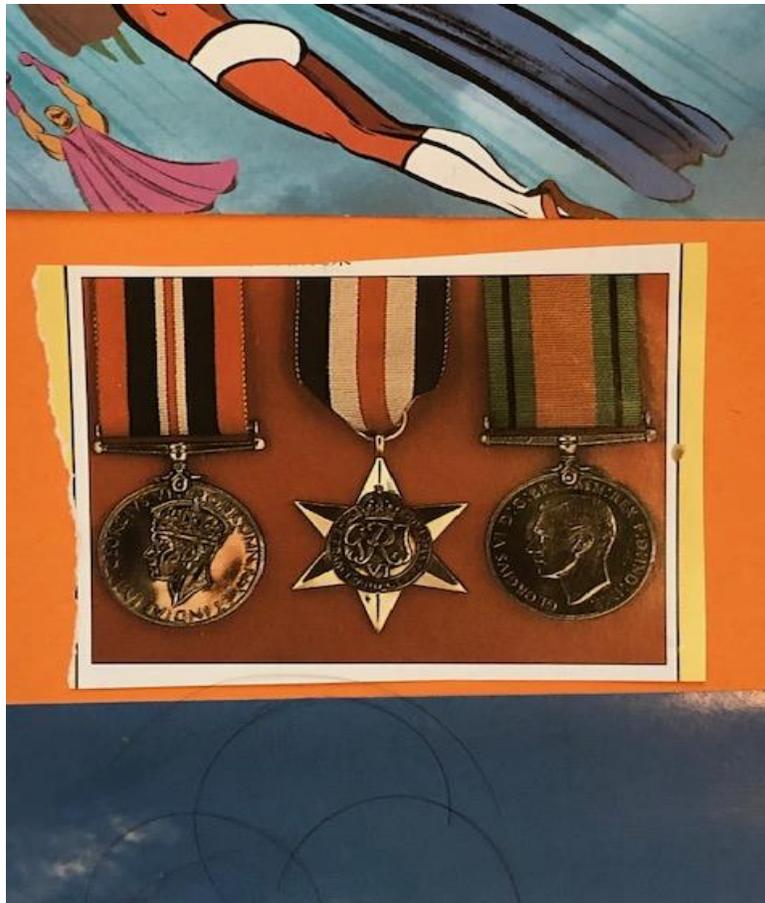


Figure 6.5. Judy's medals

During our gallery walk none of the students nor I asked her about the meaning of this small image so I can only extrapolate that aspects of the EHCW program had been of value for her as she said that she had “overcome” her “struggles.” I surmise that these medals symbolize an accomplishment she was proud of, and perhaps Judy felt pride in doing something that she acknowledged was initially hard for her, and then “overcoming” it to complete her practicum placement and finish the program.

Several protocols were established to ensure practicum placements were well supported for the students and viewed as legitimate by the employers. The *Community Outreach Workers* carefully selected employers who showed an understanding of the situations faced by individual women, and a willingness (perhaps due to their social values or perhaps due to the low unemployment rate) to offer training and potential employment opportunities. In some residential care homes, the students' first languages were valued if there were residents who shared their languages. The *Community*

Outreach Workers collaborated closely with the women to find workplaces that could accommodate some of their needs (e.g., half-time shifts because they had school-aged children and needed to pick them up, or preference for working in the kitchen over housekeeping or laundry). Each student was visited at least twice in the two-week practicum period by either the core teacher or the *Community Outreach Worker*, who also checked-in directly with the supervisor or employer. There were support protocols in place, with signed letters of agreement with the employers regarding expectations and safety, and WCC provided workplace insurance. There was training leading up to the practicum placement about workplace expectations, and a post-practicum debrief session. These supports were described and explained to the EHCW participants, who could also phone or email the EHCW staff if they had any questions or concerns. While not explicitly mentioned by the students in their stories, these measures affirmed the legitimacy of the practicum experience and contributed to the overall cultural capital the women accumulated through the practicum placement experience.

6.5. Accumulating linguistic capital

The EHCW program was not primarily a language program; it was an employment program for women with immigrant and refugee experience. I contend that in addition to vocational training, this type of programming also creates space for language and literacy learning and enhancing linguistic capital. Precisely because the program was positioned as an employment program and not labelled as a language program, the space for language learning was expansive. As observed by Pavlenko and Norton (2007),

Complementary to debates over who may be considered a “legitimate” speaker of English are debates over the framing and positioning of English language learners. Given the power of English within the larger global community, English language learners, the “marked” case, are often positioned within a deficit framework that limits the kinds of identities and communities that can be imagined by and for these learners. (p.596)

If we accept the contention that the cultural or linguistic capital of social value is typically not that of dominated or marginalized groups (Bourdieu, 1991; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), I suggest that possibilities open up, as a result, to create a program explicitly focused on employment while implicitly attending to critical language and literacy pedagogy. In this regard, EHCW provided a space for the participants to assume

an identity, not as a language learner, but as a job seeker or potential employee, someone who is labour-market ready. The practicum placement legitimized the women's skills, and subsequently language, by revealing to them via the legitimization conferred by employers that they could "succeed" in a Canadian workplace. As Rinzin, a student from Tibet in Cohort 4 who had a practicum placement in a residential care home, said :

And I'm strong in communication, I work in the place, I talk to my co-workers, I'm already become friends with them. I go from frustrated ... I never understand, to until now ... I feel I'm already, I'm okay, I'm everything professional now.

Rinzin From Tibet – Gallery walk

The words Rinzin selects, such as "I work in the place," "my co-workers," and "professional now," show that she identifies as a potential employee. She does not refer to her own English language or literacy skills, but she does refer to communication and focuses on her social interaction in the workplace and her sense of professional identity. It may be more useful to see literacies in such contexts as forms of understanding embedded in social relationships, cultural meanings and activities.

In Darvin and Norton's (2015) revised model, symbolic capital is identified as particularly relevant to understanding investment in language studies in our globalized world. The authors point out two significant ideas for learners who move transnationally and move through online and offline spaces: "First, learners do enter these spaces equipped with capital—for example, their own material resources, linguistic skills, and social networks—and are not empty vessels" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 45). The linguistic capital the EHCW students held, including the strategic use of their home languages, was acknowledged, valued, and used as a resource. In an interview with me, Maria, the core teacher, described her approach to first language use in the classroom as a positive language learning resource:

I would say, OK, go explain it to each other in Arabic [or whichever language they chose] and then explain it to each other in English. And that actually, I think it helped to kind of to memorize or to remember the concepts, and to hook the vocabulary together from one language to the next language and so that, I think, was really helpful...oh, OK, surprisingly, they didn't stay in their language groups for very long and it wasn't like me saying "OK, come back to speaking English"...it wasn't like that at all, it was them wanting to take it from their first languages and bring it back into English. So sometimes I had them write things in their language and then

tell me or a partner about it in English, because we're going to talk about it in English. So be prepared to bring it into English. That writing [in their language] really helped and sometimes it was pictures, so I'd say "do your sketching, your diagramming, your mind-mapping in any language" – sometimes it was in English, but then come back and tell us about it in English, or teach each other about it in English. And I think that was really helpful.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

This use of first language was a validation of linguistic skills, and provided opportunities to demonstrate and share content knowledge. Valuing first language as a resource for learning became a way of both recognizing the participants' prior learning and building linguistic capital.

Darvin and Norton (2015) also point to how learners may struggle to convert the capital they already have into something of value in a new context:

Second, occupying new spaces involves not only acquiring new material and symbolic resources but also using the capital that learners already possess as affordances and transforming this capital into something that is regarded as valuable in new contexts. This conversion is always a site of struggle, given that what may be valued in one place may be radically devalued in another. (p. 45)

Investment in language learning may be a part of this transformative process. Even though EHCW was not funded, labelled or described as an English language course, implicit in the program model was the integration of English language training with vocational skills and content training.

The students engaged meaningfully with various text types and formats (e.g., recipes, workplace hazardous information datasheets, housekeeping checklists, employment contracts, and work schedules) to develop their informational literacy in conjunction with their English language skills. They honed their language learning strategies, which encouraged them to become independent language learners outside the classroom. As a group, they built long vocabulary lists on flip chart paper, which they hung around the room. These posters were based on themes like FoodSafe, or workplace safety, or hazardous materials. Many of the students took photos of the posters, built lists on their phones, or took pictures of objects, signs or words that they did not know and brought them back to the classroom. Throughout the course, to reinforce vocabulary and concepts, Maria explained in the interview that she often

extended themes and embedded explanations or definitions in her discussions with the students.

As described in Chapter 3, literacy is not simply the isolated skills of reading and writing. The understanding and using of many forms of texts, media and images becomes a part of identity as a student or as an employee, and membership in a community such as an employment program or a workplace. I emphasized to the core teacher and the vocational instructors that teaching materials and learning tasks needed to stem from authentic and relevant workplace-related texts and tasks, and to utilize a variety of modalities. For example, reviewing the shapes of the symbols corresponding to different hazardous workplace materials, and then asking students to seek the shapes on actual cleaning products used in vocational classes, and then providing warnings to each other about the products. This reading of symbols, as one example of an alternative semiotic system, illustrates the expanded view of literacy as multiliteracy (New London Group, 1996).

During the period that the EHCW program was running (August 2016 to October 2018) there were no similar vocational or employment training programs for women with limited English language and literacy being offered at a college the Metro Vancouver area. In developing the EHCW program, I looked to the academic literature for previous models, and, drew upon many years of experience managing and teaching in WCC's long-established combined skills model (e.g., Health Care Assistant/ESL, Baking and Pastry Arts/ESL, Hair Design/ESL), which integrates vocational training and language training. Although the Combined Skills programs at WCC were different from the EHCW in several significant ways, the model was relevant. The Combined Skills students generally required higher levels of English language proficiency for entry, were fee-paying, and did not face significant barriers to education and employment. In many of the combined skills model cohorts, the students were younger International students.

For Bourdieu, power relations are reflected through language when one's language is determined as legitimate, allowing access to economic and social opportunities such as jobs, services, and connections. My years of professional practice, both teaching and developing curriculum for the combined skills model, proved an asset in the development of the EHCW program model as I intentionally supported the development of linguistic capital for the students. Through my professional practice, I

had accumulated a repertoire of pedagogical strategies for supporting instructors adapt their approach to working with the EHCW student demographic. Strategies for vocational instructors to consider such as giving demonstrations (and encouraging questions and describe-back opportunities), utilizing language related supports (e.g., encouraging the use of digital devices for translation, vocabulary handouts with pictures, info graphics, and reviews of vocabulary) using images and videos extensively, providing step-by-step instructions, making opportunities for immediate application of theory, and providing clear task explanations, made content learning more comprehensible. These pedagogical strategies not only developed critical literacy and language learning skills, but also helped to accumulate linguistic capital.

6.6. Building capital through a relational approach and care-based pedagogy

In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature review*, I described the ethic and pedagogy of care. I referred to Nel Noddings (1984, 1988), who sees education, in its widest sense and not just in schools, as central to the cultivation of caring. I recognized early in the program planning stages that the core teacher and the *Community Outreach Workers* for EHCW would be critical as she (or he) needed to embody an ethic or pedagogy of care, as described in Section 3.6: *Care-based pedagogy*, and to prioritize the relational over the vocational content. For Noddings, educators have to show what it means to care in their behaviour. She writes, “We do not merely tell them to care and give them texts to read on the subject, we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them” (Noddings, as cited in Bergman, 2004, p. 154). A holistic approach to supporting the women outside of the classroom was critical to the success of the program and aimed to contribute to the women feeling cared for. Unlike conventional vocational programs where, generally, post-secondary students are expected to navigate support services such as seeking information about progress online or accessing the learning centre or computers on campus relatively independently, the EHCW program team intentionally oriented students to services and helped to build their familiarity with using them. The core teacher and the *Community Outreach Worker* proactively monitored the participants’ progress and acted as a first contact point for further referral to on-campus and off-campus support services when they faced challenges in their studies and

personal lives. In her Gallery walk, Cindy in cohort 4, discussed compassion, collaboration, and the environment of caring in EHCW:

This is my poster. You see the heart? [pointing to the upper left quadrant in Figure 6.3: Cindy's collage] Life is like this. We have heart. All together we [laughs] we work together, we grow together for the best in our life. Take care of yourself. Look what she needs. We can sit in the house, don't go out, we feel depressed. If you're alone, it's very important to be integrated in Canada.

Cindy from China – Gallery walk

She also acknowledged the challenges with isolation that many women with young children can feel when they stay at home, and that the feelings of isolation can be compounded as a newcomer. The caring net of support that Maria and *Community Outreach Workers* created meant they could quickly identify emerging issues and take timely measures to assist. For example, when the women needed supports that the college could not provide, such as housing or social assistance, the *Community Outreach Workers* connected them with appropriate community service organizations that could assist. Specifically, we connected each student with a local government-funded WorkBC Employment Service Centre at the end of their training so that they would continue to receive necessary employment search support. During a tour of the nearest WorkBC centre, which is located on the WCC campus, the centre staff introduced the women to its services and made connections and introductions to other WorkBC centres located near to their homes that might be more convenient for the women. A guest speaker from Family Services of Greater Vancouver provided a financial literacy workshop on saving, credit, basic investment concepts, and making a family budget. Some of the women, with the support of the EHCW staff, started reaching out to some of the community services to which they were introduced.

Maria and the *Community Outreach Workers* did not limit themselves solely to seeking employment with and for the EHCW participants. They also attended to women's other needs and capacities, such as those for continuous training and education. For instance, they supported one of the women in her application to a culinary arts diploma program in WCC. They also linked the women to existing programs at PIRS. The core teacher and *Community Outreach Worker* were highly attuned to the women and aware of the issues that they might face at work and in life. They were the relational "heart" of the program. The vocational instructors and guest speakers in the

EHCW program were short-term and changed over the cohorts, so this did not allow for the same depth of relationship to develop with the students.

The EHCW program promoted care-based pedagogy, by engaging a core teacher who had training as an EAL instructor and was interculturally competent, anchored the training process, liaised closely with the vocational instructors, and planned her lessons to prepare the participants for the vocational training components adequately. She was present in the vocational training classes to provide linguistic and sociocultural support to the learners. The core teacher also developed a relational approach to supporting the vocational instructors who may not have had as much experience teaching students with low English and literacy levels. She provided pedagogical strategies for them to make their talk, text and content learning more comprehensible. Some examples were to use more visuals such as video, photos and illustration, and to simplify their teacher talk by shortening utterances, avoiding idioms, providing pauses to allow for think time. The vocational instructors delivered their training but provided content information beforehand to Maria for her to use in preparation for their classes. The core teacher provided information to the vocational instructors about the students' learning styles, needs and capabilities, and English language abilities. From a program management perspective, the budget for instruction was approximately 1.5 times the usual, but this level of instruction can be seen both as an equity issue as well as contributing to the students feeling cared for. Jamila, a student from Syria who had joined Cohort 2 after recently being sponsored to Canada as a Government Assisted Refugee, described her feeling of being cared for in the EHCW program this way in the following excerpt from her gallery walk:

And we all have the love for the people that they make this program for us.... And the people, they help us ... not just with program ... they help us with stuff that was outside the program. Even with our life. If we have any problems, they was always there for us.... So, we have friends who were that and help us. And some love for all of them [group laughter/applause].

