



## Francophone Immigrant Integration and Neoliberal Governance: The Paradoxical Role of Community Organizations

Suzanne Huot (Assistant Professor)

To cite this article: Suzanne Huot (Assistant Professor) (2013) Francophone Immigrant Integration and Neoliberal Governance: The Paradoxical Role of Community Organizations, Journal of Occupational Science, 20:4, 326-341, DOI: [10.1080/14427591.2013.803272](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2013.803272)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2013.803272>



Published online: 30 May 2013.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 354



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 7 View citing articles [↗](#)



# Francophone Immigrant Integration and Neoliberal Governance: The Paradoxical Role of Community Organizations

Suzanne Huot

Francophone immigration is prioritized within Canadian immigration policy, with community organizations receiving government funding to support the integration of French-speaking immigrants. These organizations serve as intermediaries between governmental social policies and individual immigrants, brokering immigrants' occupational possibilities by offering specific services and emphasizing some occupations over others. As part of a critical ethnography, government documents were critically reviewed and in-depth interviews were conducted with six representatives from governmental and community organizations operating within the London, Ontario Francophone minority community. Findings highlight how characteristics of neoliberal governance shape the provision of government services through third party service providers, including community-based non-profit organizations. These organizations currently face neoliberal pressures of decentralization, decreased funding, and increased accountability. Findings specifically address how immigrant integration is constructed in government documents and how respondents viewed the role of their organizations, the particularities organizations face by being embedded within a minority setting, and the challenges this context creates for immigrants. The ways government policies are enacted via organizations have implications for immigrants' occupations. Examining the role of organizations adds an important scale of analysis to considerations of international migration within occupational science, which to date have largely attended to the experiences of individual migrants.

■ Suzanne Huot, PhD,  
Assistant Professor, School of  
Occupational Therapy,  
University of Western  
Ontario, London, Ontario,  
Canada

■ Correspondence to:  
[shuot2@uwo.ca](mailto:shuot2@uwo.ca)

---

© 2013 The Journal of  
Occupational Science  
Incorporated

---

Journal of Occupational Science,  
2013  
Vol. 20, No. 4, 326–341,  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2013.803272>

**Keywords:** Immigration, Integration, Language, Neoliberalism, Service provision

Immigration policies support varied mandates and manage demographic trends (Koser, 2010). In accordance with the rise of neoliberal rationality within Western nations, immigration policy often includes a mandate to enhance a nation's productive capacity (Wiebe, 2009). Neoliberalism is pervasive in Canada, where the official languages are English and French. French-speakers, however, are linguistic minorities in all

provinces except Quebec, and Francophone minority communities (FMCs)<sup>1</sup> have faced demographic challenges due to a decreasing population (Statistics Canada, 2009). Using immigration to bolster the demographic weight of FMCs is a current federal government policy goal. The integration of French-speaking immigrants<sup>2</sup> into FMCs is shaped by community organizations providing government-funded

services and acting as intermediaries between governmental policies and individual migrants. The term ‘community organization’ refers to the range of non-governmental and non-profit organizations providing state-funded services. These organizations influence immigrants’ occupational possibilities (Laliberte Rudman, 2010) by offering specific services in particular ways, inherently emphasizing some occupations over others during the integration process. Integration refers to the long term process whereby immigrants become full and equal participants in society (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2006). The process is inherently occupational in nature because social participation is accomplished through engagement in varied occupations.

The concept of occupational possibilities is useful for addressing ways in which occupations at an individual or local scale are differentially shaped in relation to broader social systems and structures. Embedded within specific socio-historic contexts, particular types of occupations and ways of engaging in them come to be viewed as ideal and are promoted within society. This concept informed two research questions that are the basis for this paper:

- How are community organizations affected by technologies of neoliberal governance characterizing social policy in Canada?
- How are occupational possibilities for immigrants shaped by community organizations embedded within this neoliberal context?

To address these questions I examine how neoliberal technologies are enacted upon and through community organizations in ways that constrain their capacity to enable immigrants’ occupations as means of integration. The term ‘technologies’ refers to the range of ways political rationalities are enacted, and comprise “discursive and non-discursive forms of transmission, such as policies, media and academic texts, state-funded programs” among others (Laliberte Rudman, 2010, p. 57).

This paper first reviews literature examining the influence of neoliberalism upon community organizations and then moves into outlining the methodology used to address the research questions. Findings highlight how Francophone immigrant integration is constructed within government documents. Findings also address how research participants viewed the role of community organizations, the particularities organizations face by being embedded within a minority setting, and the influences shaping the experiences of Francophone immigrants. These findings stem from a critical review of government documents and interviews conducted with representatives from organizations in the FMC of London, Ontario, Canada. Attending to the role of intermediaries like community organizations adds an important scale of analysis to studies of international migration within the occupation-based literature, which to date have largely focused on the experiences of individual migrants (Boerema, Russell, & Aguilar, 2010; Burchett & Matheson, 2010; Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002; Heigl, Kinébanian, & Josephsson, 2011; Hon, Sun, Suto, & Forwell, 2011; Horhagen & Josephsson, 2010; Martins & Reid, 2007; Nayar, Hocking, & Giddings, 2012; Peralta-Catipon, 2009; Suto, 2009; Whiteford, 2005). These studies underscore the range of transitions prompted by international migration. This work seeks to further understand how social authorities, such as service providers mediate the negotiation of these transitions when they “also face systemic challenges in providing supportive services to immigrants and refugees” (Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005, p. 260).

