

Finding a Home: The Housing Experiences of Government Assisted Refugees
and Refugee Claimants in Winnipeg and Vancouver

by

Kathleen Mary Sherrell

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2001

M.A., Simon Fraser University, 2003

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Geography)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

September 2011

© Kathleen Mary Sherrell, 2011

Abstract

This study compares the housing experiences of government assisted refugees (GARs) and refugee claimants (RCs) in two Canadian cities: Winnipeg, MB and Vancouver, BC. Drawing on 20 key informant interviews and 80 interviews with GARs and claimants, this research explores the ways in which local context and legal status influence refugees' ability to obtain adequate and affordable housing. In so doing, this dissertation asks, is it legal status, place or something else?

The implementation of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA 2002) introduced significant changes in the profile of GARs resettled to Canada. Previous research on the housing challenges faced by government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants indicates refugee claimants have more difficult pathways to housing owing to lack of social capital and temporary status (Murdie 2008; D'Addario, Hiebert and Sherrell 2006). Within this research, however, those GARs with low literacy, little formal education and large families experience the greatest challenges with respect to housing and income security. This finding marks a dramatic – and troubling – shift from earlier research. Unlike claimants, whose difficulties primarily relate to their temporary status (e.g. lack of access to information and formal assistance), the challenges facing GARs relate to the changing profile of refugees who have been sponsored in the post-IRPA era. This research extends the existing literature on newcomers and housing, as well as the wider geographic literature, by advancing our knowledge about the intersections of legal status and place on housing outcomes, as well as through a detailed consideration of the influence of housing on long-term social inclusion.

The resettlement of increasing numbers of high needs refugees in the context of extensive housing affordability problems in Canadian cities, and low prospects for employment, creates the potential for the emergence of many of the factors commonly associated with a multi-generational cycle of poverty: high unemployment and/or lack of appropriate job skills, high rates of welfare dependence, a large number of single-headed households, and low educational attainment among children. The question arises, then, whether we are witnessing the emergence of a refugee underclass in Canada, and if so, what can be done to prevent it?

Preface

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia.

Prior to conducting research, the author received ethical approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, under certificate (H06-80924) B06-0924: A Comparative Analysis of Housing Trajectories of Government-Assisted Refugees and Refugee Claimants in Two Canadian Cities (Dr. Daniel Hiebert, PI).

Findings from this research have been published as a report to the Housing and Homelessness Branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) (Sherrell 2008), as well as in 'Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver', *Canadian Issues*, Fall 2010, 52-57. (Sherrell 2010).

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
Acknowledgements	xii
Dedication	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction: Humanitarian Protection?	1
Refugee Protection in Canada	3
Finding a Home in Canada	6
Purpose and Objectives	10
Chapter Outlines	10
Chapter 2: What We Know So Far: A Review Of Existing Literature	14
Canadian Immigration	14
Housing Policy	21
Newcomers and Housing	25
Barriers, Strategies and Outcomes	29
Conclusions	37
Chapter 3: Methodology	40
Methods	43
Methods: Institutional Environment	43
Methods: Primary Research	44
Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews	47
Individual Interviews with Refugee Groups	49
Recruiting Participants	52
Data Collection	53
Data Analysis	55
Profile of Respondents	55

Methodological Issues: Identifying Participants.....	60
Methodological Issues: Informed Consent	62
Methodological Issues: Interviews as Socially Constructed Spaces.....	63
Methodological Reflections	68
Chapter 4: Putting it All in Context: Federal/Provincial Relations (Canada-BC and Canada- MB Agreements)	69
Provincial Context.....	76
Financial Assistance	77
Rental Assistance Subsidies	83
Rent Control	84
Housing	86
Refugee Profiles	89
Conclusion	94
Chapter 5: How You Get ‘Here’ Matters: Intersections of Legal Status and Provision of Assistance	97
The Broad Picture: Overseas vs. Inland Protection and Availability of Assistance	97
Mapping the Service Landscape: Winnipeg’s ‘One Stop Shop’ vs. Vancouver’s Specialization of Services	103
Differing Service Landscapes? The Effect of Legal Status and City of Settlement on Initial Settlement	110
Finding Permanent Accommodation	118
Geographic Inconsistencies and Their Effect on Settlement Outcomes	125
Chapter 6: The Vicious Cycle of Precariousness	128
Barriers to Employment: Paying the Rent?.....	130
Barriers to Entry: Public and Private Market Housing	149
Case Study	152
Current Housing: Conditions and Issues.....	153
Case Study	153
Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Alarming Housing Experiences of Post- IRPA GARs.....	156
Chapter 7: But What About Me? I’m (Going to Be) Canadian Too: Housing, Social Inclusion and Refugee Youth	160

Housing and Poverty	162
Case Study	168
Poverty and Education	174
Conclusion	183
Chapter 8: Conclusion – From 'Ability to Establish' to 'Need for Protection' ... and Back: Rethinking Post-IRPA Refugee Resettlement.....	187
Context Matters: The Need for Cross-National Research.....	196
Beyond Homeownership? Refocusing the Lens Beyond Homeownership as a Measure of Integration	199
Moving Beyond Housing as an Outcome.....	201
Summary of Contributions	203
Moving Forward: Where Do We Go From Here?	206
Refugee Claimants: Giving Help Where it is Needed.....	207
Government-Assisted Refugees: What Happened?	209
Works Cited	219
Appendices	236
Appendix A: Contact Letters and Informed Consent Forms	237
A.1: Sample Contact Letter: Business Professionals (Focus Group).....	237
A.2: Contact Letter: Business Professionals (Interview)	238
A. 3: Contact Letter: Government-Assisted Refugees and/or Refugee Claimants (Interview)	239
A.4: Sample Consent Form	240
A.5: Sample Consent Form (NGO Interview).....	241
A.6: Sample Consent Form (GAR/RC Interview)	242
Appendix B: Key Informant Interview Schedule	243
B.1: Interview Schedule: Immigrant and Refugee-Serving Organizations and Housing Service Providers.....	243
Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Government-Assisted Refugees and Refugee Claimants	245

List of Tables

Table 1: Profile of Respondents by Legal Status and City of Settlement	57
Table 2: Responsibility for Commonly Accessed Services and Programs	77
Table 3: Comparison of 2007 Social Assistance and Shelter Rates to 2006 Pre-Tax LICO.....	80
Table 4: Comparison of Social Assistance Benefits and Average Rents,	82
Table 5: Rental Assistance by Province	84
Table 6: Average Rents and Vacancy Rates by Zone and Bedroom Type.....	87
Table 7: Refugee Landings in Manitoba and BC by Category of Entry	92
Table 8: Asylum Cases Referred to IRB	92
Table 9: Government Assisted Refugee Landings by Arrival and Top Three Countries of Birth	93
Table 10: Primary Sources of Household Income	137
Table 11: Consideration of Monthly Income Assistance Rates and Average Rents	140

List of Figures

Figure 1: Methods: Institutional Environment43

Figure 2: Primary Research Methods45

Figure 3: Key Informant Interviews47

Figure 4: Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in the Winnipeg Survey, as Compared to Settlement Services (Google Maps 2011a)..... 123

Figure 5: Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in the Vancouver Survey, as Compared to Settlement Service Agencies in Vancouver (Google Maps 2011b) 124

List of Acronyms

BC Family Bonus Program	BCFC
BC Settlement and Adaptation Program	BCSAP
Behavioural Review Ethics Board	BREB
Canada Assistance Program	CAP
Canada - British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration	CBCCI
Canada Border Security Agency	CBSA
Canada Child Tax Benefits	CCTB
Canada Health and Social Transfer	CHST
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	CIC
Census Metropolitan Area	CMA
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	CMHC
Canada - Manitoba Immigration Agreement	CMIA
Employee Assistance Act	EAA
English Language Services for Adults	ELSA
Emergency Needs Assessment	ENA
Government Assisted Refugee	GAR
Greater Vancouver Regional District	GVRD
Health and Housing in Transition	HHiT
Human Resources and Skill Development Canada	HRSDC
Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia	IECBC
Interim Federal Health	IFH
Inland Refugee Services of BC	Inland
Immigration and Refugee Board	IRB
Immigration and Refugee Protection Act	IRPA
Immigrant Services Society of BC	ISS _{of} BC

Low Income Cut-Off	LICO
Labour Market Strategy for Immigrants	LMSI
Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada	LSIC
Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development	MAELMD
Mennonite Central Committee	MCC
Manitoba Family Services and Housing	MFSH
Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council	MIIC
Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program	MIIP
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation	MJTI
Manitoba Shelter Benefit	MSB
Ministry of Social Development	MSD
National Affordability Standards	NAS
Non-Governmental Organization	NGO
National Occupancy Standards	NOS
Personal Information Form	PIF
People's Republic of China	PRC
Privately Sponsored Refugee	PSR
Resettlement Assistance Program	RAP
Refugee Claimant	RC
Residential Tenancy Board	RTB
Sponsorship Agreement Holder	SAH
Social Insurance Number	SIN
Settlement Orientation Services	SOS
Single Room Occupancy	SRO
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
Vancouver Refugee Services Alliance	VRSA

Acknowledgements

Seven years of my life have been devoted to the pursuit of this PhD. Through the good times and the bad my efforts have been sustained by the support, encouragement, and guidance of many individuals. It is to these people that I owe my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost I would like to thank all of the people who participated in this research. Your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences, in spite of the multiple demands on your time, is greatly appreciated.

I have been extremely fortunate to have benefited from the wisdom and guidance of my doctoral committee. I am humbled that each agreed to help guide my studies, nurturing my academic growth and providing exemplary models of academic achievement and commitment to societal change.

Dr. Daniel Hiebert, my doctoral supervisor, has consistently encouraged me to expand the boundaries of my understanding, opening new avenues of understanding and pushing me to delve further into the issues at hand. This dissertation could not have been done without your support, encouragement and guidance.

My thanks to Dr. David Ley, Dr. Elvin Wyly and Dr. Brian Ray for their insights, support and feedback throughout my doctoral studies. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Dr. Miu Chung Yan, Dr. David Edgington and Dr. Tom Carter - my examination panel - for their insights and feedback during the final stage.

This research was made possible through the financial support of SSHRC, the University of British Columbia, Metropolis BC, and MITACs.

Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Hyndman and to Chris Friesen for their ongoing mentoring, encouragement and support over the last ten years. Many thanks to Vicky Baker for being my unofficial cheerleader and sounding board, to Barry Halliday, Silvia D'Addario, Min Jung Kwak and Bjorn Surborg for helping keep me on track, and to my family, friends, and colleagues at work and school for their curiosity and encouragement.

Words cannot express my gratitude to Kym Stewart for the study dates, ongoing friendship, and support in knowing that I wasn't in this alone. Thank you for your questions, as well as your willingness to listen.

Heartfelt thanks to my daughters, Alyssa and Grace, and my husband Bryan. Thank you for understanding the time spent away from you, for believing in me, and giving me the freedom to pursue my dreams.

*To my family and 'family' for their encouragement and unending support,
and to Christina and Thyra who taught me so much about strength and perseverance.*

Chapter 1: Introduction: Humanitarian Protection?

Refugees and people needing protection are those in or outside Canada who fear returning to their home country. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and international obligations, Canada provides protection to thousands of people every year. Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution or who may be at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, and are unwilling or unable to return to their home country (CIC 2011).

Globally, Canada is recognized as a leader in humanitarian protection. Yet, while protection is offered to those in need through both overseas and inland refugee programs, these newcomers encounter structural barriers that may hinder, or even preclude, full integration into Canadian society.¹ As a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the subsequent 1967 Protocol, Canada is one of a small number of affluent countries accepting refugees for permanent resettlement.² As one of the top three refugee resettlement countries – the others being the United States and Australia – Canada welcomes more sponsored refugees per capita than any other nation. Those in need of protection can make a claim both overseas or inland (at ports of entry or Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC] offices). Once their claim has been accepted these individuals become recognized as convention refugees. Within Canada, there are well-established systems of services to aid in settlement and integration. Access to them, however, is highly differentiated by legal status and, to a lesser extent, by city of settlement. Reflecting upon the

¹According to the 1951 Convention, “refugees are persons who are outside the country of their nationality and have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group” (IRBC 2007, online).

²The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) advocates three durable solutions for those claiming refugee status: repatriation (voluntary return to the country or origin), local integration (movement towards full participation in the immediate host country, including social, political and economic integration), and permanent resettlement in a third country. Permanent resettlement is the least frequently used of the three durable solutions. Resettlement is a term used by the government of Canada to describe “the legal process of bringing a refugee to Canada to live as a permanent resident” (CIC 2010a).

political and symbolic importance of the refugee program to Canada, Beiser (2006, 57) asserted:

protecting refugees and treating them fairly is integral to a national mythology in which Canada is a just, tolerant and humanitarian place. Canadians not only feel better about themselves because of the way they treat refugees; they also receive international acclaim for what is perceived as fair and compassionate behaviour.

There is a need to consider, then, how Canada has fared in the resettlement of refugees.

The last twenty years has witnessed a dramatic shift in the profile of poverty in Canada. Declining economic outcomes among immigrants and refugees – marked by lower wages and longer economic catch up times – have been associated with a higher incidence of poverty. The concurrent decrease in poverty rates among Canadian-born individuals has been accompanied by rising rates among newcomers and visible minorities (Collin and Jensen 2009; United Way 2004). A significant body of new research on the housing outcomes of newcomers including refugees, for example, suggests that many refugee households experience low income security and high housing affordability problems (Brunner, Hyndman and Friesen 2010; Carter 2008; Murdie 2008; Hiebert, D’Addario and Sherrell. 2005).

The difficulties encountered by both government-assisted refugees (GARs) and refugee claimants (RCs) during resettlement raise questions about the nature and extent of humanitarian protection and resettlement in Canada. Globally, the number of refugees seeking a durable solution continues to increase. Since 2002, for example, the UNHCR has undertaken a concerted effort to increase the number of people assisted through permanent resettlement both through identifying new resettlement countries, and pressuring existing resettlement countries to increase their annual targets (UNHCR 2010). As Canada comes

under pressure to admit larger numbers of refugees, there is a need to reflect upon the ways in which humanitarian responsibilities at the global scale intersect with the quality of resettlement in Canadian cities.

Consideration of the barriers faced by refugees necessitates thinking about what is meant by protection. Is allowing refugees to enter and live in Canada sufficient? Or, alternatively, is there a need to ensure opportunities exist for newcomers to establish themselves once in Canada? Perhaps most importantly, what are the long-term consequences of not providing adequate supports for refugee newcomers?

Refugee Protection in Canada

Why does Canada ask people to come and then not support them? For example, with housing or education. Before we arrived we think if we [make it] to Canada it will be okay" (Azita, a refugee claimant from Winnipeg who arrived in 2005).³

Canada accepts about 7,500 government-assisted refugees (GARs) per year.⁴ In the past Canada – among other industrialized countries – has frequently been criticized for ‘cherry picking’ those refugees with a high potential to adapt, while those who faced the greatest obstacles for resettlement were viewed as poor candidates (Zetter 1999; Abu Laban 1998). Although humanitarian refugees are not required to meet the requirements set out in the points system faced by economic immigrants, selection on the basis of ability to establish within 1-2 years after arrival meant unofficially they were screened according to many of the

³ To preserve anonymity respondents were asked to provide an alias to be used in when quoting or referring to them in the text.

⁴ An additional 3,500 refugees come to Canada each year as privately-sponsored refugees. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program enables Sponsorship Agreement Holders, groups of five (in which any five Canadians or Permanent Residents over the age of 18 come together to sponsor one or more refugees from abroad to settle in their city) and community sponsors (e.g. organizations, associations) to aid in the resettlement of refugees to Canada. In addition to providing financial assistance for one year or until they can support themselves (whichever comes first), sponsors provide additional settlement assistance – which can include accommodation, food, clothing – and emotional support for the duration of the sponsorship period (CIC 2010b).

same factors (e.g. language, age, education). Consequently, GARs selected for resettlement in Canada were most likely to be young, well-educated, and English speaking urbanites; those with the highest needs were left to languish in the camps, often for protracted periods.

In his 2003 statement to the UNCHR's Executive Committee the Honourable Omar Ramadhan Mapuri, Minister for Home Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, stated:

Resettlement should be seen not only as a protection-focused mechanism, but also as a durable solution based on the contribution that refugees can make to the economies of resettlement countries and as a burden-sharing mechanism. Unfortunately, what seems to be taking place is for the resettlement countries to pick those refugees that they see as assets, leaving behind those they consider liabilities. The ones left behind are usually the uneducated, the aged, the vulnerable, and the ailing, including HIV/AIDS victims (Mapuri 2004, 25).

The 2002 implementation of Canada's Immigrant and Refugee and Protection Act (IRPA) formalized the separation of immigration and refugee protection in Canadian legislation and radically altered the ways in which refugees abroad are chosen for resettlement. A key feature of the legislation is a shift in focus from selecting individuals based on their 'ability to establish' to their 'need for protection.' The shift to a more humanitarian selection process has meant that, for the most part, the worst cases now come first. At the same time, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has increased the use of 'group processing', particularly from protracted refugee situations.⁵ Consequently the profile of refugees resettled since 2003, when the first post-IRPA GARs arrived in Canada, is dramatically different from cohorts arriving prior to that time. The cumulative effect of the legislative and policy changes has been the arrival of an increased proportion of 'multi-barriered' or 'high needs' GARs.

⁵According to the UNHCR (2008, 1) a protracted refugee situation is "one in which refugees find themselves in a long-standing and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years of exile". Statistically, protracted refugee situations refer to a "population of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for at least five consecutive years" (UNCHR 2008, 1).

Those arriving include higher numbers of individuals with little or no formal education, low or no proficiency in English, illiteracy in first language, and significant physical and mental health issues, as well as single headed households that are larger than the Canadian average. Further, the proclivity of Canada to receive individuals from protracted refugee situations means the majority of GARs arriving in Canada have spent long periods (i.e. 5 years or more) in refugee camps or refugee-like situations. Yet, in addition to arriving with the right to permanent residence, GARs have access to a full range of settlement services, including temporary accommodations and one year of financial assistance.

On the other hand, and facing very different conditions, are those who arrive on Canadian soil of their own accord and claim refugee status. Under the UN Convention on Refugees, Canada has a responsibility for non-refoulement of those found in need of protection. With the exception of being eligible for social assistance, refugee claimants receive little (or nothing) in the way of information or services to help them integrate and navigate the legal and settlement processes. Ultimately those whose claims are accepted or who are allowed to remain for other humanitarian reasons, approximately fifty percent of applicants, are recognized as ‘protected persons’, and as such eligible for permanent residence. Yet, unlike government-assisted refugees, who receive both financial support and settlement services upon arrival to facilitate integration in Canada, refugee claimants are not necessarily eligible for this assistance. Rather, refugee claimants are left alone to navigate the system both before and after being recognized as convention refugees. In spite of the differences in services available to refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees, both groups have been found to face significant barriers in integration, particularly around obtaining employment, and access to adequate and affordable housing.

In his 2001 (8) article, Ransford Danso cited an Ethiopian respondent who characterized his settlement experiences in Canada thus:

‘Canada claims to be a country of many opportunities, but the little I have seen so far seems to contradict this. It is like putting a bird in a cage to decorate your room and it cannot escape’ His point is that as a refugee, you cannot go back to your home country because of political instability there. Yet, you cannot have access to opportunities in the country that offered to protect you either. It is like a prisoner's dilemma.

Certainly, the metaphor of 'refugees as living in a gilded cage' has arisen elsewhere in the literature (cf, Altinkaya and Omundsen 1999). I argue that fragmentation of the refugee support system and failure of government to adequately address the needs of refugees, including both government-assisted and refugee claimants, means that those brought to Canada and/or going through the inland claim process experience systemic difficulties that hinder or preclude integration. Throughout my dissertation research the metaphor of refugees living like a bird in a (gilded) cage – of living in comfortable surroundings but with limited or no freedom – has stayed with me. Through consideration of the income security and housing experiences of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Vancouver, British Columbia this research considers the intersections of humanitarian protection and local resettlement as experienced in two Canadian cities.

Finding a Home in Canada

Over the past decade the cost of housing, relative to household income, has been rising in Canada (Moore and Skaburbskis 2004; Murdie 2004; Bunting, Walks and Filon 2004). The tendency for newcomers to concentrate in large urban centres – which are the “most expensive and competitive urban housing markets” in the country (Ray 2004, 45) – means that immigrants are particularly exposed to housing affordability problems. Recent research

in Canada has documented something of the scale of this issue, showing that, upon arrival, many immigrants experience economic disadvantage, marked by lower incomes and higher poverty levels (Smith 2004; Picot 2004; Picot and Hou 2003; Ley and Smith 2001). In other words, recent immigrants face the difficult situation of reconciling below-average incomes with above-average housing prices. But the category of ‘immigrant’ is too broad, and contains many sub-groups. Those who have entered Canada as refugees, through government or private sponsorship, or as refugee claimants, face the greatest challenges in acquiring sufficient income for adequate housing.

This research examines refugee resettlement and social integration with an emphasis on the ways that settlement policies influence housing and homelessness. In undertaking this analysis, I am cognisant of the difficulties facing other socio-economically disadvantaged groups including, but not limited to, First Nations communities, single parents, and the working poor. While examination and analysis of the housing experiences of these groups is beyond the scope of the current research, I argue that much can be learned from the experiences of refugees. The difficulties faced by many low-income Canadians in accessing adequate and affordable housing are compounded by the status of refugees who arrive with limited financial and frequently social capital, as well as with human capital that is undervalued. In addition to language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the housing search process in Canada (e.g. where to get information, rights and responsibilities), refugees frequently lack the necessary financial resources, credit history and references to procure housing. Obtaining adequate and affordable housing represents an important first step in the settlement process; yet without sufficient incomes, refugees and other newcomers may be forced into crowded and/or substandard living conditions. While homelessness is often

equated with ‘rooflessness’ by both academics and policymakers alike, this research will begin with an understanding of homelessness as a continuum that includes both relative and absolute forms.⁶ In so doing, homelessness becomes tied to notions of residential insecurity as well as the most extreme form, the absence of housing.

Refugees face challenges that are distinct from other immigrant classes. While funding is provided to aid government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees in their initial settlement, it is set at a low level – roughly equivalent to provincial social assistance rates – and generally limited to a single year of support. Refugee claimants face even greater disadvantage, as they receive no formal settlement services during the critical period when their claim is assessed. Research suggests economic and social integration occurs over a period of 5 to 15 years (Li 2003; Reitz 1998), well beyond the one-year period funded by Canada. In light of inconsistencies between the length of time required to settle, and the provision of funding, we can expect that refugees will face significant barriers in their ability to acquire adequate housing. For those without access to affordable housing, absolute homelessness is a possible outcome.

Settlement is influenced not only by the qualities and characteristics of the newcomers themselves, but also by existing social, political and economic institutions within the receiving society (Reitz 1998). Although government-assisted refugees arrive in Canada with the same basic entitlements (access to medical and dental care for one year, and social assistance equal to provincial rates), for example, they settle in different environments

⁶ Thus, the continuum of homelessness encompasses those in insecure, inadequate and/or unaffordable housing – whether rented or owned – to those without any shelter. Included within this group, then, are people who are doubling up or ‘sofa surfing’, as well as those in temporary housing and emergency shelters. With respect to affordability, however, it must be recognized that some households may choose to spend high proportions of their monthly income on housing (e.g. to live in particular areas or homes); this project examines those for whom high housing costs are not a choice.

depending on the city of settlement. Provincial differences in social assistance rates, differing local economies and job opportunities, and variations in local housing markets represent three of the ways in which local environments may influence settlement and integration. Policies relating to the admittance of government-assisted refugees (GARs) and refugee claimants (RCs) are established and people are admitted at the federal level, yet it is in the cities that the impacts are most significantly felt.

Through a cross-national comparison, and drawing upon immigration (Murdie 2003a, 2003b; Hiebert and Ley 2003; Ley and Smith 2001; Bourne and Rose 2001; Ley and Germain 2000; Hiebert 2000; Ray 1998) and housing literatures (Miraftab 2000; Ray 1998; Chambon, Hulchanski, Murdie and Teixeira 1997; Hulchanski 1997), this research seeks to compare the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian cities: Winnipeg and Vancouver.⁷ Specifically, this research asks: How are the housing trajectories of refugees influenced by their local environments? Through this comparative work this research considers the intersections between local housing environments and federal and provincial settlement policies. Further, through consideration of the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants this research considers the effect that legal status – and by extension the rights and services to which people have access – has on their ability to obtain adequate and affordable housing.

⁷ While I recognize that privately-sponsored refugees may face similar settlement issues, it is difficult to access potential participants due to their reliance on private sponsors and community groups as opposed to refugee serving organizations. As a result, this research project will be limited to an analysis of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of the extent to which the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants are influenced by their legal status or local environment.

Five research goals have been identified:

- To develop a better understanding of the intersections of local housing environments and federal and provincial settlement policies;
- To develop a better understanding of the effect that legal status, and by extension the rights and services to which people have access, has on the ability to obtain adequate and affordable housing;
- To better understand how variations in the provision of settlement services between cities shape housing outcomes among refugee groups;
- To develop a portrait of the housing trajectories and experiences of recently-arrived refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver; and
- To consider how housing shapes long-term settlement outcomes.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2 explores the intersections between the literatures on Canadian immigration and housing policy, specifically focusing upon newcomers and housing. To date, research on the housing outcomes of newcomers – and refugees more specifically – have largely focused on Canada’s three largest immigrant receiving cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, with a

smaller number of studies on mid-size Canadian cities such as Edmonton, Winnipeg and Kitchener (Carter, Polevychok, Friesen and Osborne 2008; Bezanson 2006; Abu Laban, Derwing, Mulder and Northcott 2001). Yet the settlement of refugees throughout Canada either through destining (GARs) or individual choice (claimants and secondary migration) necessitates consideration be given to the housing experiences across both smaller and larger centres.

Chapter 3 establishes the methodological approach of this research and outlines issues that arose in the course of the research.

While the Federal Government bears primary responsibility for establishing immigration policy (e.g. setting admission levels, determining eligibility and admitting newcomers to Canada), BC and Manitoba have begun to assume greater responsibility for immigration, particularly with respect to the design and provision of most settlement services. The devolution of responsibilities for settlement services and programs enables British Columbia and Manitoba to customize the services delivered to meet the needs newcomers in BC and Manitoba, potentially enhancing geographic variability in settlement environments. As such, Chapter 4 considers the overall context into which refugees arrive, including immigration policy and mainstream services. With respect to the context into which newly arrived refugees settle, for example, how do the overarching concerns of the provincial government (e.g. with demographic or labour market needs) influence refugee outcomes?

Building upon the differing policy environments outlined in the previous chapter, Chapter 5 explores the ways in which services for newly arrived refugees may be differentiated by the way in which individuals came to Canada. Unlike GARs, for whom the Federal government

continues to oversee the provision of services and financial assistance, responsibility for the remainder of settlement and integration programming in BC and Manitoba has been devolved to the respective provinces. The result, as we will see, has been the emergence of significant differences in the provision of services to refugee claimants.⁸ Given the varying service landscapes for refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver, this chapter considers the implications for initial settlement outcomes.

Income security and housing are two important elements of successful settlement and integration into mainstream Canadian society. Consideration of the financial and housing situations of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants, including the influence of access to settlement services, social capital and barriers to housing, provides insights about the challenges faced by newly arrived refugees. In so doing, Chapter 6 seeks to better understand the factors that influence housing outcomes: is it legal status (e.g. inland vs. overseas determination), place, or something else?

Although housing is frequently used as an indicator of settlement, little attention has been given to the ways in which housing influences other aspects of people's lives. Building upon the notion of housing as an outcome (e.g. of income, vacancy rates, barriers to housing), Chapter 7 explores a different trajectory, the ways in which housing and poverty impact newcomers' physical and mental health, education and long-term social inclusion.

Previous research on the housing challenges faced by government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants indicates that refugee claimants have more difficult pathways to housing

⁸ It is important to note this dissertation does not provide an extensive analysis of the ways in which settlement agencies interpret funding guidelines and implement programming. While beyond the scope of this research, findings may be used to inform future research on the role of immigrant and refugee-serving organizations in shaping refugee outcomes.

owing to lack of social capital and their temporary status (D'Addario et al. 2006; Murdie 2008). Within this research, however, those GARs with low literacy, little formal education and large family sizes experience the greatest challenges with respect to housing and income security. This finding marks a dramatic – and troubling – shift from earlier research. Unlike claimants, whose difficulties primarily relate to their temporary status (e.g. lack of access to information and formal assistance), the challenges facing newly arriving GARs relate to the changing profile of post-IRPA GARs. The introduction of IRPA included a greater emphasis on honouring Canada's refugee humanitarian commitments. The resulting change in the population – and its varying settlement needs – owing to the admission of more people with special needs has not received sufficient attention within the academic literature nor within settlement programming. This dissertation seeks to contribute to both of these discussions.

Chapter 2: What We Know So Far: A Review Of Existing Literature

Immigration to Canada is not new, nor is academic interest in immigrant outcomes. The confluence of widespread changes to the immigration system, declining economic outcomes, and increasing housing affordability problems in Canadian cities has precipitated a heightened interest in the housing outcomes of newcomers. My research is fundamentally framed by two key literatures – Canadian immigration and housing – as well as the emerging literature on newcomers and housing. This chapter explores the housing outcomes of newcomers, and specifically refugees, in Canadian cities.

Consideration of the existing literatures reveals three key gaps, each of which will be examined later in this chapter. First, existing research on the intersections of the legal status of refugees and housing is situated within the context of a single city or province. In so doing, the research fails to account for the difference that place makes in housing outcomes. Second, consideration of homeownership as a measure of integration bodes poorly for refugee newcomers, many of whom remain as tenants in the private rental market. Third, existing research within the housing and newcomers literature focuses upon housing as an outcome (e.g. of income security, housing tenure and housing market), with insufficient attention to ways in which housing acts as a catalyst for other measures of integration.