Jamila from Syria – Gallery walk

From Jamila's comments, we can see that *caring* can be a significant force in education. Caring in the EHCW program contributed to the cultivation of social capital and investment in learning for students.

Throughout the time that the five cohorts of EHCW ran, Maria, the core teacher, and I frequently met to exchange ideas and pedagogical strategies to contribute to the students feeling cared for, improve the program for the students, and increase their investment in learning. Maria suggested strategies to help the vocational instructors with their lesson planning to teach those with lower English language and literacy levels. Breaking down the curriculum and scaffolding teaching materials, particularly vocabulary and concepts into manageable chunks, was essential to make learning accessible. Maria was in the same room with the vocational instructors during their classes, and her role was to both support the students and provide pedagogical support for the vocational instructors. Some of the vocational instructors had not taught students who had lower levels of English language and literacy, and may have felt either frustrated or unable to easily adapt their pedagogy. In the interview with Maria (see Appendix E), she described how she would sensitively approach this:

[If] particular instructors were having a little bit of a hard time with some part of it, I would actually ask them “is it OK if I interject here” or “Is it OK with you if I just raise my hand and try to explain something, because I can see that’s not, maybe, coming across as clearly” and they were very receptive, but trying to figure out how to and sometimes it was running a bit of a review at the beginning of the class ... or maybe at the end, or maybe interjecting an explanation that might be helpful. Giving out supplemental materials after or following that particular class. Um, and then, eventually though, [in subsequent cohorts] it was understanding and anticipating what was coming up, and it was the pre-teaching that was really helpful.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

The students expressed appreciation of this support during the vocational training and activities, and as a result produced frequent and authentic language use through discussion, reading, and writing. They built on their prior knowledge and their full repertoire of language skills, which supported their ability to solve problems and build content knowledge.

Another curricular topic that was not only imperative for employment, but also expressed through a pedagogy of care was that of safety. Safety issues taught in EHCW ranged from exposure to chemicals and basic first aid, to back care and posture, to self-care and stress relief. Safety topics were integrated throughout the curriculum and Maria emphasized a culture of workplace safety, mental wellness, and caring in the classroom.

She drew the women's attention to the resiliency that social connections enable. She noted the importance

to be very careful with safety, and I think that was one of the things that students often commented on, was that it's not just like "get a job" but it's also "get a job and stay safe," and I think it's also that eventually when they did the occupational safety training that it was also really prominent in their minds, but also a different way of thinking. So, Ok, I'm going to... of course, I'm going to stay safe, but HOW can I stay safe? For example, wearing pants or wearing the right shoes and how important those things became.... Taking care of my back, being mindful, relaxing, looking out for each other.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

These complex interactions in EHCW resembled or reflected the sociocultural context and demands of the work environment. Stories were brought in as discussion starters and explored in relational way. According to one critical literacy pedagogist, discussions about "ethics, fairness, discourse and identity, values and action are central ... they educate students to carefully examine the possible social effects of different positions" (Janks, 2013, p. 233).

Maria, who had built a strong relation of trust with the students, related a story that one woman who wore a hijab had shared with her about an interview for a practicum placement. The female interviewer had asked the student if she was comfortable wearing a hijab. The student, taken aback, did not understand the intent behind the question given that there are multiple readings of the Muslim hijab in the Canadian context (e.g., the hijab as subordination or as resistance) and because she could not perceive the intent behind the question, and was concerned that it might be a racist microaggression, she was silent.

Because language learning is a social practice that is intimately connected to social relations of power between speakers (Janks, 2013; Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2011) this story can help us to understand both the communication "break down" and the student's silence. The story provides a powerful illustration of the relationship between the individual language learner, the broader social context, and language learning. Language learning is not just an abstract skill, but a socially constructed practice in the events, interactions, and processes that constitute daily life. When the student does not understand the reason behind the interviewer's question and

does not respond, she is positioned as someone who “can’t speak English or who doesn’t know.” She is silenced because she is being asked about something that has multiple or ambiguous meanings in the current Canadian context. In relation to her, the interviewer’s subject position is that of “knower,” and it is that knowledge that gives her power. Although the student understood the words, wanted to interact with the interviewer, and get the job, she resisted speaking. This discourse must be understood not only in relation to the words that were said but also in relation to larger, inequitable structures within the workplace, and Canadian society at large, in which immigrant language learners are generally considered illegitimate speakers of English.

Following this incident, back in the classroom, Maria asked the student if she was comfortable relating the story to the group and discussing it together. She wanted to create an opportunity to analyze this situation critically. Having a voice is needed to build a sense of agency and becoming capable of acting on or changing one’s world. Initially, Maria encouraged the group to try to unpack the meaning behind the interviewer’s question as she explained in the following interview excerpt:

So, let’s talk about all the possible things it [the job interviewer’s question] could mean. So, do you think that they want you to take it off, or are they checking in on your comfort level, or could it have been that they just don’t have any experience at all with this. You could be the first woman who’s coming in with their head covered. Or, maybe they were feeling you out to see if you might take it off.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

As much of communication depends on gleaning meaning from context and being attuned to nonverbal cues, having a teacher who can help analyze situations, gestures or unarticulated intentions can support language learning and help build linguistic capital. Once Maria and the group understood the feelings of their classmate and explored possible racism and sexism that prompted the interviewer’s question, they discussed strategies for how this issue might be addressed in future job interviews. They practiced short but definitive statements about their decision to wear a hijab as they better understood how it might be viewed in the Canadian cultural context. The social perspective on language use sees culture as embodied in language at the semantic and pragmatic levels. From a pedagogical perspective, this understanding might be made transparent to students. Along with student-centred and critical approaches, trying to make cultural context and power relations transparent could go some way to equipping

students with the linguistic and cultural competence with which they could identify and, possibly, challenge the conditions of their marginalization.

To further analyze the story above, I again turn to Norton and others who build on Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus in their analysis and application to language teaching:

Learners are positioned in certain ways by virtue of their gender, race, ethnicity, social class, or sexual orientation. How learners are perceived by others is shaped by prevailing notions of what it means to be man or woman, Black or White, middle class or working class in a specific society. In the same way, also because of habitus, learners in turn position others and accord or refuse them power. (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 46)

The discussion about wearing a hijab or other visible signifiers of religion or culture, was relevant to the whole cohort as several women were wearing a hijab. In the example described by the teacher above, the strategies they developed, and the language they practiced became the basis for the women to resist being positioned as one who "doesn't know." As Esmeret, a student from Eritrea in the fourth EHCW cohort, described it during her gallery walk:

At the end we'll be stronger, successful, and confident. And I like this part because we have like a ... chance of success.... At the end you can make the best ... in hotels and senior homes ... something like that.

Esmeret from Eritrea – Gallery walk

To a certain extent, the confidence the women claimed they had gained in the EHCW program, may have been partly due to the increase in knowledge about the Canadian workplace and laws leading to an accumulation of social capital. This identity shift can help to overcome social disadvantages associated with low levels of linguistic and social capital.

The *Community Outreach Worker* had explained that she valued the importance of "looking the part" and the enhancement of social capital that this represented for the women. Following the first cohort, the *Community Outreach Worker* had arranged for the women to visit *Dress for Success* (a non-profit program that provides clothing, haircuts, and makeovers for low-income women) to ensure they had appropriate clothing for the interviews for their practicum placements. When Fatimah showed us her collage (see Figure 6.2), she had an image of a large brown shoe in bottom left-hand corner. Fatimah

laughed as she pointed at it calling it a “man’s shoe” and then described her appreciation of this aspect of the EHCW program this way:

When I go to my work, and they told me that you should have uniform and shoes, and we got to dress success, and then get...pants and coat and everything we needed, it’s just so important for us. Without it, these things, we should pay for to get this. But...When I take my coat and see my uniform and choose, it’s amazing, and name tag. And my name. It’s awesome.

Fatimah from Eritrea – Gallery walk

Discussing and understanding how to dress for the workplace or for interviews, and trying on clothes through *Dress for Success* were safely and at times joyfully explored. The extra efforts that Maria and the *Community Outreach Workers* made to anticipate supports for the students showed in their behaviour and demeanour, and contributed to the student’s sense of being cared for. I suggest that issues related to appearance were topics that emerged because of the safe and relational environment of the women-only program model.

I relate a final story about clothing. In this case, the symbolic capital manifested through the uniform of being a student at a recognized institution conferred advantages to the women. At WCC, many programs have their students wear uniforms for identification, hygiene, safety, and professionalism in the occupational area (e.g., dental hygiene students wear green scrubs with their hair tied back, minimal jewellery and white safety shoes; baking and pastry arts students wear white trousers, a white baker’s-style jacket and a white hat with their hair tucked into it; automotive students wear blue coveralls and steel-toed boots, and high visibility ear protection sets, etc.). Most uniforms have the college logo embroidered onto it, and students wear a metal nametag with their first name and the college logo on it. The EHCW program provided uniforms at no cost for its participants. They wore a white cotton jacket similar to the one that Culinary Arts students wear, black non-slip safety shoes (which they had a choice of from a pre-selected website) and a black cap for putting their hair up into. The women were encouraged to wear black or dark coloured trousers. They were provided with lockers to store their belongings and their uniforms and were expected to wear these for the days when there were vocational classes and at their practicum sites. The women seemed excited to order, receive, and then wear these uniforms. The uniforms held symbolic capital for the women by being identified as a student of WCC, both at WCC when they

were in the cafeteria, bakeshop, learning centre or library and in the workplace on their practicum placements. By wearing a uniform, an EHCW student was becoming a *legitimate participant* in an institution-based community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

6.7. Expanding economic capital

Whether the students landed a job at the end of the EHCW program or not, many reported an increased sense of agency, or power over employment search as a result of participating in the program. Nadimah, a student in Cohort 2, who was interviewed by a co-researcher in my inquiry community and did not land employment upon graduation, shared the following:

Before when you apply for job... you don't have answer. You will feel so bad with yourself. Oh my God! ...I'm not a good... But now you're feeling..., I will apply for this job, if they agree, good, if not, another one is waiting for me! ... There's many people that will say yes because you attend a course and you have a certificate for many things. (Nadimah – from Iraq, as cited in Shan et al., 2019, p. 11)

Those of us working with the women felt it was important to provide realistic and practical information about work opportunities. During the just over 2 years of the program, unemployment in the British Columbia hospitality sector was at the lowest rates that it had been in decades. We were cautious, though, about conflating a student's growing sense of agency with power or empowerment. The women's positivity at the end of the course was palpable, as stated below by Angie during her gallery walk:

Before [the EHCW program] I had kitchen skill, working in a kitchen. And after I took two weeks' practicum in kitchen, now I have more [job] offers and I'll surely in the future have more offers in the kitchen or possibly ... [group laughter] more offers in the [?] job. This is great for me.

Angie from Philippines – Gallery walk

It would require follow-up research to determine how durable Angie's and the other women's sense of agency and empowerment are. This was not in the scope of the program funding. During the program proposal writing process to seek funding, I had to provide evidence and rationale for the proposed program. Once funding was approved, a monthly online reporting system was required. I reported attendance and submitted narrative reports describing the program's implementation and delivery, in order to claim

the funds. Program management and staff had to meet this government mandate. During the interview, when a co-researcher in my inquiry community was interviewing me in my role as program manager, I reiterated that when applying for program funding, I had to provide statistics from labour market research around the areas of highest need from an industry perspective. I had to list the national occupational classification code for positions, the labour market demand, and the future outlook. Hospitality was a sector I had identified as likely to be open to hiring people that had lower English skill levels.

6.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented, interpreted and analyzed data gathered through arts-informed research, with my inquiry community, and in semi-structured interviews with the core teacher. I used Bourdieu's metaphor of different types of capital to analyze the verbatim quotes gathered during the women's gallery walks describing their collages, telling stories and contributing their perspectives. In terms of personal development, the women reported increased self-confidence, vocational skills, knowledge around workplace health and safety, and pride associated with being a student, wearing a uniform, gaining Canadian work experience and earning certificates. The program participants said that EHCW contributed to their personal development, and expanded their social networks, thereby enhancing their social and economic capital and opportunities.

Although the EHCW program was not primarily a language program, extensive curricular and pedagogical considerations were given to language and literacy. If we accept, as Bourdieu does, that the accumulation of a person's linguistic skills plays a role in their position in society as delegated by powerful institutions, then language and literacy skills are paramount. For Bourdieu, power relations are reflected through language when one's language is determined as legitimate, allowing access to economic and social opportunities such as jobs, services, and connections. EHCW was an employment program for women with immigrant and refugee experience, which created space for and held rich opportunities for language learning and enhancing linguistic capital. This space was evident through the women's stories of their experiences in the program.

In this chapter, I described the relational approach and care-based pedagogy that was used. The intention to build social relations was intentionally addressed in EHCW, starting with the decision to create a “women only” program. This contributed to the creation of interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity which effectively built social capital. Caring in the EHCW program contributed to the cultivation of social capital and investment in learning for students. We were aware that as the women’s social networks become broader, more influential, and more conducive to opportunity, other types of capital are correspondingly further enhanced. These different forms of capital are relevant to understanding investment in language studies in our globalized world. I will extend my analysis of EHCW in Chapter 7 by looking at investment, and imagined communities and futures.

Chapter 7.

Addressing Identity, Investment, and Imagined Communities and Futures – Research Analysis II

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze data I gathered through my collage-making workshops and Gallery walks, an interview with the core teacher, along with insights gained through my inquiry community addressing themes related to the women's identities, their investment in the EHCW program, and their imagined communities and futures. As a practitioner-researcher focusing on a localized inquiry, I was primarily concerned with practical solutions but also with the conditions that originally produced the problems such as the lack of affordable childcare, limited opportunities for employment training for women with low levels of language and literacy, and the contradiction of not being able to find employment without Canadian work experience. Investment relates directly to my research question as I seek to increase the participants' investment in learning by better understanding their lived experience of the program and by making adaptations to the curriculum and the program when possible. For example, many of the EHCW participants face barriers to employment training due to heavy domestic responsibilities. Providing childminding was a solution to a local problem.

In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature review*, I theorized identity and investment and the relationship to language learning in applied linguistics. In this chapter, I discuss concepts of identity and the importance of building social relationships through EHCW in relation to investment. In doing so, I also examine the unanticipated increase in student investment in learning which resulted from the provision of onsite childminding. Finally, I address the notion of imagined communities and imagined futures as a significant contribution to my analysis, theorizing and research of the EHCW program.