### **Community Organizations as Intermediaries between Immigrants and the State**

Canadian immigration policies are being implemented within a neoliberal governance context characterized by: decentralization of federal government responsibilities to other levels of government and intermediaries (e.g. third party service providers), changes to funding approaches for services, and a shift from public to administrative

accountability (Bhuyan, 2012). These technologies used to support neoliberal state restructuring began in the 1980s when the Canadian government reduced its role in social welfare service provision through decentralization, and altered relationships with community organizations (Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005; Lee, 2008). The result is a paradox of 'centralized decentralization' in which the neoliberal state retains control of restructuring yet relies upon alternative service delivery for the provision of social services (Evans et al., 2005). Through decentralization, organizations play "a 'parastate' function, administering government-funded social services while brokering the priorities of both the government and the public they serve" (Bhuyan, 2012, p. 229).

Responsibilities for the funding and administration of immigrant settlement services were devolved to provincial and municipal scales in 1996. The federal government maintains power over immigration control (i.e. the selection of desirable immigrants through its policies) but transfers responsibility for immigration integration policies (Bhuyan, 2012). Settlement and integration service provision has become a sub-sector of Canada's public social welfare system that includes "a number of not-for-profit, community-based, multi-ethnic, and ethno-specific organizations and groups" (Lee, 2008, p. 103) that receive state funding. Although the number of immigrant arrivals has increased over time, funding for services has been retrenched and altered to an increasingly market-based approach, creating tensions for organizations whose increasingly limited services are in ever higher demand (Evans et al., 2005).

Services are geared toward assisting immigrants adjust to their new lives and become contributing members of Canadian society. They include English language learning courses, employment searching and training, document translation and interpretation, and assistance and information regarding additional services pertinent to occupation (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2011). Community organizations seek

to enable immigrants' engagement in occupations, but the focus is upon preparing them for economic productivity. This reflects neoliberal activation policies geared toward reducing dependency upon social assistance by 'empowering' citizens to be independent and productive (Genova, 2008), as well as immigration policies focused on attracting skilled immigrants with productive potential.

Community organizations providing services to immigrants are governed by neoliberal technologies such as funding models characteristic of fiscal constraint. There has been a move from the former base or core funding approach toward a program-based or contract funding approach. This creates a purchaser/provider relationship between the government and organizations aimed at encouraging greater competition and efficiency (Evans et al., 2005; Richmond & Shields, 2005). Funds are allocated for specific services with defined outcomes, leading to more controlled spending and removing organizations' discretionary financial decision making. Canadian social welfare policy has been retrenched as the transfer of responsibilities for programs and services once administered federally has not always been adequately financially supported (Bhuyan, 2012). The increased competition engendered by the funding shift has benefitted particular organizations over others. Richmond and Shields (2005) noted monopolization by larger multi-service organizations as well as a "growing loss of autonomy and independent advocacy from the community-based settlement sector" (p. 517).

Immigrant-serving community organizations face greater competition in securing funding, and in order to promote spending efficiency these funds are tied to accountability requirements (Richmond & Shields, 2005). However, the contract approach often fails to financially support the associated administrative requirements. The push to make organizational spending more transparent has been described as a shift from 'public accountability' where the state is accountable to the public for the goods and services it provides,

toward 'administrative accountability' where service providers are accountable to the state and its funding priorities, rather than to their clients and partners. As summarized by Taylor (cited in Evans et al., 2005), "in this way government is able to evade responsibility for under-funding services and shift blame for deteriorating service quality onto third party non-profit organization service deliverers. The general tendency under neoliberal governance systems is to push risk and accountability downward" (p. 87). The challenges of supporting immigrant integration that stem from the neoliberal governance context lead to a need for better understanding of how community organizations are affected and how immigrants' occupational possibilities are impacted.

## Methodology

To explore these issues a critical ethnography entailing four stages of data generation was undertaken<sup>3</sup> (Carspecken, 1996). Critical ethnography is guided by critical theory principles (Jamal, 2005; Van Maanen, 2004) aiming to advance understanding of relationships between groups and social structures that people are often unaware of, but that nonetheless influence their occupations (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Western Ontario. This paper focuses on the two methods used in stage four: a critical review of government documents and in-depth interviews with representatives from local government and community organizations. Stages one through three are detailed elsewhere (Huot, Laliberte Rudman, Dodson, & Magalhães, 2013).

Government documents focusing on Francophone immigration to FMCs were located through database and targeted searches (e.g. government websites) and by hand searching bibliographies. Selected documents (e.g. Canada, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Jedwab, 2002; Quell, 2002) were read in their entirety to obtain a sense of the whole. They were then analyzed to identify dominant themes, as these may influence policies, services, and institutions within FMCs.

For the interviews, six participants were purposefully recruited from the following organizations: a local office of a provincial government agency funding community programs, a local branch of a provincial multi-service organization, a community college, a centre for women who have experienced sexual abuse, a community centre, and an organization offering programs geared toward French-speaking immigrants. The organizations' mandates were not immigrant-specific and were open to the broader French-speaking population.

The participants were employees or members of the board of directors from the organizations. Four participants were male, two were female, and four were immigrants. I asked them to describe their organizations and what they saw as the issues faced by immigrants and organizations in the London FMC. The purpose was to uncover how they understood the community context, given that the organizations they represented formed part of the structure shaping the experiences of French-speaking immigrants. The interviews provided a nuanced understanding of how French-speaking immigrants and their occupations are embedded within a specific local context that is shaped by government policy priorities and neoliberal governance. Limitations of this article stem from the study focus being upon Francophone immigrant integration, rather than community organizations and the implications of neoliberalism specifically. As a result, follow up interviews were not conducted with the participants to glean further depth regarding the influence of neoliberal technologies upon their operations. Findings to this effect are however noteworthy given that such comments were unsolicited.