Canadian Immigration

The changing social geography of Canadian cities has been well documented by geographers. Widespread changes to Canada's immigration policy in the 1960s and 1980s have significantly altered the profile and number of immigrants arriving in Canada (Hiebert 2000,

1999; Ley 1999). The introduction of new categories of entry (e.g. business class, investors) and the clarification of the refugee program have precipitated the entry of increasing numbers of migrants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. As immigration has (re)emerged as a topic of concern amongst geographers and the wider academic community there has been greater recognition of the need to account for the diversity of newcomers both with respect to differing countries of origin (Hiebert 2005), the influence of gender on migration (e.g. Tastsoglou, Ray and Preston 2005; Giles 2002; Indra 1998) and transnational migration patterns (e.g. Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Waters 2001). While attention has shifted from studying immigrants as a homogenous group, research has often focused on the experiences of economic, and less frequently family class, migrants (e.g. Ley 2005; Lo, Teixeira and Truelove 2002). More recently, refugees have emerged as a distinct study group (Brunner et al. 2010; McLean, Hyndman and Friesen 2006; Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi 2005; Abu-Laban et al. 2001; Beiser 1999; Abu-Laban, Derwing, Krahn, Mulder and Wilkinson. 1999). The plethora of scholarly and policy-related studies undertaken over the last decade has underscored the diversity amongst Canada's newcomers and has elucidated what Vertovec (2007) in the context of the UK has characterized as 'super-diversity.' As the immigrant population has changed so has the Canada into which they arrive.

The work of Bourne and Rose (2001) is illustrative in this context; widespread social transformations have produced uneven social geographies in Canadian cities into which newcomers settle. These uneven geographies are related to a number of social concerns and policy issues, of which three are of particular interest: the uneven geography of population growth, the growing concentration of newcomers in a small number of large urban regions, and the rise of immigration from non-traditional countries (and as such the need for the

provision of enhanced settlement services). The overwhelming concentration amongst Canada's largest centres – most notably Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (or MTV) – has precipitated concern about the ability of these cities to provide services necessary to newcomers to promote integration. The effects of increased numbers from diverse backgrounds, as well as the propensity to concentrate in a few large centres have been differentially experienced, resulting in large cities becoming more and more heterogeneous, while smaller centres remain relatively unchanged (Bourne and Rose 2001; Hiebert 2000; Ley 1999). Recognition of the varying and uneven impacts and influences of immigration and other social transformations underscores the need for research that moves beyond single centres to elucidate similarities and differences so as to better inform policy.

Following calls for the need to distinguish between immigrants and refugees, researchers have begun documenting differences between government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants. Drawing upon the work of Renaud, Piche and Godin (2003), for example, Murdie (2008) asserts there is a need to reject the tendency among researchers to treat refugees as a monolithic group, instead recognizing that significant differences may exist within this population. Although government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants may eventually experience the same legal status, they are afforded very different services and rights in the initial period after arrival. Refugee claimants owing to their category of arrival are likely to experience more difficulties than government-assisted refugees (Hiebert et al. 2005; Rose and Ray 2001).

Within refugee literatures in particular attention has been given to the ways in which local environments influence outcomes (e.g. Carter et al. 2008; Sherrell et al. 2005; Abu-Laban et al. 1999). Characteristics such as the size of city, presence of co-ethnics and availability of

settlement services have been recognized as important in this respect. Yet, for the most part, existing research has focused on specific categories or groups in single cities (e.g. government-assisted refugees, sponsored refugees or refugee claimants) with little consideration of the situation across categories of entry or the difference that geography makes. This research seeks to contribute to current literature through consideration of the experiences of GARs and refugee claimants in two Canadian cities.

The economic difficulties facing immigrants upon arrival in Canada have been extensively researched by both geographers and the wider academic community. It has long been recognized that while immigrants earn less upon arrival than the average Canadian-born person this wage gap narrows over time in Canada. For many recent immigrants the processes of economic integration experienced by earlier immigrant cohorts have been replaced by longer-term economic disadvantage. Today's newcomers are more likely to experience a lower relative income upon arrival in Canada and a delayed catch-up period, regardless of gender or level of education (Picot, Hou and Coulombe 2007; Picot 2004; Reitz 1998). In 1991, for example, the average income for immigrants who had been in Canada for ten years or less was \$18,208, compared to \$26,213 for Canadian-born people.

The earnings gap between recent immigrant and Canadian-born workers has increased since 1980, when men who were recent immigrants and had some employment income earned 85 cents for each dollar earned by Canadian-born men. By 2000, this earnings ratio had fallen to 67 cents, and by 2005 it was 63 cents. A similar trend has been seen among recent immigrant women, who by 2005 were earning 56 cents for every dollar earned by Canadian-born women (Collin and Jensen 2009, 24).

Those arriving in the 1970s achieved income parity after 15-20 years (Picot 2004, Reitz 1998). As relative earnings have declined the time to achieve income parity has continued to increase.

Declining economic outcomes have been associated with a higher incidence of poverty for immigrants (cf, Fleury 2007; Picot and Sweetman 2005).

Between 1980 and 2000, the proportion of immigrant family incomes that fell below the low-income cut-off (LICO) has risen considerably [Picot 2004]. Although the percentage of immigrant families living below the cut-off rose from 24.6 per cent in 1980 to 35.8 per cent in 2000, the corresponding figures for the Canadian-born declined from 17.2 in 1980 to 14.3 per cent in 2000. Poverty, once largely composed of Canadian-born citizens in 1980, is now predominantly associated with visible minorities and new immigrants (and Aboriginal Peoples and women, especially single mothers) (Sherrell, D'Addario and Hiebert 2007, 65-66).

Collin and Jensen (2009) assert that the low-income rate for recent immigrant families in 2005 was over 4.5 times that of their non-immigrant counterparts (32.6% and 6.9% respectively); while the low-income rates for unattached immigrants was even higher (58.3%, compared with 26.3% for non-immigrants).⁹ One year after arrival the low-income rates among refugees are the highest of all categories of entry, with 54.7% of refugees living in poverty (compared to 42.4% for skilled workers and 38.3% for family class immigrants) (Collin and Jensen 2009).

Obtaining employment is challenging for many newcomers to Canada. Within the larger immigration literatures, significant evidence exists for downward occupational mobility among immigrants and refugees, the need for Canadian experience, and the related problem of non-recognition of credentials (SPCW 2006; Lamba and Krahm 2003; Lo, Preston, Want, Reil, Harvey and Siu 2001; Waxman 2001; Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Bai 1991).

The significance of employment to integration for all immigrants is underscored by a 2003 Statistics Canada report entitled *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Progress and*

⁹ The Census defines recent immigrants as having arrived in Canada during the preceding five years; statistics are drawn from Census data.

Challenges of New Immigrants in the Workforce (2003).¹⁰ While labour market integration is a critical aspect of settlement, results from Wave 2 of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) demonstrate that refugees have the lowest labour market participation rate of all immigrant groups (Statcan 2005, cf, Krahn, Derwing, Mulder and Wilkinson 2000).¹¹ Two years after arrival, for example, 38% of refugees aged 25-44 years had not participated in the labour force compared to 20% of all respondents (Statcan 2005). Although labour market participation among refugees increased during the first four years after arrival, over 60% continued to experience difficulties in obtaining employment (Statcan 2007). While lack of Canadian experience was cited as the biggest obstacle to gaining employment amongst all respondents in all three waves, refugees were more likely to cite language as the primary barrier to employment (27% of refugees compared to 16% of all respondents in Wave 3) (Statcan 2007). The results of these studies reinforce the significance of adequate language proficiency to labour market success for refugees in Canada, a finding consistent with refugee research in the United States (Mamgain 2003; Birman and Trickett 2001).

Krahn et al.'s (2000) research elucidates many of the barriers newcomers to Canada encounter in obtaining access to the Canadian labour market.¹² Refugees were more likely to be unemployed than other Canadians; those who have obtained employment were frequently in precarious jobs with low wages and no benefits (Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell et al. 2005). Further, those who arrive as professionals may encounter barriers that preclude employment

¹⁰ The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) was a survey designed to examine how newcomers adjusted over time to living in Canada. Twelve thousand individuals who arrived in Canada between April 2001 and May 2002 were selected to participate in the survey; respondents were interviewed six months, two years and four years after arrival.

¹¹ In this context 'refugee' includes government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees; refugee claimants are excluded from the LSIC.

¹² Although not assessed according to the same criteria as economic migrants, refugees selected pre-IRPA had to demonstrate an ability to re-establish their lives in Canada.

in positions similar to their pre-migration jobs, including access to professional organizations who act to protect existing standards *and* shelter those already engaged in the profession from further competition. As a result of these processes, many refugees (and certain members of the wider population) come to occupy jobs that are incongruous with their level of education or abilities, something Potocky-Tripodi (2002) has referred to as 'status inconsistency'.

These factors may be compounded by the lack of network(s) to help newcomers find suitable jobs, as well as discrimination owing to language or race (Krahn et al. 2000). In some cases a person's name can impact job search outcomes. A 2009 study of 6000 mock resumes, for example, found job search applicants with foreign names were less likely to receive call-backs or interviews than were those with English names (Oreopoulos 2009), a finding consistent even among second and third generation citizens.¹³ If adequate employment opportunities do not exist newcomers with poor English language abilities and minimal Canadian work experience will experience un(der)employment and financial hardship.

As a result of below-average earnings, housing and rent affordability is a chronic issue for new Canadians. In 1996, 21 per cent of immigrant households suffered from "core housing need," which refers to a combination of poor housing quality and problems with affordability [Pendakur and Pendakur 1996]. Recent economic changes have therefore had uneven social consequences, and have been especially hard on immigrants. These financial setbacks translate into difficulty accessing affordable and adequate housing (Sherrell et al. 2007, 66)

Recent immigrants demonstrate greater dependence on government transfers and experience higher poverty rates than earlier immigrant cohorts (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). For those dependent on welfare, the provision of insufficient welfare rates in Canada translates into

¹³ While these results are troubling, the extent to which the discrimination is intentional remains unclear; further research is required in this area.

high proportions of income (or social assistance) being devoted to housing. CMHC defines housing as affordable when households spend no more than 30% of their income on housing. Immigrants and refugees must frequently allocate much higher proportions than this (Hiebert et al. 2005; Murdie 2004; Zine 2003). In some instances newcomers report spending between 50 and 75 percent of their income on housing (Mendez, Hiebert and Wyly 2006).

Housing Policy

While housing has received more attention over the last decade, much of this research has focused upon homeownership, the ability of households to transition from renters to owners (Mendez and Hiebert 2008; Hiebert, Mendez and Wyly 2006). Researchers have pointed to the increasing divide between homeowners and renters (e.g. Hulchanski 2004a, 2002), as well as the declining level of housing affordability in Canada (e.g. Skaburbskis and Moore 2004, 1991), a problem affecting Canadians across the country but particularly in larger CMAs.

Canada's rental housing market has undergone massive changes since the 1970s marked by a diminished supply of low-cost housing and rising demand. The combination of reduced incentives to build rental housing; rental units lost to demolition and ownership conversion; increased housing costs and decreasing vacancy rates; and large-scale conversions of single-room occupancy hotels (SROs) have depleted existing rental stocks. When combined with the concomitant increase in demand owing to increasing poverty, de-industrialization, de-institutionalization, and the reduction and restricted eligibility of financial assistance (Bunting et al. 2004; Koegel, Burnam and Morton 1996), the fortunes of renters have declined.

In his work, David Hulchanski (2004a, 2002) presents a pessimistic portrayal of a Canada that is increasingly polarized with respect to income and wealth. Housing tenure, Hulchanski (2004a) argues, is the line that divides these two Canadas. As the gap continues to widen, and in the absence of federal assistance to develop units at moderate rents, renters find it more and more difficult to move into homeownership, a situation Hulchanski fears will escalate the ‘dehousing trend’ toward increased homelessness. As income gaps increase, more households find themselves (totally) excluded from the housing market (Hulchanski 2002). Consequently, Shapcott (2004, 200) asserts “low-, moderate- and middle-income tenants have literally been priced out of the private rental market” as inflation rates have not kept pace with increases in average rents. While the ‘dehousing problem’ affects many Canadians, some – including newcomers and single parents – face multiple barriers.

The late 1990s and early 21st Century has been marked by a crisis in the supply of affordable housing (Shapcott 2004). Successive cuts to social housing funding (culminating in the complete withdrawal of federal funding in 1993) were accompanied at the provincial level by cancelled housing programs in most jurisdictions, and cuts to social spending (including reduced welfare benefits and lower minimum wages in real terms).¹⁴ Consequently there has been a shift from an emphasis on increasing the supply of affordable housing units (supply-side) to the provision of cash assistance to low-income households (demand-side) (Shapcott 2004; Hulchanski 2004b).

¹⁴ While full consideration of the provision of social housing is beyond the scope of this research it is important to recognize the broader context in which housing trajectories occur. Thus, while this project does not look at the range of availability of social housing units and/or programs, it is necessary to recognize that changes in the provision of social housing in Canada over the last thirty to forty years have resulted in decreased supply of programs and units. For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of social housing policy in Canada see Hulchanski (2004b); Shapcott (2004); Prince (1998) and Banting (1990).

In Canada, social assistance functions as the primary form of housing assistance. Although housing policy and social assistance (i.e. welfare) policy are frequently considered to be separate entities, changes to Canada's welfare system have had a significant impact on the ability of low-income individuals and families to access affordable housing. Prince's (1998) review of changes to Canada's welfare system provides a comprehensive analysis. The 1996 replacement of the Canada Assistance Program (CAP) with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) program is one of the most significant changes to the Canadian welfare state to date; yet it was done without consideration for its impacts on the provision of housing assistance (*ibid*). Under the implementation of the CHST, federal funding for social assistance, post-secondary and health were combined into one block transfer from the federal to provincial governments rather than a cost-sharing program.¹⁵ With respect to social assistance, the introduction of the CHST was significant in that all national funding requirements were eliminated with the exception of the prohibition of minimum residency requirements.¹⁶ As such, provinces were no longer required to provide assistance to all those in need nor are applicants guaranteed the ability to appeal negative decisions. Federal downloading of responsibility was accompanied by cuts in federal transfer payments; therefore provinces have often cut programs to avoid raising taxes to pay for them.

Provincial differences in rates and conditions of benefits introduced in the wake of these changes serve to further increase inequality of access. Those seeking social assistance face reduced benefits, restricted access to assistance for those deemed employable; and, in BC, the

¹⁵ Subsequent changes to the CHST effective April 1, 2004 separated the CHST into two separate transfers: one for health and one covering post-secondary education, social assistance, and social services (HRSDC 2005).

¹⁶ Five rights were guaranteed under the CAP: the right to an adequate income, the right to obtain assistance when in need, the right to apply for welfare regardless of province of origin, the right to obtain assistance without forced participation in work and/or training programs, and the right to appeal welfare decisions (Hulchanski 2004b).

imposition of strict time limits on benefits (recipients may only receive full benefits for 24 of every 60 months after which time the benefits are significantly reduced). Provinces have also made important changes to the nature and delivery of social assistance programs, the result of which Hulchanski (2004b) argues has been increased absolute and relative homelessness. In light of the growing inequality between social assistance benefits and average rents, the buying power of households dependent on social assistance continues to fall. Hulchanski argued that even if households devote more than 30% of assistance to housing it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain adequate housing. Given more restricted access to welfare and the context of rising rents and housing inaffordability, more and more families are at-risk of absolute and relative homelessness. Further, income assistance rates do not vary in relation to local market conditions (e.g. average rents), yet housing affordability varies significantly across provincial jurisdictions.

Newcomers and Housing

Relatively little is known about the housing experiences of immigrants and refugees in Canada (Murdie 1999, 1)

Since 1999 research on the housing outcomes of immigrants and refugees in Canadian cities has expanded dramatically. While much of the earlier Canadian literature on the housing outcomes of immigrants and refugees emerged out of the Housing New Canadians project at the University of Toronto, funding from Metropolis, Human Resources and Development Canada (HRSDC), and other organizations (e.g. the Laidlaw Foundation), has facilitated the ability of researchers across the country to contribute to this growing knowledge base. The result has been a great deal of new research, including large scale census- or Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC)-based studies (cf, Hiebert and Mendez 2008; Preston, Murdie, Wedlock et al. 2007; Hiebert, Germain et al. 2006; Hiebert, Mendez et al. 2006), smaller qualitative studies (cf, Kissoon 2010; Teixeira 2009; Ghosh 2007; Bezanson 2000), and literature reviews (cf, Murdie et al. 2009; Wayland 2007). Of particular note for this research has been the rapid growth in studies focusing on the housing outcomes of newcomers, and particularly refugee groups, in Vancouver (Brunner et al. 2010; Francis 2009; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009; McLean et al. 2006; Hiebert et al. 2005) and Winnipeg (Carter, Polevychok and Osborne 2009a; Carter et al. 2008; SPCW 2006).¹⁷

As with the broader housing literature, research on newcomers' housing experiences has been approached within the context of a singular understanding of homeownership as the penultimate achievement of a housing career. Homeownership, then, is often "viewed as evidence of success" (Preston et al. 2009, 303). For immigrants, the concepts of integration and homeownership are closely intertwined – integration is associated with rising incomes,

¹⁷ This study also received funding from the Housing and Homelessness Branch of HRSDC (see Sherrell 2008).

better housing and increased homeownership (Murdie 2002). Unfortunately these positive outcomes are not experienced by all. “While some newcomers are able to move rapidly into home ownership or are living in stable and secure housing, others are ‘living on the edge’ in unsafe, insecure, or crowded conditions within the private rental market” (Sherrell et al. 2007). Subsequent analysis of newcomers in Canada’s housing markets has extended discussions of homeowners and tenants to recognize differing trajectories of immigrant homeownership.

Given this complexity, the concept of a housing trajectory recognizes there is no one, single housing pathway (e.g. the upward career from renter to owner). Rather, it is understood that a number of individual and systemic factors may influence housing outcomes. In so doing, it is possible to identify three groups: those who are able to purchase housing mortgage-free with wealth transferred to Canada; those who sacrifice and struggle financially in order to attain homeownership, and those who are left behind in the rental housing market (Hiebert 2009; Hiebert et al. 2006; Rose, Germain and Ferreira 2006; Hulchanski 2004). While some newcomers have difficulties in the housing market it is important to recognize this is not true for all. The majority of newcomers continue to experience upward housing trajectories (see also Hiebert, Mendez et al. 2006). Within 6 months of arrival almost 20% of newcomers have become homeowners, with 6% already mortgage free. Four years after arrival, over 50% of LSIC respondents achieved homeownership. Further, the homeownership rates increased for all categories of entry, including refugees (Hiebert and Mendez 2008). Although Hiebert and Mendez’s (2008) analysis of LSIC reveals that the homeownership rate for refugees increased in the first four years after arrival (from 3.1% in Wave 1 to 19.3% in Wave 3), they continue to have the lowest homeownership rate of all newcomers.

Homeownership, however, does not necessarily equate to housing stability as refugees may assume significant financial burdens. Hiebert (2009) cautions “[i]t is also worth considering whether newcomers are ‘pushed’ into homeownership prematurely by low rental vacancy rates in the rental market, particularly in Toronto and Vancouver.” As the monthly costs of owning and renting have converged in the York Region of Toronto, for example, homeownership has emerged as a “risky housing strategy” (Preston et al. 2009, 303) for recent immigrants. Over half of recent immigrant homeowners in the York Region of Toronto who arrived between 1996 and 2001 spend 30% or more of household income on housing (Preston et al. 2009). In Winnipeg, increased homeownership among refugees in Carter et al.’s (2009a) research are offset by considerable affordability challenges. “The evidence suggests that several of these homeowners have housing plus other debts that they may not be able to carry” (Carter et al. 2009a, 320). In the York Region of Toronto, Preston et al. (2009) assert owners and renters allocating 50% or more of their incomes to housing are at risk of homelessness if any economic downturn occurs (e.g. job loss). Discrimination in the housing market may prod some into home ownership in order to avoid landlords, typically through the use of multi-generational households (Miriftab 2000; also see Ley 1999).¹⁸ Homeownership then may be accomplished by substituting a larger number of adult income earners, in effect substituting bodies for capital. For those who have struggled into homeownership in this way, however, the prospect of rising mortgage rates or job lay-offs may create economic uncertainty (Preston et al. 2009; Carter et al. 2009; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009). Further, the tendency for co-ethnics to be employed in the same industry, and

¹⁸ Ley’s (1999) analysis reveals that while personal incomes may be low, household incomes may be higher. South Asians in Vancouver in 1996, for example, ranked 17/21 in personal income compared with other ethnic groups, but 5/21 in household income; while Hungarians ranked 11/21 in personal and 18/21 in household income. Only the Jewish and British groups maintained the same rankings (1 and 2 respectively) in both categories.

in many cases by the same employer, means the effects are experienced throughout the group, thus reducing the potential for assistance to be provided to those in need.

Findings from smaller qualitative studies reveal that the overwhelming majority of refugees continue to be tenants particularly within the private housing market (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Francis 2009; Sherrell and ISS_{of}BC 2009; McLean et al. 2006; ISS_{of}BC 2006; Hiebert et al. 2005). As the gap between homeowners and renters elucidated by Hulchanski (2004) continues to widen, it appears immigrant tenants are being 'left behind'. A notable exception is Carter et al.'s (2009) study of refugee housing experiences in Winnipeg, where a great deal of the improvement in housing outcomes over the first three years may be attributed to access to social and rent-geared-to-income housing, as well as movement into 'cheaper but smaller units' located in the inner city.

In Canada, housing is considered affordable if it accounts for no more than 30% of monthly household income (CMHC 2001). Declining economic outcomes among recent immigrant cohorts creates particular challenges for refugees who may be unable to supplement low household income with savings transferred to Canada. Further, those who have obtained employment have often done so in low paying jobs in the low skilled service sector. Similarly, in the United States, a large number of the refugees considered to be economically self-sufficient (i.e. not on welfare) are living well below the poverty line. As a result, many refugees in Canada and the US live in over-crowded conditions or are forced to allocate a higher percentage of their monthly household income on housing than do other immigrant groups (Mayadas and Segal 2000).

While government-assisted refugees receive financial support upon arrival through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) the rate is still too low to obtain housing in the context of Metro Vancouver's high rental prices. Four years after arrival many refugees continue to experience the worst degree of crowding – approximately three times that of economic immigrants – and serious affordability problems (Hiebert and Mendez 2008; Hiebert, Mendez et al. 2006), with one in five spending at least 50% of monthly household income on housing. While refugees have been shown to have a progressive housing career over the first four years, they continue to experience many challenges that require further attention. “An insufficient supply of affordable low-cost housing results in high rent-to-income ratios among those least well-off and puts them at risk for economically induced homelessness (Bunting et al. 2004; Moore and Skaburskis 2004)” (Fiedler, Schuurman and Hyndman 2006, 208). Over half of refugees continue to allocate over 30% of household income on housing four years after arrival (Hiebert and Mendez 2008). Although the result for some may be absolute homelessness, research on the housing outcomes of immigrants and refugees in Vancouver suggest these groups are more likely to be among the ‘hidden homeless’ or vulnerably housed (Hiebert et al. 2005).

Barriers, Strategies and Outcomes

The existing literature highlights a number of individual and systemic barriers low-income immigrants and refugees face in Canada's housing market. These relate to wider trends in the market, including the limited supply of public and/or subsidized housing, and low vacancy rates and high rents within the private rental market (e.g. Carter et al. 2008; Zine 2002; Owusu 1999; Ray 1998).

Barriers

Drawing on work conducted as part of the Housing New Canadians project, David Hulchanski (1997) differentiated the barriers that newcomers experience in accessing housing into two categories: primary barriers (identified as characteristics which are difficult, if not impossible, to change) and secondary barriers (which may change, and frequently do, over the course of the life cycle). Primary barriers may include factors such as aspects of race/ethnicity, culture, religion and gender. Discrimination against skin colour, while possibly less evident than in past, and visibility of ethnic differences (such as food and clothing practices), continues to be a source of housing discrimination in Canada (Novac, Darden, Hulchanski and Seguin 2002; Miriftab 2000; Owusu 1999; Ray and Moore 1991; Henry 1984), as does gender. Secondary barriers (including level and type of income, knowledge of the housing system, language and or accent, and household size) may also influence people's entry into the housing system (cf, Novac et al. 2002; Miriftab 2000; Danso and Grant 2000). Low incomes among refugees constrain housing opportunities; while long waitlists hinder mobility into more affordable housing (SPCW 2006).

Barriers erected by landlords, including requirements regarding damage deposits, credit history, and requirements for co-signers, for example, may be impossible for refugee groups to fulfill. Reluctance on the part of landlords to rent to applicants who are on welfare creates additional barriers to housing (Novac et al. 2002; Zine 2003; Miriftab 2000), which may lead some applicants to try to hide sources of income. Zine (2003) notes that for newcomers, problems in obtaining housing may arise both from the source of income (owing to stigmas with welfare) and the amount of income (current shelter allowance rates are frequently insufficient to meet housing costs); a finding that is echoed by those of Miriftab (2000),

Hiebert et al. (2005), and Murdie (2008). Difficulties confronting all low-income households are exacerbated for refugees given their lack of familiarity with the Canadian housing markets and limited English language proficiency (Carter et al. 2008; Murdie 2008; SCPW 2006). Lack of proficiency in English can increase barriers owing to the potential inability to read classifieds or negotiate rental contracts with landlords. In the Vancouver study by Hiebert et al. (2005), for example, refugees were twice as likely as other immigrants to cite language and size of family as barriers to housing (Sherrell et al. 2007). Unlike other immigrants who may be able to depend upon savings brought during migration the affordability problems brought about by low-incomes and high rents mean refugees are forced to spend more on housing (Hiebert and Mendez 2008).

In addition to the primary and secondary barriers outlined above housing choices are constrained by both individual and systemic (or macro-level) factors (cf, Wayland 2007). Systemic factors include: the type and quality of housing available across different income levels and areas of the city (e.g. refugees may choose housing in the inner city because it is more affordable, but it is often low quality or substandard housing); the proximity of goods and services to housing (e.g. the desire to locate near schools, services); and access to public transportation, safety issues, and pressure to find housing quickly (e.g. owing to limitations on stays in transitional housing). For refugees, these factors may be compounded by a lack of choice since counsellors, family members or friends may make decisions about housing for them. Counsellors at refugee-serving agencies, for example, may be under pressure to ensure transitional housing spaces are freed up as quickly as possible in order to accommodate incoming arrivals (SCPW 2006). Further, although GARs are provided with assistance in obtaining their first permanent accommodations (e.g. by ISS_{of}BC's Welcome House in

Vancouver), pressure to move quickly means that the housing obtained is not always suitable (cf, Francis 2010; Sherrell et al. 2005). Consequently some spoke of having engaged in secondary migration to obtain housing that better met their expectations and needs elsewhere in Metro Vancouver.

Strategies

For many, the difficulties imposed by low workforce participation, insufficient social assistance rates and a tight rental market intersect with other barriers to make it more difficult to obtain housing. The combination of these factors has been found to necessitate reliance on various informal strategies to overcome barriers in the housing market, including lying about size of family; attempting to hide sources of income; movement to lower quality housing units; co-tenancy; and assembling multi-generational households (Teixiera 2009; SCPW 2006; Murdie 2004; Novac et al. 2004; Miriftab 2000). For larger families the challenges of obtaining adequate and affordable housing may be aggravated by a lack of affordable units of sufficient size, as well as the unwillingness of landlords to ignore national occupancy limits (Sherrell et al. 2007).

Previous research has identified differential access to social capital and settlement services owing to legal status as a key factor in settlement and housing outcomes (cf, Murdie 2008; D'Addario et al. 2006; Ray 1998). For refugees, who arrive with limited (or no) financial capital, and whose human capital is frequently undervalued, social capital may represent their most important resource. According to Stone (2003), social capital is

a concept that describes the extent and nature of relationships people have with others, the relationships people have with their communities, and relationships between people and various services, institutions and systems (Stone 2003, 13).

Unlike other forms of capital – namely economic (e.g. assets, wealth) and human (e.g. education, skills) – social capital is relational.

Significant evidence exists about the importance of both formal (i.e. government) and informal (i.e. family and friends) support during resettlement (cf, Simich 2003; Lamba and Krahn 2003; Simich, Beiser and Mawani 2002; Abu-Laban et al. 1999), a finding consistent with the refugee research in the United States (cf, Hardwick 2003; Mamgain 2003; Mayadas and Segal 2003). Although newcomers draw upon both formal (i.e. government) and informal ties (i.e. family and friends) in the search for housing, research suggests groups are more likely to rely on informal sources of information, such as friends, family and sponsors, particularly during the initial settlement period (cf, Rose and Ray 2001; Danso 2001; Ray 1998).

Drawing on the work of Granovetter (1974), Ray (1998) cites the influence of both strong and weak networks on the housing search. According to Granovetter (1993), strong ties (i.e. densely knit networks of family and friends) may be differentiated from weak ties (low density networks of acquaintances).¹⁹ Although housing search information may be obtained from NGOs and service organizations, for example, the tendency for newcomers to rely on information from family and friends may result in concentration in particular areas as people are more likely to have information about their own neighbourhoods (Owusu 1999; Ray 1998). Spatial biases inherent in information obtained from those in the immediate neighbourhood may serve to limit housing choices.

¹⁹ While many people within the network are likely to be in contact with one another, weak ties are those in which few in the network know each other, but each is enmeshed in his/her own dense network.

Murdie (2008), for example notes that housing information and help were provided primarily by informal sources for both refugees and refugee claimants. Sponsored refugees (e.g. GARs and PSRs) may be more likely to rely upon family and friends both upon arrival and for temporary accommodations than are refugee claimants, in large part owing to their ability to draw upon more extensive social networks, such as family and friends, as well as immigrant and refugee serving organizations (cf, D’Addario et al. 2006; Murdie 2008).

A number of studies have shown that immigrant households tap into informal networks to overcome barriers faced in the housing market (Preston et al. 2009; Hiebert et al. 2005; Rose and Ray 2001; Owusu 1999; Ray 1998; Hulchanski 1997). With respect to housing search information and help, for example, Teixeira (2009) and Murdie (2008) assert the most important information sources continue to be family and friends, as opposed to more formal sources, such as settlement organizations and housing search providers.