For many, the experience of migration and settlement bring issues of identity to the forefront. Language, and interacting with others in a new language, is viscerally tied

to questions of who we are, what we understand ourselves to be, and how we imagine ourselves and our place in the future.

7.2. Identity and Investment

Of relevance to the data excerpts presented in this section is the integral relationship between identity and investment. As stated earlier, Norton (2013) contends that identity refers to “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 45). This notion of investment in learning a language relates to not only social identity, but for the participants in the EHCW program developing a social identity while using English for employment purposes, and building a social identity while using English to engage with the broader community.

A particular feature of multilingual, multicultural Metro Vancouver is that the city has a significant number of workplaces where Mandarin or Cantonese are used extensively or exclusively, and where employees may not need to interact in English. For those employed in positions where English is not required, and if the employee does not already have a high degree of competence in English, the workplace is unlikely to provide a site for language learning. This lack of exposure and ability to build linguistic or social capital will thus limit the number and types of future potential work sites. As described earlier, how closely one’s language use aligns with the legitimate language or the prestige dialect as expressed through accent or word choice may be leveraged into particular social networks or not. This echoes what Li Fen, a Chinese speaker in Cohort 2, who had two school-aged children and had never worked in Canada, expressed:

Uh, changed, yeah, my thinking changed a lot. Maybe I find a job. I feel comfortable to finding a job. Yeah, and I speak. Before, I looking job just ... in the ... finding a Chinese, maybe restaurant. Now, I got ... I see looking ... Canadian people ... talking, speaking English good.

Li Fen from China – Gallery walk

Li Fen’s words illustrate what the data I reported in Section 2.1 *Immigration and employment training in Canada* confirms. Upon arrival in Canada female refugees and immigrants typically have lower levels of either official language in comparison to their male counterparts, often arrive with lower employment skills (Cukier & Stolerick, 2019),

are more likely to work part-time, and are underrepresented in workplaces where opportunities for informal English language learning build linguistic capital (Beiser & Hou, 2010). Being perceived as a “legitimate speaker” confers linguistic capital. Investment in the target language is therefore an investment in a learner’s own social identity, an identity, which relates to Bourdieu’s analogy of the economic market and concrete gains. Investment presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constructing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world, and building linguistic capital which can be exchanged for material benefits.

There was a range of English language levels in each EHCW cohort, and initially, many of the women appeared to be shy with each other and tended to speak little. The social conditions under which the women in the program seemed most uncomfortable and unlikely to speak related to discussions around employment. By entering the EHCW program, the women explicitly acknowledged that they faced barriers to employment, and for most, the primary barriers were lack of English proficiency and lack of Canadian work experience. As the students became actively engaged in the program, they claimed their confidence in speaking increased and extended beyond the classroom. The women seemed to be claiming their right to use English more with their children, with friends and in the community. Li Fen, from China, describes the transformation she experienced through the EHCW program during her gallery walk:

In this program, I learn a lot of things, and I got lots of confidence. And let me, and before, I spoke with no confidence.... But all the friends and women support each other, so stronger. I like this program. [Group laughter] This program...change my life. Yeah. Very different. And talk to my kids ... be confident, speak up! [laughs]

Li Fen from China – Gallery walk

With enhanced confidence, the women appeared to become more comfortable asking questions and taking up more challenging conversations relating to employment. Women described their ability to negotiate with their practicum host regarding work schedule hours or requesting to change from the housekeeping department to another department at the worksite such as laundry or to one of the restaurant kitchens. I would argue that this increasing confidence in turn strengthens investment and commitment to language learning.

A holistic approach to supporting the women outside of the classroom was key to the success of the program. Unlike conventional vocational programs where, generally, post-secondary students are expected to navigate support services such as seeking information about progress online or accessing the learning centre or computers on campus relatively independently, the EHCW program team intentionally oriented students to services and helped to build their familiarity with using them. The core teacher and the *Community Outreach Worker* proactively monitored the participants' progress and acted as a first contact point for further referral to on-campus and off-campus support services when they faced challenges in their studies and personal lives. This immediate net of support allowed the team to identify emerging issues and take timely measures to assist. For example, when the women needed supports that the college could not provide, such as housing or social assistance, the team would connect them with appropriate community service organizations that could assist. Specifically, we connected each student with a local government-funded WorkBC Employment Service Centre at the end of their training so that they would continue to receive necessary employment search support. During a tour of the nearest WorkBC centre, which is located on the WCC campus, the centre staff introduced the women to its services and made connections and introductions to other WorkBC centres located near to their homes that might be more convenient for the women. A guest speaker from Family Services of Greater Vancouver provided a financial literacy workshop on saving, credit, basic investment concepts, and making a family budget. Some of the women, with the support of the EHCW staff, started reaching out to some of the community services to which they were introduced.

Maria and the *Community Outreach Workers* attended to women's other holistic needs and capacities, such as those for continuous training and education rather than solely limiting their focus to employment. They were highly aware of issues the women might face at work and in life. The vocational instructors and guest speakers were short-term and changed over the weeks, not allowing for a similar depth of relationship to develop. Using their personal and professional networks, the core teacher and *Community Outreach Worker* invited guest speakers from different organizations to introduce the women to different resources and support. For instance, they invited a speaker from West Coast LEAF – Legal Education and Action Fund, to come in as a guest speaker:

So, we brought in Westcoast Leaf and talking about that piece specifically. Yeah, what does it look like if someone doesn't like you, but you all work together and it's OK, but what is actually considered a hostile work environment [or harassment] and what are your rights there and what do you need to do. And that was an important piece of what we wanted to give to the women, and again, with a different range of English levels, they may not have been able to take away ALL the information, but enough of the information so that they know what to do should this happen.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

Maria had followed up with this because the women in the program had asked her to discuss possible discrimination or racism in the workplace. For Bourdieu (1977) 'success' in society such as social mobility and the accumulation of desired forms of capital comes at the cost of one's agency and self-direction. One could argue that people are 'bought off' by the system, which rewards those people who 'buy into' it. This is where Norton's ideas of *investment* come to bear, in effect, how to support agency in the face of authority.

Providing support for the women outside of class had implications for my professional practice. Our response in the EHCW program was to support the women's construction of agency and self-direction through responding to their requests, whenever feasible, for information provision. West Coast LEAF, as described on their website, "is committed to an inclusive vision of feminism that defends the right to be free from discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression" (West Coast Leaf, n.d., Our Vision section, para. 2). In the workshop, they shared information on people's rights as employees (e.g., breaks, statutory holidays, safety, etc.) and courses of action available to them to deal with workplace discrimination, harassment, and unfair practices such as employers withholding pay. Norton Pierce (1995) claims, "The second language teacher needs to help language learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom. To this end, the lived experiences, and social identities of language learners need to be incorporated into the formal second language curriculum" (p. 26). This claim aligns with my professional experience, and underlies my work as a practitioner-researcher.

In the holistic model for EHCW, while not specifically a language program, the same premise for language learning applies. In EHCW, an extensive variety of literacy activities, which are not specifically language learning activities, extend beyond the classroom. Example literacy activities range from asking a supervisor at a practicum site

for clarification, speaking with childminders about their child's food preferences and sleeping habits, working on their resumés in the learning centre at the college, and making small talk with co-workers at their practicum sites, which helps students claim the right to speak with target language speakers outside the classroom. Angie, a student in Cohort 3 who had a large age gap between her two children and had been out of the workforce for almost 8 years, talks about her growing confidence to speak up this way:

And now I am so proud of myself because I know so many things [laughs]. Before it was like, I couldn't talk, I couldn't share my ideas. But now I feel very confident. Yeah. Now it's ... every word is talk, the door is open for us!

Angie from the Philippines – Gallery walk

These literacy activities increase investment in learning by showing how opportunities to speak are socially structured, range across the spectrum from formal to informal, are socially situated, engage the social identities of students, and derive from the goal of preparing for and seeking employment.

7.3. Building social relationships in and beyond the EHCW classroom

In recent years, the value of practices such as building a sense of belonging, or community connection, or social cohesion for newcomers in Canada have rightly gained significance in the public and academic discourse on migration. These have generated social policy and discussion, particularly with an increasing awareness in Canada of systemic racism in our institutions, reports of microaggressions against Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) in a wide variety of institutional settings (Neustaeter, 2020), the spate of hate crimes against Asian Canadians related to COVID-19, and one of the most horrific racist incidents in the country, when six Muslim men were shot to death and others were seriously injured during an attack on a Quebec City mosque in January 2017 (see additional implications of COVID 19 in Section 8.7: *Afterword-Final thoughts in challenging times*). While an academic focus on the sense of belonging or social cohesion was not within the scope of this dissertation, an awareness of these issues informed my program planning and the pedagogy in EHCW. Broadly defined, the feeling that you belong or are accepted as a respected and valued member of a group or community is a critical human need for seeing value in life and developing

resilience. Researchers such as Neufeld et al. (2016) show significant benefits associated with a strong sense of belonging, such as better physical and mental health, greater success at school, increased employment readiness, and higher reported levels of job satisfaction and satisfaction with life in Canada. In this sense, the development of social relationships in the EHCW program was intentional within the program and beyond the program. This active promotion of inclusion and sociality (Fenwick, 2008) among the women contributed to the expansion of their social relationships in and beyond the class. The premise for building social relationships in reimagining an employment program for women is to create a context where students and teachers are invested in the language and literacy practices.

The EHCW staff discussed pedagogical ways to actively and intentionally build social relationships among those in the program to empower the women to feel accepted and recognized as legitimate members of the community college. A key staff member in the EHCW program was the *Community Outreach Worker*, and the personal histories of the women who filled this role were significant. In the first three cohorts, the woman hired for the role spoke Arabic, Gujarati and English and was of South Asian ethnic origin. In the last two cohorts, the *Community Outreach Worker* was of Chinese ethnic origin and spoke Mandarin and English. Neither woman was born in Canada. In both cases, the women (both under age 30) had relevant undergraduate degrees, had experience working in the immigrant settlement sector and had developed extensive networks in the community. Both *Community Outreach Worker #1 and #2* followed up with the women beyond the program. They worked in the office that was provided for them on campus, and in the classrooms to build strong relationships with the students and the core teacher. From my classroom observations, I sensed that their presence in the classes was welcomed. Although they each had different strengths and personalities, the women participants stated that they found the *Community Outreach Workers* to be relatable, accessible, helpful and encouraging. In Figure 7.1 we can see the collage that one of the *Community Outreach Workers* produced in an arts-informed workshop. Her discussion about the collage during a gallery walk in which she participated summarizes her beliefs about the EHCW program and provides an insight into her identity as a compassionate supporter or ally to the women. She describes her perspective as follows:

One student, Eman, described the experience of being concerned about not being accepted in the broader Canadian society. Moreover, she described how having some positive social experiences through the program had increased not only her sense of self but also her social identity amongst others:

If you stay in your home and just thinking is no, afraid about someone's not accept you, and thinking, thinking ... it's different when you go out and find lots of things and learning.... And you will see that people is very kind and very nice.... And they accept you! Why you thinking ... there's anyone will not accept you? No. I think now I am very comfortable to walk with people, don't afraid, and ... I am ... sure that we—I will make something here.

Eman from Eritrea – Gallery walk

At the beginning of the program, the women tended to sit together with people of similar or close ethnic or linguistic backgrounds. Over time the core teacher and the *Community Outreach Worker* explicitly built pro-sociality through shared experiences like discussing the challenges at school and at home that many women faced, and together as a group, eliciting and strategizing ways to address these. She had a variety of techniques for mixing up groups and pairs so that all the students interacted with and got to know all the class members. During their three months together, the women formulated friendship and support networks among themselves. It is difficult to measure the extent to which the program succeeded in fostering these social relationships over time. Building social relationships was not a stated program outcome. However, the lived experience of the women provided testimony to its importance. Maria relayed this story to me in our interview:

So, one of the students lost her father during the term. And seeing how all the students rallied around her and they all gave her lots and lots of support. And weeks later she came back and she said "I really want to make an announcement" and she stood up at the front and she talked about how meaningful it was that everyone had talked to her and that her family had wanted to thank the group for supporting her through this while she was so far away, and that was huge, really, really huge. And I think that that could be more than what might happen in another class that isn't as bonded together. She wanted to keep studying and she was able to continue along with the group despite her grieving.... And, you know, she cried through several classes, but it wasn't... it was OK and we told her it was fine. She was still studying and she showed her grief. And it was really powerful to see that.

Maria – Core teacher – Interview

The women cherished the mutual support that they had developed and experienced through and beyond the program. There were multiple examples which point to the expansion of the women's social connectedness, and the resulting support structure the women had built through the program. After classes, some of the women would wait for one another to take the public transit system together, sometimes with their children. They took notes for each other and shared them if a classmate was absent. They formed a Whatsapp group with peers where they shared information, jokes, photos from the class, and news about how their practicum was going when they were all away from the class at their worksites. In these ways, the women created a new-found Canadian community in the EHCW program. As another student described so eloquently:

When you're an immigrant, in a new country, you don't know anybody, you don't know anything, it's lonely. And once you learn, because that's so Canadian, when I'm asking someone, people know. So, I feel like I'm now one of them. And this is a good one when you have community and you have met with them all the time, you will learn. And once you learn, it's not enough like home. And once you learn you can give this message, or this for immigrant people, so you can help too.

Jamila from Syria – Gallery walk

The connection that Jamila makes between having strong social relationships and the impact on learning is compelling. Jamila seems to position herself as having agency, no longer needing as much help but contributing to society when she says “And once you learn... you can help too.” Perhaps she is showing the shift towards greater investment in learning and commitment to her imagined community and future.

One of the staff reinforced her perspective on the importance of expanding social relationships and networks in her collage (Figure 7.1) and described her hopes for the program this way:

...another thing that I really love seeing in this program is the friendships that emerge, that it's women helping women. Not only in terms of mentorship and instruction, but also with each other. I know that afterward, with Cohort One, we still have the “What's App?” Group. I know that we all have each other's numbers, and forward each other jobs and opportunities from the program. Kind of helping each other walk up this hill, we'll do it together. And I think that's so important because like, so many communities are matriarchal. Women in this program are still at the centre of their families, and of their communities, and we need to keep this in mind as we move up the hill. We can't leave all these things behind that are preventing women from taking programs, we have to incorporate it. So, let's create

this together, let's see what would work for you. Is it part-time, is it full time? Is it volunteering? Where are you? How do you want to walk up this hill together?

The Community Outreach Worker #1 – Gallery walk

As I further describe in the next paragraph, the burden of motivation to learn an additional language was traditionally placed on the learner and underachievement attributed to personality traits or affective factors at the expense of more complex social or societal factors. Norton (2016) explains that motivation to learn an additional language does not necessarily translate into investment. Investment means a commitment on the part of the learner and the community of practice both within and beyond the classroom. Learners have greater investment when interacting with the people who represent or provide access to their “imagined community.” Related to learners’ imagined communities is the extent to which such investment is productive for learners’ engagement in both the classroom and the wider target community (Norton, 2016, p. 477; see more on this in Section 7.5: *Imagined communities and imagined futures*).