Audio-recorded interviews were conducted in French, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English by the first author to ensure internal consistency (Lopez, Figueroa, Connor, & Maliski, 2008). All translations were reviewed by a bilingual supervisory committee member. Analysis of the French transcripts occurred iteratively through three stages. The first stage involved

whole-text analysis that was done by re-reading the transcripts to become immersed in the data (Ryan & Russell Bernard, 2003; Sandelowski, 1995). Line by line analysis was then conducted using low-level, open coding in stage two. These codes included the participants' opinions as they were voiced. The third stage used high-level, theoretical coding (Carspecken, 1996) where codes were based on more than the transcripts and applied concepts from the theoretical framework informing the study (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Huot et al., 2013). Rather than collapse the codes into themes, the findings are presented at three 'scales' that address respondents' perspectives of individuals (micro), organizations (meso) and the FMC (macro). Respondents' comments regarding the organizations themselves, how the organizations and members of the FMC are embedded within a minority context, and their views on Francophone immigrants are discussed. The purpose is to highlight how organizations influencing individuals' experiences are embedded within and constrained by elements of their particular socio-historic contexts. Given the small size of some of the organizations, findings and quotations are not directly linked to specific respondents to preserve their anonymity.

Adopting a methodology within a critical theory paradigm led me to engage in a form of reflexivity referred to as 'social critique', which attends to power imbalances between researcher and participants (Finlay, 2002). Several steps were taken to ensure rigor and to make these imbalances visible. Through journaling and peer debriefing I critically self-reflecting upon my positionality and the forms of power and privilege I hold by being, among other identity aspects, a Canadian-born, university-educated female who is fluently bilingual in French and English. Additional techniques used to ensure rigor were consistent with critical theory research (Huot, 2011). For instance, member-checking was completed by asking participants to review transcripts and offer insights contributing to ongoing data co-construction. Prolonged engagement, which is vital for ethnographic research, was also practiced

(Carspecken, 1996). Beginning in 2008, I immersed myself in London's French-speaking community by participating in events and volunteering for organizations, as well as making the community aware of this research during social interactions.

## Findings

Immigration policy is a federal government jurisdiction, yet the work of organizations serving immigrants occurs at the community level. Cities respond to Francophone immigration differently, based on their respective local contexts and the particular organizations operating within them. Yet, they are influenced by the 'Canadian model' of neoliberal alternative service delivery for supporting immigrant integration (Richmond & Shields, 2005) discussed above. Given the technologies characterizing this approach, community organizations face limitations in how they can support and enable immigrants' occupations during the integration process. The framing of Francophone immigrant integration within government documents also has implications for the organizations contracted to support the implementation of policy initiatives. For instance, these documents may inform funding priorities for the offer of particular services. I begin by presenting key findings from my critical review of government documents, highlighting how integration is constructed with an emphasis upon productive occupations. I then move on to present findings from the interviews conducted with representatives from the community organizations.

### *The construction of integration in federal government documents*

Analysis of Canadian government documents regarding Francophone immigration identified a range of issues including the attraction and recruitment of potential immigrants, their reception by host communities, their settlement and integration, and their retention by FMCs (Canada, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Jedwab, 2002; Quell, 2002). With respect to settlement and integration in particular, two issues were stressed: employment

and qualification recognition, and French language service provision.

Employment was positioned as central to integration and figured prominently in Francophone immigration policy and services (Canada, 2006). Much discussion centered on the lack of recognition of formal credentials and past work experience (Canada, 2003b; Fédération des communautés francophone et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), 2001, 2004). Additional barriers to labor market entry were listed as employer attitudes and expectations that immigrants obtain 'Canadian experience', leading some to first volunteer without remuneration (Canada, 2003a; FCFA, 2004).

Access to French-language government-funded services was cited as key to the 'reception structure' for immigrants, and was argued to not only assist immigrants but to further benefit FMCs by curbing their assimilation into the Anglophone community (Canada, 2003a; George & Mwarigha, 1999; Jedwab, 2002, 2008). The importance of offering services in French creates a vital function for Francophone institutions, such as community organizations, that also play a broader role by contributing to community life, identity-building, and larger symbolic and political purposes (Bourgeois, Denis, Dennie, & Johnson, 2007). Despite this, immigrants' English language proficiency was noted as essential for integration, particularly within the labor market (Canada, 2006).

Integration challenges were largely framed as those posing barriers to immigrants becoming productive members of society. In addressing their socio-cultural and economic integration for example, one document lists obstacles related to: labor market integration, not having a network of contacts, not knowing the host society's values and customs, credential recognition, and weak official language skills (Canada, 2006). Reflecting Laliberte Rudman's (2010) assertion that occupational possibilities are "shaped and promoted through various means, such as government policy" (p. 56), aspects of integration emphasized in these documents inform what the

ideal immigrant is expected to do (e.g. learn English, find a job) and how community organizations should ideally support this process (e.g. provide employment services). Within the London FMC, Francophone community organizations aim to facilitate the integration of diverse French-speaking immigrants by providing a range of government funded services. As detailed above however, neoliberal technologies shape the ways that they are able to do so. The following subsections present findings from interviews conducted with representatives from organizations within the London FMC who serve as intermediaries between government policy and individual immigrants.

#### *The role of community organizations for supporting immigrant integration into FMCs*

Participants described their organizations' roles as including aspects like community building, yet through decentralization processes service provision remained a significant part of their daily operations. Reflecting the emphasis placed upon French-language service provision in government documents, participants emphasized the importance of having Francophone organizations offer services directly, rather than offering translated services through Anglophone organizations. One participant explained that Francophone organizations create a different environment for clients because *all* operations are conducted in French.

*When she calls [organization], automatically we will answer in French. It's already a starting point. It will reassure her, it will encourage her to ask for services. We won't answer her in English and then, so all of the services are in French. When she goes there, she already knows in advance that she will get the service she needs . . . she will get it on the spot, she won't have to wait, ok, we will make an appointment, . . . the other counselor who is bilingual is off-site. It's not like that. You come here, you will get the service in French, without an immediate delay.*

It was explained that given the unique context of FMCs, Francophone organizations try to adapt their service delivery to the particularities of the community. Participants argued that when immigrants can access needed services (e.g. counseling) without language barriers, this can increase their autonomy and facilitate their integration by enabling them to participate in a broader range of occupations. However, respondents discussed challenges they faced to offering the range of services they felt were required to facilitate their clientele's integration and engagement in occupations within the community.