The ability of respondents to access assistance and social support from within their ethno-linguistic communities may provide important assistance particularly during early settlement periods, thus facilitating short-term social integration (Rose and Ray 2001). For those without a pre-existing network of family and friends, “social networks based on weak ties forged after arrival were seen to be vital strategies for settlement” (Hiebert et al. 2005, 103) for refugee claimants in Vancouver’s Chinatown. These networks – whether weak or strong – act as an important means of obtaining information for those seeking new housing as well as a source of assistance in mitigating against the worst forms of homelessness. While systems of support exist to alleviate the incidence of absolute homelessness, the study of successful refugee claimants indicate that not everyone is included (*ibid*). Refugee claimants, for example, may be more socially isolated than are other immigrant classes; a factor which

hinders their ability to enter the housing market (*ibid*). In spite of high affordability problems, for example, newcomers do not rely upon shelters; rather they engage in strategies such as doubling up, sofa-surfing and staying with friends or family (Preston et al. 2009; D'Addario et al. 2006).

Outcomes

Both large scale analyses, such as the LSIC analyzed by Mendez and Hiebert (2008), and smaller scale, qualitative analyses, such as those by Carter (2008); Sherrell et al. (2005); ISS_{of}BC (2006); SPCW (2006); McLean et al. (2006); Francis (2009); and Brunner et al. (2010) identify significant housing challenges among refugees in Metro Vancouver, Winnipeg and Canada more broadly. Findings converge on three main themes: high rates of tenancy, affordability challenges and overcrowding.

Small scale studies with refugees in BC and Manitoba reveal continued reliance on government transfers (e.g. RAP, provincial social assistance) and/or employment in minimal wage, part-time jobs with few benefits and little security (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell and ISS_{of}BC 2009; Francis 2009; McLean et al. 2006; ISS_{of}BC 2006). In Vancouver, for example, high rates of unemployment and dependence on social assistance were evident among Acehnese one year after arrival (McLean et al. 2006), a pattern that continued when respondents were revisited five years later by Brunner et al. (2010).

Affordability and overcrowding challenges are widespread among refugees in both provinces. Almost one-third of respondents interviewed by ISS_{of}BC (2006), for example, spend 60% or more of their monthly household income on housing, leaving them precariously housed and at-risk of absolute homelessness. The intersection of low incomes

and need for larger units is a barrier for many families owing to the higher costs and more limited stock of these units (Hiebert 2009; Carter et al. 2009; Murdie et al. 2008; Murdie 2004). Low income recent immigrants are more likely to live in over-crowded housing (Fleury 2007). In their study of Acehnese GARs arriving in 2006, for example, McLean et al. (2006) found over 80% of respondents report living in overcrowded housing conditions; one in five were living in households of 3 or more people per room (cf, Francis 2009; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009; Sherrell et al. 2007; McLean et al. 2006,).

Existing research on GARs in BC has frequently involved smaller-scale qualitative studies intended to obtain a better understanding of settlement experiences and outcomes. While interest in the housing situation of newcomers has increased over the last decade, the works of Murdie (2008), Renaud and Gingras (1998), Rose and Ray (2001) and Hiebert et al. (2005) are notable for their exploration of the intersections of legal status and housing situations.

In Toronto, Murdie (2008) undertook an explicit analysis of the differing housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants. Murdie argues that the lack of legal recognition as landed immigrants (e.g. ability to work) and support upon arrival disadvantages refugee claimants, as compared to government-assisted refugees. Results of his study generally confirm the hypothesis that “refugee claimants will experience a more difficult pathway to housing and will be less adequately housed than sponsored refugees, at least in the initial stages of resettlement” (*ibid*, 82). His findings coincide with those of Renaud et al. (2003) on Montreal.

Damaris Rose and Brian Ray (2001) undertook a secondary analysis of data produced by the Renaud and Gingras (1998) study in Montreal. Rose and Ray (2001) argue economic insecurity (as measured by high unemployment and low wages) is associated with significant housing affordability problems. In light of difficulties in accessing employment and institutional rules prohibiting housing assistance for those who have not obtained permanent resident status, refugee claimants experience significant housing affordability problems.

In Vancouver, Hiebert et al. (2005) argue that refugee claimants experience greater disadvantage in housing and labour markets than do other immigrants, a factor related to their category of entry. Consequently, they may be at greater risk of relative homelessness (as measured by overcrowded and/or substandard conditions, high shelter-to-income costs, and rates of insecurity) than are other immigrant or refugee groups.

Conclusions

Having a safe and secure place to live provides a base from which individuals and families can build healthy, engaged lives. But paying for that basic human need taxes the resources of many people (CCSD 2007, 6).

As we have seen, existing research on the intersections of legal status and housing do so within the context of a single city or province. In so doing, the research fails to account for the difference that place makes in housing outcomes. This dissertation contributes to the aforementioned literatures through consideration of the policy and service environments in Winnipeg and Metro Vancouver. As will be seen the provincial and local context into which newcomers settle influences settlement outcomes, particularly for refugee claimants. Secondly, much of the existing literature on newcomers and housing focuses upon homeownership. While some refugees are attaining homeownership, the vast majority are

not. Consideration of homeownership as a measure of integration bodes poorly for refugee newcomers, many of whom remain as tenants in the private - or less frequently public rental market. Third, existing research within the housing and newcomer literature focuses upon housing as an outcome (e.g. of income security, housing tenure and housing market), with insufficient attention to ways in which housing acts as a catalyst for other measures of integration. This research diverges from earlier research through its explicit consideration of the long-term implications of housing on social inclusion.

Note that differences in methodologies employed and specific issues addressed in the studies preclude full comparison of their findings. This research explores the barriers faced by government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants, and strategies utilized in obtaining housing in Winnipeg and Vancouver in ways that facilitate comparison.

Refugees experience considerable affordability problems owing to low employment participation, continued reliance on government transfers (e.g. RAP, provincial social assistance), and/or employment in minimum wage, part-time jobs. The majority live in rental housing within the private market and display the lowest homeownership rates of all newcomers. Low incomes, high rents and, for some, large household sizes have contributed to significant overcrowding problems among refugee households. As such, it is necessary to differentiate between the outcomes of tenants; while some are able to move into homeownership, others are not (Mendez 2006). Those unable to make the leap into homeownership face a dwindling stock of affordable housing.

Large scale studies (e.g. LSIC) show newcomers are facing challenges in housing, though they are differentiated by category of arrival, with economic immigrants faring much better.

Refugees, by contrast are having far more difficulties. Although large scale, cross-national studies on the housing experiences have been conducted (e.g. Hiebert and Mendez 2006), the focus has primarily been upon economic and family class immigrants. By contrast, refugee studies have tended to be smaller in scale and limited to the context of one city or – to a lesser extent – one province.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As with any research, this dissertation began with a desire to better understand a relatively unexplored issue. At the beginning of my doctoral studies I was involved in a research project entitled the *Profile of Absolute and Relative Homelessness Among Immigrants and Refugees in Metro Vancouver*. One of the major findings was that refugee claimants have a more difficult pathway to housing owing to their legal status, a finding that validated previous research in Montreal and Toronto. As I searched the literature I began to notice research on newcomers, and more specifically refugees, analyzed the situation in one of the three largest Canadian centres: Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (Murdie 2008; Hiebert et al. 2005; Rose and Ray 2001) or 'second tier' centres (Carter and Enns). By contrast, there was a dearth of comparative research on the (housing) outcomes of refugees, particularly across the tiers. Yet multiple geographical dimensions are inherently implicated in settlement outcomes, which reinforce the need for greater emphasis on comparative research. As I examined the research being undertaken across Canada and began to map the gaps, I became interested in the question of whether the problems refugee claimants face in securing housing was a 'big city' problem, thereby requiring a more localized response, or if it was more widespread, thereby requiring a national response. This research moves beyond studies of housing trajectories in single cities, to consider the ways in which they are influenced by housing markets and assistance regimes in two Canadian CMAs that are quite different in scale, services, and the population of newcomers: Vancouver, BC and Winnipeg, MB.

The process of conducting research is never linear. What began as an investigation of the housing outcomes of refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver led me on an incredible journey,

with each question leading me in different directions, and led me to pursue new areas of inquiry. Refugee admission, resettlement and the policies associated with these processes are complex. Changes made at the Federal or Provincial levels to benefit refugees or expand the boundaries of protection may have unforeseen consequences. For my research this has necessitated an unanticipated journey into larger questions of international protection versus localized resettlement outcomes. Most notably it has led me along the pathway from a straightforward comparative research study, in which the housing outcomes of GARs and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Metro Vancouver are analyzed, to consider larger policy and conceptual questions.

What began then, with the expectation to legitimate previous research findings and produce a critique of the differentiation of services by legal status, has instead produced a richer, more complex discussion of the differences that place and federal policy play in settlement outcomes. From a policy perspective, a significant challenge exists: policies governing refugee admittance and entitlements (for both refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees) are established at the federal level, yet local contexts and/or institutional environments vary greatly (e.g. with respect to housing, employment, availability of services, and so on). The differing situations of Canadian cities necessitate exploration of the settlement experiences of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants across multiple Canadian cities. My location in Vancouver and ability to undertake subsequent research has resulted in a deeper analysis of the outcomes of post-IRPA GARs in Metro Vancouver. In so doing, it raises important questions about Federal and Provincial policies that I believe are relevant to post-IRPA GARs in both cities, and potentially across the country.

On a personal note, my academic journey has opened a new doorway professionally. My position as the Manager of Community Settlement Programs for ISS_{of}BC has informed my understanding of the immigrant services sector. It has also enabled me to bring my academic knowledge and passion to my everyday work. It is important to clarify, however, this position was obtained after the interviews for this project were conducted.

The decision to undertake a small-scale, comparative study is contentious as I am cognizant of critiques levelled against case studies and comparative analysis in qualitative research. Following the rise of quantitative research methods in the 1950s, small scale case studies have frequently been criticized in terms of their reliability, validity of analysis, and ability to generalize to the wider population. Pickvance (1995) argues that while case studies are frequently dismissed because they do not permit confident statistical inference, the real strength of case studies is in their ability to make causal inferences. Case studies offer the opportunity to make previously ambiguous relations more visible (cf, Pickvance 1995, Mitchell 1983). As such, the intention of this research is to elucidate previously obscured relations and processes that will aid in the understanding of refugee housing trajectories and settlement outcomes. The use of comparative analysis is intended to limit the extent to which mistaken causal inferences can be made from single case studies. Context matters and this is where comparative case studies can be most usefully employed.

This research examines the housing trajectories of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg, MB and Vancouver, BC.

Methods

A two-stage research program was undertaken, including an analysis of relevant policies, and the gathering of primary data.

Methods: Institutional Environment

The first stage involved examination of the contextual and policy environments into which newcomers settle, including the immigration, economic and housing dynamics in Winnipeg and Metro Vancouver. For each city this included:

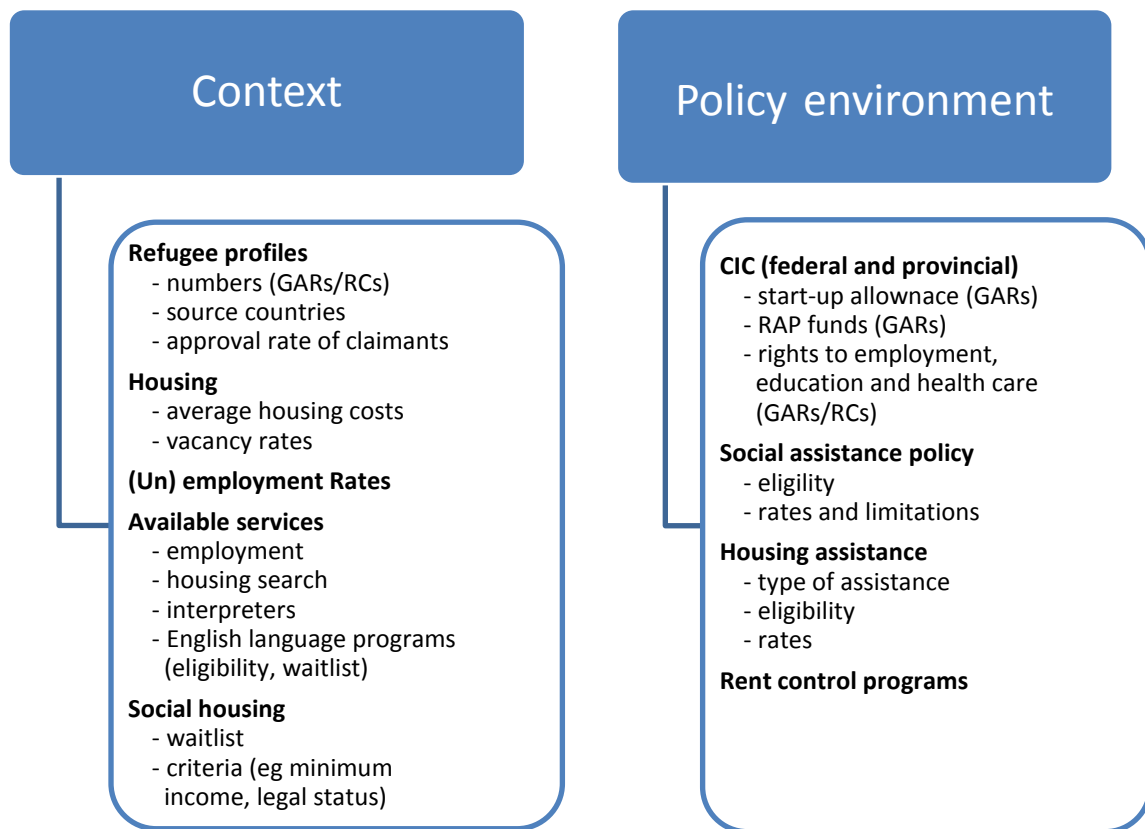


Figure 1: Methods: Institutional Environment

As the above figure suggests, the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants are influenced by a multitude of institutional factors that make it difficult,

if not impossible, to determine causality. Recognition that “different instances of the same phenomenon at the same time but in different places may have different causes” (Pickvance 1995, 37-8) necessitated the adoption of a plural, as opposed to universal, understanding of causality.²⁰ Both refugee groups and key informants were asked to reflect upon the factors they believe to be significant in influencing housing trajectories.

While much of the information sought was publicly available (e.g. settlement policies, social assistance rates and eligibility/restrictions, and so on), institutional barriers made it difficult to obtain some statistics/data. For example, in spite of repeated requests to the appropriate agencies, information on social housing (e.g. waitlists by number and size of units, etc), was not forthcoming in either city. When possible, I tried to obtain this type of information anecdotally or through other sources. In Winnipeg, for example, key informants suggested that while the overall stock of social housing in Winnipeg was large, the number of 4-5 bedroom units was small and was characterized by low turnover rates. Further, those units that became available were often in poor physical condition and/or located in unsafe neighbourhoods.

Methods: Primary Research

The second stage of the research involved a multiple-point of contact study of key informants and refugee groups in Winnipeg and Vancouver, involving the establishment of collaborative relationships, key informant interviews and individual interviews with refugees (see Figure 2 for an overview of the primary research methods). Conducting primary research necessitated two trips to Winnipeg (one for a duration of one week and another for one month), as well as

²⁰ By contrast, the concept of universal causality assumes that “causal processes are the same wherever and whenever a phenomenon is produced” (Pickvance 1995, 37).

ongoing research in Vancouver. Individual interviews with key informants, government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants were completed from March to September 2007.

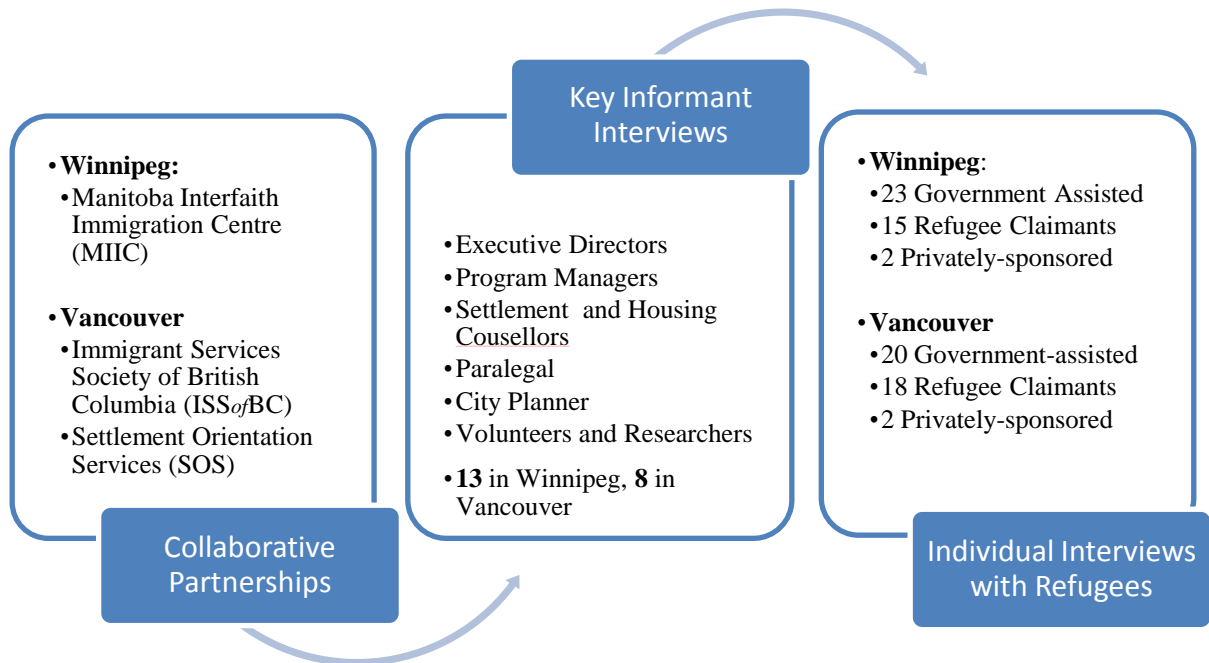


Figure 2: Primary Research Methods

In accordance with UBC requirements for ethical research, authorization for this study was received from the Behavioural Review Ethics Board (BREB). All participants were asked to provide informed written consent immediately prior to participating in the research (see Appendix A for Contact Letters and Informed Consent Forms).²¹ Children and individuals who are not legally competent were not interviewed in this research.

Concerns about anonymity were particularly pertinent given that funding for the project was provided by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (formerly Housing and Homelessness Branch) of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). All respondents were assured that while results would be provided to the Government, precautions would be

²¹For a detailed discussion of ethical issues in research, including informed consent, see Ryen (2004).

taken to ensure that no identifying characteristics would be given. To ensure anonymity, each interview was assigned a number to be used on the interview schedule in place of the participant's name. Further, each person was asked to provide an alternative name that could be used when quoting them; neither the participants' name nor their alternate name appeared on the interview schedule. Due to the nature of focus groups, participants were informed that I could only guarantee limited confidentiality; all participants were asked to refrain from disclosing the content of information discussed in the focus group. Consent forms were stored separately from the interview schedules in a locked filing cabinet; all electronic files have been password protected.

Refugee settlement is aided by a combination of both state and private actors in both cities. Before undertaking primary research, collaborative relationships were established with immigrant and refugee-serving providers in each of the cities. In Vancouver I partnered with the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC) and the Settlement Orientation Services (SOS), while in Winnipeg I collaborated with the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) (see Figure 2). Two other agencies were integral in completing the Vancouver research: the Inland Refugee Services of BC (Inland) and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The formation of these relationships was important both in refining the overarching research questions and survey instruments, as well as in facilitating the participation of refugee groups in both cities. Collaborative partnerships are beneficial in that they enable researchers to access knowledge about background information and settlement policies that may not be available through other sources (Hiebert et al. 2005; Waxman 2001). Previous research has suggested that language barriers and lack of familiarity with researchers may limit participation amongst immigrants and refugees

(Hiebert et al. 2006; Sherrell et al. 2005). The use of trusted informants may facilitate the recruitment of potential participants by allowing researchers to build upon previously established relationships (cf, Sherrell 2003; Waxman 2001; Hyndman and Walton Roberts 2000; Simich et al. 2002).

Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews

Once these collaborative partnerships were in place, an informal focus group and key informant interviews were conducted with stakeholders from immigrant and refugee-serving agencies and other agencies in each of the two cities (see Appendix B for Key Informant Interview Schedule). Participants for the focus group held in each city were identified in consultation with partnering agencies so as to ensure appropriate representation.

Thirteen key informant interviews (12 individual, one group) were conducted in Winnipeg and seven in Vancouver (6 individual, one group) with representatives from immigrant and refugee-serving agencies and housing service providers.²² Attempts were made to ensure a variety of participants, including front-line workers, as well as middle and upper management (See Figure 3 for an overview of Key Informants interviewed in the study).

Winnipeg	Vancouver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Executive Directors (2) •Program/Service Managers (2) •Paralegal (1) •Settlement Counsellors (6) •Housing Counsellors (2) •Housing Researchers (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Centre/Service coordinator (3) •Program/Service Manager (1) •City Planner (1) •Settlement Counsellor (1) •Housing Counsellor (1) •Liaison Volunteer (1)

Figure 3: Key Informant Interviews

²² While key informant interviews were intended to be individual, two respondents invited another person to participate in the interview.

In addition, representatives were interviewed from the Red Cross of the Lower Mainland, the City of Vancouver, and from a second stage housing provider in Winnipeg. Although attempts were made to include paralegal representatives in Vancouver this was not possible.

The decision to interview more key informants in Winnipeg reflects my lack of familiarity with both the service environment and refugee issues in Winnipeg. Unlike Vancouver, where I could draw upon pre-established contacts and a more in-depth understanding of the issues facing refugees, conducting research in Winnipeg required I develop a knowledge base. Further, my location in Vancouver provided the ability to interact with service providers throughout the research, enabling me to seek more information or greater clarity as analysis progressed.

The use of semi-structured interviews enables researchers to increase the comparability of their findings by obtaining the same basic information from each participant, while providing the necessary flexibility to follow up on issues and/or concerns arising in the interview (Kitchin and Tate 2000). Key informant interviews were approximately one hour in length and were conducted at a time that was convenient to the participant. All key informant interviews were audio-recorded and used to prepare detailed notes. Data from the key informant groups were analyzed using standard content analysis and were particularly helpful in finalizing the interview schedule for government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants.

Individual Interviews with Refugee Groups

Sample Groups

The target population for this project is government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants living in Winnipeg and Metro Vancouver.²³ The sampling frame included government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants who were known to immigrant and refugee-serving agencies. Participants were recruited primarily through immigrant and refugee serving organizations (see later section), though snowball sampling was used with the Somali community in Winnipeg.²⁴

To facilitate comparison within the refugee cohorts in the study I focused on a small number of specific groups in each city.²⁵ Following consultations with partnering agencies in both cities a decision was made to interview GARs from Sudan and Afghanistan; for the most part this was successful in both cities. In Winnipeg a number of GARs from other countries (e.g. Burma, Iran and Chechnya) were interviewed due to the inability to identify sufficient numbers of Sudanese GARs; in Vancouver I was able to interview almost equal numbers of GARs from Sudan and Afghanistan. Identifying refugee claimants was a more problematic endeavour. The low number of refugee claimants settling in Winnipeg necessitated the inclusion of more diverse participant groups. After analysing the number of claims accepted by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in each city, as well as available statistics from

²³ Metro Vancouver, formerly known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), is a partnership of twenty-one municipalities and one electoral area that forms the metropolitan area of Greater Vancouver.

²⁴ Snowball sampling is a respondent-driven sampling method in which respondents are asked to provide referrals for other potential participants.

²⁵ According to the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC 2006) the top ten countries of origin of new clients served in 2005-2006 by number of individuals were Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Eritrea, Liberia, Columbia, Sierra Leone and Burundi. It is important to note, however, that this ranking includes all new refugee clients, regardless of category of entry (e.g. government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees, as well as refugee claimants). In Vancouver, the top five countries of origin for government-assisted refugees at that time were Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, Columbia and India (ISSofBC 2006), while Spanish-speaking (e.g. Mexican, Honduran and Colombian) and Chinese-speaking claimants were the predominant claimant groups (Charlton 2006, personal communication).

ISSofBC (2006) and MIIC (2006), I decided to interview Spanish-speaking claimants. While this was successful in Vancouver (12 of the 18 participants were Spanish speaking), only 1 of the 15 claimants interviewed in Winnipeg was Spanish speaking.

Given limited funding a decision was made to interview 40 refugees in each city, with the goal of recruiting equal numbers of GARs and claimants in each city. The significantly smaller numbers of refugees, both GARs and claimants, arriving in Winnipeg posed challenges for interviewing a comparable number of respondents in Vancouver. Rather than interview a very large number of refugees in Vancouver or a very small number in Winnipeg, I elected to interview equal numbers in both cities. While the results of this study may not be representative of all refugees settling in the two cities, the findings provide greater understanding of the experiences of refugees in Winnipeg, as compared to those settling in Vancouver.

Initially the sample groups were restricted to include only those within the first three years after arrival. The reasons for doing so were threefold:

- Firstly, analytically this is the period during which differences in status are likely to have the most significant impact on housing. While government-assisted refugees receive legal recognition upon arrival (e.g. rights to permanent residence, access to settlement services), the asylum status of refugee claimants is still being decided within the first three years.
- Secondly, the first three years marks the period during which linkages to non-governmental organizations (e.g. immigrant and refugee-serving agencies, housing

service providers, legal aid societies) were likely to be the strongest for both groups.²⁶

Because I was working in conjunction with trusted informants to recruit participants (see later section), the decision to limit the study to government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants within the first three years aided in identifying potential participants, as this was the period during which immigrant and refugee serving organizations were funded to provide formal settlement service to government-assisted refugees.

- Finally, in the first three years we might expect that both refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees would be undergoing rapid changes in their housing and employment situations. Interviewing these groups while they were in process – as opposed to looking back upon this period – enabled me to collect more accurate information.

Although I had hoped to restrict participants to those arriving in the last three years (between 2004 and 2007), difficulties in identifying participants, particularly in Winnipeg where the timeframe for fieldwork was limited, required me to extend this timeline to five years after arrival.²⁷ This was done in consultation with immigrant and refugee serving agencies in both Winnipeg and Vancouver. For the sake of this research refugee claimants included both those in process as well as those who had already received final decisions on their claims.

²⁶ Although some newcomers may be assisted after that time period, frontline workers were asked to limit potential participants to those within the first three years. While refugee claimants were not eligible for formal settlement services the first three years marks the period during which they may receive assistance from legal aid and/or refugee-specific organizations. Once they have received a decision, whether positive or negative, claimants are unlikely to continue seeking assistance from these agencies.

²⁷ Five refugee claimants and one government-assisted refugee interviewed had lived in Winnipeg for less than 6 months. Two had come to Canada after living in the United States.

With respect to refugee claimants, the decision to restrict participation to those within the first five years raised an ethical concern, as some had not yet received a final determination on their asylum claims. As such, it marked a period of ongoing legal uncertainty. In light of the continued decline in new asylum claims in Canada and an approval rate of less than fifty percent, however, it was not feasible to restrict participation to only those refugee claimants who had received a positive determination. The importance of obtaining information on this vulnerable population merited inclusion of in-process claimants. All attempts were made to ensure participants were well aware that their participation (or not) in this project had no bearing on their refugee decision. Throughout the interview all participants were reminded that they could refuse to answer questions if they so desired (e.g. before questions about employment). Further, participants were not asked any questions relating to their asylum claims.

Recruiting Participants

Following the completion of key informant interviews, settlement counsellors were asked to identify potential participants and ascertain their willingness to participate in the research study.²⁸ Potential participants were primarily recruited through partner agencies (ISSofBC, SOS and MIIC, as well as Inland and MCC). To preserve the privacy of potential participants, settlement counsellors at these agencies were asked to initiate contact. Clients were provided with both a letter of introduction about the study and a copy of the consent form and asked if they would be interested in participating (see Appendix A for Contact Letters and Informed Consent Forms). Those refugee claimants and government-assisted

²⁸ While I recognize working closely with immigrant and refugee-serving agencies may introduce biases in both the sample population (i.e. only those seeking assistance from those agencies) and responses (i.e. participants may be less likely to criticize services received if frontline workers are present at the interview), I believe the advantages outweigh the drawbacks.

refugees who were agreeable were contacted either by settlement counsellors or interpreters to arrange a time for the interview.

In one case, the settlement counsellor introduced both myself and the project at a women's meeting. After explaining the research (e.g. goals, procedure), attendees were asked to let the counsellor know if they were interested in participating in the project. Because almost all of the women wanted to be included, a draw was held from the pool of eligible individuals (i.e. those 6 months to 5 years after arrival, who had arrived as either a refugee claimant or a government-assisted refugee). Two of the women volunteered to interpret for others who needed help in this respect.

Three individuals were recruited for this study through other participants without any knowledge or assistance from immigrant and refugee-serving agencies. Similarly, although MIIC recruited some Somali respondents, word of mouth was helpful in increasing the number of participants. While every effort was made, it was not possible to interview a diverse group with respect to age, gender, status, and so on. This was particularly the case for refugee claimants who might be more sporadically in contact with refugee-serving agencies due to their more limited access to services. In light of restricted resources to conduct interviews with refugees a decision was made not to interview multiple individuals from the same household. In so doing my intent has been to diversify the potential range of housing trajectories amongst respondents.

Data Collection

Forty semi-structured interviews ranging from ½ hour to one hour each were conducted with GARs and claimants in each of the two cities (see Table 1 for an overview of respondents).

In addition to demographic information and basic questions on legal status (e.g. category and date of arrival), the interview schedule contained a detailed exploration of the housing and settlement experiences of newcomers, including both the period immediately after arrival and in the intervening period (e.g. services received following arrival, employment, housing trajectory since arrival, and percentage of monthly income spent on housing) (see Appendix C for Interview Schedule for Government Assisted Refugees and Refugee Claimants).²⁹ The use of individual interviews enabled me to probe issues identified in the earlier parts of the study, thus adding depth to the analysis.

Interpreters were provided for all interviewees, and prior to interviews, interpreters were reminded of the importance of interpreting participant responses as closely as possible, and asked to minimize their own input (e.g. their views, answering for clients, or correcting respondents). Because interpretation occurred ‘on the fly’, however, it was difficult to obtain exact renditions. Whenever possible interpreters were given the opportunity to reflect on their thoughts on the issues in informal discussions following the meeting.