Investment differs from motivation in that it decentres the individual (e.g., motivation is attributed as a personality trait of the individual and therefore is psychological, whereas investment is sociological). Investment is always shifting across different power relationships (Norton, 2013). As such, the conditions for learning can be created to support investment. Teachers have no bearing over a learner’s personality, but they can describe, encourage, and support student behaviours that are facilitative for language learning and identity building such as taking risks and trusting the guidance of teachers and mentors (New London Group, 1996), being positive, tolerating ambiguity and having the courage to make mistakes (Hellman et al., 2019). In EHCW we explicitly created an environment that supported these behaviours both inside and outside the classroom. In an interview that one of the members of my inquiry community did with the *Program Manager from PIRS*, she expressed satisfaction that the program worked to support the behaviours that build relationships and reduce the social isolation that some of the women may have experienced. She said:

I've been able to be in contact with a number of [the EHCW participants from the first cohort]. Some of them have been involved in another program at PIRS. And to me, that's indicative...if they're getting out and getting involved, that we're doing something positive, that they're now... feeling part of a community...My interest has always been breaking down isolation for people, and how do we support creating spaces that are positive. And I

feel like this was one of them, so I feel good about that. (Program manager from PIRS, as cited in Shan et al., 2019, p. 76)

Despite coming from diverse backgrounds, with multiple languages from their countries of origin, the women were able to cross borders of difference and form crucial friendships and bonds through the EHCW program.

7.4. Supporting student investment through childminding

For many of the women in the program, their previous investment (or lack of investment) in English had been impacted by their identity as primary caregiver in the family. Most participants had young and school-aged children and many cared for elderly members of their family who either lived with them in Canada or who lived overseas and they communicated with online or via other family members, and this domestic space was usually mediated through their first language. For many, they wanted to improve their English not only for employment, but also to establish a sense of agency over community or other family-related tasks. For some, with older children, they wanted to relieve the children who had taken on some of the family's domestic responsibilities. Some women expressed concern that their young teenagers had taken on more parental tasks than they were comfortable with. Others expressed interest in taking more responsibility for dealing with every day and settlement-oriented tasks such as registering their children for school, and communicating at the health clinic. Esmeret, an EHCW student with three children under the age of 8, describes how the other participants in the program understood and shared their domestic concerns and how they encouraged each other to address them:

in this program, I learned a lot of things, and I got lots of confidence...Before, I spoke with no confidence...But all the friends and women support each other, so stronger. And I talk to my kids...be confident, speak up! [laughs] We have a response for them, answer the teacher, help, friend help. And a heart. Everybody has a heart to help.

Esmeret from Eritrea – Gallery walk

Esmeret's words show how learners invest in a language because it will help acquire a wider range of symbolic (and material) resources such as gaining confidence, talking to the teacher, and being able to provide responses and answers when talking to children and friends. I would extend this to align with Norton's (2013) theorizing on investment

that the acquisition of a wider range of symbolic and other resources will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power which is what they are ultimately “buying” with their investment.

Given her understanding of the complex lives of immigrant and refugee women, the *Community Program Manager* from PIRS strongly advocated for the program to set up childminding at the training site so that mothers with young children could participate. Childminding was another aspect of the EHCW program that was part of our holistic reimagined employment program model and provided layers of explicit and tacit learning. This program was the first that had set up onsite childminding at Westcoast Community College. Without childminding, many of the women would not have been able to step out of their domestic spaces to join the program. In addition to making it possible for the women to attend classes, the positive, well-supported experience of accessing childcare prepared some women for entering the workforce. For example, for women who come from countries where the institutionalization of childcare is viewed as cold or impersonal, this first experience with institution-based childcare helped to dispel myths or anxiety, and build trust towards leaving pre-school-aged children with an early childcare educator. Angie described her initial anxiety this way:

I can prepare everything for my daughter ... and get to school on time.... My daughter don't know any English before coming to this class. I worry about it she can adapt the childminding....turns out, she was very happy and learned a little bit English...and she learned how to share with her friends. [group laughter]

Angie from the Philippines – Gallery walk

Having onsite childminding allowed the women to feel less anxious about this significant step. As the childminding room was located right across the hall from the classroom, the mothers were easily contacted by the early childhood educators if the child was upset and needed soothing. The mothers got to know the names of all the children in the childminding room and told us that they spoke to their children at home about the others. They reported watching friendships between the children in the childminding group develop. The mothers arranged for their children to have playdates after class and sometimes cared for another woman's child when needed on weekends or evenings.

The early childhood educators themselves were women who shared the lived-experience of immigration and settling in Canada. They had empathy for the EHCW participants and their children as more recent newcomers. The women got to know, trust and respect the early childhood educators as highly competent, certified, and experienced who shared the identity marker that they were non-native speakers of English. This unspoken modelling of positive adaptation to employment and life in Canada held much social capital for newcomer women, perhaps subtly contributing to a shifting identity and an imagined future. Language is central to perceptions of identity and how we continually modify it to suit changing circumstances. The women readily engaged in discussions in English with the early childhood educators about their children's needs, likes and dislikes, and how each day had gone. This experience suggests that the motivation to speak is mediated by investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learner's social identity. April, when describing some of the supportive aspects of the EHCW program, specifically mentioned the childminding:

I felt good, uh, connection.... I love [names of the early childhood educators] here. They are patient and helpful. My daughter had took care very well.... I think she is ready to go to daycare. Her English is improved too. Even that program help me how to organize with my child.

April from China – Gallery walk

April and the other mothers in this context related to childminding, were seen as legitimate language users, despite lower levels of English language proficiency, as they were experts in their knowledge and understanding of their children. As mothers with concerns about safety, nutrition, health, toileting and the emotional well-being of their children, they had the right to speak and to be listened to. The poststructuralist view that social identity is changeable and contradictory (Weedon, 1997, 2004) helps to explain how students were both silenced in some contexts and responded to and created opportunities to use English in others. Their identities as capable and responsible mothers legitimated their language use. The early childhood educators, and other WCC staff such as security personnel and janitorial staff (based on my observations and field notes), treated the women with a respect which reinforced and valued, not diminished, their identities as mothers and the legitimacy of their English language use in this social context. The women who had children in the childminding room appeared to be engaged in supporting their children and invested in their identities as mothers and in the

community of motherhood. Norton and Pavlenko (2019) state, “To understand the learners’ investments, we need to examine their multiple communities and understand who can and who cannot be imagined as a legitimate speaker of a particular language variety in a specific context” (p. 8). This positive experience with childminding and the comfort women described experiencing through speaking with the professional early childcare educators every day became a significant social investment which contributed to the women’s learning, positive identity formation as mothers, and their expanding social capital.

All the children spoke languages other than English at home, so being part of the EHCW childminding was a language learning and social experience for them too. There was significant structured playtime with arts and crafts, story time and singing. There were activities based around daily activities like tooth-brushing, handwashing and tidying up (see the tooth-brushing paintings, handprints and measuring charts in Chapter 2, Figure 2.3: *Childminding space at WCC*). Some of the mothers also learned the familiar songs that the children were singing or borrowed picture books that the early childhood educators had read to the children so that they could reread them together at home. In this holistic way, the site of learning extended beyond the individual to the family unit. Thus, the childminding served as informal family literacy and contributed to the women’s investment in learning English. As Darvin (2019) points out, “When learners are able to claim legitimate positions in these contexts [such as parenting], then they have better opportunities to invest in their learning” (p. 246). The women reported that the childminding aspect of EHCW was an unanticipated but powerful learning experience which built their confidence around accessing childcare services in the future. This not only built investment in language and literacy learning, but this positive experience with childminding may have reduced a significant psychological and economic barrier to seeking employment and entering the labour force in the future.

7.5. Imagined communities and imagined futures

The concept of imagined communities and imagined futures is another significant contribution of the theorizing and research that has emerged into the study of language and literacy education over the past two decades. Building on her concept of investment Norton (2016) integrates concepts about imagined identities/futures: “The sociological construct of investment signals a learner’s commitment to learn a language, given their

hopes for the future and their imagined identities” (p. 476). I use the concepts of imagined communities and imagined futures to analyze the data I gathered through arts-informed research in this section.

In my experience, the practices and materials used in the collage-making workshops engaged the women in using their imaginations and creativity, and provided a safe space to dream and express their hopes for the future. According to Brigham (2011) art-making requires participants to “tap into unconsciousness and bring to light unverballed meaning and embodied experience” (p. 47). The role of investment in English language learning and the teaching of English is further explicated through how learners imagine their possibilities for the future—their imagined identities and imagined communities. Norton (2013) describes how language learners often adopt *imagined* subject positions in *imagined* communities of speakers of the language they are learning. This extends Weedon’s (1997) work on subject positions, and agency from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. As I described earlier, in EHCW we nurtured a counter-discourse towards adopting a subject position or identity of employable woman. Through the 12 weeks of the program, the women expressed solidarity in shifting their identities from unemployable to employable. As described in my literature review in Chapter 3, scholars writing about imagined futures in language education (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Pavlenko, 2019) observe that we can imagine connections with people beyond the immediate and that these imagined or perceived communities can impact our identities and learning in our everyday life. Further, they argue that imagined communities compel learners to act (or not act). The imagining of the future self is then posited (Norton & Pavlenko, 2019) as a means

to appropriate meanings and create new identities,... allows us to transcend the focus on the learners’ immediate environment, as the learning of another language, perhaps more than any other educational activity, reflects the learners’ desire to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds. (p. 3)

In Chapter 6, I described the efforts to create a learning environment where the women could acquire social, cultural, linguistic and economic capital. In describing their collages, many women expressed a shift in positionality or transformation regarding social structures of opportunity. In her gallery walk, this shift in thinking was expressed by Senait, as an increased sense of agency:

So, I can do that. I can go any place and I can even get a job, I can get another one, one better and will pay me money. [laughter] I trust myself, and I know what I know. And what I learned here. So. That's what I say. As much you learn, there's gonna be more good for you. In the future. Asking to find a job that they can offer for you training in the future so you can move yourself or getting money more. You'll go higher, not just ... cleaning or something.

Senait from Eritrea – Gallery walk

I would argue that this broadened access to an imagined community opened up possibilities for the women which impacted positively on their investment to language learning but also to their social identity as employable women. The arts-informed research project provided the space for the women to imagine their futures and talk about their hopes and dreams. Kanno and Norton (2003) point out that “imagination should not be equated with fantasy or withdrawal from reality” (p. 244) where there is no possibility of action, but a kind of hopeful imagination which informs the struggle for a better future. That said, according to Anderson (1991), imagined communities are illusory—they are false constructs in his original reference to nationalism and belonging to the nation state. Indeed this illusion could be so for the participants in EHCW if their imagined futures prove to be otherwise in unsatisfactory employment conditions. Nevertheless, our awareness of this concern and strategies to mitigate it, helped to balance the pedagogical importance of imagining communities to belong to and positive futures for themselves which contributed to the women's investment in EHCW.



Figure 7.2. Tenzin's collage

In her collage (see Figure 7.2), Tenzin played with colour as a metaphor for imagined possibilities. On the left hand side she used black and white images which she described as her “professional side” related to employment and responsibility, and the right hand side which she called her “love side,” which involved friendships and choices. Tenzin acknowledged that these sides did overlap and interconnect when she pointed out the glass of champagne which symbolized celebration. Tenzin described her imagined future and hopes this way:

It's lots of picture. [laughter] okay, I need to... [laughter] I have power. [laughter] okay. Now, it have two ... two sides. It's like, professional side, and my love side. And it's together....[pointing at the champagne] [laughter] Celebrate your winning. [laughter] We have all us, we have ... black outside. Like, you work hard, you work, goes ... goes working, go somewhere, you work, work, work. But you have also your own life, private life. Like this is your private life to make friends, to make... you better ... what you want to do. Challenge. It's like this. Black and white, and colour. They have—we have hope. We have to go with this hope to work. Yeah. ... If anyone can imagine what you want in this pictures, it's about me. Yeah. Me, I imagine what I want.

Tenzin from Tibet – Gallery walk

For those of us working with the women, the question became, how do we balance the promotion of a broadened imagining of the future for the women, with the reality that immigrant and racialized women are overrepresented in the low-end of the service sector? It was important to provide both hope and practical information about work opportunities, and pathways into better paid, more secure or more rewarding employment.

During the just over 2 years the EHCW program was running, unemployment in British Columbia, particularly in the hospitality sector, was at some of the lowest rates that it had been in decades. Some of the women in the EHCW program were offered jobs during their practicum placements even before the program had ended, and the positivity the women felt receiving job offers was palpable. As Senait, a student in the fourth cohort, said,

Before [the EHCW program] I had kitchen skill, working in a kitchen. And after I took two week practicum in kitchen, now I have more [job] offers and I'll surely in the future have more offers in the kitchen or possibly ... [group laughter] more offers in the job. This is great for me.

Senait from Eritrea – Gallery walk

These job offers provided choices and options for the women's futures, resulting in a stronger sense of personal agency and contributing to a rising sense of confidence for all the women in each cohort. As they watched their classmates get offers of employment, they seemed to feel their chances were increasing. Investment in particular imagined communities increased through their proximity or access to these communities. My colleagues and I were cautious, though, about conflating a student's growing sense of agency with power or empowerment. Within our inquiry community, we had questions about the maintenance of that positivity and the endurance of their hope and imagined futures once they were in the workforce. As we had stated in our published article (Shan et al., 2019) "immigrants, particularly women, who are in immediate need of jobs, are easily channeled in the feminized and low-end sectors of the labour market" (p. 3). Were the futures that the women were imagining for themselves limited through pre-existing social structures? It would require follow-up research to determine how durable these women's sense of agency and empowerment may be. While many of the women expressed positive imagined futures, this likely spoke to the immediate empowering impact of the program. It would require follow-up and

longitudinal research to determine the impacts of the program on longer-term, sustainable, social and economic change for individual women.

7.6. Conclusion

The *Community Program Manager* and I designed the EHCW program for migrant women who faced barriers to employment such as lack of Canadian work experience, low levels of English language and literacy, or experiences of trauma. Many faced barriers related to heavy domestic responsibilities resulting in non-participation in the labour market due to raising children, being home-bound caring for elderly or unwell family members, bearing responsibility for finding suitable and very scarce childcare in the BC context, and responding to cultural expectations about appropriate work environments for women. We also strove to build a learning space which built social connections and enhanced social and cultural capital development in a gender-specific environment.

Clearly, one modest program cannot transform the systemic inequalities in our society. However, through previous experience, practitioner inquiry and being responsive in terms of program design, we recognized and attempted to address some structural barriers that were in place for the women.