Funding became a predominant theme because it is essential for service provision and influences how organizations function. It was noted that many services were offered through the contract approach described above, with funds accorded for specific uses. Contracts could stipulate eligibility criteria for services and restrict access for particular populations, such as asylum seekers. Discretionary spending was thereby limited, and continuity of services was not guaranteed, since programs were funded for finite periods. One respondent described the challenge of an annual funding cycle for programs:

*Let's say if you have a project, it's in the span of one year. When you start the project it takes three to four months for the project to start to run well, and as soon as it's started, you have to end it. And when it's over the funders don't want to finance the same project twice, so you have to come with another idea. So, there is no continuity in the projects. That penalizes us too.*

Some programs entailed engagement in various occupations facilitating integration and covered transportation, child care and admission costs. Yet many of these were subject to time-limited funding with no guaranteed continuity. Additional challenges such as staffing shortages led some programs to rely on volunteers, causing a further lack of stability. Without access to such programs, possibilities for occupational engagement are hindered for immigrants. Organizations

sought to overcome barriers so that their clients could continue participating in their programs specifically, and in the community more broadly.

Organizations were continually seeking out and applying for funds to support their operations. Participants explained that successful applications depended on a number of aspects, including whether programs reflected the mandates of funders and/or the organizations, and whether the organizations had successfully managed funding in the past. Given the emphasis upon administrative accountability, newer immigrant-run organizations that had no 'track record' within the community reportedly faced particular difficulty in obtaining initial funding:

*We are in the process of working on a lot of projects, a lot of projects. And as you know in terms of projects, they require subsidies. And when the money doesn't come it blocks a bit. But well, we have hope that it will, it will unblock itself.*

This respondent went on to explain that Citizenship and Immigration Canada "*can't finance as long as we haven't proven in the field to have managed finances*". Another respondent described funders as "*social banks*" seeking a return on investment, in the sense that money must be well managed in order to have a positive impact within the community, leading them to fund more mainstream organizations. This approach highlights the concern of growing monopolization by larger multi-service organizations at the expense of smaller and often ethno-specific agencies geared toward marginalized populations (Richmond & Shields, 2005).

Offering time-limited programs within specific organizations was criticized by some participants for creating 'silos' where they operated separately, each providing their own services. Respondents noted that funders were increasingly encouraging partnerships between organizations, where various program components could be offered according to their particular mandates. It was felt the aim of such partnerships was to allocate



resources efficiently and to avoid redundancy. One respondent gave examples of the types of partnerships that had been formed between community organizations in the London FMC:

*We have partnerships with [Organization A] for a lot of programs where we offer the education component and they offer the settlement and integration component. We equally have a partnership with [Organization B] for diverse projects that they are in the process of putting in place, education, dietary health etcetera, so we will give the education portion.*

However, tensions between community organizations were highlighted as they described competing for limited financial resources, and being required to serve a targeted number of individuals within a small community of potential clients. One participant felt that not all organizations were getting their “*piece of the pie*” despite their contributions to the community. In addition to specifying issues restricting the operation of community organizations (e.g. funding contracts specifying what services can be offered to whom) and limiting their capacity to facilitate immigrant integration, the respondents also addressed how the ways these issues were influenced by the broader FMC context within which they were embedded presented additional challenges.

#### ***The particularities of enabling immigrant integration in a FMC context***

Francophone immigration to FMCs is being promoted through governmental policies in part to mitigate the effects of French-speakers’ ongoing assimilation into Anglophone society (MCCF, 2006). FMCs struggle with assimilation, given the challenges people face in living their lives in French despite having to engage in common occupations in English (e.g. shopping, banking). One respondent stated that being part of the FMC required an ongoing active effort by FMC members:

*Everyone has their priorities, and once we are in London and that we’re in an Anglo-*

*phone work environment etcetera or when we’re in an exogamous family, it’s then a lot more difficult to find time to get involved in our Francophone community. You really need a will to fight, to continue to progress in terms of a Francophone community and it’s not everyone that has the time or the desire to do it.*

Organizations working to facilitate Francophone immigrant integration face continuous challenges in retaining French-speakers within the community, because it is embedded within an Anglophone environment. This challenge was described as having practical implications since sustaining program funding often requires serving a minimum number of clients.

Their capacity to enable immigrants’ occupations through their programs and services was complicated by the difficulty organizations had in identifying Francophones and encouraging them to become and remain engaged in the community. As language is not a visible marker of identity, many in London live largely in English without self-identifying as Francophone. Participants described this as a consequence of living within a minority setting where French-speakers reportedly often used English by default. This may be attributed to lower rates of bilingualism among Anglophones (Corbeil & Lafrenière, 2010) and the assumption that others in the city do not speak French. The challenge this posed in London was emphasized:

*We are effectively lost in a world and once we are with a completely Anglophone group we hesitate to speak French. And it’s normal, because those people at that moment will say ‘what are they saying amongst themselves?’...I am part of a committee where we are 15 Francophones around the table, there is one Anglophone and the whole meeting is conducted in English. And that happens all the time. That’s also an incredible danger. So I say, the way to resolve this, is that we have to combat assimilation through integration.*

It was also noted that the Francophone community's lack of visibility and its small size and scattered nature made it difficult for immigrants to build social networks and participate in occupations with other French-speakers. From the participants' perspectives, this may be addressed in part by engaging in what could be described as 'community occupations'. These include social gatherings organized for diverse purposes that are hosted by community organizations and that bring Francophones together. Indeed, one participant explicitly defined 'community' as a group of people who *do* things together. Another respondent described the positive effect of these events:

*When there are larger forums where there are diverse people who arrive but who are Francophone, recently I saw that there was a workshop on H1N1, there were Arabs who spoke French, the ambiance was warm. When we have the same language of communication we have an ease, we can associate.*

By extension, it was felt that the community was negatively affected by the absence of French-speakers who do not participate in such occupations. While the organizations played an essential role in facilitating these events, respondents emphasized that it was difficult to unite the FMC as a whole. Although community occupations were attended by diverse Francophones, they remained unsuccessful in building momentum for sustained engagement. As explained by one participant:

*There are sporadic activities. We do our AGM [annual general meeting], we call, the Francophones arrive, some people arrive. It's just for that activity. There is nothing continuous as such that permits people's interpenetration . . . . If we had for example common demonstrations that would bring Francophones together four or five times a year, I believe we would be more united.*

It seems that while community occupations are useful for bringing Francophones together, they

do not necessarily enable a longer term sense of community belonging and ongoing occupations to occur in French within the city.

Participants explained that growing diversity in the community could make it more difficult to plan activities catering to a variety of interests and to welcome immigrants into the community. However, they acknowledged that organizations had a role to play in assisting immigrant integration and encouraging unity; not simply through the provision of settlement services, but also through community building so that immigrants could develop a sense of belonging by engaging in occupations within the FMC. For instance, it was noted that continuing to bring the Canadian-born and immigrant populations together through community occupations would contribute to the "openness of spirit" of each group and encourage solidarity. This presents a way of conceptualizing integration that is not solely directed toward individual skill development and productive occupations (e.g. resume writing workshops). It reflects the need to build a stronger sense of community for the FMC to which diverse people, sharing a language, can engage in a range of occupations and feel they belong. In addition to addressing community organizations and how they are contextualized within a minority setting, the respondents discussed what they viewed as the challenges faced by the Francophone immigrants integrating into the London FMC.

#### *Influences shaping the experiences of Francophone immigrants integrating into FMCs*

As the FMC is embedded within a larger Anglophone community, respondents emphasized that it was possible for immigrants to be integrated into one community but not the other. They explained that while immigrants could engage in particular occupations in French, such as working in Francophone organizations or attending French churches, they could still feel socially marginalized due to the need for English skills to engage in occupations beyond Francophone-specific environments. Korazemo and Stebbins (2001) argued that living in cities as members of minority groups obligates Francophones to live

linguistically segmented lives. This can lead to the further segmentation of immigrants' occupations.

Echoing the emphasis placed upon language proficiency in government documents, the primary barrier to immigrant integration cited by respondents was language, because English skills were deemed essential for living in London: *"the principle obstacles are as I said earlier, for the Francophones who do not know English, it's the language; because no matter what people say, to communicate here you have to have notions of English"*. Despite being a designated FMC, most social interactions required for engaging in everyday occupations were conducted in English. One participant explained that English skills were particularly necessary for obtaining what he deemed "essential services", such as health services that are not legislated to be bilingual, and services that should be offered in both official languages but either are not, or are delayed and of lesser quality when provided in French. He argued that increased bilingualism among service providers more broadly, and not just within Francophone organizations, would enable French-speaking immigrants to be more independent, further enabling their integration:

*So, I won't ask for the moon, that in the essential services, health, ah, transportation, that there be a minimum language of communication so that people can be functional. Because when someone is autonomous, someone arrives here all alone, he knows how to go get a hotel room, he knows how to go take his train, take his bus, make his purchases. It's a plus . . . even if he is alone. But if he needs the support of a crutch from the start, if he doesn't arrive at integrating, he will never integrate.*

One's ability to work toward integration without the immediate obstacle of language was viewed as beneficial for immigrants and could expand their occupational possibilities by providing further opportunities for engagement.

Respondents discussed aspects of integration beyond access to services. Given the focus upon

productive occupations within government documents and neoliberal discourse, it is perhaps not surprising that employment was most strongly emphasized: *"for sure, if you don't integrate yourself through work you cannot integrate otherwise"*. At the same time however, respondents noted that negotiating transitions to occupation following migration related not only to more concrete aspects of integration (e.g. learning a language, finding employment), but also to less tangible ones. For instance, immigrants' adaptability was viewed in part, by some, as related to their attitude or "mentality":

*And especially when you leave your country and you arrive here, don't expect to necessarily get a job like you want right away, with the same advantages that you had back home. It's impossible. So integration, when we abandon what we abandon, what we have in our country. When we arrive in a new country, you have, I think that it's a question of mentality, to accept first that we're going to start over at zero, like it or not. And that's what immigrants in general have trouble accepting.*

Participants recognized that there were particular ways of engaging in occupations in Canada, explaining that immigrants had to learn the unwritten rules or the "culture" of the host community. Several participants elaborated upon this, indicating that the host society had a role to play in informing immigrants about Canadian society and making taken-for-granted aspects of everyday doing and being more explicit:

*But, it would take a moment, us in terms of members of these communities that we tell people, this is how it works in Canada. You want to integrate, it isn't only work. It isn't only the taxes that you pay, but there is also the culture. A way of doing.*

The respondents described challenges they felt French-speaking immigrants faced in the community and emphasized that their attempts to work toward integration and to engage in occupations

were embedded within the social context. For example, one participant explained that despite self-identifying in particular ways, immigrants' experiences were nonetheless influenced by how they were perceived by others:

*I can't deny the fact that I am Black, because I am Black. But at the same time, do I see myself as Black? No, I see myself as a person whose skin color is black. So, it makes a big difference. It causes me, personally I don't connect myself to the community in that way, where I tell myself ah 'we the Blacks, we do this we do that'. No, because I don't see life in black and white, but at the same time, that is to say, that there are facts that I live that are due to the fact that someone else represents me in looking at me, he is Black.*