All participants were asked for permission to audio-record interviews for use in creating detailed notes at a later time. Some (17), adamantly refused to be recorded in spite of assurances the files would be password protected and would not contain any identifying information. In these cases more extensive written notes were taken during the interview which were used to compile detailed summaries. The reluctance of participants to allow interviews to be recorded may arise from concerns about having their voice on tape even though there is no identifying information (e.g. interview number, name, and date) on the

²⁹ This research draws upon an interview schedule utilized in earlier research by Hiebert et al. (2005) and D’Addario (2005) in order to facilitate comparison.

recording itself. Rapley (2004) asserts the issue of recording “is chiefly around trust: will you as a researcher *misuse the information* as this is a ‘permanent record’ that they could be identified through at a later point” (Rapley 2004, 19). Prior experience with the state may be pertinent in understanding this reluctance. Once the recorder was put away in my bag the respondents visibly relaxed. Given the use of interpreters and the need to concentrate simultaneously on the respondent and the interpreter, as well as taking notes, there is more danger of missing important information and/or of putting words in their mouths. In these cases I tried to review my notes with the interpreters after the interview. In some cases, however, the tight scheduling of interviews (sometimes three in a row) precluded doing any review until much later in the day.

Interviews were conducted at a time and place that was convenient to each participant. Each participant received a \$25 cash honorarium, intended to offset costs associated with their involvement in the project (e.g. transportation, child minding); this practice is similar to other research with refugee groups (cf, Francis 2009; Sherrell and ISSo/BC 2009; Hiebert et al. 2005; Sherrell 2003; Hyndman and Walton Roberts 2000).

Data Analysis

Detailed notes were compiled from each interview either from audio-recordings or from written notes made during the interview. These notes were then reviewed using standard content analysis to identify patterns of responses, themes and issues.

Profile of Respondents

Forty semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with refugees in each city. I began the study aiming for twenty GARs and twenty claimants in each city. Twenty-three

GARs, 15 RCs and 2 PSRs were interviewed in Winnipeg, and 20 GARs, 18 RCs and 2 PSRs in Vancouver. This included 22 in-process refugee claimants and 11 who had already received a decision (see Table 1 for a detailed profile of respondents).³⁰ Two respondents spontaneously volunteered they had received negative decisions on their claims; the results of the other claims are not known.

Although I had not initially requested the participation of privately sponsored refugees (PSRs), it appeared that confusion as to the category of entry of some participants led to the inclusion of a small number of this group. The responses of the four PSRs (2 each in Winnipeg and Vancouver) have been omitted from analysis. Given the small number of PSRs participating in the research it is not possible to provide a general overview of their housing and settlement outcomes.

³⁰The number of respondents who reported already having received a decision on their claim was relatively even between the two cities, with 5 in Vancouver and 6 in Winnipeg.

Profile of Respondents by Legal Status and City of Settlement							
City	Vancouver		Winnipeg		All respondents		
Legal Status	RC	GAR	RC	GAR	RC	GAR	All
Number of respondents	18	20	15	23	33	43	76
Gender							
<i>Female</i>	15	15	1	20	16	35	51
<i>Male</i>	3	5	14	3	17	8	25
Age							
19-24	-	3	3	-	3	3	6
25-44	14	10	11	13	24	23	48
45+	4	7	1	10	5	17	22
Average Age	40	38	32	42	36	40	39
Education (attended)							
No formal education	-	3	1	6	1	9	10
Elementary school	1	5	1	7	2	12	14
High School	12	6	7	6	19	12	31
Post Secondary	5	6	6	4	11	10	21
Country of Origin							
<i>Afghanistan</i>	-	9	1	13	1	22	23
<i>Sudan</i>	-	11	-	3	-	14	14
<i>Burma</i>	-	-	-	3	-	3	3
<i>Somalia</i>	-	-	9	-	9	-	9
<i>Mexico</i>	10	-	-	-	10	-	10
<i>China (PR)</i>	6	-	-	-	6	-	6
<i>Other</i>	4	-	5	4	7	4	11

Table 1: Profile of Respondents by Legal Status and City of Settlement

With the exception of refugee claimants in Winnipeg, the majority of respondents were female and arrived with other members of their family. Refugee claimants in Winnipeg, by

contrast, are mainly single young males. While the dominance of women participants was evident in both the GAR and RC categories in Vancouver (75% and 83% respectively), the gender breakdown in Winnipeg was highly differentiated by legal status. Eighty-seven percent of government-assisted refugees interviewed in Winnipeg were female, compared to 7% of refugee claimants. In part, this reflected the ways in which participants were identified. In the case of GARs, many of the participants were identified through a women's group, while almost half of the claimants were identified through the social networks of previous respondents in the study.

Although respondents in the study were more likely to have arrived with other family members (73% overall and 93% of GARS), refugee claimants were slightly more likely to have arrived on their own (55%) than with their family (45%). Respondents in Vancouver exhibited a smaller overall household size than did those in Winnipeg.³¹ Fewer than 10% of respondents in Vancouver, for example lived in households of seven or more compared to 40% of those in Winnipeg. The average age for all respondents was 38, slightly older for GARs in Winnipeg (42) and younger for refugee claimants in Winnipeg (32). Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 70, and included three respondents over age 60.

Refugee claimants included in the study reported higher levels of education than did GARs. Although GARs in both cities were more likely to have attended elementary school or no formal education, the majority of claimants have attended high school or post secondary institutions. Over 90% of claimants had completed some high school or post-secondary education, compared to 51% of GARs. One-third of all claimants reported having attended

³¹The responses of the three respondents who reported having no permanent accommodations at the time of the interview have been omitted from consideration.

some post-secondary education. By contrast, 56% of GARs in Winnipeg and 40% of GARs in Vancouver reported having either elementary school or no formal education.

It is important to note that level of education was self reported, and may have included education obtained in Canada. In Winnipeg the high proportion of refugee claimants with post-secondary education may have been influenced by participation of Somali claimants, many of whom attended secondary and post-secondary education in Winnipeg, as well as those who had spent time in the United States prior to coming to Canada and claiming asylum. In some cases no direct comparison was possible; in such cases respondents provided an approximation of their level of education. One respondent, for example, noted that he had graduated from the 'equivalent of high school'. Given the inability to directly compare level of education (e.g. owing to different educational structures), respondents may have overestimated the level of education achieved.

The top five countries of origin for all respondents were Afghanistan (29%), Sudan (18%), Mexico (13%), Somalia (12%) and PR China (8%). Fifty-one percent of all GARs respondents were from Afghanistan and 33% were from Sudan. Challenges in identifying sufficient Sudanese participants in Winnipeg resulted in the inclusion of other countries of origin. In total, 57% of the GARs interviewed in Winnipeg were from Afghanistan, followed by 13% each from Sudan and Burma. In Vancouver, 55% of the GARs interviewed were from Sudan, with the remaining 45% from Afghanistan.

With respect to refugee claimants, 30% of all claimants interviewed were from Mexico, 27% were from Somalia and 18% were from the People's Republic of China (PRC). In Winnipeg, 60% of claimants interviewed were from Somalia; there were no other countries with

multiple respondents. Fifty-five percent (55%) of claimants in Vancouver were from Mexico and 33% from PRC.

Methodological Issues: Identifying Participants

While I had hoped to interview Spanish-speaking claimants in each of the cities this was not possible in Winnipeg for two reasons. Firstly, given the small number of refugee claimants arriving in Winnipeg it was necessary to extend the initial request for Spanish-speaking claimants to include other groups. Secondly, although IRB statistics indicate the arrival of claimants from Spanish-speaking countries in Winnipeg over the preceding three years the agency was only able to identify one Spanish-speaking participant. Three possible reasons for this include: Spanish-speaking claimants do not access services through MIIC (which is the only formal refugee-serving agency in Winnipeg); Spanish-speaking claimants often arrive in Winnipeg to start their claim and then engage in secondary migration; and finally, the influence of agency staff.

In Winnipeg, for example, attempts to identify refugee claimant participants were hampered by the reluctance of the paralegal working with claimants to ask clients to participate in the research. Consequently, all claimants participating in the project in Winnipeg were identified through settlement counsellors or word of mouth from previous participants. The majority of claimants interviewed were Somali (see Table 1).

In Vancouver, difficulties in identifying sufficient numbers of Spanish-speaking refugee claimants led to the inclusion of refugee claimants from the People's Republic of China (PRC). In part, this may reflect the small capacity and large workloads of staff in refugee-specific agencies. While it was possible to work with settlement counsellors and refugee

protection staff at the single agency responsible for these processes in Winnipeg, the small size of refugee agencies operating in Vancouver made it difficult to identify a wider range of clients.

Letters of invitation and consent forms were provided to settlement counsellors who agreed to assist in recruiting participants. Settlement counsellors were then asked to provide this information (e.g. an overview of the research project, what was involved in the research, and so on) to newcomers to allow them to make an informed decision whether to participate in the research. It became evident, however, that the purpose of the interview and/or my affiliation (e.g. UBC) was not always made clear to participants. In a number of interviews in both cities, for example, respondents reported understanding that I was from a housing provider (e.g. BC Housing, Manitoba Social Housing) and could potentially obtain subsidized housing for the household. Once it became clear we were conducting research on housing, as opposed to interviewing the family for a housing unit, for example, the mother of one respondent became quite agitated. Although the daughter chose to continue the interview it left me feeling uneasy about whether informed consent was truly obtained or if she felt obliged given that I was at her home. Furthermore, the interpreter later reported having felt very unsafe given what the mother was saying to her (in their first language). This information was not translated at the time and could not be addressed. Further, one respondent reported having been told, not asked, that I would be coming to interview him and was under the understanding I was either from the immigrant and refugee-serving agency or the government. Misunderstandings such as this proved problematic and stressful for all parties, including the participants, interpreters and myself.

Methodological Issues: Informed Consent

Research should, as far as possible, be based on freely given informed consent of research subjects who have been provided with adequate information on what is being done to them, the limits of their participation, as well as any potential risks they may incur by taking part in research (Sin 2005, 279).

While the consent forms utilized in this research clearly communicate that participation in the research is voluntary and respondents have the right to refuse to answer question(s) or end the interview at any time, concern with ethics does not end once the participant's signature has been obtained. The conceptualization of informed consent as being fluid, and as such continually renegotiated, demands greater attention be paid to ethical research practices throughout the research process (Sin 2005). Ethical research practices require continued attention to ensure potential risks to participants are minimized both during the interview, and as a consequence of participation in the study (Sin 2005). As such, recognition that informed consent is obtained and maintained meant participants were periodically reminded of the voluntary nature of their participation and their ability to refuse to answer questions or end the interview if they appeared uncomfortable during the interview, as well as prior to asking questions about sensitive topics (e.g. income and employment).

The ways in which information is presented both on the informed consent forms and in verbally broaching the subject (e.g. the language used) influences the consent process. Dependence upon interpreters to adequately and appropriately convey the necessary information made this a difficult task. The importance of obtaining voluntary and informed consent was explained first to interpreters before the interview and again to participants during the interview. However, I was dependent upon interpreters to verbally translate information contained on the consent forms. While some interpreters understood the importance of obtaining informed consent, others, particularly family members, felt it

redundant, believing that consent was given merely by agreeing to meet with and be interviewed by me.

Methodological Issues: Interviews as Socially Constructed Spaces

Interviews are socially constructed spaces influenced by the understandings and motivations of multiple actors, including the researcher, interpreter, respondent, and others present during the interview, as well as the location of interviews. The “flow of the interview” (Warren 2002, 84) can also be influenced by the location of the interviews, and, in some cases the use of an audio recorder. Recognition that the interviewee’s responses are “contingent and locally constructed (i.e. with the interviewer) ‘versions’ of reality” (Silverman 2001, 87 as cited in Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman 2004, 13) necessitates that consideration be given to the interview context (Rapley 2004). Although respondents were given the ability to suggest the location of interviews the place chosen was not always conducive to the process of interviewing. The location of the interview had the potential to influence what information was (not) shared. Interviews in people’s homes frequently have multiple members of the family in attendance, and subsequently participating. Respondents interviewed in immigrant and refugee serving agencies, for example, were frequently interrupted by staff seeking the proper occupant of the office or wanting to check how the interview was proceeding, while respondents interviewed in public places (e.g. libraries, coffee shops) spoke in hushed tones and/or looked around to see if they knew anyone in the surrounding area before answering questions.

Feminist and post-modern researchers have recognized the need to situate themselves in their work in order to acknowledge their own limited perspectives (Rose 1997; Harraway 1991).

Unlike previous attempts to overcome the influence of the researcher in the research process, situated knowledge seeks to expose the ways in which “our research agenda, political commitments, and personal motivations shape our observations in the field, the conclusions we draw, and the research reports we write” (Kirsch 1999, 14). In adopting feminist research practices I acknowledge I am neither neutral nor unbiased. Throughout the research process, including analysis and writing, I have attempted to be cognisant of the ways in which my positionality influences the research, as well as being attentive to power and power relations. For example, I have chosen to engage in *complementary reciprocity*, or the exchange of information or assistance with respondents (cf, Johnson 2002 in Rapley 2004). In so doing I reject the arguments of both those who argue that researchers should remain unbiased and neutral, as well as those who suggest that interviewers must engage in the sharing of all personal, biographical and emotional experiences (i.e., *strict disclosure*). The sharing of information or assistance has occurred within the context of individual interviews, with me assessing when and if it is appropriate. The provision of information, however, has not been utilized strictly as a means of establishing rapport and facilitating greater disclosure. While some respondents asked for information on available resources (e.g. family reunification, social housing) or assistance in explaining letters from the government (e.g. concerning the BC Medical Services Plan, CIC), others expressed curiosity about my own migration history and how I had begun working with refugees. At the end of one interview the respondent asked if I would be willing to provide feedback on a school assignment that was due the following day.

Even as the influence of the researcher has been problematized, however, the perspective and limits to claims of interpreters have largely escaped notice. Although the use of interpreters

facilitates the inclusion of those with less fully developed language capacities, which is significant in that their needs and experiences may differ substantially from those with better English language skills, the use of interpreters may influence the information provided. Temple (2002, 845) asserts “much cross-language research continues with an unquestioning acceptance of the non-problematic use of [interpreters and] translators”. Recognition of the active role of researchers in the creation of knowledge necessitates that we reconsider the view of interpreters as neutral conveyers of information.

In her work on the translation of written texts, for example, Gayatri Spivak (1993) positions translators as active agents in the research process who produce texts that are informed by their own life experiences. Consideration should be given to the ways in which interpreters influence the research process, as well as the ways in which researchers may be dependent upon interpreters for perspectives as well as for words (Temple 1997).

In moving beyond debates around the need for literal (i.e. word for word) or free (i.e. meanings) interpretation it is important to recognize that meanings are constructed that reflect the values and beliefs of the interpreter. The ways that the interpreter understands and views the world will affect the meanings that are assigned during the rendering from one language to another. Given the active role of interpreters in shaping the research process, then it is not possible to fully eliminate or account for the influence of interpreters in research (Temple 1997). Their relationships with the interviewee and the researcher, their beliefs, values and social location, all affect the interview process.

In her work with a Bengali/Sylheti interpreter, for example, Rosalind Edwards (1998) asserts that the class positioning and professional affiliations of the interpreter may have led the

interpreter to foreground some aspects of the interview over others (Temple and Edwards 2002; Edwards 1998). During a debriefing session following several interviews, for example, one interpreter in Vancouver provided additional information about respondent(s), as well as the migration experiences of refugees from that country. In so doing, class differences were conveyed (e.g. lack of birth control, illiteracy, villages or rural areas). Consequently, in subsequent interviews I attempted to be aware of times when her views might be influencing the responses provided and ask follow-up questions.

The use of professionals or key informants as interpreters may influence both the interviewees' willingness to participate in the research, as well as what information the interviewee is willing to share. The need to maintain a relationship outside of the research process, either as a professional or a member of the society that is being studied, potentially places both the interpreter and the interviewee in a tenuous position. In Winnipeg, settlement counsellors acted as interpreters in a small number of interviews, a situation that proved problematic both for respondents, who may have been less likely to criticize the agencies or talk about their experiences with the agencies, as well as in keeping the interviews to the one hour period desired. One counsellor, for example, would become defensive when clients asked questions (e.g. about available services, or family sponsorship) or talked about issues, and would halt the interview to go on at length answering the respondents' queries and talk to me later about how s/he did not know the client was having that particular problem. Every attempt was made to reassure the settlement counsellor(s) that I was not there to assess their performance, but rather to explore newcomers' housing and settlement experiences.

Although the use of trusted informants, such as settlement counsellors, as interpreters may facilitate access by building upon established relations, the fear of reprisals from settlement

agencies, whether real or imagined, may influence people's answers. In the context of questions around settlement service provision, for example, newcomers may be less likely to be critical of immigrant and refugee-serving agencies when settlement counsellors are utilized as interpreters.

Whenever possible interpreters were drawn from community members and/or volunteers with the organization, as opposed to settlement counsellors. While their language skills were sometimes not as fully developed as those of settlement counsellors, necessitating more explanations about the meaning of particular words and/or questions, the interviews proved less political. In a small number of interviews, family members acted as interpreters. When using family members, however, it was sometimes difficult to have the interpreter refrain from answering for the respondent and/or expanding upon what he or she had said. Interpreters were periodically reminded of their role in the interviews. Despite challenges introduced by the use of interpreters, I believe the ability to collect more detailed responses outweighed the drawbacks. Interpreters are not neutral participants in the research process, but rather actively shape it. In emphasizing positionality and being accountable for the choices that have been made in the research process I acknowledge my role in deciding what was or was not followed up upon. For those who rely on interpreters to conduct research, the potential influence of interpreters must be considered.

In light of the continued calls for researchers to acknowledge and account for their own positions in their research, a more sustained critique of the impact of interpreters on the research is needed. If we are to “acknowledge that [we] carry out interviews *with*, rather than *through* interpreters ... the latter's role should be made explicit and be the subject of critical reflection” (Edwards 1998, 197).

Through consideration of the interpreters' life experiences, relationships with the ethnic group(s) being studied and their views on relevant issues, the researcher attempts to situate the knowledge in terms of both the researcher and the interpreter. The intention, then, is not to privilege the insights of interpreters over those of the respondents, but rather to make interpreters visible in the research process. In this way, both interpreters and researchers become accountable for the ways in which their social and political positions affect the research that is being undertaken.

Methodological Reflections

I end the chapter in the same way I began, with the recognition that research is never linear. In spite of attempts to identify similar groups in Vancouver and Winnipeg in order to facilitate comparison – and as such foreground the influence of place in housing outcomes – the realities of fieldwork necessitated changes in research design. On the one hand, expanding the countries of origin beyond those initially identified and extending the timeframe to include individuals who had been in Canada 6 months to 5 years ensured the overall research goals of interviewing forty refugees in each city were achieved. Certainly, failure to adjust my research design would have ensured the overall sample size was not achieved. On the other hand, it is necessary to reflect upon the consequences of having altered the research design. What impact, for example, does the gender imbalance or the inclusion of non-comparable national groups have on the research? The inability to identify and interview comparable groups in both cities limits the extent to which it is possible to isolate the influence of place. As such, analysis seeks to establish how legal status and place intertwine in influencing the settlement and housing outcomes of refugees.

Chapter 4: Putting it All in Context: Federal/Provincial Relations (Canada-BC and Canada-MB Agreements)

Immigration is not only a shared constitutional responsibility but many of the levers that make immigration work are the responsibility of provinces (Hall 2002).

Immigration is a jurisdictionally complex issue in Canada, with responsibility shared between the federal and provincial governments. “Section 95 of the Constitution Act, 1867 recognizes the concurrent powers of legislation of the federal and provincial governments in immigration matters” (CIC 2004). Although concurrent jurisdiction over immigration is enshrined in the constitution, Vineberg (1987) asserts the relationship between federal and provincial governments has been marked by periods of both cooperation and adversity. Beginning in the post-World War II period, however, the federal government has assumed a lead role in immigration-related matters, with provinces relegated to a more consultative position. In Vineberg’s (1987) estimation, the postwar federal government

perceived immigration as a national program and, therefore, assumed full responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission of immigrants. The Cabinet did, however, direct the new department to develop consultative arrangements with the provinces and with national organizations. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration chose to interpret the cabinet direction as applying solely to the field of settlement in which provincial cooperation was essential (305).

Since this time the federal government has assumed primary responsibility for immigration – continuing to establish admission levels, define admission procedures, and (in most provinces) administer settlement and integration programming. Provincial governments, by contrast, provide services which newcomers, like all other citizens, can access, including education, health services, and social assistance.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, the federal-provincial relationship began to shift once again to facilitate more provincial involvement in the selection of some immigrants, most notably through the provincial nominee program.³² Immigration legislation introduced since the 1976 Immigration Act, including the 2002 Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act, have afforded the Minister the ability to enter into agreements with provincial and territorial governments to delimit responsibilities for immigration. Consequently, we have seen an increase in the variability of federal-provincial relationships as the different provinces and territories have negotiated individual agreements with the federal government.

The Cullen-Couture Agreement (1978) was a landmark agreement that provided Quebec the ability to select newcomers destined to Quebec. The Canada-Quebec Accord, signed in 1991, is the most comprehensive federal-provincial agreement signed to date. Although the agreement provides Quebec with sole responsibility for the selection of independent immigrants and refugees being admitted to Quebec, as well as full control over settlement services, the federal government maintains responsibility for defining immigrant categories, establishing immigration levels, and admitting newcomers to Canada.

Subsequent agreements have been signed with all provinces and two territories in the intervening period. Although these agreements are re-negotiated every five years, they contain no expiry date. Rather, they are understood to be a “permanent element of managing immigration in Canada” (Vineberg 2009). The federal government continues to establish targets, with input from provinces, and to admit newcomers to Canada. One noticeable difference pertains to the admission and resettlement of government assisted refugees

³² While beyond the scope of this research, see Carter (2009b) for a more in depth discussion of the provincial nominee programs.

(GARs). Although British Columbia and Manitoba (among other provinces) have been afforded increased ability to influence the numbers and demographics of those being admitted to Canada, the federal government has elected to maintain full responsibility for the initial resettlement of government assisted refugees. As such, it contracts directly with refugee serving organizations through contribution agreements to administer the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), including provision of temporary accommodations, initial information and orientation services, and one year of financial assistance.³³

In the late 1990s the federal government began pursuing

a process of ‘settlement renewal,’ to devolve responsibility for settlement to the provinces, while maintaining responsibility for immigration. Most provinces declined this arrangement except for Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba. These provinces signed agreements in order to receive greater provincial autonomy over immigration and settlement (WRHA 2008, 4).

The agreements signed with British Columbia (first signed in 1998, and renewed in 2004 and 2010) and Manitoba (first signed in 1996, and renewed in 2003 and 2010) are of note, both for their greater scope and relevance to this study.³⁴ Unlike many of the federal-provincial agreements which pertain mostly to provincial nominee programs, the Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration (CBCCI) and Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement (CMIA) afford both provinces a greater role in planning and involvement in attracting business immigrants (CIC 2004, CIC 2003a). Further, the agreements provide BC and Manitoba with funding and responsibility for the design and provision of most integration services. British Columbia and Manitoba commenced delivering settlement services in 1999; both provide a full range of settlement and integration

³³ See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP).

³⁴ For a more detailed discussion of federal-provincial relationships see the edited volume by Biles et al. (2011); included within the volume are chapters on the integration and inclusion of newcomers in British Columbia (Hiebert and Sherrell) and Manitoba (Carter and Amoyaw).

programs, including information and orientation services, English language classes for adults, and employment programs for newcomers.

Although the agreements signed with British Columbia and Manitoba contain many similarities (e.g. in delimiting federal-provincial roles and responsibilities, transferring funding to the provinces to provide settlement and integration services) there are some slight differences that provide insight into the political and economic context in each of the provinces. The late 1980s and early 1990s was a time of significant immigration to British Columbia. While immigration itself is largely a federal responsibility, the demand placed upon provincially provided services, such as education, social assistance and health care, owing to the arrival of significant numbers of immigrants, created cause for alarm. Hall (2002) asserts concerns about the ‘financial and social pressures’ arising from continued immigration to BC provided a strong impetus for the negotiation and signing of federal-provincial immigration agreements in BC.

At the time of the 2004 Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration (CBCCI), the agreement in effect at the time of the primary research, the province was in the initial stages of a widespread neoliberal restructuring. The BC Government’s overarching concern with mitigating additional costs incurred as a result of continuing high immigration to the province are evident in both the wording of the agreement itself, as well as their subsequent actions. The CBCCI Annex on Settlement Services, for example, contains wording to “ensure settlement and integration services are client-based, efficient and effective” (CIC 2004), a statement not contained in the 2003 Canada – Manitoba Immigration Agreement. With respect to settlement services, changes introduced in the wake of the CBCCI have ensured “BCSAP funds are allocated through a competitive

process, where the government issues Requests for Proposals and ranks the applications that are submitted by [Immigrant Serving Agencies] for their quality and economic efficiency” (Hiebert and Sherrell, forthcoming). Although funding is transferred from Ottawa to both British Columbia and Manitoba to design and deliver settlement and integration services, the government of British Columbia is alone in allocating only a portion of monies received to BC Settlement and Adaptation Programs (BCSAP).³⁵ At the time of the initial agreement in 1996, for example, the NDP Government transferred \$17 million – or approximately half of all monies received – to general revenues. This decision, which remains consistent with BC’s concerns about mitigating the cost to provide provincial services to newcomers, continues to the present time “under the assumption that newcomers use general services such as health and education” (Hiebert and Sherrell, forthcoming). In so doing, however, no restrictions are placed upon the monies (e.g. facilitating better access to mainstream programs for newcomers). While the Liberal Government in BC continues to transfer monies to general revenue the amount has remained consistent at \$17 million per year.³⁶ Significant increases in federal transfers since 2005, however, has meant the proportion of monies received that are being transferred to general revenues has declined from a high level of 50% to approximately 15% in 2009-2010.³⁷

By contrast, consideration of the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement (CMIA) suggests a greater concern with ensuring positive client outcomes and access to services, as

³⁵ At the time of the research the Ministry of Attorney General was responsible for the design and implementation of BCSAP programming; it currently rests with the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (MJRI).

³⁶ Although the province initially reported the funding had gone into general revenues a report by Hyndman and Friesen (System in Crisis) asserts \$12 million was directly awarded to Vancouver Community college for its fee-for-service English classes. One million dollars was set aside to aid immigrants who could not afford fee-based English language classes.

³⁷ From 2005-2006 to 2007-2008 funding transferred from the federal government for settlement and integration services has increased 86.7% in British Columbia and 69.5% in Manitoba (AMSSA 2007).

well as facilitating integration (CIC 2003a). The negotiation and signing of the CMIA took place within the context of concerted government efforts to increase the number of immigrants settling in Manitoba.

It is clear that Manitoba needs an increase in immigration to keep its population and workforce in balance (Premier's Economic Advisory Council - Manitoba Labour and Immigration, no date).

The dual emphasis on attracting and retaining newcomers to Manitoba is evident in both the inclusion of guiding principles in the CMIA, as well as broader government actions. Contained within Manitoba's Guiding Principles in the CMIA, for example, is the commitment "to provide a 'seamless', fully integrated and cost-effective continuum of settlement and integration services in order to continuously improve client service" (CIC 2003a). The Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program (MIIP) offers pre-arrival information, as well as centralized Initial Information and Orientation (e.g. Entry Program), and Language Assessment and Referral Programs (e.g. Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Program).³⁸ Through the centralization of the two initial programs all newcomers, including refugee claimants, have access to the same information and orientation services. Further, a collaborative relationship between the two programs ensures all newcomers participating in the Entry Program have their language skills assessed at some point during the Entry Program. Increasing the level of immigration is one of the seven key elements of Manitoba's Action Strategy for Economic Growth released in 2003.

Immigration to Manitoba has increased dramatically in recent years owing to the implementation of the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement. Manitoba's initial target of

³⁸ Responsibility for the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Programs remains with the Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

attracting 10,000 immigrants per year was achieved in 2006, up from approximately 4,600 newcomers in 2001 and 2002 (Government of Manitoba 2007). Buoyed by their success the province of Manitoba has established a secondary target of doubling immigration to 20,000 annually by 2016 (Government of Manitoba 2007).³⁹ Approximately 80% of these newcomers will settle in Winnipeg (SPCW 2006), though there are mechanisms in place to facilitate regionalization within the provincial nominee program. Further, concern with attracting and retaining newcomers to Manitoba evident in the CMIA is underscored by its broader commitment to facilitating more horizontal integration and interdepartmental coordination between ministries. The

Labour Market Strategy for Immigrants (LMSI) is an interdepartmental initiative that includes Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, and Manitoba Competitiveness, Training and Trade. The goal is to improve labour market outcomes for immigrants in Manitoba by enhancing interdepartmental coordination and identification of key areas for joint activity (Government of Manitoba 2007, 31).

The movement towards more inter-departmental initiatives evident in Manitoba from the early years of the decade is in stark contrast to BC, where such initiatives have only more recently been put into place. A 2009 study carried out in partnership with the Immigration Policy and Initiatives Branch (the branch responsible for immigration policy in BC at that time) recommended a need for more inter-ministerial cooperation to facilitate the employment outcomes of post-IRPA GARs (Sherrell 2009). In part the paucity of inter-departmental initiatives in BC may relate to the lack of stability of the immigration portfolio in that province. Unlike Manitoba, where responsibility for immigration has remained with Manitoba Labour and Immigration since 1999, primary responsibility for immigration in BC

³⁹ Overall immigration to Manitoba has increased significantly from about 4,500 in 2002 to 13,520 in 2009, largely owing to exponential growth in the provincial nominees program.

has rested with six ministries during the same period.⁴⁰ Each shift was followed by a period of realignment and readjustment as immigration policies and programs were evaluated and potentially revised according to the mandates and approaches of the new Ministry. The stability found in Manitoba affords the province a greater ability to establish initiatives and partnerships with other departments, and facilitates a more long-term approach to immigrant settlement and integration. The result of these varying agreements, Hiebert (2009) and Hiebert and Sherrell (forthcoming) have argued, is increased complexity in the ways in which immigration is dealt with across the country.

Provincial Context

Once settled in BC and Manitoba newcomers can access a variety of provincially provided services, including social assistance and rental assistance subsidies, and encounter different local contexts (e.g. rent controls and different average rents. Although provinces are responsible for many of the mainstream services accessed by newcomers and citizens alike, jurisdiction for these services is divided between multiple ministries and departments, each with their own eligibility criteria and mandates. This section outlines some of the commonly accessed programs and services, and provides an overview of the local assistance and housing context (see Table 2 for an overview of responsibilities for commonly accessed services and programs).