In Chapter 7, I have drawn on theories of investment, identity, and imagined communities and futures as they apply to language learning and education. These theories interrelate and are particularly applicable for the EHCW program with its focus on vocational training and employment. For the students, such an investment in the target language is also an investment in their own social identity, which changes across time and space. The connections between how a person envisions possibilities for the future and their future community, and how these future imaginings intersect with the histories, experiences, and relationship to the acquisition of language and workplace skills through investment and identity can compel learners to act or not to act. For many in the program, an imagined community emerged out of a sense of confidence built in social relationships. This idea of a better future for all the women in the group and their shared dream they have presupposes an imagined identity. The social identity that the EHCW program nurtures and takes practical steps towards building, and which offers an enhanced range of possibilities for the future, is a woman with a job.

Chapter 8.

Reflections and Conclusion

I began this dissertation describing the metaphor for the experience of being a doctoral student as a long walking journey. I recognize that I am coming to the end of this part of my journey in which I have walked alongside others, walked alone, rested, stopped, chosen different routes or paths, and at times left the main path. Essayist Rebecca Solnit (2000) says, “The subject of walking is, in some sense, about how we can invest universal acts with particular meanings” (p. 3). In my practitioner inquiry I explored other universal acts, like teaching, learning and imagining. However, this metaphor now reminds me that the destination is not my only goal, a journey is tied to the concept and identification of the self as a traveller, and, in this re-identification as a traveller, the journey does not end but continues.

The course work and readings that I have done since starting my doctorate have opened a space for critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995, 2010), provided a grounding in more recent educational theory, created an opportunity to explore qualitative research methods, and offered collaboration within an inquiry community – goals that I had prior to starting. The use of arts-informed methods prompted an under-anticipated shift in my thinking towards increasing criticality, and perhaps a shift in my own identity towards being an activist practitioner. What happens when we open up and create a space where women can participate and speak to what matters to them? I have described tensions that arose through my research and that I explored, which nudges me towards a critical perspective of some of the programs I conceptualize, am involved in, and manage. I keep coming back to this idea, that exploring arts is a potentially transformative way to open up otherwise instrumentally-oriented employment related pedagogy and curriculum.

8.1. Coming to the end of my doctoral journey

Chapter 1: *Situating my practice and research* outlined the dissertation and situated my emergent scholarship and evolving identity as a practitioner-researcher within a qualitative research paradigm. I provided an overview of my professional

practice and presented both the metaphor for and the experience of my doctoral journey. In this journey, I have sought to balance locating myself (and my positionality) in my practice, exploring my identity as an emerging researcher-practitioner, and presenting my data and analysis in the overarching context of a practitioner inquiry. I have reflected on my efforts to create change within my professional context and in the site of my inquiry (the EHCW program) and understand the implications of these efforts through practitioner inquiry. By presenting the participants' voices, together with my own narrative writing and photographs, my intention was to illustrate how and why I work with diverse learners, program staff and colleagues as part of my educational practice. According to Donald (2011),

Researchers know that 'who we are' is always in a state of flux as long as we remain open to the standpoint of another; this openness creates the possibility that our sense of *who* can be transformed through encounters with difference. (p. 17)

My scholarly research is informed as much by my personal experience as through direct observation, reading and theorizing both practitioner and scholarly literature, and engaging in dialogue with others.

In Chapter 2, I provided the background context of immigration and employment training in Canada for the site of my inquiry, which was the EHCW program delivered by WCC in Vancouver. I described the holistic re-imagining of a conventional vocational program for a specific student population—women with immigrant and refugee experience who also had low levels of English language and literacy and faced acknowledged barriers to finding employment. This re-imagining was done in partnership with a community development organization, PIRS, who had specific expertise in working with migrant women and their children. I described the pedagogical approach of the core teacher related to philosophical understandings of an ethic of care, which I further describe in Chapter 3. For many years in my professional practice I had questioned the use of course/program evaluation forms, and I welcomed the opportunity to analyze in depth this one institution-based document. This analysis provided part of the rationale for my practitioner inquiry, generated my research question, and resulted in a change that I wanted to effect in my practice. I thus sought alternate forms of student input about their experience of a program.

In Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature review*, I provided an overview of the praxis and a theory in a framework that I used to explore and come to a deeper understanding of both my own practitioner-researcher experience and the women's experiences in an employment training program. These theoretical foundations are situated within a qualitative research paradigm where my in professional work, emerging scholarship, theory and practice inform each other. In Figure 3.1: *Mind-map–Guiding my inquiry*, I provided an illustration of the nexus between praxis and theory in the contexts of my research. I overviewed the key terms, concepts, theories and practices that guided my inquiry. I provided this visual guide to my literature review, as my approach to practitioner inquiry was not linear. In my practitioner inquiry, using art was intrinsically linked to a critical reflective practice. In the mind-map I indicate these linkages. Arts-informed approaches critically challenge conventional approaches to program evaluation. In my practitioner inquiry, critical reflection is done individually and as part of my inquiry community, where I worked alongside others in a CoP I loosely grouped the terms and concepts into three broad interconnected categories: methodological (blue), philosophical (green) and theoretical (purple).

In Chapter 4, I described my methodology, methods and research activities. Arts-informed research is the central theoretical and methodological foundation of my practitioner inquiry. I will address this in more detail in Section 8.3: *Practitioner inquiry: Reflecting on integrating arts-informed program evaluation* below.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are the chapters in the dissertation using data gathered from the participants in the EHCW program. In these chapters I attempted to address the overarching challenge of being a researcher in a program that I manage, and the emic challenge qualitative researchers face more generally. In Chapter 5, I presented my data relatively unanalyzed through theory because I intended to step back and invite the reader to hear the participants' voices unfiltered. I was influenced by an approach that Harris (2006) presents when he asks researchers to look at ways individuals self-represent through everyday speech. This approach aligned with the dialogic method of the arts-informed program evaluation I used to collect the speech. Harris emphasizes the aural over the visual, and advocates for listening carefully to the prosaic rather than the extraordinary or spectacular speech which can contribute to our understanding.

In Chapter 5, I provided photos of the collages that two participants described during their gallery walks, and I reconstructed their stories about their experience in the program using both their verbatim language and my written summaries. I intentionally limited references to theory, but while trying to capture each woman's authentic voice, my bias and perspective were inevitable. I hoped that this emic approach created a richer, insightful view of the participant or insider perspectives and contributed to an understanding of the EHCW program. The data that I gathered through my arts-informed research project and as part of my inquiry community revealed much about the women's and the staffs' experience of the program that was not visible through direct observation or statistics.

In Chapters 6 and 7, my focus for the synthesis and analysis of my data is on the theoretical lenses represented in purple in Figure 3.1: *Mind-map—Guiding my inquiry*. In Chapters 6 and 7, I used a more conventional etic approach, from the perspective of the observer or outsider, where I employ a thematic approach, showing images and selecting verbatim quotes from discussions of the different collages to illustrate themes that I identified as common to multiple women's stories, or unique insights. I listened to these same voices and tried to interpret and analyze the significance of some of this speech from an etic perspective using several key scholars' theorizations. In this approach, I was conscious that the accounts or stories of the EHCW program that the women offered via their collages and the gallery walks were *representations* of their experience.

In Chapter 6, I drew on verbatim quotes gathered through my collage-making workshops, an interview with the core teacher and interviews that my co-researchers carried out as a part of our inquiry community. I analyzed the data through Bourdieusian theorizing using the broader themes of economic, social and cultural capital. In the mind-map I created, I drew linkages between feminist theory, both poststructuralist feminism (Weedon, 1997) and the ethic of care (hooks, 1994; Noddings, 1984), which iteratively informed the conceptualizing of the EHCW program, my individual research, and also the collaborative research of my inquiry community. The intention to build social capital was intentionally addressed in EHCW, starting with the decision to create a "women only" and relationally based program. Caring in the EHCW program contributed to the cultivation of social capital and investment in learning for students.

In Chapter 6, I also recognized the workplace practicum as a site of cultural and economic capital acquisition through providing the women with an opportunity to gain recognized certificates such as Worldhost and FoodSafe, and Canadian workplace experience, which for some women led directly to employment. The pedagogical approach acknowledged the women's first language(s), and sought to build linguistic capital through legitimizing their English language use. An unintentional outcome of providing onsite childminding was informal family literacy and an accumulation of linguistic capital for the women who brought their children there. The mothers with children in the childminding room were seen as experts on their children's preferences, needs and habits, which through daily conversation with the childminders legitimated their English language use in this context. The EHCW program intentionally provided a space in which to expand women's various forms of capital.

In Chapter 7, I used different but interconnected theoretical framing for my analysis. Again, these concepts are linked and interrelated on the mind-map (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.1) and coloured purple, indicating their theoretical nature. Building on the notion of different forms of capital, I looked at investment in language education, identity theory and imagined communities/futures. The participants described how they invested in language learning because proficiency in English helped them to acquire a wider range of symbolic (and material) resources such as gaining confidence, talking to the teacher, and being able to provide knowledgeable responses and answers when talking to colleagues and employers at the practicum site. For poststructuralist theorists (e.g., Norton, 2013; Weedon, 1997, 2004), the view that social identity is changeable and contradictory helps to explain how students were both silenced in some contexts and responded to and created opportunities to use English in others. At the beginning of the program, many appeared reluctant to speak in an employment related context, but some of those same women spoke confidently with the childminders as they were self-identified experts in their knowledge and understanding of their children, conferring the right to speak and to be listened to. Finally, there are connections between how a person envisions possibilities for their imagined future, their imagined future community, and their investment in language learning and identity.

In conclusion, my focus on forms of capital, investment and imagined futures in Chapters 6 and 7 revealed several important factors. Firstly, context was paramount to learning. As program developers, the decision was made to have a women only program

and to focus on building social relations. I suggested that this led to shared norms, shared values, and opened spaces for exploration of topics like: acknowledgement of skills learned in the domestic sphere, parenting, confidence, self-care, clothing and appearance, all of which were relevant to understanding investment. I also argued that theories such as identity theory, feminism, and ethic of care interrelate and are particularly applicable for the EHCW program with its focus on employment. I would suggest that English language levels relate closely to feelings of personal self-actualization, finding employment, job satisfaction, and job retention. For many of the EHCW students, an investment in the target language is also an investment in their own social identity, which changes across time and space. Finally, the connections between how a person envisions possibilities for the future and their future community have a bearing on investment in language learning and identity development. How future imaginings intersect with the histories, experiences, and relationship to the acquisition of language and workplace skills, through the acquisition of various forms of capital, can also compel learners to act or not act.

In this Section 8.1: *Coming to the end of my doctoral journey*, I have briefly summarized my process along this doctoral journey, my practitioner inquiry, and in this dissertation. I overview the first seven chapters to synthesize the data that I gathered primarily through analyzing the course evaluation form, my arts-informed workshops, the interviews that I conducted, and the collaborative research that I did as part of my inquiry community. In the next section, I reflect back on the overall practitioner inquiry, though I necessarily focus on the arts-informed program evaluation as the central method in this research. I identify the limitations of my practitioner inquiry in Section 8.2 as part of my critical reflection, while concluding the value of integrating arts-informed program evaluation has brought to my practice in Section 8.3. In Section 8.4: *EHCW: A program for transformation?*, I address the transformational value of EHCW for individuals and for society. I maintain that employment training for immigrants can positively impact participants and help work towards social change. However, others maintain that government funded employment training combined with the demand for low-skilled labour, sexism, racism, and a lack of recognition of the women's prior experiences, perpetuate steering immigrant women to lower-paid, entry-level positions in the labour market. In Section 8.5, I conclude that I gained a better understanding of the participants' lived experience by using an arts-informed approach, compared to using a

generic, “one document suits all programs” accountability-oriented course evaluation form. The women shared what was of value to them about the program, and we worked with that to make modifications to the program to increase their investment in learning. In Section 8.6, I discuss the extent to which I have answered the research questions that I laid out in Chapter 1, and whether I met the goals of inquiry. In Section 8.7: *Afterword – Final thoughts in challenging times*, I look at the current global context as a way to re-engage with current conversations, address the questions remaining, and point out areas for future study.

8.2. Reflecting on integrating arts-informed program evaluation

In my individual research, I set out to shine a light on arts-informed program evaluation in an employment training context, and reflecting on this is the focus of this section. As I had mentioned earlier, the notion of using an arts-informed research approach was initially disruptive to me. Initial reading about arts-based research, particularly in the context of practitioner self-study, caused me to question whether some of the practices were simply a platform for self-centred utterances, no matter how poetic, that served little if any social purpose. I felt I might be looking at something that was appropriate for a privileged few. As most of the applied vocational or employment programming that I manage is short-term, focused on outcomes or competencies and is instrumentally oriented to reaching these goals, I could not see an immediate application. Even though I had determined that the course evaluation form was inappropriate and not useable for the EHCW students, I found it challenging to imagine alternative ways of gaining understanding beyond the traditional means of standardized course evaluation forms or online surveys. My inquiry nudged me to think about how I might create space for dialogue with instructors, students, and even employers about using arts-based possibilities. Further reading on feminist arts-based adult education, demonstrated its importance to building a sense of community, self-worth, and personal and collective identities. Clover (2016) argues that the arts are “integral to what it is to be human, not add-ons enjoyed by those with the privilege to do so” (p. 5). I began to see its importance with those who face barriers or are marginalized.

Using an arts-informed program evaluation was novel and innovative in my professional context, and I found that the process and the data generated differed from

the traditional evaluation form or other quantitative methods for measuring the value of programs in the following beneficial ways:

- students expressed their experiences or perspectives through images thereby reducing the need for full expression through English language;
- art-making honoured different ways of learning and created a space for exploring the lived experience of participants in a program;
- students engaged more deeply and provided richer, lengthier and unexpected descriptions of their experience without a pre-set series of questions shaping their responses;
- art-making, as it was immersive and social, appeared to be identity forming and agency building;
- the women showed agency—they created images that told their stories—they controlled the agenda;
- art-making brought in and interrelated identity theory, feminism, and a pedagogy of care—particularly relevant for the EHCW program with its focus on employment;
- the experience of providing feedback on the program was a positive learning experience—in-depth, reflective, dialogic, collaborative and engaging;
- arts-informed participatory research methods, when done with sensitivity, brought caring into the program evaluation process. The gallery walk that we participated in involved both giving and receiving. Developing a relational bond was more important than “making a picture”;
- through my arts-informed research, myself, the staff, and teachers also engaged in critical and collaborative reflection alongside the participants. It was not just individual feedback giving; we learned together.

My newfound belief in using arts-informed evaluation processes as a complement to other qualitative research processes, and in EHCW, as an alternative to using traditional evaluation forms is a result of my practitioner inquiry. Tenzin’s collage (see Figure 7.2) and story perhaps best illustrates the benefits. Her collage plays with colour where she artfully portrays her “professional” side on the left in black and white, and her “love” side on the right in colour. She describes living in black and white and living in colour and the intersections between these worlds as celebrations. This collage highlights the depth of insight that can be expressed through arts-based methods that would never have been made visual through the course evaluation form. For me this visual also provides a metaphor for the holistic aspect of an employment program where issues of social equity

are explored. I am making a change to my practice that is more consistent with my beliefs and concerns than former practices. I see using arts-informed program evaluation in EHCW as a promising practice with potential applications in other programs, and in a limited way I am advocating for change in my professional context.