Yet their comments also implied that integration required personally overcoming these challenges. Despite addressing various forms of discrimination that existed within the host society, some participants emphasized that while the community should welcome immigrants, and organizations are available to assist them, it is ultimately immigrants themselves who are responsible for surmounting obstacles they face to their integration. One participant stated that organizations could only do so much:

*What can we do to help them, to facilitate the process of integration and facilitate the process, at the end of the line that each is responsible too, because often it's easy to just say there is racism. Yes there is racism, but, you can overcome it.*

Another participant was more critical, indicating that some immigrants may be in need of a 'reality check' upon their arrival in Canada:

*[Immigrants] think that, well ok, that's also a perception of being abroad, not yet in Canada, think that you arrive today, life is beautiful, money will grow on trees, you will pick it, and that's it. Those, I would say,*

*utopian dreams make it so that when they arrive here the reality . . . , but finally it degenerates into what, deception, and finally the person does not want to put forth any effort. Thinking that it will be easy, I will be there sitting on my chair and the work will come find me. The people that put in the necessary effort end up getting what they need.*

Respondents identified a range of aspects influencing Francophone immigrants' integration process. These discussions also addressed how integration into FMCs was shaped by community organizations and their location within minoritized settings. Beyond simply observing that organizations influence immigrants' occupations through the services they provide, it is crucial to acknowledge that by acting as intermediaries between immigrants and the state, these organizations are constrained by and become conduits for technologies of neoliberal governance.

## Discussion

Government documents addressing Francophone immigrants' settlement and integration focus largely upon employment and service provision. This focus informs settlement services that are funded to address five areas geared toward encouraging immigrants' contributions to society: employment, housing, education, health, and income security (Jedwab, 2002). These areas reflect what the government lists as some of the main obstacles to immigrants' successful integration including lack of Canadian work experience, lack of foreign credential recognition, problems clearly communicating at work, lack of English language skills, and difficulties adapting to Canadian culture (Canada, 2006). For example, it is proposed that programs supporting initial labor market experience for immigrants should be provided, as such initiatives "would ensure that new arrivals would be able to contribute fully to their community and to Canadian society" (Canada, 2003b, p. 20).

Immigrants' socio-economic integration is a long term process comprising different stages. While Citizenship and Immigration Canada is responsible for immigrants' initial reception (e.g. providing information), challenges exist within the 'middle stage' of integration, which encompasses aspects such as obtaining employment, education and so on. In part, that is because this stage is characterized by a lack of coordination, with no governmental department having single or lead responsibility (Richmond & Shields, 2005). Decentralization creates a fragmented sector that can be difficult to navigate (Simich et al., 2005). Settlement and integration services are mainly provided through community organizations, but remain controlled by government, limiting their discretionary capacity to enable immigrants' occupations. Service provision is also undergoing a process of standardization due to increased accountability measures, ensuring third sector providers spend their funds according to criteria outlined in contracts (Evans et al., 2005). In requiring community organizations to use quantifiable measures to track their outcomes, clients are treated with more specificity and less sensitivity and creativity (Evans et al., 2005). This also contributes to an "advocacy chill" by limiting organizations' advocacy roles, political activities and community mobilization efforts (Bhuyan, 2012; Evans et al., 2005, p. 83).

This study's findings reflect those of Simich et al. (2005), who interviewed representatives from the health and immigrant settlement sectors. They found systemic issues including "limited resources, lack of integration of policies and programs and narrow service mandates" (p. 259) which limited community organizations' ability to meet client needs. Despite the available supports, many of these remained inaccessible to immigrants due to factors such as limitations on service provision (e.g. eligibility criteria). Participants in Simich et al.'s (2005) study also highlighted systemic challenges faced by organizations serving immigrants, including loss of resources that affected service provision in multiple ways (e.g. outreach services, community development).

This article examines how organizations' capacity to enable their clients' occupations is shaped by the broader policy context. Participants discussed a range of issues including challenges in obtaining secure funding for their services, sustaining engagement on the part of community members given their minority context, and realigning immigrants' expectations of Canada with the realities they experience. Technologies of neoliberalism that are imposed on community organizations are in turn enacted through their constrained capacity to enable immigrants' occupations as means of integration. This is highlighted by tangible types of services offered to support productivity (e.g. employment counseling, resume writing workshops, language courses), as well as the implicit messages regarding immigrants' need to take individual responsibility for surmounting the challenges they face.

Community organizations play a paradoxical role in enacting neoliberal activation strategies by seeking to make immigrants 'responsible' and 'productive' members of society on one hand, while also attempting to advocate on their behalf and offer services that would enable a broader range of occupations and integration on the other. The tension that arises in taking up some but resisting other neoliberal technologies illustrates Laliberte Rudman's (2010) argument that occupational possibilities are differentially shaped for different social groups, with respect to "what they come to view as what they can and should do in everyday life" (p. 55). As demand for services increases over time, given the specific policy focus on Francophone immigration, these services have become more difficult and complex to access (Evans et al., 2005). While this is characteristic of the Canadian settlement services sector as a whole, it is especially challenging for Francophone organizations operating within FMCs, given their minoritized setting and the particularities this entails, such as serving a dispersed population that is not readily identifiable, which is subjected to the forces of linguistic assimilation on a daily basis. Whiteford, Klomp and Wright-St Clair (2005) stated that "all occupation takes place in a context. That is, no

human action is independent of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which it occurs" (p. 10).