⁴⁰ Since coming to power in 2001 the Liberal government has transferred responsibility for immigration from the Ministry of Immigration to the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (2011).

	FEDERAL	MANITOBA	BC
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	Resettlement Assistance Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) Employment and Income Assistance (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada)	Employment and Income Assistance (Manitoba Family Services and Housing) ⁴¹	BC Employment and Assistance , (Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance)
RENTAL ASSISTANCE SUBSIDIES	-	Manitoba Shelter Benefit, (Manitoba Family Services and Housing) ⁴²	BC Rental Assistance Program, (Ministry of Forest and Range and Minister Responsible for Housing) ⁴³

Table 2: Responsibility for Commonly Accessed Services and Programs ⁴⁴

Financial Assistance

Both refugee claimants and those government-assisted refugees who are no longer receiving financial support through the Resettlement Assistance Program are eligible for social assistance in BC and Manitoba. In both provinces, Employment and Income Assistance is envisioned as a thing of last resort – a short-term measure to aid individuals or families while recipients find employment. Eligibility for assistance in both provinces is through a means test that compares household resources (financial) with the cost of basic necessities. In 2002 the Government of British Columbia introduced significant changes to the Employment and Assistance Act (EAA), including more rigorous selection guidelines and the implementation of a mandatory three-week job search process. Other amendments have stipulated that ‘employable’ welfare clients without children are limited to two years of support within any five year period; and clients must demonstrate they have been financially independent

⁴¹ Current responsibility rests with Manitoba Family Services and Consumer Affairs.

⁴² Now located within Manitoba Housing and Community Development.

⁴³ Government restructuring in 2008 transferred the responsibility for BC Housing to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. In 2010 Housing was separated from Social Development; Rich Coleman is now the Minister of Energy and Mines, and Minister Responsible for Housing .

⁴⁴ Ministries listed represent those in place at the time of the primary research in 2007. Where appropriate the Ministry currently responsible for the portfolio is listed in the footnotes.

(defined as having been employed for a minimum of 840 hours *or* having earned a gross income of at least \$7000 per year) for two consecutive years (MEIA 2007; Wallace et al. 2006; VRSA 2006).⁴⁵ Refugee claimants who had not yet received their work permits were exempt from the three week waiting period and job search requirements before being given an intake interview. In spite of the existence of the emergency needs assessment (ENA), clients must be aware of, and initiate, the process. The findings of Wallace et al. (2006) indicated clients are frequently not informed of the ENA process even when initial contact with clients indicates the three-week window will subject the individual/family to ‘undue hardship’.⁴⁶ Instead clients end up waiting the month (or so) before the appointment.

While Canada does not have a standard poverty line, the most frequently used measurement is the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). LICO measures the number of households spending at least 20% more on food, shelter and clothing than the average Canadian (i.e. those spending 70% or more of their income on the three basic necessities) (Statistics Canada 2007). Consideration of social assistance rates in comparison to pre- tax LICO measures reveals a significant gap: benefits do not account for more than 35% of the LICO threshold. In spite of minor increases in benefits in 2007, current assistance rates in British Columbia account for 26-35% of the Low Income Cut-Off across all categories sampled (see Table 3 for a

⁴⁵ The results of a 2006 report by Wallace, Klein and Reitsma-Street (Denied Assistance: Closing the front door on welfare in BC), perhaps not surprisingly, cast serious doubts on government assertions that welfare policy changes implemented in 2002 had assisted people in moving from ‘dependency’ to jobs and economic self-sufficiency. Following implementation of the changes, the reduced caseloads were touted as evidence of the success of the policy in moving people from welfare and into jobs (similar claims made in the US). While government attributes dramatic reduction in caseload to success in moving people into work, but rather, the report finds: vulnerable populations are systematically excluded from a system that is increasingly restrictive and complicated; reduced caseloads related more to lower numbers entering the system than it did people moving off welfare and into work; more restrictive and complicated eligibility and applications mean people often need help from advocates to navigate the system, yet access to advocates has been restricted (even more difficult for those with mental health issues and/or language barriers); and finally those not able to access assistance increasingly rely upon charities and shelters, or forced into homelessness (absolute and relative).

⁴⁶ Criteria for ENA are: “an urgent need for food, an immediate need for shelter, or emergency medical need” (Wallace et al. 2006, 45); if emergency need is demonstrated the application is expedited.

comparison of 2007 Social Assistance and Shelter Rates with 2006 pre-tax, LICO). Consideration of after-tax LICO rates does not improve the situation dramatically: social assistance rates in both provinces account for no more than 43% of after-tax LICO. If the LICO is used as an ad hoc poverty line, as is frequently the case in Canada, social assistance rates in both provinces are woefully inadequate. According to the National Council of Welfare (NCW 2006), the peak year for welfare incomes (which includes all government transfers) was 1992 in Manitoba and 1994 in British Columbia.⁴⁷ Cutbacks in benefits and more stringent eligibility guidelines have been introduced since then in both provinces.

Over time, the gap between shelter costs and assistance rates has continued to expand in both Manitoba and British Columbia. While recipients in both provinces have seen minor increases in recent budgets (2003 Winnipeg, 2007 BC), the continued failure of social assistance rates in BC and Manitoba to “reflect the current costs of basic necessities” (Janzen et al. 2004, 4) has resulted in the erosion of the purchasing power among social assistance recipients. The concomitant increase in rents across the two CMAs during this period has made it more difficult for social assistance recipients to procure adequate and affordable housing (Janzen et al. 2004); reforming shelter assistance rates, then, is a necessary component of addressing affordability issues. A 2008 report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities asserts that mitigating high shelter cost burdens among social assistance recipients necessitates raising the shelter allowance and indexing it to actual rent increases (e.g. CMHC’s Annual Rent Survey; FCM 2008). Otherwise, problems of severe shelter cost burden will continue among social assistance recipients.

⁴⁷ These annual incomes represent total welfare income (including all government transfers and benefits); they are represented in 2005 constant dollars (NCW 2006).

	Monthly Income Assistance Rates \$	Monthly Shelter Maximum Rates \$	Monthly Social Assistance Benefits \$	Annual Social Assistance Benefits \$	LICO ⁴⁸ (2006) Pre-tax	Gap (\$)	Annual Social Assistance as % of LICO (2006)
British Columbia⁴⁹							
Single, employable	235	375	610	7320	21202	-13882	34.5
Couple with 2 children (under 19 years)	401	700	1101	13213	39399	-26186	33.5
Couple with four children (under 19 years)	401	785	1186	14233	50397	-36164	28.2
Manitoba^{50,51}							
Single, employable	195	271 ⁵²	466	5592	21202	-15610	26.3
Couple with 2 children (under 19 years)	661	471	1132	13579	39399	-25820	34.5
Couple with four children (under 19 years)	959	513	1472	17669	50397	-32728	35.1

Table 3: Comparison of 2007 Social Assistance and Shelter Rates to 2006 Pre-Tax LICO (MEIA 2007, MFHS 2007, Statistics Canada 2007)

⁴⁸ LICO calculations are based upon household size without consideration for household composition (e.g. number of adults, children). To facilitate comparison with social assistance information the earlier categories have been employed here. LICO income cut-offs (1992 base).

⁴⁹ Under the BC Family Bonus program, families may receive \$123.50 per month for each child to age 19 years (MEIA 2007). As such, a family with two children under 19 years may receive an additional \$247.00 per month, while a family with four children may be entitled to receive an additional \$494.00 a month. Anecdotal evidence from immigrant and refugee serving organizations, however, suggests that not all families who are eligible to receive these benefits actually receive them. As such, rates shown do not include BCFB; rather rates reflect the minimum guaranteed income.

⁵⁰ Basic assistance rates in Winnipeg are differentiated according to whether or not recipients receive assistance for shelter costs. For sake of ease, all rates in the table have been calculated with the assumption that households are receiving shelter and basic assistance rates. Further, the basic assistance rates provided for households with children are age dependent: children 12-17 receive \$189.20, \$149.40 for 7-11 year olds and \$117.20 for 0-6 years (gov.mb.ca). All calculations assume the children in the household are between 7 and 11 years old.

⁵¹ Maximum shelter rates in Winnipeg are differentiated between Basic Rent and Rent with Heat, Lights and Water; all rates shown are for Rent with Heat, Lights and Water in the private market. For a more detailed chart see <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/eiafacts/rental.html>.

⁵² A single employable person who shares rent or rents a suite with a shared kitchen or bathroom will only receive \$236.00 per month for rent (gov.mb.ca)

While housing affordability is a product of the relation between income and housing costs, it is important to bear in mind that housing affordability problems can arise from both high housing costs in relation to household incomes, as well as low household incomes relative to the cost of housing (Chisholm 2003). As such, while housing costs may not be regarded as being particularly high for the general population, low incomes (e.g. resulting from low social assistance rates) may create housing affordability problems for some households.

A comparison of the monthly social assistance rates and average rents presents a stark portrait of the housing affordability challenges in Vancouver and Winnipeg: procuring housing in both cities necessitates allocating all of the shelter benefits and a large percentage of the basic assistance to housing (see Table 4 for a comparison of Social Assistance Benefits and Average Rents, 2007). After paying for housing, social assistance recipients in both cities are left with little, if any, money to pay for food, clothing, and basic needs, necessitating doubling up in crowded accommodations. In Vancouver, the annual average rents faced by single employable persons living in bachelor suites and a couple with two children living in a two bedroom unit, surpass annual social assistance benefits (including *both* shelter and income assistance).

	Monthly Income Assistance Rates \$	Monthly Shelter Maximum Rates \$	Monthly Social Assistance Benefits \$	Annual Social Assistance Benefits \$	Average Rent (Monthly) \$	Average Rent (Annual) \$	Gap btw Annual Assistance and Annual Rent (\$)
British Columbia							
Single, employable, living in Bachelor Suite	235	375	610	7320	735	8820	-1500
Couple with 2 children (under 19 years), living in 2 Bedroom Unit	401	700	1101	13213	1084	13008	205
Couple with four children (under 19 years), living in 3 Bedroom Unit	40	785	1186	14233	1234	14808	-575
Manitoba							
Single, employable, living in Bachelor Suite	195	271	466	5592	451	5412	180
Couple with 2 children (under 19 years), living in 2 Bedroom Unit	661	471	1132	13579	740	8880	4699
Couple with four children (under 19 years), living in 3 Bedroom Unit	959	513	1472	17669	874	10488	7181

Table 4: Comparison of Social Assistance Benefits and Average Rents (2007), (MEIA 2007, MFHS 2007, CMHC 2007a, 2007b)

Rental Assistance Subsidies

Recognition of the difficulties facing low-income households in affording market rents has prompted the Governments of British Columbia and Manitoba to introduce rental assistance programs in 2006. The programs, which are intended to ameliorate the housing cost burdens of low-income households, provide direct cash assistance to eligible renter households (see Table 5 for Rental Assistance Programs by Province).⁵³ Unlike the Manitoba Shelter Benefit (MSB), which is available to renter households spending beyond 25% of household income on housing, the affordability criteria for the BC Rental Assistance Program is set at 30% or more of household income (BC Housing 2006a, 2006b, 2007; MFHS 2006a, 2006b). Given higher housing costs in Vancouver, this imposes additional financial burdens on working poor households. To be eligible, households must be working and renting in the private rental market: those households receiving even part of their income from social assistance (with the exception of those receiving disability benefits), and/or living in subsidized housing are excluded. While government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants are eligible to receive benefits in both provinces, all persons receiving BC Rental Assistance Program benefits must have lived in British Columbia for the full twelve month period preceding the date of the application (BC Housing 2007, 2006a, 2006b; MFHS 2006a, 2006b). While government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants are eligible for both the MSB and the BCRAP according to citizenship requirements, those receiving Income Assistance, and/or living in subsidized accommodations are not eligible (MFHS 2006a, 2006b; BC Housing 2006a,

⁵³ Basic eligibility for both programs include the stipulations that recipients cannot be a homeowner (regardless of whether or not the family lives in the house), establishes maximum income limits, and requires there be dependent children living in the household (under 18 in Manitoba, under 19 in BC). The movement away from building non-market housing (i.e. fixed infrastructure) units towards flexible subsidies, which enable people to live where they choose, without stigma of landlords knowing they are receiving assistance, is consistent with broader movements in the US towards the housing voucher system.

		Rental Assistance?	Eligibility Criteria (for families)	Exemptions
Manitoba	Manitoba Shelter Benefit (2006)	Monthly benefit of up to \$200 to help families, seniors and persons with disabilities living in private rental market <i>or</i> room and board accommodations .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must spend more than 25% of household income on rent - be a renter - have one or more dependents under 18 and receive the Canada Child Benefit - be a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant or refugee claimant - have a maximum annual household income of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$19,380 for two-person households (one parent/guardian with one child) - \$20,940 for three-person family - \$21,780 for four or more person family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cannot be living in Manitoba Housing Authority or receiving a subsidy for shelter through other housing programs - cannot be receiving Manitoba Employment and Income Assistance (except those in the disability case category)
British Columbia	BC Rental Assistance Program (2006)	Direct cash assistance (monthly); Household size, income, rent and where applicant lives in the province (e.g. GVRD or outside GVRD) are all taken into consideration in determining assistance rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one or more dependent children under age of 19 - annual income below \$28,000 (increased from \$20,000 in the 2007 Budget) - part of income must come from employment - have filed an annual income tax return - must spend more than 30 % of household income for rent - must have been a resident of BC for the full 12 months immediately preceding the date of application - all members of household must be either a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant or refugee claimant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cannot live in subsidized housing, or live in co-operative housing and are a shareholder - cannot receive income assistance under the BC Employment and Assistance Act (excluding the Medical Services Plan) - cannot own a home that you do not live in - do not meet citizenship requirements, or came to Canada under a private sponsorship agreement that is still in force (individual or their family).

Table 5: Rental Assistance by Province

2006b). As such, the measures are designed to assist only the working poor leaving those dependent on inadequate social assistance benefits with no additional means of financial support.

Rent Control

Rent increase guidelines, or the percentage a landlord can increase rents without applying for approval from the Residential Tenancies Branch (RTB), are established annually in both Manitoba and British Columbia (RTO 2006; RTB 2005). While the guidelines establish

maximum rent increases, landlords may apply for larger increases (either as a percentage or a dollar amount) if they can demonstrate that the standard increase is insufficient to cover increased expenses owing to significant, and unforeseen, renovations and/or repairs, or a significant increase in operating costs.⁵⁴ Landlords, however, can increase rents when tenants move out without any consideration for these guidelines (CMHC 2007a). Unlike Manitoba, where the guidelines for approved rent increases have been 1.5 to 2.5 per cent annually, rent increases in British Columbia are tied to inflation: landlords can increase rents by an amount equal to inflation plus two percent (RTB 2007a, 2007b; RTO 2006).⁵⁵ In 2006 the rent increase guideline in BC was 4% compared to 2.5% in Manitoba.

Average rents in Winnipeg rose 3.4% from October 2006 compared to a year prior, well above the 2.5% rental control guideline (CMHC 2006c); a factor, the report suggests, which may result (in part) from the tendency for landlords in older buildings to have applied for rent increases above the guideline to cover costs associated with higher utility costs (CMHC 2006c). Overall, the average rent increase in Winnipeg was driven primarily by a particular segment of the market: bachelor and three bedroom units, which saw increases of 4.6% and 5.3% respectively (CMHC 2007b). These are the units most frequently in demand from participants of this study.

⁵⁴ See RTB 2005, Section 13.1 for a more detailed discussion of the Rent increase process.

⁵⁵ It is important to note, however, some units in Manitoba are exempt from rent increase guidelines. In an effort to increase the construction of rental housing, new buildings in which the first occupancy permit was issued, or the first tenant moved in, after April 9, 2001 are exempt for a period of 15 years, while those issued, or occupied, after March 7, 2005 are exempt from rent control guidelines for a period of 20 years (Residential Tenancies Branch 2005, Section 13.10).

Housing

In October 2007 the vacancy rate for purpose built apartments in Winnipeg was 1.5%, while the corresponding figure for Vancouver was 0.7%, much tighter than the Canadian average of 2.6% (CMHC 2007a, 2007b). A 2008 report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities asserts that while 3.0% is considered a healthy vacancy rate, “all major centres west of Ontario are below two per cent” (FCM 2008, 15). A dearth of new construction in the public and private rental markets, particularly at the lower market rents, have contributed to declining vacancy rates. The failure of governments to stimulate construction of new rental units (e.g. through incentives, density bonuses) and withdrawal from funding new social housing, is aggravated by ongoing declines in the existing rental stock, particularly through conversions or demolition. Further, vacancy rates are frequently highest at the higher end of the housing market.

Overall, the Vancouver CMA is characterized by higher rents and lower vacancy rates than in Winnipeg across all bedroom types (see Table 6 for a more detailed comparison of Average Rents and Vacancy Rates by Zone and Bedroom Type). For renters, the challenges are influenced by supply and demand-side factors. In both cities the rental stock continues to decline owing to the paucity of new construction – particularly at lower-market rents – as well as conversion and demolition of existing stock (CMHC 2007a, 2007b). Although the concurrent rise in demand may be attributed to a number of factors, including increased homeownership costs and skilled labour shortages in the construction market for new condos in Vancouver, and young demographic profile and low resale rates in Winnipeg, both cities continue to experience in-migration. In both provinces, the forecast is for continued low vacancy rates and high demand (CMHC 2007b). While there is insufficient supply in both

WINNIPEG and VANCOUVER CMAs										
Zone	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Average Rent (\$)	Vacancy Rates (%)	Average Rent (\$)	Vacancy Rates (%)	Average Rent (\$)	Vacancy Rates (%)	Average Rent (\$)	Vacancy Rates (%)	Average Rent (\$)	Vacancy Rates (%)
<i>Core Area</i> ⁵⁶	446	1.8	546	1.5	725	1.8	876	1.5	591	1.6
<i>Suburban Areas</i> ⁵⁷	464	1.8	601	1.3	746	1.4	874	1.6	668	1.4
Winnipeg CMA	451	1.8	578	1.4	740	1.5	874	1.6	638	1.5
<i>City of Vancouver</i>	760	0.4	902	0.4	1283	0.7	1457	0.5	912	0.5
<i>Burnaby</i>	659	0.1	778	0.4	974	0.6	1119	2.3	836	0.5
<i>New Westminster</i>	590	1.2	709	1.4	893	1.0	1131	0.0	751	1.3
<i>Richmond</i>	647	2.1	862	0.8	1059	0.5	1134	0.0	927	0.7
<i>Surrey</i>	539	1.1	661	2.3	820	2.6	922	2.6	747	2.4
<i>Tri-Cities</i>	593	2.1	703	1.6	879	2.2	1061	0.6	779	1.8
Vancouver CMA ⁵⁸	735	0.5	846	0.7	1084	1.0	1234	1.2	898	0.7

Table 6: Average Rents and Vacancy Rates by Zone and Bedroom Type (CMHC 2007a, 2007b)

⁵⁶ The Core Area includes: Fort Rouge, Centennial, Midland and Lord Selkirk.

⁵⁷ The Suburban Areas include: St. James, West Kildonan, East Kildonan, Transcona, St. Boniface, St. Vital, Fort Garry, and Assiniboine Park.

⁵⁸ Only those cities with respondents living in them have been included in the breakdown.

Winnipeg and Vancouver, the situation is worse in Vancouver. Higher rents, lower vacancy rates and rent increases above that allowed by provincial guidelines aggravate the challenges faced by renters in Vancouver.

The concurrent tightening of the housing market in both cities, which is marked by declining vacancy rates, rising average rental rates, and the depletion of the supply of suitable and affordable housing particularly within the inner city where many newcomers settle, has increased the risk of homelessness among newcomers and other vulnerable populations (SPCW 2006).

Overall Canada has witnessed an increase in housing stock, but much of it has occurred at the higher cost end of the housing market.

One of the greatest impacts on the availability of affordable rental choices will be Canada's overall vacancy rates ... These tight market conditions have put significant pressure on the market, pushing up rents. Limited supply has also resulted in lack of options for those seeking affordable units. It is important to note, however, that supply does vary by type of unit ... Overall, however, the decline in vacancy rates has resulted from increased demand for rental housing (Bruce and Carter 2003, 41).

In the absence of incentives to make the construction of low-cost rental units more viable Bruce and Carter (2003, 42) argue the "gap between market rents ... and the rents that low-income households can afford are expected to continue to widen". The forecast is for continued rent increases and declining rental stocks in both cities (CMHC 2007a, 2007b). In spite of extremely low vacancy rates in both Vancouver and Winnipeg, housing is not included within existing settlement and adaptation programs for newcomers (e.g. designated

housing search workers) in either province.⁵⁹ Rather, any available assistance (e.g. BC Rental Assistance Program, Manitoba Shelter Benefit) are provided through other ministries (Housing and Social Development in BC, Manitoba Family Services and Housing in Manitoba). While newcomers may access basic settlement and adaptation programs, they may lack both knowledge of these rental subsidies, as well as ability to apply for them (e.g. applications are only available in English).

Refugee Profiles

Unlike government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees, whose claims for protection are processed overseas and who are admitted based upon established targets, many refugee claimants arrive of their own accord. Although some make claims immediately upon arrival others may enter Canada through other means (e.g. as a tourist, temporary work permit, ‘through the border posts’) and make their claims at a much later time. To date, there is no reliable and publicly available dataset providing information on the total number of refugee claimants in Canada. Two ways in which we can obtain information on the scale of this group are through consideration of the number of claims referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), or through analysis of CIC’s Refugees Landed in Canada (Asylum) data.⁶⁰ Asylum claims referred to the IRB represent those persons deemed eligible by CIC or CBSA to make a claim for refugee status in Canada. As such, this is a rough indication of the number of individuals initiating a refugee claim in a given year. By contrast, Refugees Landed in Canada (Asylum) represents the number of individuals who have been designated

⁵⁹ Although GARs are eligible for assistance from housing search workers, funding for these positions is obtained through Federal RAP funding.

⁶⁰ While access to the former data is dependent upon individual requests (e.g. Freedom of Information and personal requests), the latter is included in CIC’s annual publication ‘Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview’.

as ‘protected persons’ status (i.e., have received asylum) and obtained permanent resident status. Those who have been recognized as convention refugees, but have not yet obtained permanent resident status are not included in these numbers.⁶¹

Although British Columbia and Manitoba both have well-established refugee receiving programs, there are considerable differences in the number of refugees and category of arrival, which may influence the ability – and willingness – of these provinces to provide services. Unlike Manitoba, which receives a similar proportion of government assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees, the majority of refugees arriving in BC do so through the government-assisted and Landed in Canada streams (see Table 7 for estimates of Refugees in Manitoba and British Columbia by Category of Entry). Far fewer privately sponsored refugees settle in BC (e.g. 10-15%) than do in Manitoba (e.g. 46-52%). By contrast, 36-47% of refugee newcomers in BC arrive as Landed in Canada refugees, compared to 5-8% in Manitoba. The higher preponderance of privately sponsored refugees settling in Manitoba (as compared to refugee claimants) is advantageous as costs for financial assistance and other basic needs are primarily borne by sponsors (e.g. the Mennonite Central Committee, group of five). By contrast, the costs associated with providing support for refugee claimants in BC are borne by the province, at least until the newcomers obtain employment.

⁶¹ Wayland (2006) argues the processing fees needed to accompany the application for permanent residence are a significant barrier to refugee claimants. Inability to pay the fees, which can be as high as \$1400 for a family of four, can delay both integration and family reunification. Although those who are unable to afford the processing fees are still protected persons, and as such cannot be removed from Canada, they continue to be issued temporary documents (e.g. SIN numbers, temporary work permits). The lack of permanent status delays integration as potential employers may be less willing to offer employment and/or invest in people with temporary documents. Further, protected persons cannot sponsor family members until permanent resident status is obtained, thus delaying family reunification.

Between 2004-2007 approximately 1,200 refugee claimant cases per year were referred to the IRB in Vancouver, compared with approximately 80 per year in Winnipeg (see Table 8 for Asylum Cases Referred to the IRB, 2004-2006). In Vancouver, the top three countries of origin, which combined account for over forty percent of claims referred, have been consistent across the time period: China, Mexico and Honduras. Further, the presence of well-established Chinese and Spanish-speaking ethno-cultural communities in Vancouver, may provide some newcomers with opportunities for information and support (both financial and short-term help). In Winnipeg the top three countries account for over 34% of claims referred in each of the three years. Unlike Vancouver, however, there has been no consistency in the source countries for claimants in Winnipeg. The 2004 implementation of the Safe Third Country Act served to reduce the number of individuals making refugee claims in Canada. Although the number of cases referred to the IRB has declined from 2004-2006 in both Manitoba and British Columbia, the impact is much more evident in Manitoba with a decline of 50% over the three year period. While it is not possible to determine the cause of this decline it may relate to the inability of potential claimants to gain admission to Canada, particularly in the absence of a CIC office at the Winnipeg airport.

Approximately 820 GARs arrived in British Columbia each year between 2004 and 2006, compared to 520 GARs in Winnipeg. Throughout this period Afghanistan has remained one of the top two countries of origin in both Winnipeg and Vancouver (see Table 9 for a more detailed overview of GAR landings in Manitoba and British Columbia).

Refugee Landings in Manitoba and British Columbia by Category of Entry (arrivals and as a percentage of refugee landings)						
	2004		2005		2006	
	BC	Manitoba	BC	Manitoba	BC	Manitoba
Government Assisted Refugees	880 (44%)	548 (45%)	810 (43%)	492 (46%)	798 (50%)	522 (43%)
Privately Sponsored Refugees	204 (10%)	608 (50%)	178 (10%)	493 (46%)	223 (14%)	633 (52%)
Refugees Landed in Canada (Asylum)	928 (46%)	63 (5%)	879 (47%)	90 (8%)	577 (36%)	61 (5%)
Total Refugees Landed	2012	1219	1867	1075	1598	1216

Table 7: Refugee Landings in Manitoba and BC by Category of Entry (CIC 205, 2006, 2007)

	2004		2005		2006	
	Vancouver	Winnipeg	Vancouver	Winnipeg	Vancouver	Winnipeg
Number of Claims Referred	1320	103	1068	87	1199	51
Top 3 Countries (by country of first persecution)	China (285) Mexico (179) Honduras (155)	Somalia (17) Israel (9) USA (9)	Mexico (186) China (145) Honduras (123)	USA (12) South Korea (8) Sri Lanka (7) Mexico (7)	Mexico (254) China (157) Honduras (82)	Afghanistan (7) Nicaragua (6) Ethiopia (5)
% Captured by Top 3 Countries	46.9	34.0	42.5	39.1	41.1	35.3

Table 8: Asylum Cases Referred to IRB (IRB 2007)

Government Assisted Refugee Landings in Manitoba and British Columbia (#) and Top Three Countries of Birth						
	2004		2005		2006	
	BC	Manitoba	BC	Manitoba	BC	Manitoba
Total Arrivals	880	546	810	486	798	521
Top 3 Countries of Origin	Afghanistan Iran Indonesia	Sudan Afghanistan Congo, DR	Afghanistan Somalia Sudan	Sudan Afghanistan Congo, DR	Afghanistan Thailand Iran	Afghanistan Colombia Ethiopia
% Captured by Top 3 Countries	40.4%	48.2%	42.2%	44%	46.8%	38.4%

Table 9: Government Assisted Refugee Landings by Arrival and Top Three Countries of Birth

Although the absolute number of GARs settling in Winnipeg has remained relatively consistent, their proportion as a percentage of Manitoba's total immigration has declined owing to Manitoba's aggressive efforts to attract and retain immigrants (Government of Manitoba 2007).

Conclusion

Agreements signed in the 1990s, and renewed in five year intervals, afforded Manitoba and British Columbia an increased role in immigration. At a basic level the agreements contain many similarities, delimiting federal-provincial roles and responsibilities (e.g. expanded ability to select immigrants through the provincial nominee program) and transferring funding to the provinces to provide settlement and integration services. Closer examination, however, provides insight into the varying contexts within British Columbia and Manitoba. In Manitoba, provincial efforts to increase immigration in order to meet demographic and labour force needs have contributed to a policy and service environment which seeks to facilitate the successful integration of newcomers. In part, the stability of the immigration portfolio has afforded greater possibilities to establish inter-departmental initiatives and relationships to promote integration on a broader level. By contrast, the immigration portfolio in BC has rested with five different ministries in the same period. In British Columbia the initial CBCCI was negotiated and signed during a period marked by rising governmental concerns about the economic costs associated with immigration to British Columbia. Consequently, the province elected to transfer \$17 million per year of the monies received from CIC to fund settlement and integration programming to its general revenues in order to offset costs to provincially provided services resulting from increased immigration to the

province. While the amount has remained constant since its introduction, significant funding investments by the Federal Government have meant the proportion of monies transferred to General Revenues has declined from 50% in 1999 to approximately 15% in 2009-2010. As such, the funding envelope available for the design and implementation of BCSAP programs and services has increased in both absolute and relative terms. It is these differences in the agreements that enhance the geographic variability of federal-provincial relationships, and by extension the context into which newcomers settle.

Newcomers in BC and Manitoba have access to similar services (e.g. social assistance, rental subsidies) and encounter similarities in the housing and financial assistance. In both provinces provincial social assistance levels are inadequate to meet average shelter costs. Although some steps have been taken to ameliorate the rental cost burden (e.g. rental assistance programs, rent control), neither province has explicitly included housing in their settlement service portfolio. As such, newcomers continue to settle in cities marked by increasing rents, extremely low vacancy rates, and a declining stock of low-cost housing.

Consideration of the profile of refugees arriving in Manitoba and British Columbia reveal further differences. Although both cities have well-established refugee receiving systems, the arrival of greater numbers of privately sponsored refugees in Manitoba offsets costs associated with demand for settlement services and provision of assistance (both of which are primarily provided by the sponsors). By contrast, in British Columbia refugee claimants represent a much higher proportion of the refugee arrivals, both in absolute numbers and percentage. The consequence in British Columbia is a much higher demand for services and assistance.

The chapter began with the statement that immigration is a jurisdictionally complex issue in Canada. Further analysis of the agreements signed by Manitoba and British Columbia, the provincial environment (e.g. social assistance, rental assistance), and profile of refugees arriving in each city has revealed broader complexity. While we may anticipate newcomers will face barriers to housing in both Winnipeg and Vancouver, the challenges may be more severe in Vancouver.