My experience with using collage-making specifically resonates with what other proponents of collage-making have found (Butler-Kisber, 2008). In summary, collage-making in the context of the EHCW program proved valuable in the following ways:

- students easily negotiated the interactive, group-based approach. Some discussed their collages in their first languages or in English while making them, some interacted with me about the process, and others worked silently and individually;
- collage-making, along with the gallery walk, enabled time and a method for both individual reflection and the collective articulation of experiences;
- collage-making was a sensory or embodied process resulting in an artifact, that supported the maker/viewer/responder collaboratively generate meanings;
- paradoxically, collage-making both reduced control over the representation of the ideas through the magazine images available to the maker, but also facilitated the ability to represent or express ideas through the juxtaposition, connections, gaps or placement of images;
- in the collage-making process, the placement of the magazine pictures sometimes went through multiple arrangements before being glued into place. Collages showed fragments of text or images that were placed creating new ways of understanding and representing knowledge rather than creating or expressing a single, coherent idea; and
- collage-making required reflection and an intellectualizing of ideas, which often resulted in a visual metaphor that encouraged dialogue and was open to multiple responses and interpretations during the gallery walk.

From my perspective, the novelty of visual representation as a contributor to program evaluation added new insights. As an activity it was pedagogically meaningful. One student, Eman, revealed this when described her experience of using artmaking to tell a story: “This is the first time for me to look at picture and find my thinking....” This decision to explore an arts-informed approach aligned with my view of critical literacy and multiliteracies. Butler-Kisber (2008), who advocates for arts-based research, states,

The search for more embodied and alternative representational forms where meaning is understood to be a construction of what the text

represents and what the reader/viewer brings to it, and the realization that we live in an increasingly visual/nonlinear world, have naturally led researchers to explore the potential of visual texts, collage being one possibility. (p. 268)

Collage-making was inspiring and educational for me; it elevated student contribution to program evaluation beyond rote box-ticking. For this group of students, English language was not a barrier to collage-making. The social component was significant—we shared a culminating experience which was caring and contributed to a humanizing of the institution, rather than presenting a generic, standardized institutionally based document. Participatory art-making enabled an authentic dialogue between students and staff, as I had invited the core teacher, the *Community Outreach Workers* and students to join me in the collage-making workshops that nurtured reflective practices as part of this program evaluation. Sometimes the images that the women chose to use in the collages either surprised or baffled me when I first looked at them. In the viewer, art can invoke curiosity, require interpretation and prompt questioning. One scholar working with collage states it warrants meaningful engagement: “The ambiguity that remains present in collage provides a way of expressing the said and the unsaid, and allows for multiple avenues of interpretation and greater accessibility” (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 268). While stories need to be told, they also need to be listened to. Dr. Shawna Butterwick drew our attention (2020) to the value of listening at a UBC sponsored forum on arts-based teaching and learning for adults, “Listening not to respond, but to understand.” I held back my reaction to each collage until I heard their stories because then they made sense and were often poignant. Some students were very literal in their choices; for example, one woman selected a photo of a bed and then discussed the company sanctioned bed-making procedure they learned at their practicum site. I have seen others include a picture of a bed and describe it in a much more metaphorical way when they discussed learning how they needed to repeat things or practice over and over until they could do it well, or how an unmade bed projects the warmth and messiness of a family.

In summary, arts-informed inquiry provided an accessible alternative to the traditional forms of information gathering about courses and programs such as the standard course evaluation form, or an end of term online survey. Arts-informed research methods enabled the women with immigrant and refugee experience, who had relatively low levels of English literacy, to collaborate with me on program evaluation and

to provide meaningful feedback. Sufficient data were gathered to influence the outcomes in subsequent cohorts, and the development of additional programs. The 3-hour workshop involved artmaking, storytelling, dialogue and critical reflection, which engaged the participants in exploring multiple ways of knowing and various dimensions of identity. It was fun, communal, we talked and laughed, and drank tea; but we were also silent at times and reflective, engaged in our work. While measuring affect is a challenging task, the richness and complexity of a program like EHCW with broad, holistic goals that integrate affective and cognitive components, collage-making was an exciting choice for this learning-oriented evaluation and research into the role of arts-informed inquiry.

8.3. Limitations of my practitioner inquiry

In this practitioner inquiry, I was committed to exploring and discussing issues relevant to the circumstances of the participants' lives and the teachers and staff in the program. I saw this practitioner inquiry as a kind of action research involving the participants researching their own experience of the program. As described above, using arts-informed research added value to my learning-oriented program evaluation processes. However, as with all research methodologies, there were limitations to collage-making as arts-informed program evaluation specifically, and to arts-informed research more generally.

Arts-informed research is appropriate and useful for getting at some kinds of questions, but not all. For example, I wanted to know more precisely what the teacher did pedagogically to support the use of first language and her approach to language and literacy in the classroom. That issue did not arise during the collage-making workshops, and I could only learn about that by asking direct questions, and/or by direct observation. Even by observing, as a person of authority, my presence changed the classroom practice and the teacher and students may have performed for me. Due to my interest in the program's English language learning potential, this theme did not emerge significantly through either the data gathered through my arts-informed workshops or through my inquiry community. I recognized that interviews were a methodology well-suited to focused questioning and probing on specific themes, and chose to do two. In the following paragraphs, I describe the limitations with arts-informed research that I encountered with the collage-making process specifically, and with arts-informed research in general.

As a practitioner-researcher, I still have much to learn and will continue to build my repertoire and adapt, review, revise or even abandon the collage-making workshop for other arts-informed evaluation practices. If doing the collage-making workshop over, I would give the participants smaller pieces of cardstock to build their collages on, to put less emphasis on “filling the space” and more focus on the symbolism of what they were creating, and on the representation of it. I think small-scale collages (e.g., 8.5 by 11 inches) would have inspired the students to select images and fragments that were more metaphorical and perhaps look at and think more about colour, shape, composition and content. I think the large poster-sized format was somewhat intimidating to some as they felt a need to “fill” it. I also think it might have been interesting to ask the women to “title” their work. That might have produced more data on their experience of the program and helped them synthesize their expression of it. Another opportunity that I did not explore but that my collage-making provided, was as an elicitation for writing. With this group of students, I wanted to see what visual imagery and discussion would emerge; I was interested in the intuitions and feelings behind the imagery. The gallery walk process could also be revised. Much data could be gathered through talking to students individually or in smaller groups, giving them 5 minutes of free or exploratory writing about their art collages, or asking them to write labels/titles on their collages and then to talk about them. Alternatively, I could consider an arts-informed workshop that is digitally multimodal or multilingual, perhaps incorporating first language and text. There are limitless variations on arts-informed workshops that I could explore in the future to elicit interesting data in adaptation to the demographics of the group of students and the program context.

The research question I generated in the arts-informed workshops along with the participants was open-ended (e.g., What was your experience of the EHCW program?) and the environment or atmosphere I tried to create was appreciative. However, I was conscious that the workshop’s timing within two weeks of program completion may have led to a high level of positivity about the program. I perceived an elevated level of excitement as they were reuniting with their friends for the workshop; there were lots of hugs and greetings. Those who voluntarily attended the workshop appeared proud of themselves for completing the program, and optimistic about the future. Perhaps those who felt differently did not choose to participate in the workshop? It is possible that the women who did attend were performing for me and trying to say what they thought I

might want to hear, or they may have been performing for each other too. This elevated level of positivity and enthusiasm was evident from knowing the group's trajectory through the duration of the program. At previous points during the program, many had been much lower in mood and outlook. For example, the group faced challenges when they were struggling collectively to prepare for the Foodsafe exam, and then some in the group did not "pass" the exam the first time. There was a mixed feeling of relief and anxiety, but those who required further study passed it the second time.

One way to mitigate this elevated level of enthusiasm might have been holding the workshops a couple of months after the program's completion. However, in my experience, longer term follow up also presents operational challenges as former program participants get busy or move, are hard to get hold of, or forget details of the program experience. Overall, in their enthusiasm, it could be the case that the women conformed to what they thought my aims of the project were, and they reproduced them. Perhaps they thought I wanted to hear positive feedback, and they provided it. However, this also occurs in other feedback methods such as on a course evaluation forms, focus groups, or electronic survey. With their voices and stories, the women expressed authenticity, but to what extent were the participants performing for me? Did the way that I presented my workshop, gave the waiver with its authoritative university logo, or made the collages with them, create an environment of expectation that they wanted to meet? The limitation is that this appreciative line of inquiry may be viewed as unbalanced or uncritical in its emphasis on the positive.

Perhaps a primary limitation for using qualitative research generally, and arts-informed research as a part of a learning-oriented program evaluation specifically, is that it is time-consuming. It is not "cheap" data. The following is an estimate of the "cost" of the data gained from one class. The collage-making workshop with five women (approximately one-third of the class) required three hours. Then around one hour was needed for transcribing each woman's audio recording of her discussion about her collage, and five to ten hours to analyze and compare the transcriptions to identify key themes. Finally, several hours to write up a report was needed. This minimal estimation of approximately 20 hours of necessary time is not a consideration when done as part of doctoral research. However, in current neoliberal public bidding processes where the budget is a substantial component of the criteria for selection, this research process would be scrutinized using a cost/benefit analysis. Indeed, if a major limitation of course

evaluation forms or online surveys is that the information collected is shallow and accountability-oriented rather than enabling meaningful understanding leading to continuous improvement, the advantage is that those data collection processes, especially if automated, are less expensive. In the case of EHCW, a more traditional course evaluation form was inappropriate and the cost-saving advantage outweighed. One can consider this type of program evaluation as an integrated aspect of the learning with pedagogical value as it seemed to contribute to the identity development of the learners. Therefore, an approach that decentered written text was not only inclusive but could be considered decolonizing as it draws in other ways of knowing and the open-ended data gathered was particularly valuable given the program's holistic nature.

Another limitation that I identify as an opportunity not taken up in this project and, if doing over, I would reconsider is about not sufficiently involving the participants in the curriculum revision process. Although the women students who participated in the arts-informed workshops can be considered co-researchers, I have not shared this textual version of my arts-informed inquiry with the EHCW participants – only with my fellow researchers in our inquiry community and other academics through presentations and publications. I experienced how the women participated and shared their knowledge of the program during the arts-informed workshops, but I am unaware of how the women would understand this textual version of the research and its analysis. As Butler-Kisber (2008) has pointed out, this is a limitation that is shared:

In collage work, as in all other qualitative research, the ethical issues of voice, reflexivity, and trustworthiness are always of prime importance because of the proximity between participants and researchers and the attention that must be paid to building trust and relationships that arise as a result. (p. 273)

Indeed, from my perspective, trust was built between myself and the EHCW participants during the data gathering process. However, I did much of the analysis alone and in isolation from the students (etic). I did not set up a system of “checking in with them,” which was problematic. As Marshall et al. (2014) noted, “At a truly emic level, we should also involve *our* participants as much as possible in our data analysis, through which we make our judgements about *their* social, cultural, and linguistic practices [Italics original]” (p. 7). The ultimate collaboration or reimagining of an educational program is feedback or input on the final representation of the data by those who were involved in generating it. For many of the women in the EHCW program,

representation in the form of this dissertation is likely not accessible to them as the language, and literacy barriers might prevent their understanding of it. How would they react to my analysis? Would they find that the theoretical lenses that I drew on added value to the interpretation of their experience? I do not see this as an ethical issue, but rather in terms of curiosity and an additional opportunity to gather data. A check-in with the women in the EHCW program could have provided a degree of validity. Perhaps there is a modified or counter-narrative they might have provided to how I have portrayed the program.

Another comment on doing arts-informed research—because I was specifically interested in learning more about the women’s experience of the EHCW program, I did not explore a wide variety of research questions. In retrospect, I think arts-informed approaches to research questions relating directly to an individual’s identity could yield interesting results. For example, a research question such as “What does having a higher level of English represent for you?” or “What does belonging in Canada look like for you?” might have produced evocative images and revealed reasons for taking the EHCW program that were not revealed when asking about the program directly. In my experience as a program manager, particularly of tuition-free government-funded programs, I have witnessed potential students providing reasons they believe we want to hear for taking the program in order to be selected. For example, I believe that some of the women registered in the program may have prioritized their need for social interaction, opportunities to be exposed to and to practice English, and to participate in a caring, supportive learning context where the anxiety that often accompanies listening and speaking in English is reduced, over their need for employment. I accept that there are multiple, valid reasons for wanting to and being invested in study; the greater challenge from my perspective is a student taking a highly desirable seat in a program who is not invested in studying and thereby preventing another from doing so.

A final limitation of my choosing to do practitioner-inquiry and eclectically representing my knowledge is that it was challenging for me to draw boundaries. My readings and research kept pointing me in directions worthy of further pursuit such as: narrative inquiry, *métissage* (Donald, 2011; Chambers et al., 2008), decolonization, critical discourse analysis, arts-based pedagogy, teacher/practitioner identity, sense of belonging, trauma-informed teaching, the role of childcare and broader gender issues that shape and constrain women’s access to learning and to the labour market, and

linguistic racism and language discrimination. However, in order to complete the project, as all doctoral students must, I had to make decisions. The result may have been superficiality in some areas and too much depth in others. I expect though that this is not a limitation of practitioner-inquiry specifically. The boundaries may not be any more or less porous compared to other methodologies

8.4. EHCW: A program for transformation?

Throughout the approximately 2.5 years that I collaborated with my inquiry community, a significant portion of my doctoral journey, my growth as a practitioner-researcher was stimulated. In my practice, I use my lived experience as an educator/program coordinator, to make choices about how to engage with partners, what kinds of programs to develop, and how to deeply engage with the participants to ensure their voices influence the development and improvement of the program. This work provides direction and vision to program innovations and change, but is emergent and done in collaboration with others. The research and discussion done through our inquiry community found that the EHCW program helped expand the women's knowledge, both in relation to employment practices in the hospitality industry, and legal and labour rights, contributed to enhancing the women's confidence and self-esteem, as well as enhanced their social and economic opportunities (Shan et al., 2019, pp. 14–15).