The study reported here contributes to the growing body of literature within occupational science that is informed by critical social theory and calls for researchers to explore how occupations are dialectically related to, and in transaction with, the specific contexts within which they are situated. Those adopting a critical or transactional perspective in their work have stressed the need to move beyond the strong emphasis upon individualism within the discipline (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008; Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006; Laliberte Rudman, Huot, & Dennhardt, 2009; Suto, 2009). This article considered a particular structural context within which immigrants' experiences of integration are embedded. It explored how representatives from the community organizations serving them viewed the role of their organizations, the particularities faced by being embedded in a minority setting, and the challenges faced by immigrants joining the community. This provides an important scale of analysis for occupational science research as intermediaries, like the

community organizations in this study, shape the experiences and occupations of individuals and serve as 'brokers' between them and the state. The ways government policies and programs are enacted via organizations have material implications for immigrants and their occupational possibilities within host communities.

### End Notes

1. Francophone minority communities are French-speaking communities in Canada located outside of the province of Quebec. FMC designation requires a geographical region to have over 5,000 French-speakers or a French-speaking population accounting for more than 10% of the total population.
2. The term 'immigrant' is used as a general term encompassing all newcomers, including immigrants from all classes and categories (e.g. economic, family) as well as refugees and asylum seekers.
3. This study was completed as part of the author's doctoral degree. The dissertation examined the integration of French-speaking immigrants from visible minority groups to London, Ontario, Canada (Huot, 2011).

### REFERENCES

- Bhuyan, R. (2012). Negotiating citizenship on the frontlines: How the devolution of Canadian immigration policy shapes service delivery to women fleeing abuse. *Law & Policy*, 34(2), 211–236. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9930.2011.00361.x
- Boerema, C., Russell, M., & Aguilar, A. (2010). Sewing in the lives of immigrant women. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 17(2), 78–84. doi:10.1080/14427591.2010.9686678
- Bourgeois, D., Denis, W., Dennie, D., & Johnson, M. L. (2007). *Provincial and Territorial Government contributions to the development of Francophone minority communities*. Moncton: Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities on behalf of the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. Retrieved from: <http://www.cmfc-mccf.ca/docs/publications/ProvincialandTerritorialGovernmentContributionstotheDevelopmentofFrancophoneMinorityCommunitiesAssessmentandProjections.pdf>
- Burchett, N., & Matheson, R. (2010). The need for belonging: The impact of restrictions on working on the well-being of an asylum seeker. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 17(2), 85–91. doi:10.1080/14427591.2010.9686679
- Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2003a). *Strategic framework to foster immigration to Francophone minority communities*. Ottawa: Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/settlement/framework-minorities.asp>

- Canada. Standing Committee on Official Languages. (2003b). *Immigration as a tool for the development of official language minority communities: Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages*. Ottawa. Retrieved from [http://www.cpfnb.com/articles/ActionPlan\\_e.pdf](http://www.cpfnb.com/articles/ActionPlan_e.pdf)
- Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2006). *Strategic plan to foster immigration to Francophone minority communities*. Ottawa: Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/plan-minority.pdf>
- Canadian Council for Refugees. (2006). *Gender-based analysis of settlement, research report*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccrweb.ca/GBAresearch.pdf>
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Connor Schisler, A. M., & Polatajko, H. J. (2002). The individual as mediator of the person-occupation-environment interaction: Learning from the experience of refugees. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 9(2), 82–92. doi:10.1080/14427591.2002.9686496
- Corbeil, J., & Lafrenière, S. (2010). *Portrait of official-language minorities in Canada: Francophones in Ontario*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-642-x/89-642-x2010001-eng.pdf>
- Cutchin, M., Aldrich, R., Baillard, A. L., & Coppola, S. (2008). Action theories for occupational science: The contributions of Dewey and Bourdieu. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 15(3), 157–165. doi:10.1080/14427591.2008.9686625
- Dickie, V., Cutchin, M. P., & Humphry, R. (2006). Occupation as transactional experience: A critique of individualism in occupational science. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 13(1), 83–93. doi:10.1080/14427591.2006.9686573
- Evans, B., Richmond, T., & Shields, J. (2005). Structuring neoliberal governance: The non-profit sector, emerging new modes of control and the marketisation of service delivery. *Policy & Society*, 24(1), 73–97. doi:10.1016/S1449-4035(05)70050-3
- Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA). (2001). *Let's talk. Report of the Dialogue Task Force*. Retrieved from [http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/docs/e/Lets\\_talk.pdf](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/docs/e/Lets_talk.pdf)
- Fédération des communautés francophone et acadienne du Canada (FCFA). (2004). *Evaluation of the ability of minority Francophone communities to host newcomers*. Ottawa: Prairie Research Associates. Retrieved from [http://www.ocol.gc.ca/docs/e/Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_ability.pdf](http://www.ocol.gc.ca/docs/e/Evaluation_of_the_ability.pdf)
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209–230. doi:10.1177/146879410200200205
- Gazso, A., & McDaniel, S. A. (2012). The risks of being a lone mother on income support in Canada and the USA. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 30(7/8), 368–386. doi:10.1108/01443331011060724
- Genova, A. (2008). Integrated services in activation policies in Finland and Italy: A critical appraisal. *Social Policy & Society*, 7(3), 379–392. doi:10.1017/S147474640800434X
- George, U., & Mwarigha, M. S. (1999). *Consultation on settlement programming for African newcomers: Final report for Citizenship and Immigration Canada Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services*. Retrieved from <http://ceris.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/community/george1.pdf>
- Georgiou, D., & Carspecken, P. F. (2002). Critical ethnography and ecological psychology: Conceptual and empirical explorations of a synthesis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(6), 688–706. doi:10.1177/1077800402238074
- Heigl, F., Kinébanian, A., & Josephsson, S. (2011). I think of my family, therefore I am: Perceptions of daily occupations of some Albanians in Switzerland. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 18(1), 36–48. doi:10.3109/11038120903552648
- Hon, C., Sun, P., Suto, M., & Forwell, S. (2011). Moving from China to Canada: Occupational transitions of immigrant mothers of children with special needs. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 18(3), 223–236. doi:10.1080/14427591.2011.581627
- Horghagen, S., & Josephsson, S. (2010). Theatre as liberation, collaboration and relationship for asylum seekers. *Journal of Occupational Science*,