Chapter 5: How You Get ‘Here’ Matters: Intersections of Legal Status and Provision of Assistance

The following chapter details the varying process and entitlements of those who come to Canada as refugees, and in so doing presents a portrait of a service landscape differentiated by both legal status (i.e. GARs or refugee claimants) and city of settlement. Through consideration of the varying service landscapes, this chapter examines the ways in which services and information provided to refugees intersect with the influence of place to shape initial settlement outcomes.

The Broad Picture: Overseas vs. Inland Protection and Availability of Assistance

Canada is among 145 signatories to the UN Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugees, while often considered a homogenous group, can be differentiated according to the way in which they come to Canada. Canada differentiates between overseas (government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees) and inland refugee determination (refugee claimants). Government assisted refugees are those individuals who have been afforded convention refugee status by the UNHCR overseas and arrive in Canada with the legal right of permanent residence. Unlike GARs, who have been ‘invited’ to come to Canada, refugee claimants arrive on Canadian soil of their own accord (i.e. ‘uninvited’) and claim refugee status. Under the Convention on Refugees Canada has a responsibility for non-refoulement of those found in need of protection.⁶² Upon arrival, individuals seeking

⁶²The principle of non-refoulement prohibits the expulsion and forced return of persons seeking refuge to any country where they have reason to fear persecution. The principle – which is enshrined in International Refugee Law – refers to any country in which the person has reason to fear persecution, not just the country of origin (UNHCR 1977). It is important to note, however, that international law is routinely ignored by signatory countries; unfortunately there is no effective means to penalize countries when this occurs.

refugee status inland, however, must navigate a complex legal process to be recognized as Convention refugees or other Protected Persons, and receive the right of permanent residence.⁶³ The need to prove not only their identity, a necessity that is made more difficult owing to the lack of ‘proper’ documentation, as well as the validity of their claim can be an onerous and lengthy process (Dauvergne 2005). The legal process of recognition (i.e. of proving they are ‘worthy’ to remain in Canada) can often take years.

The ways in which refugees arrive in Canada (i.e. through overseas or inland determination) have significant impacts on the information and services available to them. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Canada, settlement and integration costs are underwritten by the Federal government. In the case of both Manitoba and British Columbia, however, the provinces have signed agreements with the Federal Government that transfer federal funds to the provinces; the provinces are then responsible for overseeing the provision of settlement and integration services to newly arrived immigrants and refugees. One notable exception exists – the Federal Government administers the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). Beyond RAP, GARs are expected to use the services offered to all immigrants, such as language training or general orientation services. While services for GARs and claimants are funded directly by the Federal Government, responsibility for services other than RAP remains with the provinces. Under this arrangement the provinces contract non-governmental organizations and educational institutions to deliver direct services to newcomers. These non-profit immigrant and refugee-serving agencies provide a range of programs for newcomers, including English language

⁶³ The refugee claim process may result in recognition of an individual as either a Convention Refugee (i.e. those meeting the exact definition of a refugee as defined by the 1951 Convention), or a Protected Person (i.e. a person for whom removal to their country of nationality would subjected to possibility of torture, risk of life, or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment). In some cases, individuals who are unable to return to their countries of origin may be allowed to remain in Canada under Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds.

classes, settlement services and employment programs. Although the overall framework in which services are funded in British Columbia and Manitoba is similar, the ways in which services are provided differ significantly across the two provinces, and at a smaller scale the two cities. This section examines which agencies provided services, and considers how services have differed across cities and legal statuses.

Following their arrival in Canada, GARs have access to the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Contracted service providing organizations receive funding from CIC to deliver RAP services to newly arrived GARs during the first four to six weeks after arrival (CIC 2003b). Responsibilities include the provision of reception services at the airport, temporary accommodation, basic orientation to Canada, and initial settlement services. Upon arrival in Canada GARs are met at the airport by representatives from immigrant and refugee serving organizations and taken to temporary accommodations where they spend their first 1-2 weeks.⁶⁴ In some cases, however, respondents reported having spent much longer periods. Large families in Winnipeg, for example, spoke of having spend upwards of 2-3 months in temporary accommodations.

While in temporary accommodations, newly arrived GARs receive thirty hours of information and orientation services in their first language, as well as assistance in accessing primary medical care, completing necessary applications (e.g. to receive Social Insurance and Permanent Residence cards), and ensuring essential needs are met. GARs have access to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFH) until such time as provincial health insurance is available so as to ensure timely access to health care during the period between initial arrival

⁶⁴ The time limitation imposed on temporary accommodations by CIC necessitates that housing counsellors obtain permanent accommodation for refugees as soon as possible after their arrival. Failure to do would lead CIC to claw back part of the shelter portion of RAP, further reducing newly arrived GARs' means of obtaining permanent accommodation.

and eligibility for health insurance.⁶⁵ During this period counsellors assist newly arrived GARs to find permanent accommodations and to provide referrals for other community services and programs (e.g. the Bridge Clinic in Vancouver, Entry Program), as necessary (Dolin 2004, CIC 2003b). Following initial orientation during the first four to six weeks, GARs are eligible to access provincially funded settlement services provided by immigrant and refugee serving organizations in the community (ISSofBC 2010, 2007).

In addition, GARs receive financial assistance for a period of one year or until they become self sufficient, whichever comes first (ISSofBC 2010, 2007). Recipients are provided with a one-time start-up cheque to cover costs associated with basic household needs (e.g. bedding, and basic furniture), staples (e.g. basic food and cleaning supplies), and clothing (CIC 2006; Dolin 2004).⁶⁶ In some cases the actual goods may be provided in lieu of money. Further, the initial payment includes one month's living allowance to cover costs associated with food, transportation, rent and incidentals, as well as a repayable loan to cover telephone and/or utility deposits and damage deposit (CIC 2006; Dolin 2004). Special allowances may be given to families depending on household composition, including school start-up allowances for children attending kindergarten to Grade 13, maternity allowances for pregnant women, newborn allowances to cover costs associated with furniture and clothing, and an allowance

⁶⁵ As such, refugees have access to basic and emergency medical care, and emergency health and dental care, including contraception, prenatal and obstetrical care, approved prescription medications, and the cost of an immigration medical examination if the refugee is unable to pay (CIC 2003b). Those receiving RAP assistance may, with proper pre-authorization, be eligible for eye glasses; prosthetics; wheel chairs, second and subsequent psychiatric consultations; and routine medical exams.

⁶⁶ In the publication *Faces of Refugees* (2007), the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC 2007) provides an estimate of the resettlement packages for GARs by size of household. A family of five headed by a single parent would be provided with a start-up allowance of \$4,505, which would include funds for clothing, school start up, first months' costs for food and transportation, and a repayable damage deposit loan (\$300) and telephone installation. The monthly support allowance for this family would be \$988, of which \$660 is budgeted for rent. The household would also receive an allowance for a one-zone bus pass (\$69). A single person, by contrast, would receive a total basic household needs and furniture package of \$900. Their monthly allowance would be \$635, including \$400 for shelter.

for children under six years of age (CIC 2006). Monthly financial assistance for food and shelter provided by CIC during the first year under the RAP program is guided by provincial social assistance rates, and varies according to the size of the family (Dolin 2004).

In Canada, inland claims for protection can be made in-person either at a Citizenship and Immigration Canada office or at a port of entry (airport, port, or border) (IRB 2007; CIC 2002a).⁶⁷ Those deemed eligible to submit a refugee claim are referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) for a hearing.⁶⁸ Once a positive decision on the eligibility interview has been received, the claimant has 28 days to submit a Personal Information Form (PIF).⁶⁹ Following completion of all medical exams and the submission of the PIF to the IRB, refugee claimants can apply for a work permit allowing them to work during the time in which the claim is being decided.⁷⁰ Medical results must be received by CIC in Ottawa prior to submitting an application for a work permit (a process that may take up to six weeks) or the application will be refused and as such must be resubmitted causing further delays (VRSA 2006). Although refugee claimants are eligible to receive a work permit, the approval process can take as long as five months (VRSA 2006). During this time claimants are eligible to receive provincial social assistance. Throughout the claim process refugee claimants have

⁶⁷ Because there is no CIC office *per se* at the Winnipeg airport claims must be made at CIC offices in the city.

⁶⁸ Claims involving persons who have already been conferred protection in another country, persons who have arrived in Canada (either directly or indirectly) through a country other than their country of nationality or former habitual residence, and persons who have committed serious crimes or who are security risks may not be referred to the IRB for consideration (See CIC 2002a for a complete list). Those claims for which a decision on eligibility has not been made within three working days are automatically sent to the IRB for consideration. This change, which was introduced by IRPA (2002), is intended to speed the processing times on refugee claims (IRB 2006; Jimenez and Crepeau 2002). Claims may be sent either for a fast-track hearing, for “claims that appear to be simple because they may be decided on the basis of one or two issues” (IRB 2006, online), or for a full hearing, which are utilized for more complex claims involving more than two issues (IRB 2006).

⁶⁹ All processes are non-adversarial (i.e., no one argues against the claim).

⁷⁰ In BC, cutbacks in Legal Aid funding mean that refugee claimants may only be eligible for limited legal assistance (i.e. 8 to 10 hours). While this may be sufficient to prepare the Personal Information Form (PIF), it may not be sufficient to have a lawyer represent the claimant at the Refugee Claim Hearing or, if necessary, assist in preparing subsequent applications (e.g. Judicial Review or Pre-Removal Risk Assessment).

temporary status in Canada, not knowing if they will be able to stay and build a new life in Canada or be required to return to their country of origin. For many respondents the inland refugee claim process was characterized as one of uncertainty and limbo.

Refugee claimants is next to hopeless persons. A person who ... is waiting for an admission to be a person who lives on this land. You are not a guest, you are not a citizen, you are not a landed immigrant, you are not a tourist. You are basically a person that is hoping to stay but you don't know if you can. Everything follows from this ... prevailing uncertainty. Landed immigrants know they have all the rights except voting and holding office. They know they are staying here and have the freedom to do whatever they want. Refugee claimants are still waiting for admission (Key Informant, Vancouver).

This uncertainty has implications for service provision as refugee claimants are not eligible to access many settlement and integration programs. Claimants who are granted Convention Refugee status following a positive decision on their refugee claims receive the right to apply for permanent resident status (CIC 2006; VRSA 2006; CIC 2002a).

The initial settlement period for those seeking inland determination differs significantly from that of GARs as there is no federal or provincial program similar to RAP to aid newly arrived refugee claimants. Rather they are left to navigate the initial settlement period and identify settlement services on their own. While the claim is in process, refugee claimants have access to a number of rights and are eligible to access many Canadian services, including the right to work, access to education for minor children and adults (post-secondary). Like GARS, claimants may be eligible for basic and emergency medical and emergency dental through IFH until such time as provincial coverage takes effect. With the exception of social assistance, however, refugee claimants receive no financial assistance or funding to provide clothing, furniture or other basic necessities. A large discrepancy exists between federal and provincial funding and services for GARs and refugee claimants. While an integrated system

of financial, settlement and integration services exist to support GARS in the initial settlement period, refugee claimants encounter a fragmented and under-funded system in which they receive little or no information or services to help them integrate and navigate the complex refugee claim process.

Claimants by definition of their status in this country, they do not have access to any of the basic [settlement] services until their claims are heard and determined ... This is a very, very long waiting process. Until one gets a positive determination there is no access. However, for GARs the settlement, the service provider organizations are available to them for as long as they need them (Key Informant, Vancouver).

Mapping the Service Landscape: Winnipeg's 'One Stop Shop' vs. Vancouver's Specialization of Services

At the local level the provision of services for refugees varies significantly. While multiple immigrant and refugee serving organizations exist in each city, services for refugees in Winnipeg have been centralized into one agency, the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council.⁷¹ By contrast, services for refugees in Vancouver are differentiated according to legal status. The Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC) provides services for immigrants, as well as Government Assisted Refugees. Services for refugee claimants, while scarce, are provided by three agencies – Settlement Orientation Services, Inland Refugee Services of BC, and the Mennonite Central Committee – under the auspices of the Vancouver Refugee Services Alliance (VRSA). The following section briefly outlines the differing services provided by Winnipeg's 'One Stop Shop' and Vancouver's 'Specialization of Services.'

⁷¹All refugees, including government – and privately-sponsored refugees, as well as refugee claimants – may access services from MIIC.

The smaller number of refugees settling in Winnipeg – approximately 550 GARs and fewer than 100 claimants compared to 805 GARs and over 1100 claimants in Vancouver – enables the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council’s (MIIC) Welcome Place to extend full settlement services to all refugee claimants seeking services from their organization.⁷² Welcome Place is unique in Canada in that it is a ‘one-stop shop’ that provides orientation services to all refugee groups, including refugee claimants, government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees.⁷³ Although the agency is primarily funded to provide orientation services and temporary accommodations to all GARs settling in Manitoba, the organization has made the decision to extend the same services to the approximately 120 claimants accessing their services each year.⁷⁴ To ensure that temporary accommodation exist for both GARs and claimants Welcome Place reserves 22 of their 27 units for GARs; the remainder are rented to refugee claimants at social assistance rates. In addition to being eligible to stay in temporary accommodations for the first 20 days, Welcome Place provides those refugee claimants who have received a positive decision on their eligibility interviews with immediate financial assistance to pay for rent and other daily expenses. Welcome Place later invoices and is reimbursed by the Ministry responsible for provincial social assistance. Housing counsellors aid GARs and claimants in securing permanent accommodations – contacting potential landlords and advocating on their behalf when necessary. While GARs receive household goods and basic furniture from the Federal Government the organization

⁷² Statistics for refugee claimants are based upon the number of claims referred to the IRB (i.e. the claimant has been deemed eligible to make an inland claim) in each city between 2004 and 2006.

⁷³ Under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program sponsorship agreement holders (SAH), groups of five, or community organizations commit to providing financial and settlement assistance to refugees for one year, or until they become self sufficient.

⁷⁴ It remains unclear as to whether or not claimants in Winnipeg may access Life Skills Trainers. Although key informants at the agency indicated that claimants can access all services, interviews with claimants themselves suggest this is not always the case. Many expressed a desire for assistance with the day to day needs covered under the life skills program.

relies heavily on donations of furniture and household goods to furnish the permanent accommodations of refugee claimants.

In Winnipeg, the referral system and assessment program for government-funded English language classes is centralized. All immigrants and refugees must attend a month-long Entry Program which provides basic orientation to Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg, as well as the health, legal and education systems. Clients undergo an individual English language test at some point during the month-long course. Once the assessment is completed, clients are referred to government-funded English language classes. While GARs can attend classes on a full-time basis, funding limitations restrict claimants to part-time attendance.⁷⁵ Key informants suggest the waitlists vary according to the Level of English language instruction, with those in lower levels (e.g. Levels 1-3) able to enrol immediately, while those in higher levels (e.g. Levels 4-6) have to wait a month or longer. Refugee claimants may wait longer owing to the priority to accommodate GARs. Welcome Place offers free conversational English classes that are not structured by levels twice a week for those clients living either in temporary accommodations or for those who are on the waitlist for English language classes.

A pilot program being undertaken at the time of the research provides claimants with access to paralegals to aid in the completion of the PIF, as well as guide the claimant through the

⁷⁵ Although refugee claimants have the same access to English language classes as do GARs, one respondent noted that “a surprising number of our clients do already speak English. The reality is that poor people or the underclasses just don’t get out. And the ones that we see – short of the ones that may be coming from south or Central America ... that can travel by land – but people who have to cross an ocean have money because otherwise they don’t get here, and by extension a lot of them are well educated, speak English”.

overall claim process. In this way claimants simultaneously receive services to facilitate settlement and negotiate the refugee claim process.⁷⁶

Unlike Winnipeg, where one agency works with all refugee groups, services for refugees in Vancouver are differentiated by the way they came to Canada – either as ‘invited’ GARs or ‘uninvited’ refugee claimants. For the most part services for GARs in Vancouver are similar to those in Winnipeg. The Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS_{of}BC) is contracted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide RAP services for all GARs settling in Vancouver. All GARs destined to BC stay at Welcome House, the 12 apartment temporary accommodations adjacent to ISS_{of}BC, for the first two weeks after arrival.⁷⁷ If space allows, refugee claimants can be housed at Welcome House and are charged fees for accommodation equivalent to social assistance rates. RAP counsellors work with GARs intensively during the first two weeks and throughout the first year. To facilitate settlement during the first year and beyond GARs may access ISS_{of}BC's multilingual Community Settlement Counsellors (CSC) located closer to their permanent accommodations. Full-time RAP-funded housing search counsellors assist newly arrived GARs staying in temporary accommodations in procuring permanent accommodations.

The provision of services to claimants in Vancouver differs significantly from that in Winnipeg. Unlike the ‘one stop shop’ greeting refugees in Winnipeg, three agencies work together under the umbrella of the Vancouver Refugee Services Alliance (VRSA) to provide

⁷⁶ Access to paralegals at Welcome Place was being done under a pilot program funded by the Ministry of Justice. Although the agency had previously secured 3 year funding plus a one year extension to hire the paralegals they have experienced significant difficulties in securing ongoing funding. One key informant expressed considerable frustration with the fact that while legal aid, lawyers, the provincial government, and so on are all in favour of the program continuing, funding has not been secured.

⁷⁷ GARs who self-transfer to Vancouver from other provinces are not automatically eligible to stay at Welcome House.

settlement services to claimants.⁷⁸ Massive restructuring in the funding of settlement services in 2001 resulted in the establishment of consortiums, making it more difficult for smaller agencies to compete for funding. As resources dwindled in the settlement sector smaller agencies had to either close down or downsize. VRSA represents an attempt by the three main refugee claimant serving agencies – Settlement Orientation Services (SOS), Inland Refugee Services of BC (Inland) and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) – to eliminate duplication of services and provide a continuum of service for refugee claimants. Unlike Welcome Place and ISSofBC, however, these three claimant-specific agencies operate with fewer staff (1-3 per office) and rely heavily on volunteers to provide information and services.

Claimants arriving in Vancouver encounter a lack of information and limited assistance. When potential claimants initially approach CIC to state their intention to submit a refugee claim they are provided forms to fill out and are scheduled for an eligibility interview that can be up to a week later. At the scheduled interview those individuals who are deemed eligible to submit a refugee claim receive new documentation that enables them to access services, including social assistance. There is however usually a gap then between the two interviews plus the time until social assistance approves the application, a period that can be two weeks or longer. During this time there are often many pressing needs (e.g. for food, diapers, clothing, and housing), yet no assistance is available. These difficulties are often aggravated by the tendency for refugee claimants to arrive without financial resources, a lack of English language proficiency, and no pre-existing social networks, such as local family, friends or contacts within their ethnic community. Further, in many cases, even if they bring

⁷⁸ Although ISSofBC aids in the provision of services to Farsi and French speaking claimants their primary focus is on GARs; as such, they have not been included in the discussion of VRSA.

money with them it is usually not enough to support them for very long. The VRSA consortium seeks to fill the gap between the claimants' arrival in Vancouver and the time in which they become eligible for mainstream service provision.

The Inland Refugee Society of British Columbia (Inland) is the first contact for refugee claimants in Vancouver, providing immediate needs support (e.g. clothing, food vouchers, and bus passes), as well as assistance in finding emergency shelter and referrals for housing.⁷⁹ While the agency does not have any settlement counsellors its sole frontline worker assists approximately 700 claimant households to access emergency and permanent accommodations each year.⁸⁰ Further, claimants can participate in a free 10-week volunteer-run English and Life Skills program focusing on basic language skills necessary for everyday living and information on renting accommodations, applying for employment, opening bank accounts and ensuring children are enrolled in schools. Inland is co-located with SOS and refers newcomers to other agencies as needed.

Settlement Orientation Services (SOS) assists refugee claimants with settlement activities, as well as providing an orientation of the refugee claim process, from before the eligibility interview to the final decision from the IRB. This includes helping complete forms and applications, answering key questions, referring to government offices, and guiding them through the legal process to ensure every step is completed.⁸¹ Although the agency mostly

⁷⁹ Recognition of the difficulties facing refugee claimants has led to significant changes since the primary research for this study was conducted. From Spring 2008 the Salvation Army's Belkin House began reserving 15 apartments and 10 beds (for men) in their temporary accommodations floors for use by newly arrived refugee claimants. Funding to offset costs until claimants receive social assistance was provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (MAELMD).

⁸⁰ Statistics for claimants may represent individuals or households.

⁸¹ Although counsellors may provide information on the Personal Information Forms (e.g. what the questions are asking, not to leave any blanks) they are unable to aid clients in completing them because the PIF is a legal document. Whenever possible claimants are referred to Legal Aid for assistance in completing their PIF.

works with Spanish and Chinese-speaking clients, claimants from other countries may be assisted with the help of interpreters. Counsellors at SOS assist approximately 1,200 active clients (households or individuals) per year until a decision has been reached on their claim. In some cases this may take as long as five years or more, a period key informants suggest is increasing owing to growing backlogs at the IRB. In 2009, for example, there were over 100,000 refugee claimants in Canada (CIC 2009).

Although the primary mandate of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is to help those in need of protection outside Canada to come to Canada through private sponsorship, the agency also offers support to refugee claimants. Under the umbrella of VRSA, MCC aids post-determination claimants to pursue other options (e.g. Humanitarian and Compassionate applications, PPRA), and assists those without any further appeals to tie up loose ends in preparation for departure from Canada. When called upon, the agency will also guide newcomers and claimants throughout the settlement and legal process (e.g. information relating to temporary and permanent affordable housing). Counsellors at MCC refer clients to different organizations that can help. In addition, the agency links newcomers with free adult English language classes, and can provide those who have experienced trauma with limited counselling and/or referrals to more appropriate agencies (e.g. Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture).

In Vancouver, access to government-funded English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) is differentiated according to legal status. While GARs are entitled to attend English language classes for the first year, claimants in Vancouver are not eligible to attend government funded ESLA classes. One agency offers claimants the ability to participate in basic and intermediate English language classes through the use of volunteer teachers; higher classes are available

for a fee through private language schools and universities. Although the tuition for private language schools may be quite high, Inland has worked out arrangements with a number of private language colleges that enables claimants to pay a nominal fee of \$10 per semester to access classes. In this way, the claimants fill up spaces that would otherwise be unoccupied. At the time of the research extensive waitlists made it difficult for GARs to access ELSA classes until 7 to 8 months after arrival.⁸² Although there are no fees charged for ELSA classes, meaning newcomers can continue accessing English language classes after the first year, the pressure to find employment and the lack of childminding for parents of young children reduces people's opportunities to enrol in further language training. Key informants noted that once GARs transition to provincial social assistance at the end of the first year they may be sent for further education and/or training. The results of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) show that language barriers and access to equitable employment are the two most serious areas of need for newcomers, yet because claimants are not entitled to the ELSA program they suffer disproportionately.

Differing Service Landscapes? The Effect of Legal Status and City of Settlement on Initial Settlement

Previous research has underscored the importance of social capital in the housing search outcomes of immigrant households (cf, Hiebert et al. 2005; Ray 1998). The combination, (or lack thereof), of strong ties (i.e. family and close friends) and weak ties (i.e. acquaintances) may provide access to practical assistance and knowledge about the housing market. In the absence of social capital newcomers are faced with making decisions based on limited or

⁸² Increased funding for ELSA classes in BC since this time, however, has changed this situation dramatically. At the time of writing, for example, some ELSA programs in Metro Vancouver are struggling to attract sufficient participants. To date, however, eligibility for ELSA classes in Metro Vancouver has not been extended to include claimants.

faulty information. Access to social capital, however, is not equal. Many refugee claimants, for example, lack established social networks upon arrival, resulting in social isolation and limited access to necessary information and assistance. In the absence of settlement services, claimants in Vancouver experience greater challenges in accessing social capital. While formal services provided to GARs are relatively even, with the exception of the life skills trainer program in Winnipeg, the assistance provided to claimants differs significantly between the two cities.

In Winnipeg, the capacity of newly arrived claimants to develop social capital may be enhanced by the ability of refugee claimants to access temporary accommodations, financial assistance and full orientation services immediately upon arrival. Provision of these initial services provides a stable base from which to look for housing and connect with existing co-ethnic communities. The ability to utilize social capital in Vancouver continues to be differentiated according to a refugee's legal status as either a GAR or Claimant. In contrast, refugee claimants in Vancouver experience a gap between arrival and ability to access services such that recently arrived claimants are left with no immediate financial support (e.g. provincial social assistance) and/or help in obtaining housing. Consequently, while claimants in Winnipeg reported high levels of informal help (e.g. from church, co-ethnics, and so on), refugee claimants in Vancouver were the least likely of all respondents to have been able to build or benefit from social networks.

In Vancouver, those claimants without pre-existing networks spoke of a lack of information (e.g. about housing services, supports) upon arrival. In the absence of social networks or formal information and services many were reliant on chance encounters (e.g. with taxi drivers, people on the street) or notices on bulletin boards for information on where to get

help or find housing.⁸³ Through these chance encounters respondents were eventually able to contact refugee-serving agencies and/or ethnic organizations (e.g. the Hispanic Community Centre). Frequently, however, these contacts were made after an extended period of time, necessitating claimants negotiate initial settlement on their own. While 90% of GARs interviewed in Vancouver were able to obtain help from family, friends and/or co-ethnics to find housing, the same was only true of only half (9) of the 18 claimants interviewed. In Winnipeg, these difficulties were ameliorated by the provision of settlement services and temporary accommodations that were accessible to claimants.

Findings from the 2005 Study on the Profile and Extent of Absolute and Relative Homelessness among Immigrants and Refugees in the GVRD (Hiebert et al. 2005), indicate that refugee claimants were less likely to establish social networks upon arrival, a condition associated with more precarious housing situations.⁸⁴ While the ability of claimants in Vancouver to access pre-existing social networks was higher than may be expected by the findings of the 2005 study, it is important to note that the help received was overwhelmingly short-term and geared towards meeting immediate needs (e.g. initial shelter, food and clothing). One respondent, for example, was met at the airport by a family member and taken to a one bedroom apartment shared with nine other roommates. S/he has received no further financial assistance or information from her family member. It is important to recognize, however, that some claimants in Vancouver were able to obtain help from formal or informal sources. Three of the six claimants from China, for example, reported living with family

⁸³ The November 2008 introduction of First Contact in Vancouver promises to reduce this problem by increasing the availability of information to refugee claimants.

⁸⁴ The GVRD has since been renamed Metro Vancouver.

members upon arrival; all continue to live with and receive financial and emotional support from their families.

Settlement services help provide newcomers staying in temporary accommodations the time to become more familiar with their new environs, to make connections with existing ethno-cultural communities, and – in some cases – to secure permanent accommodations near other newcomers.⁸⁵ In Winnipeg, for example, there are a number of ethno-specific organizations (e.g. a Somali association) that claimants may access. While respondents asserted these organizations ‘can not actually *do* anything’ (e.g. provide financial assistance, housing, or jobs) they provide valuable information (e.g. where to receive services, obtain documentation, find housing, and so on) and social connections. It is important to note, however, that Somali respondents asserted help is sometimes dependent on which tribe a person belongs to. Those who are not from the same tribe may not be interested in helping newly arrived claimants; while other individuals who are familiar with members of a person's extended family (e.g. father or brother) may provide more help and support. One apartment found in my field research, for example, was overseen by a Somali caretaker. While the condition of the apartment itself was not good, the caretaker did not require a rental history or references, things that are difficult for those who are new to the country to provide.

In Winnipeg, claimants were directed to MIIC's Welcome Place either through personal networks or via information on the internet. The smaller size of Winnipeg and tendency for refugee claimants to arrive by Greyhound facilitates the quick linkages to refugee serving agencies or ethno-specific organizations. People brought to Toronto and sent to Winnipeg by

⁸⁵ It is important to note that Winnipeg receives a much smaller number of refugee claimants (50-100 per year, compared to 1,100 - 1,300 in Vancouver); this factor may contribute to MIIC's ability to extend settlement services and temporary accommodations to claimants.

bus, for example, reported either being given the address of Welcome Place or told to go outside of the station, find someone who ‘looks like them’ and ask where they can get help. The former location of Greyhound next to the University of Winnipeg (it has since moved) and near Welcome Place and a number of small community organizations increases their ability to quickly find services. Eleven of the fifteen claimants interviewed in Winnipeg (73%) stayed at Welcome Place until social assistance and permanent accommodations were obtained. Frequently, claimants interviewed in the study spoke of being directed to Welcome Place within the first 24-48 hours after arrival in Winnipeg. While the amount of financial aid provided is small (approximately \$46 per week) the combination of temporary accommodation and financial support provided a stable basis from which claimants could begin navigating the refugee claim process. Further, the proximity of the temporary accommodation at Welcome Place to government offices (e.g. social assistance, CIC offices) minimized transportation costs for claimants who might have to use these services multiple times per week. Many claimants spoke of finding accommodation in the downtown so as to be close to both Welcome Place and other necessary services. Access to temporary accommodation, then, provided new arrivals with time to identify necessary services, as well as government ministries whose services they may have to draw up and find housing nearby. By contrast, newly arrived claimants in Vancouver frequently reported that they found housing first and then they began their claim process. While claimants in Winnipeg reported high levels of assistance, refugee claimants in Vancouver were less likely to report having social networks. In the absence of pre-existing social networks and a lack of information upon arrival, claimants in Vancouver were reliant on chance encounters (e.g. with taxi drivers, people on the street or in the airport) to obtain information about where to get help or

how to find housing.⁸⁶ For many, access to services followed much later. The result is often more dispersed housing located far from necessary services and government ministries. In the absence of information some claimants also reported being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords.

While all of the claimants interviewed in Winnipeg were connected to Welcome Place within the first few days after their arrival, claimants in Vancouver frequently spoke of first obtaining help from refugee-specific agencies weeks, or in some cases months, after their initial arrival.⁸⁷ Refugee claimants arriving in Vancouver reported having arrived either by air or ‘through the border’, neither of which were located near refugee-specific organizations. Many respondents reported having arrived with many questions (e.g. Where do I go? Who can help?) but receiving little assistance. Help in many ways is dependent upon who the claimant comes in contact with – those who were fortunate were quickly put in contact with charitable organizations, faith groups or refugee-claimant serving organizations. Others, however, frequently fell victim to exploitive individuals (e.g. immigration consultants, unscrupulous landlords and/or employers).