My identity as a practitioner-researcher shifted through the exploration of new research methods. Analyzing an institutional document propelled me to consider alternative ways of understanding programs. As I was already experienced in interviewing, facilitating focus groups, and presenting, arts-informed program evaluation provided a rich opportunity. Being introduced to and discussing new theoretical perspectives, particularly critical feminist perspectives (Cho et al., 2013), and discussing them brought another layer of learning and understanding. Perhaps the most valuable, albeit difficult, learning in an inquiry such as this is to interrogate your assumptions. I described the ethical tensions I experienced in Section 4.4: *Ethical issues and limitations*. However, this collaborative work done as part of my inquiry community was experienced less as an ethical tension and more as an identity shift for me. Having to reflect on my work using a “critical” stance, opened my eyes as I negotiated my role variously and sometimes imperceptibly as a practitioner/researcher, insider/outsider, manager of government funded programs/critic of government funded programs, and

community-based researcher/university-based researcher. Sometimes the boundaries between these dichotomies felt permeable with no distinction, and at other times I felt positioned. My critical consciousness of the social and economic marginalization that immigrant and refugee women encounter was buffeted by my workplace roles.

Throughout this period, I read, questioned and learned with and from others about how, on the one hand, some view neoliberal government-funded vocational training programs for newcomers as “structurally implicated in the reproduction of social, cultural and economic hierarchies” (Shan et al., 2019, p. 4) in Canada. Maitra and Shan (2007) and Maitra (2015) suggest that dominant cultural values inform employment training programs towards assimilating immigrants. Others find that immigrant training and employment services “often remain heavily influenced by race/class/gender hierarchies as well as stereotypical assumptions of desirable/undesirable bodies, forms of socialization and modes of habitation that often are naturalised in the course of training” (Maitra & Maitra, 2015, p. 317). From this perspective, immigrant training programs, especially those with a focus on soft skill training, are based on immigrants conditionally being “integrated” into the host society. Ng’s (1988) study shows that accountability to funders, measured by the number of immigrants employed, influences the work of employment services providers. Ng maintains that the demand for low-skilled labour—coupled with sexism, racism, and a lack of recognition of the women’s prior experiences—functions to steer immigrant women to lower-paid, entry-level positions in the labour market.

On the other hand, it is my view that employment training for immigrants can positively impact participants, work towards social change, and that such training programs can be a site for resisting the reification of immigrant women as predominantly cheap labour and holding space for their imagined futures not only as employable women but also as mothers, citizens and community members. Certainly, given the short-term, project-based funding and limited resources, a program such as EHCW cannot effect dramatic social change. Our intention to bring consciousness to some of the power imbalances and need for various knowledge, skills and strategies for the women to build various forms of capital is insufficient for systemic social change. However, intentions and ideals held by practitioners do matter. By offering the women an entry point not only to employment but to the broader community and society, EHCW provides a ladder or structure for multiple social possibilities.

In reimagining conventional vocational training for women with refugee and immigrant experience, our inquiry community found that EHCW straddled the binary of social reproduction and transformation (Shan et al., 2019). Our inquiry community—university and community-based researchers—were immersed in the EHCW program with access to the day-to-day work of the program staff, interactions with program participants, and opportunity to discuss and review program development and curricular planning. For some of the researchers, who had not worked extensively in employment programming for newcomers, they came to an appreciation of the practical nature of developing a program like EHCW. The knowledge co-construction process helped us develop a deeper understanding of the relational nature of the program. Our inquiry community summarized our thinking in the journal article: “There is no clear line between reproduction and transformation, but only continuities and disjunctures between them” (Shan et al., 2019, p. 17).

8.5. Meeting the goals of my inquiry

In this section I discuss the extent to which I have answered the research questions that I had, and met the aims of the inquiry that I set out in Chapter 1. In every teaching and learning environment, it is paramount to look at what we do, ask questions about our work, and learn from these questions to find what is of value and worth and build on that. This is my practitioner inquiry. As a practitioner-researcher, I am increasingly interested in learning-oriented program evaluation and developing an evaluative culture in the CEU that centres on learning. When I look up evaluation in the etymological dictionary online, I see that it is a noun of action from the French *évaluer* “to find the value of,” and from Latin *valere* to “be strong, be well; be of value, be of worth.” However, from my years of practice in various educational settings, I also know that the term “program evaluation,” for many post-secondary educators, conjures anxiety or fear. Is our program at risk? Are we not “measuring up” somehow? Is this code for “we’re looking to cut programs, is this the one to ‘sunset’?”

Current accountability arrangements such as course evaluation forms, or standardized program reporting limit our data gathering processes. My professional context is continually changing: shifts in student demographics, student needs and capacities, thinking about pedagogy, the use of technology, the labour market, the equipment used in the workplace, and changes to procedures and regulations impact

employment programs. The inadequacy of some of the accountability measures I am required to use led to my research question: How can I, as a practitioner-researcher using an arts-informed approach, gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experience of a program in order to increase their investment in learning, improve the program and develop my own practice? Answers to this question require adaptations and modifications to program planning and pedagogy.

For the most part, the activities I undertook as a practitioner-researcher aligned with the guiding principles I listed in Chapter 3: *Framing my inquiry – Literature Review*. I prioritized stories as a dialogical way of exploring the value of a program for the participants and the staff involved in it. In my dissertation I have described tensions that arose in my work. My thinking is shifting towards a more critical perspective of some of the programs I conceptualize, propose and manage. Arts-informed research was transformational for me as a doctoral student and inspired me as a practitioner-researcher. I found art-making to be transformative in adult education through which interrogated and contested ideas become a site for talking and learning around identity development—a site of resistance for the women in EHCW.

The guiding principles established in Section 3.2 that I was not as fully able to follow were the last two: that ideally the voice of those typically not heard, the women students, should be foregrounded, and that the end-users—the participants—should be legitimate partners in the curriculum design or revision process (Quintero, 2009, pp. 10–11). I believe that the arts-informed research approach fulfilled its potential to create complex, reflexive, and interpretive images that represented the participants' lived experiences. They brought their voices and agency into the research, as well as deepening my understanding of the program. The women advocated for changes in the program, and we implemented several of their suggestions, which served to increase their investment in learning. Examples of modifications we made to the program based on student input were focusing more on seeking employment in long-term residential care facilities as opposed to jobs as housekeepers in large hotel chains, and focusing more on Canadian employment law. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) maintain, "Inquiry conducted with and by students allows learners to empower themselves to take different stances toward their education, acting as agents for change in their schools and communities" (p. 5). A significant curricular supplement that the students advocated for and we arranged, was a 2-week course taught in a partnership with the BC Federation of

Labour union, which was voluntary for students and immediately followed the EHCW program on the same daily schedule. No-cost, onsite childminding was also provided. This training, delivered by the BC Federation of Labour Health and Safety Centre, focused on workplace health and safety using an EAL curriculum model. Participants had the opportunity to continue improving their English language skills while learning more about workers' rights and responsibilities in health and safety topics such as workplace violence, preventing back injuries, workplace chemicals (i.e., WHMIS), and identification of hazards.

A key aspect of answering my research question in considering the extent to which the women were engaged themselves and included in the process of curriculum revision. Certainly, the *Community Program Manager* from PIRS, the teachers and the *Community Outreach Workers* were involved in curriculum revision processes from one cohort to the next. However, perhaps as an indication of the power imbalance, or bureaucratic or institutional constraints, we were not able to consistently use the students (critical end-users) as legitimate partners in all curriculum design or revision processes. For example, many students wanted to focus more on culinary instruction with the chefs by extending the length of the program. We knew the students were particularly engaged in that activity as it had been a powerful way to recognize their prior learning, expand knowledge of cooking skills and empower the women to explain and share aspects of their culture. Given that we had already budgeted the salaries for the vocational instructors we had limited flexibility to either extend the program's length or reduce other aspects of the curriculum. We knew that it was a priority to ensure that the students got the short-term occupational certificates (e.g., FoodSafe and WorldHost) that were recognized by industry. In our initial and ongoing discussions with employers, they had told us that once the students had those credentials and knife skills, they could provide on-the-job training for necessary food preparation skills. In other words, due to labour market shortages, they would hire new employees with minimal food preparation training. Therefore, despite the women's evident engagement and investment in that aspect of the program, more training in this area would not significantly increase their employability, and we did not extend that module in the program. The dialogue around this decision-making process involved the women so that the constraints and rationales were transparent for them.

By exploring a range of methods and theories, and following my guiding principles, I have met the goals of my inquiry. Throughout this practitioner inquiry, I used various research methods to enhance and extend my ways of engaging in more meaningful communication, gathering data, and understanding a program that I manage. I detailed the experiences of being a part of an inquiry community. In my individual research, I described analyzing a document that is commonly used in my workplace, its lack of suitability for use with students in the EHCW program and shone a light on the possibilities for arts-informed program evaluation in a vocational context.

8.6. Implications for my practice and future research

Current systems for evaluating and improving employment programs, like measurement of the number of participants employed or the standardized course evaluation form, are impoverished. I engaged in practitioner inquiry to understand the women's experience in the program *and* to expand my evaluative practice by critically reflecting on it. This process was more useful for revising the program in the earlier cohorts. We used the stories gathered following the second and third cohorts to get rich data and progressively make program adaptations for the last two cohorts. Arts-informed inquiry as part of a learning-oriented program evaluation was effective with students with low levels of English language and literacy, but could work equally well with other student populations. I intend to create future opportunities for arts-informed exploration and research in my practice. Some implications for practice that my research surfaced, and additional research possibilities generated are to:

- Use other arts-informed approaches to ask questions and gather data with other student populations;
- Compare the data generated through a traditional course evaluation form with an arts-informed evaluation process in different programs;
- Follow-up to determine how durable the EHCW participants' sense of self-confidence, agency and empowerment is over time;
- Advocate for the integration of language and literacy learning in employment programs to contribute to the development of confidence and agency, identity, and social relationships that enables newcomers to overcome these barriers;

- Enquire more deeply about the women’s expressed positive imagined futures, and explore through curriculum the alignment between what is imaginable and what is likely available;
- Consider further how employment programs might be reimagined to recognize existing competencies and ladder training, in a phased or part-time approach, to get an accredited trade and reduce vulnerability to precarious employment;
- Seek out existing funding or explore opportunities for paid work experience;
- Conduct longitudinal research to determine the impacts of the EHCW program on longer-term, sustainable, social and economic changes for individual women.

Overall, nurturing an evaluative culture in the CEU at WCC was simultaneously supported by my participation in the inquiry community and by building a community of practice. As I demonstrated through the textual analysis of a course evaluation form, course-level reviews can be inadequate, box-ticking exercises rather than processes supporting real curricular understanding or change. Arts-informed research activities provide additional methods for understanding students’ experience. Intentional reflection and the process of collaborating and co-creating a program is often overlooked in a conventional summative program evaluation process which emphasizes measuring outcomes. As a holistic program, we reached out to the women as who and where they were, what they needed and whom they could become. We provided space for the women to articulate their own identities and knowledge, build relationships and develop collective identities, and explore different relationality (economic, social and cultural) between the self, their community within EHCW and their imagined futures.

8.7. Afterword – Final thoughts in challenging times

I cringe at the phrase “new normal” for many complex reasons, the least of which is that it is overused, and the worst of which is that it touches on my profound fears of loss and that our world is profoundly changed. I cannot come to the end of this journey without discussing the COVID-19 pandemic. No one could have predicted 5 years ago when I started this doctoral journey that we would be wearing masks into grocery stores, watching the Provincial Health Office report every day at 3:00 p.m., understanding the importance of an R1 rating, and pinning our hopes on a vaccine. Who could have predicted then the current political and cultural climate in the United States? Or,

predicted the impacts of the “Me Too” movement and Women’s marches or the Black Lives Matter and racist politics in North America? Or, the as yet unknown impact of international economic devastation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and possible unanticipated waves of migration?

How do the issues that I have discussed in this dissertation relate to this moment? Given this new context, what have I learned from writing this dissertation? What are the conceptual skills and knowledge that can help me extend the conversation about employment programming for migrant women during this current time? When we reimagined conventional vocational training for women with low language and low literacy, we focused on providing a holistic, face-to-face model using the well-established facilities at WCC. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, like most other educational institutions, we have pivoted our training to a remote learning context. How does that impact the population that I worked with in the EHCW program? Groundwater Smith and Mockler (2007) argue that practitioner research, “with its focus upon local inquiries designed to address and ameliorate local problems, should necessarily be concerned not only with solutions, but with the conditions that produced the problems in the first place” (p. 200). The pandemic magnifies this need and has revealed deep inequities in our neoliberal society.

During the pandemic, issues of workplace vulnerability to the Corona virus, precarious employment, poverty and unemployment, digital access and literacy, domestic violence, inadequate housing and mental health have disproportionately impacted marginalized and racialized women. Given my experience with EHCW, I have a starting place for knowing some of the barriers and concerns that some of the women might face now during the pandemic, such as:

- Facing issues of poverty (e.g. due to higher rates of unemployment, or not being eligible for government grants);
- Being more likely to get COVID-19 as a woman of colour;
- Not having adequate digital literacy skills or a current computer with reliable access to wi-fi to study remotely;
- Being burdened with childcare and schooling children at home;

- Not having physical space and/or privacy at home in which to study (which is exacerbated when multiple household members are studying or working at home and on-line);
- Suffering from isolation and mental health challenges;
- Having pre-existing health conditions placing them or family members in high-risk health categories;
- Concerns about safety and being at greater risk of domestic violence (physical, sexual, financial, emotional, etc.);
- Being separated and concerned about family overseas and monitoring rates of COVID-19 and second waves in potentially multiple countries.

My learnings through this doctoral journey lead me to a place where I better recognize constraints within my practice, and a need to consider my role as an activist for the students in my programs. Support and advocacy for more equitable opportunities for marginalized communities is a higher priority. Perhaps this moment can open discussion about significant social transformation. For example, the government response of providing the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has brought the concept of the Universal Basic Income (UBI) into the public discourse. Advocates hope that CERB or other pilot projects have shown Canadians that a basic income program is possible (“Advocates Hopeful CERB,” 2020).

However, if I were to conceptualize a program now for a similar population of women to those in EHCW, I would start with practical concerns and attempt to address those. I would ask potential participants, other service providers and those working closely with them in the community—what is needed? What is wanted? I fully expect that a much greater emphasis on developing digital literacy, and building a budget so each student can have a functioning and reliable computer with good access to wi-fi would be fundamental. Remote, life-long learning will be a significant part of all our futures. I would take from and build on the learnings in this dissertation about care-based pedagogy and nurturing social relationships. In these times, the negative effects of social isolation can compound health concerns and the need for resiliency is paramount.

I end the writing of this dissertation in uncertain times. In Chapter 1, I included an e-postcard based on the pedagogy that Fels (2012) describes as a “stop moment” inviting us to reflect and listen to others in a new way. Reflecting on my course work, I remembered another e-postcard (see Figure 8.1) that I made the day after the 2016 US

Presidential election that I had also created as part of her course. In the e-postcard, I used a quote and an image of the baobab tree from the book *The Little Prince*. I combined these with a list of texts I had exchanged with Canadian family and friends living in the US on the night of the election that I had been communicating with as we watched the election results come in. I remember feeling despondent and concerned about friends and family in the US, and saddened and worried about what the next 4 years would bring. Issues of immigration, education, racism, and the economy in the US were prominent for me as a Canadian.