- 17(3), 168–176. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2010.9686691](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2010.9686691)
- Huot, S. (2011). Critically exploring the challenges of successful integration for French-speaking newcomers from visible minority groups within London, Ontario's Francophone minority community. *University of Western Ontario - Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. Paper 112. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/112>
- Huot, S., & Laliberte Rudman, D. (2010). The performances and places of identity: Conceptualizing intersections of occupation, identity and place in the process of migration. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 17(2), 68–77. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2010.9686677](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2010.9686677)
- Huot, S., Laliberte Rudman, D., Dodson, B., & Magalhães, L. (2013). Expanding policy-based conceptualizations of 'successful integration': Negotiating integration through occupation following international migration. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 20(1), 6–22. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2012.717497](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2012.717497)
- Jamal, S. (2005). Critical ethnography: An effective way to conduct anti-racism research. In G. J. S. Dei & J. Singh (Eds.), *Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies* (pp. 225–240). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jedwab, J. (2002). *Immigration and the vitality of Canada's official language communities: Policy, demography and identity*. Ottawa: Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Retrieved from [http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/docs/e/immigr\\_2002\\_e.pdf](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/docs/e/immigr_2002_e.pdf)
- Jedwab, J. (2008). Welcoming the host: Immigration and integration of Francophones in Toronto and Ottawa. *Canadian Issues*, Spring, 25–29.
- Korazemo, C., & Stebbins, R. A. (2001). Les immigrants francophones de Calgary: Leurs problèmes d'insertion dans les communautés francophones et anglophones. *Cahiers Franco-Canadiens de l'Ouest*, 13(1), 37–50.
- Koser, K. (2010). Introduction: International migration and global governance. *Global Governance*, 16(3), 301–315.
- Laliberte Rudman, D. (2010). Occupational terminology: Occupational possibilities. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 17(1), 55–59. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2010.9686673](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2010.9686673)
- Laliberte Rudman, D., Huot, S., & Dennhardt, S. (2009). Shaping ideal places for retirement: Occupational possibilities within contemporary media. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 16(1), 18–24. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2009.9686637](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2009.9686637)
- Lee, J. (2008). Immigrant women workers in the immigrant settlement sector. In M. A. Wallis & S. Kwok (Eds.), *Daily struggles: The deepening racialization and feminization of poverty in Canada* (pp. 103–112). Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Lopez, G. I., Figueroa, M., Connor, S. E., & Maliski, S. L. (2008). Translation barriers in conducting qualitative research with Spanish speakers. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(12), 1729–1737. doi:[10.1177/1049732308325857](https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308325857)
- Martins, V., & Reid, D. (2007). New-immigrant women in urban Canada: Insights into occupation and sociocultural context. *Occupational Therapy International*, 14(4), 203–220. doi:[10.1002/oti.233](https://doi.org/10.1002/oti.233)
- Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie (MCCF). (2006). *Canadian Francophonie: Issues, challenges and future directions*. Retrieved from <http://142.176.0.70/en/>
- Nayar, S., Hocking, C., & Giddings, L. (2012). Using occupation to navigate cultural spaces: Indian immigrant women settling in New Zealand. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 19(1), 62–75. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2011.602628](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2011.602628)
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. (2011). *What are settlement services?* Retrieved from [http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs\\_detail.asp?faq\\_id=4000108](http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs_detail.asp?faq_id=4000108)
- Peralta-Catipon, T. (2009). Statue Square as a liminal sphere: Transforming space and place in migrant adaptation. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 16(1), 32–37. doi:[10.1080/14427591.2009.9686639](https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2009.9686639)
- Quell, C. (2002). *Official languages and immigration: Obstacles and opportunities for immigrants and communities*. Ottawa: Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Retrieved from [http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/docs/e/obstacle\\_e.pdf](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/docs/e/obstacle_e.pdf)



- Richmond, T., & Shields, J. (2005). NGO-Government relations and immigrant services: Contradictions and challenges. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 6(3/4), 513–526. doi:10.1007/s12134-005-1024-3
- Ryan, G. W., & Russell Bernard, H. (2003). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 259–309). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Qualitative analysis: What is it and how to begin. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 18(4), 371–375. doi:10.1002/nur.4770180411
- Simich, L., Beiser, M., Stewart, M., & Mwakarimba, E. (2005). Providing social support for immigrants and refugees in Canada: Challenges and directions. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 7(4), 259–268. doi:10.1007/s10903-005-5123-1
- Statistics Canada. (2009). *Population by mother tongue and age groups, 2006 counts, for Canada, provinces and territories*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-555/T401-eng.cfm?Lang=E&T=401&GH=4&SC=1&S=99&O=A>
- Suto, M. (2009). Compromised careers: The occupational transition of immigration and resettlement. *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*, 32, 417–429. doi:10.3233/WOR-2009-0853
- Taylor, M. (2002). Government, the third sector and the contract culture: The UK experience so far. In U. Ascoli & C. Ranzi (Eds.), *Dilemmas of the welfare mix: The new structures of welfare in an era of privatization* (pp. 77–108). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Van Maanen, J. (2004). An end to innocence: The ethnography of ethnography. In S. Nagy Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice* (427–446). Toronto, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Whiteford, G. E. (2005). Understanding the occupational deprivation of refugees: A case study from Kosovo. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72(2), 78–88.
- Whiteford, G., Klomp, N., & Wright-St Clair, V. (2005). Complexity theory: Understanding occupation, practice and context. In G. Whiteford & V. Wright-St Clair (Eds.), *Occupation and practice in context* (pp. 3–15). Sydney, Australia: Churchill Livingstone.
- Wiebe, S. (2009). Producing bodies and borders: A review of immigrant medical examinations in Canada. *Surveillance & Society*, 6(2), 128–141.