Although the majority of refugee claimants interviewed in Metro Vancouver found permanent accommodations in outlying suburbs (e.g. Richmond, Burnaby), the need to access refugee-specific agencies and government services located in the downtown core of

⁸⁶The November 2008 introduction of First Contact – a 24 hour multilingual information and referral line for claimants – in Vancouver promised to reduce this problem by increasing the availability of information to claimants.

⁸⁷In Vancouver and Winnipeg participants were identified through both partnering agencies *and* snowball sampling. It is important to recognize, however, that the primary reliance on agencies to identify potential participants introduces an unknown degree of bias into the sample. Although the IRB statistics suggest there are a number of Spanish-speaking claimants in Winnipeg, for example, MIIC was only successful in identifying one Spanish speaking refugee claimant. As such, those who were not connected with the agencies may not have been included in the sample.

the city imposed significant financial burden on families who had to pay transportation costs for each member of the family to commute in and out of the downtown.

GARs in both Winnipeg and Vancouver cited proximity to family, friends and co-ethnics as a key consideration when searching for housing. For many, the benefits associated with nearness to friends and family (e.g. childcare, interpretation, transportation, support) guide both initial and future housing location searches.

we come here and we couldn't speak English. My friend would help us; they would show us. [Kathy - so by living near community members you don't have to rely on Welcome Place as much?] Yes, because Welcome Place is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. Who [else] is going to help us (Naby, a GAR from Winnipeg).

Surprisingly, Burmese refugees in Winnipeg spoke of the establishment of a co-ethnic network that exchanged information with individuals before leaving the camps. Individuals in Winnipeg obtain information on the size of households and when the families were expected to come, while providing information on what to expect in Canada. Those in the camps provided important information on the status of family members and friends still in the camps.

In Winnipeg, nearness to service agencies and employment was an important consideration for refugee claimants seeking to minimize transportation costs, and this was reflected in the concentration of claimants in low quality housing within the Downtown core. In contrast, the pressure of finding housing, frequently in the absence of information and assistance, was meant that many refugee claimants in Vancouver settled wherever affordable housing was found regardless of location. The propensity of claimants in Vancouver to report having found their housing by walking around and 'knocking on the doors' of places advertising

vacancies meant they were the most dispersed of all participants.⁸⁸ The search for affordable housing, however, meant that many of the respondents in Vancouver, both GARs and claimants, had to move far from the primary refugee-serving organizations. Lower housing costs, however, were accompanied by higher transportation costs for those respondents needing services (both settlement and claim-related) in person, aggravating an already difficult financial situation.

Similarly respondents spoke of having received assistance in identifying employment. Networks, one respondent noted, allow us to

open our ears where to get jobs when the time is up for us to stop the support of government. We are getting ready to go into jobs as soon as we finish the support of government. Now some already went in to job and got some money (Paw, a GAR from Winnipeg).

At the time of the research the provision of English language classes differed significantly between Vancouver and Winnipeg with respect to both entitlement and format. Unlike BC, where ELSA classes were funded to Level 3, newcomers in Winnipeg could enrol in ELSA classes to Level 8; those who are qualified could also take classes in English for professionals.⁸⁹

Given the significance of English language proficiency to obtaining employment – and even procuring housing – as evidenced in the literature, BC's failure to fund ELSA beyond Level 3 minimized the ability of newcomers to develop human capital. Those who arrived in Canada

⁸⁸ Individuals claiming refugee status at the Canada-US border, for example, were directed to Surrey-based organizations and agencies for assistance.

⁸⁹ In the fall of 2007, the Welcome BC initiative announced changes which seek to reduce waitlists and increase access to higher levels of ELSA classes. While more is being done Federally and provincially to promote newcomer integration through increased settlement funding, the situation facing refugee claimants continues to be ignored: refugee claimants, for example, still do not have access to language classes until they have received a positive decision on their refugee claim.

illiterate in their first language, for example, found it difficult to finish Level 3 before they were no longer eligible. By contrast, those who arrive with basic literacy and language proficiency were forced to pay for courses beyond basic English. After level 3, newcomers were required to identify and pay for their own language training. One family, for example, spoke of having paid about \$600 for the husband to take higher English language classes in order to help him obtain employment. Reflecting on her low English language proficiency, one respondent who arrived illiterate in their first language, asserted that the provincial government should remove eligibility restrictions so that newcomers could take free English language training until they were confident in English.

Finding Permanent Accommodation

Housing counsellors were available at both Welcome Place and ISSofBC to help those staying in temporary accommodations find permanent housing. While both GARs and claimants could access the housing counsellors in Winnipeg only GARs staying in Welcome House could receive assistance from ISSofBC's RAP-funded housing search counsellors. Although they did not have a dedicated housing search counsellor, the staff at Inland worked to find temporary and permanent accommodations for claimants in Vancouver through church or faith-based organizations. These housing counsellors aided newcomers, particularly GARs, in finding permanent accommodations as quickly as possible after their arrival and taught them the tools to find housing (e.g. where to find information on housing, who to contact, information about signing leases, etc).⁹⁰ In October 2007 the vacancy rate for purpose built apartments in Winnipeg was 1.5%, while in Vancouver the vacancy rate for

⁹⁰ The agency is not responsible for helping those refugee claimants who are not staying in the temporary accommodations at Welcome Place to find permanent accommodations; those staying with friends/family, for example, are required to find their own housing.

purpose-built apartments was 0.7%, much tighter than the Canadian average of 2.6% (CMHC 2007a, 2007b). Further, vacancy rates were frequently highest at the higher end of the housing market. Unlike Winnipeg, where housing counsellors noted that tight vacancy rates meant little choice for newcomers, the housing counsellor at ISSofBC placed great importance on clients' desires (e.g. with respect to areas of the city, desire (not) to be located near co-ethnics). Ultimately, however, the cost of housing had a significant influence on where newcomers in both cities were settled.

The low vacancy rates in Winnipeg and Vancouver made it very difficult to find housing for both GARs and claimants. The stability provided by access to temporary accommodations, however, meant that claimants in Winnipeg were not always 'running around' trying to find somewhere to live, as were claimants in Vancouver. In the absence of settlement services and assistance in finding accommodations, claimants in Vancouver were the most likely to have reported finding their initial and current housing by walking around and knocking on doors of apartments and/or houses that advertised vacancies. Many spoke of having found their housing either by walking around areas near their initial shelter or having taken the Skytrain and seeking out areas that looked affordable (e.g. south of Metrotown in Burnaby). Claimants in Vancouver were much more likely to have spoken of spending the first few days or even weeks living in temporary accommodations provided by church members, and/or sleeping outside (e.g. Stanley Park). In Vancouver, the lack of temporary accommodation for claimants meant it was necessary for agency staff to find accommodations 'on the spot' using Craigslist (an internet site), newspapers, word of mouth, churches (e.g. if people have a room available) and schools. Key informants spoke of having lists and names of people

willing to house newly arrived refugee claimants.⁹¹ Although anecdotal evidence suggested that frequent mobility might influence the success of refugee claims (e.g. missing mail because they move around so much may result in claimants missing appointments with immigration, etc.), continued high mobility rates among refugee claimants in Vancouver meant that even the primary refugee claimant serving organizations no longer recorded client addresses. Refugee claimants in Vancouver were the most likely of all respondents to report living in exploitative conditions such as sharing a one bedroom apartment with multiple roommates, or renting housing by the room. In the absence of information (e.g. residential tenancy regulations) and assistance in advocating on their behalf, claimants spoke of being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords.

The search for affordable housing meant that many respondents in Vancouver (both GARs and refugee claimants) had to move far from the primary refugee-serving organizations. Lower housing costs in the suburbs were accompanied by higher transportation costs for those respondents needing to access services (both settlement and CIC) in person. Reflecting on the situation facing newcomers in Vancouver, for example, one key informant noted “... less and less people have the ability to afford [housing in the City of Vancouver], but then the services are mostly concentrated here in [downtown] Vancouver which creates a kind of disconnect, access issues”. Although one agency provided some bus tickets to ameliorate this burden, one key informant suggested that a large family can spend their whole social assistance cheque on bus tickets.

⁹¹Although some new refugee claimant specific accommodations have opened throughout Vancouver (e.g. Kinbrace House, Journey Home), these accommodations are relatively small in scale.

At the time of the interviews, 12 households in Winnipeg (8 GAR, 4 Claimant) and 5 households in Vancouver (3 GAR, 2 Claimant) reported living in social housing.⁹²

In Winnipeg, high needs GARs had access to IRCOM house, a second-stage housing complex for high need immigrant and refugee families.⁹³ IRCOM house was run by an agency under an agreement with the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation and rent was charged according to income (27% of aggregate household income of anyone over the age of 13 who worked and did not attend school full-time). Although anyone within the first three years after arrival in Canada could live in this complex, priority was given to GARs followed by independent immigrants, independently sponsored or faith-group sponsored refugees, and lastly refugee claimants. While claimants were eligible for housing at IRCOM house, they received the lowest priority. As with other services and programs, their temporary status was a barrier. Access to IRCOM house is not equal even among GARs. The complex was only for families (e.g. single mothers, nuclear families, 2 dads, 2 moms). Single people and roommates could not be accommodated owing to the lack of bachelor suites and one-bedroom units. One key informant asserted that there was a tacit assumption that singles could take care of themselves. At the time of the research the majority of IRCOM house tenants were GARs. Only one claimant family was living in IRCOM. Because tenancy at IRCOM house was time limited tenants began receiving reminder notices of their need to find new accommodations six months prior to their three year residency deadline. While key informants spoke of providing assistance in locating new accommodations (e.g. housing

⁹² Two other GAR households in Vancouver reported having obtained - and subsequently moved out of - BC housing.

⁹³ At IRCOM house, 'high needs' immigrants and refugees are defined as having: large household sizes; little or no previous work experience; and limited proficiency in English (or French). For refugees, this includes those who have spent 3-5 years or more in a protracted refugee situation. Further, it is recognized that families meeting the eligibility requirements established by IRCOM house are highly unlikely to obtain gainful employment within the three year settlement window.

search tips, and information on advertised suites), interviews with IRCOM house tenants brought this into question. Difficulties in obtaining affordable units that were of sufficient size, however, created problems for many families. In spite of the recognition that families living in IRCOM house were unlikely to obtain gainful employment within the three year window (it is part of the definition of 'high needs' used in the eligibility requirements) no additional employment services or programs were offered. As such, some families faced significant problems in securing adequate and affordable housing once their time at IRCOM house had expired. At the time of the research, three families living in IRCOM house were required to leave owing to the three year residency limit. All of these families were households of seven or more, and were dependent upon social assistance. Two had received notices to appear at a court hearing to force them to evacuate the apartment; the other family had three weeks left in their allotted time. One family indicated they would be representing themselves at the court hearing. Given their inexperience with the bureaucratic process it would be beneficial for newcomers, particularly those with limited English, to be able to access legal representation. Looking to the outcome of the hearing the respondent asserted:

If the court says you have one week to move from here, we have to find a place. Doesn't matter how much expensive it is ... We have a lot of letters from the office here mentioning the time here is finished. We take the letters to Manitoba Housing; they put it in the case [file] and still we can't find any housing (Leila, a GAR from Winnipeg)

Problems with long waitlists for subsidized housing in other Manitoba and Winnipeg Social Housing complexes were mentioned by a number of respondents, particularly those with large family sizes (e.g. 6+) owing to low vacancies within larger units.

Proximity to family, friends and co-ethnics was a central concern for GARs in both cities with respect to reasons for initially choosing the housing, as well as staying in that location.

In Winnipeg, proximity to service agencies and employment was an important consideration for refugee claimants seeking to minimize transportation costs, and is reflected in the concentration of claimants in low quality housing within the Downtown core (see Figure 4 for the Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in the Winnipeg Survey, as compared to Settlement Services).

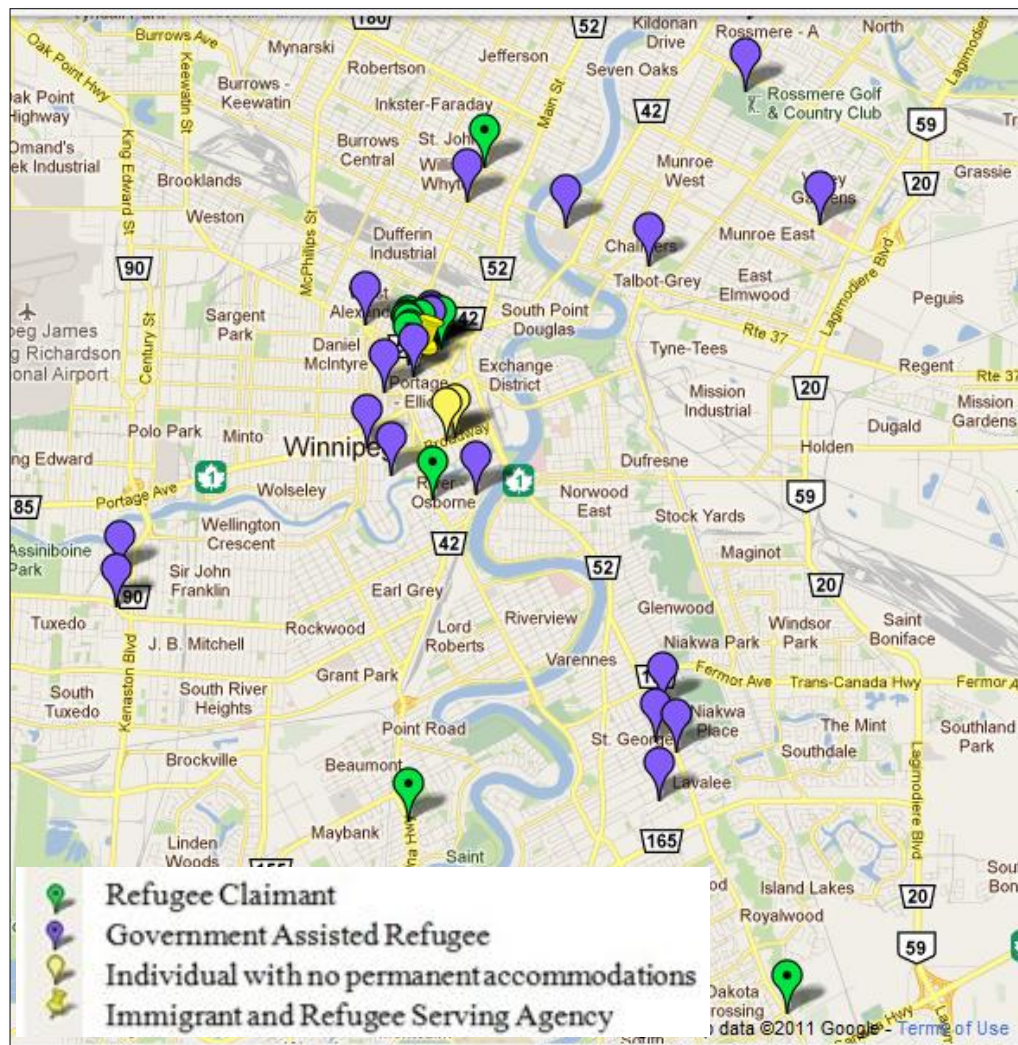


Figure 4: Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in the Winnipeg Survey, as Compared to Settlement Services (Google Maps 2011a)

In contrast, the pressure of finding housing, frequently in the absence of information and assistance, meant that many refugee claimants in Vancouver had to move far from the primary refugee-serving organizations located in the downtown core (see Figure 5 for the Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in Vancouver, as compared to Settlement Services).

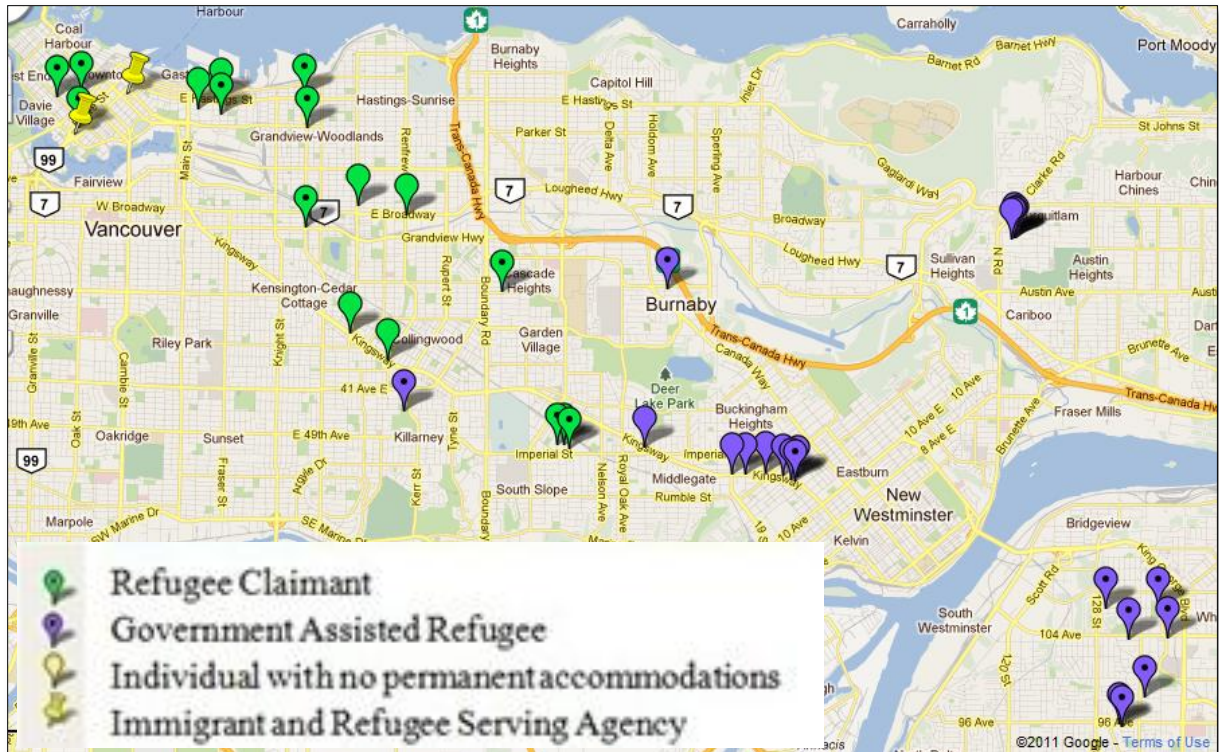


Figure 5: Location of Housing of GARs and RCs in the Vancouver Survey, as Compared to Settlement Service Agencies in Vancouver (Google Maps 2011b)

The propensity of claimants in Vancouver to report having found their housing by walking around and ‘knocking on doors’ of places advertising vacancies meant they were the most spatially dispersed of all participants. Lower housing costs, however, were accompanied by higher transportation costs for those respondents needing to access services in person, aggravating an already difficult financial situation.

Geographic Inconsistencies and Their Effect on Settlement Outcomes

Canada has an extensive and well-established system in place for aiding newcomers in settling and integrating into Canadian society. While there is assistance available for both groups (e.g. social assistance, access to work and education), eligibility to this system for refugees varies according to legal status and location of settlement.

The significance of entry category is evident in the vastly different supports extended to newcomers. Unlike those who arrive here with the right to permanent residence (e.g. immigrants and sponsored refugees), individuals who arrive in Canada on their own accord seeking refuge receive a much more restrained welcome. While basic needs (e.g. financial support and emergency medical services) and rights (e.g. ability to work, study) are extended, eligibility for other services varies according to place of settlement. Ultimately those whose inland claims are accepted – approximately fifty percent of applicants – are recognized as 'protected persons', become eligible for permanent residence. Critics are frequently divided as to whether or not claimants should be eligible for services: on the one hand those who oppose providing services to refugee claimants argue that it will act as an incentive to claim refugee status in Canada; those in favour argue that since half of those who submit refugee claim are accepted – and will have the right to Canadian citizenship – it makes sense to provide services and facilitate integration from the beginning. I am inclined to agree with the second argument – while refugee claimants arrive in Canada of their own volition, those accepted as Convention Refugees and their families (including Canadian-born children) will be eligible for Canadian citizenship. Yet, unlike government-assisted refugees, who receive both financial support and settlement services to facilitate integration in Canada, refugee claimants

are often ineligible for this assistance. Rather, refugee claimants are largely left alone to navigate the system both before and after being recognized as convention refugees.

Differences in the availability of services between GARs and claimants are compounded between the two cities. While GARs in both Vancouver and Winnipeg receive a similar level of services (e.g. orientation services, temporary accommodations, one year of RAP funding), the same is not true for refugee claimants. Unlike claimants in Vancouver, refugee claimants in Winnipeg have access to the same orientation services and temporary accommodations available to GARs. One key informant explained that while the agency was not funded to provide these services it made sense to do so because approximately half of all claimants will eventually become permanent residents.

Winnipeg and Vancouver were two very different refugee receiving cities. In Winnipeg the majority of refugees arriving do so as privately- and government-sponsored refugees, as well as a small number of refugee claimants. Manitoba's commitment to attracting and retaining newcomers, the smaller absolute numbers of GARs and claimants in Winnipeg (as compared to Vancouver), and the concentration of services into a 'one stop shop' facilitate the ability of MIIC to extend full settlement services – including temporary accommodations – to refugee claimants. Vancouver, by contrast, continued to be one of the top three immigrant receiving destinations in Canada, attracting a larger number of immigrants and refugees than Winnipeg (e.g. the total number of GARs and claimants in Winnipeg is smaller than the number of GARs alone in Vancouver). With respect to refugees, Vancouver received larger numbers of government-sponsored and refugee claimants, and a smaller number of privately-sponsored refugees. Between 2004-2006, for example, an average of 1,200 asylum cases per year were referred to IRB in Vancouver, compared to 80 per year in Manitoba. As such, the size of

Vancouver's refugee claimant population – approximately equal to that of GARs arriving in BC – makes it prohibitive for agencies in Vancouver to extend full settlement and orientation services to claimants. Further, Winnipeg's extensive history as a refugee-receiving city, owing largely to the work of the Mennonite Central Committee and the private sponsorship system, contributed to a well-established system of contacts (e.g. the Mennonite Central Committee and other private sponsorship groups) that MIIC can draw upon when additional help was needed.

In contrast, refugee claimant specific organizations in Vancouver were subjected to funding cuts and downsizing. Although the agencies have come together to form the Vancouver Refugee Services Alliance (VRSA) and ensure a continuum of care the agencies do not have access to the same relative levels of staffing available at Welcome Place to provide orientation services to both GARs and claimants. Respondents in Vancouver spoke of a gap between the time of arrival and access to (financial) services that is often filled by church groups and, less frequently, small groups of volunteers. The smaller refugee population in Winnipeg and Manitoba's aggressive efforts to increase immigration to the region are in contrast to Vancouver, where high in-migration continues to occur. How then, do services or the lack thereof, influence income security and housing among GARs and claimants in Vancouver and Winnipeg?

Chapter 6: The Vicious Cycle of Precariousness

*“If you want to rent a house you need a job.
But without Canadian experience you can’t get a job,
so you can’t get housing” (Abuali, a refugee claimant
from Winnipeg)*

The housing difficulties facing many Canadians today are well documented: inadequate social assistance rates, rising rents, and a decline in the stock and construction of social housing, have contributed to affordability challenges faced by low income households in Canadian cities (cf, Murdie 2004; Hulchanski 1997). The last decade has witnessed a significant increase in attention given to the housing experiences of newcomers in Canada’s largest urban centres. Housing outcomes are exacerbated for newcomers by rising poverty levels and lower relative incomes than comparable Canadian-born individuals (cf, Rea, MacKay and LeVasseur 2008; Hiebert 2006; Picot and Hou 2004). The simultaneous rise in poverty levels among immigrants and decline among Canadian-born populations creates cause for alarm. Relative earnings among very recent immigrants have declined from 85% of that of comparable Canadian-born individuals in 1980 to approximately 65% in 2005 (Picot, Lu and Hou 2009). The consequence is longer catch up times for immigrants to achieve income parity with the Canadian born, from 10 to 15 years for those arriving in the late 1970s to much longer times today. “Between 2001 and 2006, immigrants experienced slower increases in income than the Canadian-born population, but faster increases in shelter costs” (Rea et al. 2008, 27). For newcomers, and particularly refugees, these challenges may be amplified by limited English language proficiency, a lack of (recognized) human capital and scarce financial resources (Hiebert et al. 2005; Murdie and Teixeira 2003). The likely

consequence, for many low income households, is that adequate and appropriate housing becomes even more unattainable.

Following calls from Renaud, Piche and Godin (2003) for attention to the specificity of refugee settlement, there has been more attention to differences across refugee categories. Subsequent research has identified differential access to social capital and settlement services as key factors in settlement and housing outcomes (cf, D'Addario et al. 2006; Rose and Ray 2001). The work of Murdie in Toronto (2008, 2004), Hiebert et al. (2005) in Vancouver, and Rose and Ray (2001) in Montreal converge on the more 'difficult pathway to housing' for refugee claimants, as compared to sponsored refugees, including government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees. To date, much of this research has been constrained to the context of one city or one group; yet, place matters, as we have seen in the previous chapter. After briefly examining the current housing circumstances of government-assisted refugees (GARs) and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Vancouver, this chapter explores the influence of social capital and barriers to housing among refugees in Vancouver and Winnipeg. In so doing, it seeks to understand the factors that influence housing outcomes: is it legal status (e.g. inland vs. overseas determination), place, or something else? Findings from this study problematise previous research suggesting claimants face more difficulties obtaining housing. While refugee claimants in Vancouver face a more difficult 'pathway to permanent housing' than do GARs, the same is not true in Winnipeg. Consideration of the housing and income security among GARs and claimants in this study, however, point to greater housing challenges among Afghan GARs. In spite of having received more extensive services and information than claimants, GARs in both cities experience significant challenges. High rates of illiteracy, larger than average household sizes, and lack of formal

education aggravate barriers imposed by high unemployment and reliance on social assistance making it more difficult to obtain housing and employment.

Barriers to Employment: Paying the Rent?

Turning to the respondents in this study, questions about housing are intricately linked to issues of employment and income security. High unemployment and reliance on government transfers, including Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and provincial social assistance, are prevalent among respondents in Winnipeg and Vancouver, particularly for government-assisted refugees. Approximately 70% of all respondents interviewed in this study were not employed at the time of our interview. While these findings are consistent between respondents in the two cities, they varied according to legal status, with GARs in the study more likely to be unemployed than refugee claimants (77% and 61% respectively). Although GARs in Winnipeg reported higher levels of unemployment than did those in Vancouver (91% and 60% respectively), claimants in Vancouver reported higher levels of unemployment than did those in Winnipeg (72% and 47% respectively). Many respondents report having never obtained employment in Canada. Attachment to the labour force was lowest among Afghan GARs, with only three of the twenty-two respondents employed at the time of the research. More alarmingly, the vast majority of Afghan GARs stated they were neither working nor looking for work, even 3-4 years post arrival. Rather, many cited either that their English was not good enough or that medical conditions preclude them finding employment. One reason mentioned frequently was ‘my heart is broken’, which may suggest depression or other mental health concerns. The cumulative effects of almost thirty years in war-like situations, marked by endless suffering, may negatively impact their mental health, making it difficult to pursue employment.

Participants identified a number of familiar obstacles to employment consistent with the wider literature, including: English language barriers, problems of foreign credential recognition, lack of Canadian job experience, unfamiliarity with Canadian job finding methods and, for refugee claimants, SIN tagging.⁹⁴ Issues around Canadian experience and lack of credential recognition are prominent among respondents. Speaking of the difficulties s/he faced in obtaining employment in Winnipeg, one respondent who arrived fluent in English and with a graduate degree from a Western university noted:

First, you are foreign trained, and second they think that you don't have Canadian experience. And my question is: 'How do I get Canadian experience when you don't give me the opportunity to work?' (Amdu, a GAR from Winnipeg).

While difficulties emerged for both professionals and non-professionals in Vancouver and Winnipeg, the barriers facing professionals are compounded by issues surrounding foreign credential recognition (Simich et al. 2002). Ayesha, a government-assisted refugee in Vancouver, was trained as a medical specialist in her country of origin. Although she had both a private practice and hospital affiliation, Ayesha encountered significant difficulties in having her credentials recognized in Canada:

I had to take [high school] again ... we did our education for 22 years, it's not a short time. When we came to Canada it counts zero. We are nothing. We should start from zero. It is very, very stressful and ... it makes me very depressed (Ayesha, a GAR from Vancouver).

The subsequent introduction of the Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IECBC) speaks to the recognition among key individuals in government and business of the

⁹⁴ Social Insurance Numbers (SIN) beginning with a '9' indicate temporary status. While employers may not be aware of the meaning, respondents asserted SIN tagging influenced whether or not they were hired.

challenges facing newcomers in obtaining employment, particularly among those who are skilled.

Factors relating to English language competence are the most frequently cited barrier to employment among all respondents. This related to both proficiency in English and the location and organization of English language classes (e.g. distance or availability of classes; lack of opportunities to practice English; and organization and focus of classes). In spite of increased access to settlement services that include free, government funded English language classes, lack of English language proficiency was identified by GARs in Winnipeg and Vancouver as the most significant barrier to obtaining employment. The following respondents speak to the challenges faced by many newcomers:

If you know English you can get a job. If not, there is no work (James, a GAR from Vancouver)

Right now, I cannot speak English. Where should I work? (Rqea, a GAR from Winnipeg).

I cannot even speak one word of English (Zainiba, a GAR from Vancouver)

Although settlement counsellors emphasize English language classes over employment during the first year after arrival, the arrival of GARs who are illiterate in their first language (e.g. some of the Afghan GARs) means they face even greater challenges in learning English. Almost half of Afghan GARs, for example, have no formal education; others have completed some elementary school.⁹⁵ For those who are illiterate in their first language, learning English will require the development of pre-Literacy skills. Yet few, if any, of these courses were offered at the time of the research. Further, in spite of being encouraged to take English

⁹⁵Levels of education among Afghan GARs were slightly higher in Vancouver than in Winnipeg, with 5 of the 9 Afghan GARs having attended or completed high school or post-secondary education. By contrast 2 of the 11 Afghan GARs in Winnipeg had attended or completed some high school education; none had undertaken post-secondary training.

language classes respondents may not actually attend them. Sherrell and ISSofBC (2009), for example, suggest this may relate to the manner in which information is presented (i.e. you *may* take English, as opposed to you *should* take English). While it may be undesirable to frame participation in English Language Classes as something newcomers must undertake, greater attention needs to be placed on the importance of learning English in order to facilitate successful settlement and integration. Some respondents, for example, spoke of having underestimated the benefits of learning English in the early years following their arrival.