E-Postcard #4 11.09.2016

"Children, watch out for baobabs!"



p. 17

It wasn't a stop moment - it was a stop dead in your tracks moment that took months, weeks, hours to realize.

"Is this freakin' happening?"
"I am about to pour myself a healthy bourbon."
"I feel a bit scared to be honest."
"I can't watch. I'm on the Guardian website which is posting results live.
168 vs 109."
"I'm sick with worry."
"This is terrifying. I'm on CNN. I've still got 233 to 209."
"Obamacare. Supreme Court. He'll overturn Roe vs. Wade."
"What do you have for the latest count?"
"244 / 216"
"I am so concerned this will have a violent backlash. Whichever way this
goes, it'll be a huge wake up call."
"They're calling it "Whitelash". I'm lucky to live in California but, as a
woman of colour, it is shocking what America has become. I've lived here
since they voted in the first black president. People were dancing in the
streets."
"Apparently the Canadian immigration website crashed hours ago and it
has not got back up!"
"I don't plan to move back even though I am anti-Trump. But I also live
in a blue state [Colorado] that is moderate politically and socially
progressive."
"Kicking myself for not securing the boys' citizenship (birthright) sooner
- will be sending in paperwork ASAP."

And then the moment when it really sunk in, he'd won.

"Now if you attend to a baobab too late, you can never get rid
of it again. It overgrows the planet. Its roots pierce right
through. And if the planet is too small, and if there are too
many baobabs, they make it burst into pieces." P.15

Text and image reference:

De Saint-Exupery, A. (1943). *The Little Prince*. (R. Howard, Trans.) New York: Harcourt,
Inc.

Figure 8.1. E-postcard

At the end of my doctoral journey, I find myself on the eve of the 2020 US presidential election where issues of immigration, racism, the environment and public health are increasingly polarized. The urgent need to rebuild the global economy will create pressure at the local level to build short-term employment training programs to meet immediate labour market needs. Without strong advocacy, holistic programs of this nature that focus on practical solutions, broader systemic challenges, and student influenced responses may be at risk, or we might find ourselves with the opportunity to make significant transformational change in society. The route of my journey continues – it is winding and there are ups and downs. While I am not walking alone, I am certainly looking out for potholes.

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Appendix A.

Research activities summary

Activity	Timeline	Research focus
Met with the <i>Professor</i> and other researchers to determine feasibility of project. Prepared, sought, and received ethics approvals.	09.2016 – 03.2017	My individual research; Inquiry community research
Planned for and engaged in direct research (e.g., classroom-based observations, field notes, and interviews).	01.2017 – 05.2017	My individual research; Inquiry community research
Did initial research, analysis and writing.	08.2017 – 12.2017	Inquiry community research
Analyzed institutionally based documents and materials.	04.2017 – 09.2018	My individual research
Held collage-making workshops to gather the participants' stories about their experience of the EHCW program.	04.2017 12.2017 05.2018	My individual research
Four co-researchers and me presented on the research at Metropolis 2018.	03.2018	My individual research; Inquiry community research
Analyzed secondary research – data collected through Inquiry community research project.	05.2018 – 09.2018	My individual research
Interviewed the core teacher, and <i>Community Outreach Worker #1</i> .	11.2017 – 09.2018	My individual research
Submitted first version of the article to the journal <i>Studies in the Education of Adults</i> .	05 – 2018	Inquiry community research
Co-researchers presented at Congress 2018 Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education (CASAE)	06.2018	Inquiry community research
Notified by the journal editor to “revise and resubmit,” submitted second version of the article, publication of the article.	08.2018 – 04. 2019	Inquiry community research
Co-researchers presented at Congress 2019 Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education (CASAE)	06.2019	Inquiry community research

Appendix B.

The course evaluation form

Westcoast Community College - Course Evaluation Form

Your input is vital as we strive to meet your expectations and provide a high-quality experience!

Please take a few moments to give us your feedback. Your signature is optional. Our instructors will receive a copy or a summary of these forms, so that they too can benefit from your input.

Course name:

Instructor:

Date:

Your postal code:

Please circle appropriate number, or for N/A.

I thought this course was:

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Well organized. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 2. Sufficient in terms of length. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 3. Clear in its objectives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

I thought the instructor was:

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 4. Enthusiastic and stimulating. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 5. Knowledgeable in the subject area. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 6. An effective communicator. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 7. Encouraging and supportive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 8. Well prepared and organized. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

I believe the instructor:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 9. Used helpful instructional goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 10. Welcomed and planned for participation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 11. Used class time effectively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 12. Set useful and appropriate assignments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 13. Returned assignments in a timely manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 14. Offered helpful and constructive feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

15. Would you recommend this course to others?

16. How did you hear about this course? (Circle as many as are relevant.)

Flyer – Info session – Internet Search – Word of Mouth – Website – Other

We welcome additional comments:

We often use student testimonials for marketing purposes. If you are willing to have your name and comments appear in our marketing material, please print your name and sign here.

Signature_____ Print name_____

Appendix C.

Four roles as reader

The following questions, which I have offset in the text boxes below, are generated from the Freebody (1992), and Luke and Freebody (1999) articles in which they expand on the notion of critical reading and ask readers to interrogate the text. Freebody outlines four components of successful reading based on his perceptions of what our culture expects. He uses the metaphor of “role” to describe these components, and focuses on the learned aspects of the social role as a reader. I use his metaphors of four related roles (code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst) to ask questions of and analyze an institutionally based document - a course evaluation form (see Appendix A) from my workplace. To do this, I prepared the following series of questions based on these four roles. These questions served as a means to methodically interrogate the text, and this interrogation is described in Section 2.5.

First, I considered how the text is used.

- Who likely wrote/crafted this text?
- What are the beliefs or dispositions of the person who crafted this text?
- Who is the imagined audience for this text?
- What level of topic knowledge is assumed?
- What kind of person could unproblematically and acceptingly understand such a text? (Freebody, 1992, p. 6)

Next, I considered the role described as: *Code-breaker*. I interpreted this loosely as a way to analyze the document for features of the text and its organization, and how the reader might approach the text – its readability.

Role One – Code-breaker

- What are code-breaking skills required to engage with this text successfully?
- Are the fundamental features of the text (e.g., sounds in words, spelling, lexical items, structural conventions, and patterns, etc.) appropriate for the audience?
- Is this text organized in a way that enables or impairs code-breaking? How so?
- What are the typical features or storylines of this genre? (Freebody, 1992, p. 2)

The role, meaning maker, was a useful metaphor for me to understand the interrogate the “interior meaning system” of the text. I asked myself the following questions:

Role two – Meaning maker

- How is the reader expected to engage with this text?
- What is the disposition or orientation to the information being asked for in this text?
- How is this text’s interior meaning system related to available knowledge and experiences of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems? (Freebody, 1992, pp. 2-3)

For the first-time reader/user of a course evaluation form, even if literacy or English language were not a barrier, some contextual explanation would be necessary, such as a description of their purpose, an explanation on the procedure for doing the course evaluation form, and an overview of the format of course evaluation forms.

The third role – Text user –reveals to the reader how the text focuses and organizes our interest toward the descriptive or prescriptive. This standardized form funnels the student experience into a set of descriptors which are prescribed. The students begin to think about the classroom environment in the terms that they are given on the form. Filling in forms is more than a technical task. It draws students into the dominant practices of post-secondary educational culture, and likewise, the text draws instructors and program managers in as complicit.

Role three - Text user

- How might this text be viewed as descriptive (e.g., “a simple description of what is?”; Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 3)
- How might this text be viewed as normative or prescriptive (e.g., involving “a set of moral and political, cultural and social decisions about how things should be?”; Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 3)

Finally, the role – Text critic – asks the reader to consider both the stated administrative purposes and unstated purposes.

Role four - Text critic

- What is the stated purpose of this text? Are there other purposes of such texts?
- If literacy is a social practice, it is, therefore “constrained, mediated, and shaped by relations of power—relations that may be asymmetrical, unequal, and ideological” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 2). Is this reflected in this text? How so?

My analysis of this document demonstrated that its primary purpose is to meet an organizational mandate. This text-based strategy, thereby effectively reduces or eliminates the opportunity to reflect, have authentic discussions between students and teachers, or to examine the program in depth and the extent to which it addresses the needs and capacities of the students and the community. The shortcomings of this quantitative course evaluation approach ask me to seek alternative qualitative evaluation methods which may have the potential to overcome these shortcomings. The textual analysis of the document is my starting point as a practitioner-researcher to exploring alternative forms of program evaluation.

Appendix D.

Interview questions for the Community Outreach Worker

1. Can you confirm the following activities that you did in your position?
 - ☞ Marketing the program – including information sessions, inquiries on email and phone and advertising
 - ☞ Recruiting students - including selection
 - ☞ Arranging for guest speakers and other supports for the program. E.g. Association of Executive Housekeepers, Hotel Workers union, BC LEAF, etc.
 - ☞ Advising students about other supports in the community (e.g., single parent benefit, Leadership program through PIRS, LINC classes, etc.)
 - ☞ Setting up practicum placements by communicating with employers and establishing a process for matching students, then visiting employers and supporting students, etc.

2. Many of the women said that they felt supported by the EHCW program. What were some of the things that you did to foster a sense of connectedness, or a sense of belonging?

3. I know that you're not a language instructor. But, how did you support the development of their English language skills?
 - ☞ Did you modify your own language in any way when you communicated with the learners in the program?
 - ☞ Did you encourage them to work together with same language partners to use their first language to explore complex topics?
 - ☞ Did you use translation or interpretation?
 - ☞ Did you use plain language in your documents and written notices?
 - ☞ Did you emphasize “demonstration” or “showing how, rather than telling how”?
 - ☞ Other examples...?

4. Employers
 - ☞ How did you find / locate suitable employers to partner with?
 - ☞ How did you screen employers or determine whether an employer might not be suitable as a work experience host?
 - ☞ Was there a process for determining if a work experience placement was not working out?

- ☞ Did you do site visits of work experience placements? What sort of criteria did you use to provide feedback to students and employers about the experience?
 - ☞ How did you prepare the employers for working with this particular student population?
 - ☞ Did you provide a copy of the course syllabus or an overview of what they had studied?
 - ☞ Did you provide any advisement on how employers might use different communication strategies or instructional supports with their EHCW work experience students? E.g. did you suggest a buddy system, or an observational period, etc.
5. The communication and rapport between you and the instructor was very strong. How did you both develop that?
- ☞ Did you explicitly talk about how you would collaborate together?
 - ☞ Did you set aside time for meetings to plan your communication or was it a natural evolution?
6. You were an employee of PIRS, which is a smaller non-profit immigrant serving organization. What were some of the differences you noticed while working within a larger bureaucracy such as VCC?
- ☞ What was the experience of working in project that was the result of a partnership?
 - ☞ Did you ever feel that you had “two masters”
7. As you know, the program outcome that is measured by the funder is employment. What other “learnings” did you see the women gain through their time in the program?
8. Everyone involved in the program was conscious that marginalized and, particularly, racialized women are over-represented in the service sector. And, yet we were all involved in a program preparing women for that type of employment.
- ☞ What kind of supports or decisions did you make in light of that?
 - ☞ How did you approach that with the students themselves?
 - ☞ How did you reconcile that for your personally?
9. You were involved with the first three cohorts of the program. Of course, through that process you gained experience and better understood both your role and the program. Can you tell me how the program changed over time?
- ☞ How did the student composition change?
 - ☞ How did your ability to support the students evolve over time?
 - ☞ How did the curriculum evolve?
 - ☞ How did your ability to set up and support work experience placements evolve?

Appendix E.

Interview questions for the core teacher

1. Many of the women said that they felt supported by the EHCW program. What were some of the things that you did to foster a sense of connectedness, or a sense of belonging?
 - ☞ Tell me about developing that sense of belonging in the group through building a sense of social cohesion. How did you create an environment toward networking and building social capital within the group?

2. How did support the development of the students' English language and literacy skills? What were some of the strategies you used?
 - ☞ What did you do on a daily basis to support language learning? For example, I saw that you put key words up on the board and posters that you put around the room.
 - ☞ Did you modify your own language in any way when you communicated with the learners in the program?
 - ☞ Did you use translation or interpretation?
 - ☞ Did you use plain language in your documents and written notices?
 - ☞ Did you emphasize “demonstration” or “showing how, rather than telling how”?
 - ☞ Did you pre-teach words or was it developed as you went along? Did you write them on the board and then transfer them over? How did that evolve? Did you create a group glossary, did they have their own individual glossaries?
 - ☞ In my observation of your classes, you seemed to integrate arts-informed pedagogical activities, specifically about the debrief of the practicum experience where you asked the women to create posters of their experience. Can you tell me more about that?

3. One of things we talked about in our inquiry community was not using a deficit model with the women in the program, but working with their strengths. One of those key strengths is their first language.
 - ☞ Did you ever encourage people into their first language groups, to use first language to collaborate to learn content.
 - ☞ That practice is fairly unusual in a post-secondary setting. How did it work for you?

4. We discussed many times about how due to the very nature of the program funding and eligibility – the women were facing barriers and were marginalized – but, how do we balance that we were not “dead-ending them in jobs...”?
 - ☞ Was it realistic to set high expectations for employment, especially for those with lower levels of literacy or education, and how did you talk about that explicitly with the women?
5. What about when the women encountered discrimination or racism. How did you deal with that?
 - ☞ How did you talk about workplace harassment and what that looks like?
 - ☞ What about the assertiveness piece and developing a sense of agency?
 - ☞ What practical ways did you help to develop this?
6. I know that this was the first time that you have taught a program specifically for women. And, in our inquiry community we talked about having a feminist perspective behind that. What did that mean for you?
7. How did you collaborate In the classroom with the vocational instructors and help prepare them for working with this particular student population?
 - ☞ Did you provide a copy of the course syllabus or an overview of what the students had studied with you?
8. The communication and rapport between you and the community outreach worker was very strong. How did you both develop that?
 - ☞ Did you explicitly talk about how you would collaborate together?
 - ☞ Did you set aside time for meetings to plan your communication or was it a natural evolution?
9. I know you did some stress relief exercises with the students. Tell me a little about that....
10. As you know, the program outcome that is measured by the funder is employment. What other “learnings” did you see the women gain through their time in the program?
11. involved in the program was conscious that marginalized and, particularly, racialized women are over-represented in the service sector. And, yet we were all involved in a program preparing women for that type of employment.
 - ☞ What kind of supports or decisions did you make in light of that?
 - ☞ How did you approach that with the students themselves?
 - ☞ How did you reconcile that for yourself personally?

12. You were involved with all five cohorts of the EHCW program. Of course, through that process, you gained experience and better understood both your role and the program. Can you tell me how the program changed over time?

☞ How did the student composition change?

☞ How did your ability to support the students evolve over time?

☞ How did the curriculum evolve?

☞ How did your ability to set up and support work experience placements evolve?