For some, however, the inability to speak English may result from an (un)conscious decision on the part of individual newcomers, as well as lack of opportunity, to refrain from practicing newly developed language skills. In this way language acquisition, or lack thereof, may not be the fault of systemic failures. During an interview with a GAR who had not worked since her arrival in Canada 2 years prior, one interpreter expressed deep frustration:

She was saying if she learns English she would get a job for sure. But it's like a weak excuse for sure. ... I came to Canada with two words of English – hi and bye – and I was working in my second month ... without any English (Interpreter in Winnipeg).

Reflecting on language acquisition one respondent suggested that older people may see learning a new language as frustrating and/or a “waste of time” (Helena); in this case, the respondent continued, it is not possible to learn the language as long as the individual’s mind is made up in advance. Further, lack of opportunities to practice English outside class time increases challenges associated with language acquisition. Within the Ethiopian community, for example, one respondent noted that the tendency for people to shy away and stick to their own community, rather than go out and mix and struggle to speak English, hinders practice

and integration. Further, the desire of parents to maintain their children's first language skills may discourage the use of English at home. The extent to which limited English proficiency results from systemic constraints as opposed to individual choices is unknown.

Although two-parent households may be able to arrange ELSA classes for one parent to attend at a time while the other one cares for their children (e.g. through registration in night-time or weekend classes), this is not often possible for single parents. Difficulties in accessing childcare, whether due to expense or availability, a problem cited by respondents in both cities, compounds the problems of newcomers in attending English language classes and/or obtaining employment. Jose, an interpreter in Vancouver, expressed frustration at the situation facing refugees:

All of the institutions are telling her to study English but no one tells her what she is supposed to do with her children. How, given her financial situation, can she put her children in daycare so she can improve her language? (Jose, an Interpreter in Vancouver)

The lack of adequate and affordable childcare is amplified for those with larger than average households. Even in Vancouver, where family sizes tended to be smaller, lack of childcare was a frequently cited barrier to both employment and participation in English language classes.⁹⁶

In some cases, barriers to employment arise as a result of the way in which newcomers came to Canada (e.g. overseas vs. inland determination). Government-assisted refugees, for example, are unable to access provincially-funded employment and job search programs (e.g.

⁹⁶ It is important to acknowledge that significant increases in funding for settlement services implemented since this research was undertaken have added a large amount of money into language programs to increase the availability and level of classes. One focus of this change has been increased availability of childcare spaces for adults attending ELSA classes. Subsequent research, however, continues to report lack of childcare as a barrier (Francis 2009; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009).

provincial social assistance, EI related training) while receiving Resettlement Assistance Program funding. Further, any monies earned must be reported to CIC, and are clawed back on a dollar for dollar basis. Consequently families are never able to build up a financial cushion to help them get ahead. For refugee claimants, delays in obtaining work permits, a process which may take as long as five months, left many feeling they were in a state of prolonged limbo, unable to work or attend school.⁹⁷ One respondent in Winnipeg, for example, noted that during this period “you remain in limbo for four months, just surviving on the \$89 [twice a month] that welfare gives you” while another suggested that eliminating this waiting period would enable newcomers to obtain work faster and help themselves rather than being reliant on welfare. These barriers are compounded by limited, or no, eligibility for government-funded English classes. Some respondents reported having obtained employment within the first few months after arrival so as to avoid being dependent on government assistance.

The first two months, although I was government sponsored ... I didn't like just sitting home waiting for service ... I was grateful the Government of Canada allowed me to come. But then I thought I could earn my own money rather than depending on Government support. And from the onset I start looking for jobs. That is why I attended the session with employment agency and then I volunteered. All of these were opportunities which I thought I could make use of to prepare myself for the labour market (Amdu, a GAR from Winnipeg).

It is important to note, however, the respondent arrived in Winnipeg fluent in English, having completed graduate school in the U.K.

⁹⁷ Mountz, Wright, Miyares and Bailey's (2002) research with Salvadoran asylum seekers in the United States demonstrates the state of limbo and heightened vulnerability arising from their tenuous legal status. Through the need to renew work permits annually, attend refugee hearings, and so on asylum seekers in the U.S. - and by extension refugee claimants in Canada - are prevented from beginning the settlement process, including reunifying their families and building new lives in their country of asylum.

Refugee claimants were more likely than GARs to find employment, particularly within the first few weeks after arrival. Lack of knowledge about the system (e.g. where to get help) , as well as a pressing need for additional financial resources to meet basic needs, led many to obtain cash employment in ‘under the table’ survival jobs prior to receiving – or in many cases applying for – work permits. For many, the lack of familiarity with the location of jobs and paucity of social networks compound challenges associated with obtaining employment. While key informants and some respondents spoke of the availability of jobs in Vancouver, for example, refugee claimants expressed concern about the need for social capital to find them. One informant reported that although s/he was told it was easy to get a job in construction this was so only if you give the company a contact name of someone already working on the job site; those who are unable to provide the name of a person already working there will not get hired. The lack of geographic understanding of the city, or region in the case of Vancouver, poses additional difficulties for newcomers. Refugee claimants in particular elaborated on the ways in which their lack of familiarity with the local environment influenced their job search, particularly given their frequent reliance on public transportation. One claimant, for example, said that by the time you figure out *where* the job is located and travel there, the job has been given to someone else. Respondents asserted there is a need for information about the city to be provided during orientation, as opposed to focussing on the location of shops, government offices, and settlement agencies.

Finally, financial costs associated with obtaining employment (e.g. foreign credential recognition, driver’s licenses, transportation, identification, and criminal record checks) can be insurmountable for those on social assistance. Jane, a refugee claimant trained as a nurse in the United States lamented

I think those are just challenges waiting for us ... Social services won't help you with that, but they want you to get off social services. Wouldn't you think they would help you to get the criminal records check and all that paid so you can get the job so you won't be on social service?

The difficulties identified by Jane speak to the multiple silos in which people are classified by Government services and the differing requirements from each Ministry. For example, social assistance workers push clients to obtain employment as quickly as possible, yet provide little or no help to achieve this goal beyond basic job search skills. Rather this is seen as being the responsibility of someone else. Those respondents who obtained employment often did so in low paying jobs with limited security, no benefits, and little opportunity for advancement, a finding consistent with previous research (cf, Brunner et al. 2010).

Recognition that labour force participation may be influenced by a number of factors (e.g. gender, age, health, presence of young children) necessitated income be considered at the household, not the individual level. While overall employment participation among respondents remained low (with the exception of refugee claimants in Winnipeg), consideration of source of income at the household level provides some insight into the extent to which others in the households are employed (See Table 10 for an overview of Primary Sources of Household Income). Over half of all respondents lived in households dependent upon provincial social assistance as the primary source of income. Although

	Winnipeg			Vancouver			All Respondents		
	GAR	RC	All	GAR	RC	All	GAR	RC	All
Employment	2	6	8	10	10	20	12	15	27
Social Assistance	14	7	21	10	8	18	24	16	40
RAP Benefits	7	0	7	-	-	-	7	0	7
Other	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	2

Table 10: Primary Sources of Household Income For Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Refugee Claimants (RCs)

social assistance was the primary source of income for both GARs and refugee claimants, GARs were twice as likely to report social assistance as the primary source of income in their household as they were employment income (56% and 28% respectively).⁹⁸ In Winnipeg 91% of GAR households are dependent upon government transfers: 61% on social assistance and 30% on RAP. Although refugee claimants in Winnipeg are slightly more likely to have reported social assistance as their source of income at the time of the interview, two of the seven claimants receiving social assistance were in the process of transitioning to employment as their source of income. As such, employment (40%) will surpass social assistance (47%) as the major source of income for the refugee claimants in Winnipeg within the near future, assuming all the others keep their jobs. In part, the higher dependence of GARs in Winnipeg on government transfers relates to their more recent arrival. Almost 75% of Afghan GARs participating in this study lived in households dependent upon social assistance; when RAP was included the proportion increased to 90% overall and 100% in Winnipeg. In contrast, respondents in Vancouver were slightly more likely to report employment income (53%) than social assistance as the primary household source of income, largely owing to employment within the Sudanese community.⁹⁹ While GARs in Vancouver were equally likely to be dependent upon social assistance and employment income (50% each), refugee claimants were more likely to have reported employment income (56%) than social assistance (44%) as the primary source of household income at the time of the interview. It is important to note that three of the ten GARS and five of the ten claimants reporting employment as the primary source of household income were wholly dependent upon their spouses' income. Many of the Sudanese respondents, for example, were dependent

⁹⁸ Note two respondents reported having their monthly employment earnings topped up by social assistance if it was below \$1,000. For the purposes of this analysis their income has been counted as employment.

⁹⁹ A number of Sudanese men were employed in the construction of the Canada Line.

upon spousal income, with their (ex)husbands frequently employed in well-paying construction jobs.¹⁰⁰ One claimant in Vancouver was in the process of transitioning from social assistance to employment income.

In 2007, a single, employable individual dependent upon social assistance in Winnipeg would receive \$466 per month, while in Vancouver the same individual would receive \$610 a month (MFSH 2007, MHSD 2007).¹⁰¹ Yet high rental rates and inadequate social assistance benefits mean households dependent on basic social assistance benefits in Winnipeg devote 58% - 90% of their monthly social assistance benefits to housing, while in Vancouver this figure is even higher, at 95% or more of household income being allocated to housing (see Table 11 for a more detailed consideration of Monthly Incomes and Average Rents in Winnipeg and Vancouver).¹⁰² In some cases, average rents exceeded monthly income assistance benefits. Such high expenditures on housing relative to social assistance income impact other aspects of the family budget, a problem which will be more fully discussed in the next chapter. Although Canada Child Tax Benefits (CCTB) were intended to offset the costs of raising children under age 18, many households were forced to use those funds to pay for food, clothing, and other basic necessities of all members of the family. By spreading the funds to meet the needs of the whole family it provided less for the children.

¹⁰⁰ While family breakdown is a problem in the Sudanese community, single mothers reported being able to obtain financial support from their former spouse.

¹⁰¹ In Winnipeg, social assistance rates given include both employment insurance *and* the maximum shelter benefit. Given that rates for households with children vary according to the age of the children the analysis uses the rates for children 7-11 years old (the middle group).

¹⁰² Data on average rents in Vancouver and Winnipeg CMAs are drawn from CMHC Rental Market reports (CMHC 2007a, CMHC 2007b).

		<i>Monthly Income Assistance (2007)</i> \$	<i>Average Rent CMA (2006)</i> \$	<i>Difference (+/-)</i>
Winnipeg	Single employable in a Bachelor Suite	\$466	\$420	\$46
	Couple with two children in a two-bedroom suite	\$1,132	\$709	\$423
	Couple with four children in a three-bedroom suite	\$1,440	\$839	\$601
Vancouver	Single employable in a Bachelor Suite	\$610	\$701	-\$91
	Couple with two children in a two-bedroom suite	\$1,101	\$1,045	\$56
	Couple with four children in a three-bedroom suite	\$1,186	\$1,220	-\$34

Table 11: Consideration of Monthly Income Assistance Rates and Average Rents

The difficult financial situation of newcomer households was reflected in housing outcomes: affordability was a central concern for respondents, regardless of legal status or city of settlement.¹⁰³ Three-quarters of all respondents did not meet national affordability standards (NAS) at the time of the interview.¹⁰⁴ Surprisingly, living in social housing (e.g. BC Housing, IRCOM, MSH) did not ensure households were meeting national affordability standards. At the time of the interviews, 13 of the 17 households living in social housing reported paying 31% or more on housing; five (3 in Vancouver, 2 in Winnipeg) allocated at least 51%. The proportion of households experiencing housing stress or critical housing stress, defined as

¹⁰³ Respondents were asked to provide housing costs including both rent *and* basic utilities (e.g. Hydro); telephone and cable costs were not included. Note that with respect to affordability, those respondents who were unsure of their household monthly income, who arrived as PSRs, or who had no permanent accommodations at the time of the interview were excluded from analysis when percentages are used.

¹⁰⁴ Individuals who were unsure of their household monthly income or who had no permanent accommodations at the time of the interview have been excluded from analysis and subsequent discussion of issues of housing stress. According to Rea et al. (2008, 28), the proportion of immigrant households allocating more than 30% on housing increased from 25.4% in 2001 to 28.5% in 2006. Conversely the proportion remained relatively constant for the Canadian-born population at 18.6%. Alarming, the authors note that for “immigrants, the median household income is lower and shelter costs higher than that of the Canadian-born population”, a finding that makes sense given the larger size of many immigrant households. The situation facing households in Vancouver, where shelter costs remain significantly above the national median costs, remains dire, particularly for recent arrivals. Approximately 38% of immigrant renters allocate beyond 30% of household income on shelter. In Manitoba 37.3% of renters allocate more than 30% of household income on shelter, compared to 43.7% of households in British Columbia.

spending at least 31% or 51% of monthly household income on housing, respectively, varied according to both city and legal status. Respondents in Vancouver were less likely to meet national affordability standards than were those in Winnipeg (19% and 29% respectively). Of those respondents experiencing affordability problems 33% experienced housing stress, and 43% critical housing stress. Although fewer households in Vancouver reported housing stress than did those in Winnipeg (31% and 35% respectively), respondents in Vancouver were more likely to experience critical housing stress. Fifty percent of households interviewed in Vancouver spent at least 51% of monthly household income on housing compared with 36% in Winnipeg. Although fewer households experienced housing stress in Vancouver than in Winnipeg, owing in large part to the increased tendency for Sudanese GARs to be meeting NAS, affordability problems were actually more severe.¹⁰⁵ Refugee claimants in both cities were most likely to experience critical housing stress.

In at least one case in Vancouver affordability issues was brought upon by the decision to file a refugee claim. The longer gap between arrival and the submission of refugee claims meant that a number of respondents in Vancouver had found work by the time they submitted their claim. One respondent reported having quit working when s/he submitted his/her claim so as to avoid illegal behaviour that could negatively impact his/her case. In the subsequent transition from employment income to social assistance the respondent's housing costs

¹⁰⁵ A number of possible explanations exist for the increased likelihood of Sudanese GARs meeting National Affordability Standards: first, the combination of relatively high-paying construction jobs and the need for smaller units (1 or 2 bedroom, as compared to 3 or 4 bedroom for the Afghan GARs); second, Sudanese GARs were more likely to be living in basement suites within private homes, while Afghan GARs in both cities were more likely to live in apartments; and finally, housing affordability challenges may have been underestimated owing to the influence of the interpreter who would sometimes provide the initial answer for the client (especially female respondents). Although respondents tended to confirm his initial answer I would attempt to obtain different and/or supporting information through follow up questions.

changed from <30% (meeting NAS) to over 75% of their income (experiencing critical housing stress).

Alarming, almost one in five respondents in Vancouver allocated over 75% of monthly household income on housing, leaving them at significant risk of absolute homelessness.

I have a question: just one person has \$10 expenditure per day for breakfast, lunch, food, clothes. Is \$10 enough for one person for a day? Is it enough? ... I spend \$10 a day for food – breakfast, lunch and dinner – [for my whole family] (Zainiba, a GAR in Vancouver).

After paying for housing the family is left with less than \$10 per day to meet all the basic needs for the month, including bus pass, food and clothing for four people.¹⁰⁶

Although refugee claimants in Vancouver were more likely to report experiencing housing stress than are GARs (88% and 74% respectively), the vast majority of the households in Vancouver who spent 75% or more of monthly household income on housing were Afghan GARs. Affordability problems for GARs may be amplified by the need for larger dwelling units owing to the larger household sizes and a tendency for single-headed households in this category. The high cost of utilities created additional financial burdens for a number of respondents, particularly in Winnipeg, where cold winters and substandard accommodations combined to force a choice between paying high utility costs or suffering through the cold. One family reported utility costs as high as \$500 per month in the winter, while another spoke of having been warned by the caretaker that he might want to move out before the winter as the cost of heating could run as high as \$300 a month during the coldest months. While some rents might not be unaffordable for refugees in Winnipeg, the additional burden

¹⁰⁶ Monies received from all sources of income (e.g. social assistance and CCTB) are included in this calculation.

placed on households by high utility costs pushed some into critical housing stress and/or forced them to move into less expensive – often smaller – accommodations. As vacancy rates declined and as rents continued to increase in both cities it has become more difficult to procure adequate and affordable housing.

As with other low income families across Canada, insufficient incomes and high housing prices placed respondents at risk of absolute and relative homelessness. Yet, unlike Canadians and other newcomers, many GARs experienced additional challenges owing to high rates of illiteracy, little or no formal education, and limited English language proficiency. Further, extended periods in refugee-producing situations or refugee camps meant some GARs arrive in Canada with little or no previous work experience. Even for those with formal education (e.g. engineers), technological differences may have made their prior knowledge obsolete. One engineer seeking to have his credentials from Afghanistan recognized in Canada, for example, reported having been told his knowledge was about 20 years behind today's technological developments. Taken together, these characteristics may have impaired GARs' ability to obtain employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency, resulting in the potential for long-term dependence upon social assistance. When combined with the challenges of procuring adequate and affordable housing for large household sizes, the picture for many respondents appeared bleak.

In Winnipeg, three respondents had no permanent housing at the time of the interview; each was staying with friends on a temporary basis while looking for other accommodation. In one instance, the respondent reported having been living with various friends for a week or two during the six month period preceding the interview. Of those with no permanent address, two were refugee claimants and one was a GAR. Three additional GARs expressed concern

about their ability to continue paying their current rent once they transitioned from RAP to social assistance. Anecdotal evidence suggested that staying with friends became much more common because it is getting harder to find housing within limited social assistance budgets. Other formal research has underscored the precarious housing situation of newcomers to Canada. During the current economic downturn refugee newcomers have faced increasing layoffs and rising concerns about how to pay their rent and/or mortgages (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009). While some had attained homeownership, loss of employment placed them at risk of absolute homelessness. While many respondents spoke of overcrowding as a necessity owing to low incomes and high rents, others chose to rent smaller units. Although one family of four described their one bedroom apartment as “cozy” they reported being satisfied and had no plans to look for other accommodations.

Overcrowding and pooling of incomes are two of the ways in which households attempt to reconcile low incomes and high housing costs. In Vancouver, 47% of households living in one (bed)room units are households of three or more compared to 10% in Winnipeg.¹⁰⁷ Further, 24% of all respondents living in a one (bed)room unit in Vancouver are households of four. Approximately 45% of households living in two bedroom units in Winnipeg are households of five or more, compared to 40% in Vancouver. Fifteen percent of all respondents living in two bedroom units are households of seven or more. Finally, over one-third of all respondents living in three bedroom units are households of seven or more (approximately 70% of all respondents in Winnipeg and 50% in Vancouver).

¹⁰⁷ The term (bed) room has been used to indicate that although some units are one bedroom apartments or suites, it may also refer to bachelor suites or circumstances in which individuals and/or households are renting one room in a house.

Although overcrowding was evident in all groups it was most prominent among Afghan GARs in both cities, many of whom have larger households by Canadian standards. Over 70% of Afghan participants reported households of 6 or more persons. Lack of affordable housing of suitable size in both cities necessitates that larger families seek smaller, more affordable units. Seven of the twelve households living in three-bedroom units, for example, are families of seven or more; five of these families live in Winnipeg. Refugee claimants in Winnipeg were the least likely to experience overcrowding; in many cases claimants in Winnipeg frequently spoke of renting a one (or in some cases two) bedroom apartment with one other person.

Similarly, other research in Winnipeg (Carter et al. 2009, Carter et al. 2008, SPCW 2006) and Vancouver (Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell and ISSo/BC 2009; McLean et al. 2006) has identified overcrowding as a concern for refugees, particularly those with larger than Canadian average household sizes. Market characteristics present a number of challenges. High rents, low vacancy rates and a limited number of three and four bedroom rental units required by the generally much larger households limit access to adequate, affordable housing (CMHC 2004a). These market circumstances are exacerbated by public policy failures that have kept increases in social assistance rates well below the rising cost of housing and living in general, legislation that favours landlords, long waiting lists for social housing, and the lack of any significant public initiative to increase the supply of affordable housing in recent years (Carter et al. 2008; Wayland 2007; Zane 2002). The limited availability of affordable private rental and social housing is one of the most difficult challenges facing low-income refugee households (Carter et al. 2009). In Vancouver,

McLean et al. (2006) and Brunner et al. (2010) report Acehnese refugees doubling, and tripling, up in order to cope with affordability problems.

The extent to which households engage in overcrowding in order to make housing more affordable may actually be underestimated in Vancouver: unlike Winnipeg where large families frequently rent small multi-room units, respondents in Vancouver were more likely to speak of housing being rented by the room. As such, some of the respondents who reported living in a one (bed) room unit were living in just one room, and shared the kitchen and bathroom with other tenants. One family of three, for example, rented two rooms in a Vancouver house (for which they were charged \$700 per month), while another family of three was charged \$800 to rent one room in a house in Burnaby. In both cases the houses themselves were shared with more than ten other residents. Another respondent spoke of having shared her initial housing (a one bedroom apartment in Vancouver) with six other roommates, while another family of four rented a 7' x 10' room when they first arrived. The extent to which these strategies have successfully enabled families to cope with the challenges of obtaining adequate and affordable housing remains to be seen. Although a number of households in both cities reported pooling (adult) incomes to make housing more affordable, all but one continued to experience significant affordability problems. In spite of combining the incomes of multiple household members, however, two households in Winnipeg and five in Vancouver continued to devote more than 51% of monthly household income to housing; four of these households combined the incomes of four or more people. In some cases the incomes of non-adult household members were also pooled. One family in Vancouver, for example, reported that four children (ages 13-19) worked part time to help support the family (this is in addition to the employment incomes of one parent); in spite of

this, their housing costs continued to represent 31-50% of their monthly household income. Further, (critical) housing stress and overcrowding were often concurrent conditions, with families of 6 or more renting a one or two bedroom apartment. At the time of the interview only three of the nine households in Winnipeg and one of the seven households in Vancouver who reported pooling incomes meet national affordability standards. One family in Winnipeg combined the incomes of five family members to bring the housing costs below 20% of the total household income.

The difficult financial situation imposed by high housing costs and low incomes were aggravated even further by pressures to send remittances to family 'at home' or in the refugee camps overseas, as well as to repay Government Transportation Loans. Although the vast majority of respondents experienced affordability problems, with over half of respondents in Vancouver and 36% in Winnipeg spending at least 51% of monthly household income on housing, many reported sending remittances to family abroad.

Most of us [have] family back home [who] depend on us because they assume we are living in very good situation. Compared to them ... they are right. But [here] we are living in survivor situation same as them (Ymo, a GAR from Winnipeg).

Assumptions of 'the good life' imagined by their families abroad do not mesh with the reality in Canada. While refugee newcomers in Canada have obtained some degree of physical safety, they continued to experience significant financial and housing insecurity. The pressure to send remittances created additional stress for families and further limited their ability to take care of their immediate needs, a finding that confirms earlier research (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell et al. 2005). High housing costs influenced the respondents' capacity to participate in sending remittances, particularly in light of their low incomes.

Fewer newcomers report sending remittances in Vancouver where housing costs are higher. In Winnipeg one respondent expressed significant concern over young single mothers in his community who continued to live in deep poverty, while sending monies received from Canada Child Tax Benefits (CCTB) abroad as remittances. The decision to send remittances to family abroad aggravated an already difficult housing situation.

Further, GARs resettled in Canada struggled to repay Government Transportation Loans. GARs selected for resettlement in Canada are asked to sign two financial promissory documents: a transportation loan overseas and an assistance loan upon arrival in Canada. Collectively, these loans cover costs associated with transportation, health care, and a service fee. GARs are expected to begin repaying their loan within 12 months of landing in Canada; interest begins accruing after 3 years.¹⁰⁸ Failure to repay loans precludes a GAR from sponsoring family members. Stress associated with being in debt and owing interest, something that is forbidden in some cultures, has precipitated a number of strategies to eliminate the debts quickly, a finding consistent with other research (Brunner et al. 2010; Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009). A number of Sudanese respondents (both male and female), for example, spoke of having gone to Alberta to earn sufficient money to pay off their loans and to provide their families with some financial stability. The higher preponderance of single-headed, larger than Canadian average households, limits the potential for Afghan GARs to engage in similar strategies. Consequently Afghan respondents, whose loans were bigger owing to their larger family sizes, continued to struggle to pay off Government Transportation Loans. Although CIC estimates the national repayment rate for Government Transportation Loans is 91% or more, the highest repayment rate of any government loan

¹⁰⁸While clients were advised about loans and their subsequent repayment, it remained unclear as to whether individuals fully understood the information provided to them.

program, one must question, at what price? Respondents reported having to cut costs elsewhere (e.g. scrimping on food costs and transportation budgets) in order to repay the loans. It must be recognized, however, that decisions made at the household level – including sending remittances to family and friends at home or trying to pay off government transportation loans as quickly as possible – may exacerbate an already difficult financial situation.

Barriers to Entry: Public and Private Market Housing

Challenges in reconciling low incomes and expensive rents were exacerbated by barriers that occurred in both the public and private rental markets. While access to social housing was greater in Winnipeg, owing to a relatively larger stock, particularly in the downtown core, respondents in Vancouver faced long waitlists for social housing. With the exception of those living in IRCOM house, many of the respondents who had obtained social housing in Winnipeg were small households (1-2 people) living in bachelor suites and one bedroom units downtown.

Respondents in both cities were vocal about the benefits of obtaining social housing, believing the reduced rents would make life better for their family. As one respondent aptly noted, "the government housing, it's very long processing and you have to stay in the line. But the private one is expensive for my income" (Leila, a GAR from Winnipeg). In some cases, respondents spoke of checking on the status of their application on a daily or weekly basis (e.g. by phone or in person). One respondent, for example, reported going to the BC Housing office to check the status of her application every time she went to Metrotown; if not for this strategy the respondent believes she would still be waiting. A number of

respondents reported being frustrated that others who had applied after them already received housing. In spite of being assured by BC Housing that her name was still on the list, one woman stated she was not convinced. For claimants in Vancouver a lack of clarity on eligibility requirements meant few claimant households had applied for BC Housing. Many, however, stated they would try to obtain BC Housing “if I am allowed to stay [in Canada]” (Paola). Households attempting to alleviate high housing costs by renting smaller, more affordable units, faced difficulties when National Occupancy Standards, which regulated the number and age of persons sharing a bedroom, were applied in the public, and to a lesser extent private, housing markets.¹⁰⁹ For large families in both cities these difficulties were compounded by the combination of limited supply and low turnover among 4 and 5 bedroom units, particularly at the lower end of the market (cf, Carter et al. 2009; Wayland 2007).¹¹⁰ Reflecting on the challenges faced by families seeking larger units, one interpreter asserted:

When they want to find government housing they have to wait for years and years, two, three four years because they don't have very many three, four five bedroom [units] and ... whoever is living in the five bedrooms or four bedrooms they're not moving as quick. So they have to wait; the waiting period is very, very long (Interpreter from Winnipeg).

Unfortunately, many of the respondents waiting for social housing at the time of their interview lived in households of 6 or more, and as such were seeking the very units that are in such short supply. Many had been waiting over 2 years for a suitable unit. One family reported having received a letter from the Manitoba Housing Authority informing them their application had been cancelled owing to low vacancies in the neighbourhoods desired by the

¹⁰⁹ According to the National Occupancy Standard (CMHC 1991), housing is considered suitable if there are sufficient bedrooms for all of the household members. Cohabiting adult couples, unattached individuals 18 years of age and older, two same-sex children under 18, and two opposite-sex children five years of age and younger are permitted to share a bedroom under these regulations. It is understood that bachelor suites are meant to be occupied by one individual.

¹¹⁰ Of the 84,166 BC Housing units available in all of BC, for example, only 1,621 have four or more bedrooms.

family in question. In many cases, however, respondents suggested that although they would like to find more suitable housing (e.g. larger, more affordable) they would wait until a social housing unit became available.

Although the overall household incomes of Sudanese GARs and single refugee claimants were relatively low, their smaller average household size enabled more flexibility in identifying and obtaining new accommodations. By contrast, larger households (e.g. Afghan GARs) experienced difficulties in finding alternative accommodations. Other problems arose for multi-generational families and households with children over 18 who were accustomed to living together, yet prohibited by rules in social housing units.

While rental assistance programs were in place in both Manitoba and BC to aid low income families to reduce their housing cost burdens, those receiving Social Assistance, and/or living in subsidized accommodations were not eligible (MFHS 2006a, 2006b; BC Housing 2006a, 2006b). Further, in BC, applicants must have been a resident of the province for a full twelve month period directly preceding their application in order to be eligible for these types of benefits (BC Housing 2006b). As such, while a number of respondents were aware of the existence of various rental subsidy programs, they were not eligible owing to partial or complete reliance on social assistance.

Landlords and building managers in the private, and to a lesser extent the public, housing markets played a significant role in shaping housing outcomes among respondents. While refugees in both cities spoke of the difficulties of obtaining adequately sized housing, respondents in Vancouver frequently encountered informal ‘no children’ rules in many buildings (see the case study on the next page). As vacancy rates fell in both cities it

appeared that landlords had more freedom to select tenants, exacerbating an already difficult situation for low income families, particularly those with many children, to obtain housing. For GARs in both cities, access to a housing search assistant was integral to obtain suitable housing as the individual was able to advocate on their behalf to potential landlords. Refugee claimants in Vancouver, however, were not eligible for this service and were most likely to report problems with no children policies. For many, this resulted overcrowded living arrangements, and frequently substandard housing, particularly in unregulated basement suites.

Vancouver Case Study

For some families the difficulties of obtaining housing were exacerbated by formal and informal 'no children' policies. When told that a household contained children some building managers were straight-forward about not renting to families with children, while others would say they would call them but never did. This 'no-child' barrier appeared when making housing inquiries both in person and over the phone. In spite of signs advertising vacancies, households with children were repeatedly told no units were available or that the landlord would not rent to families with children in units on the second floor or higher owing to the potential for noise complaints from neighbours and excessive wear and tear in the units. One couple was told that the landlord was only willing to rent the unit to the two of them and suggested they "leave their children with a friend". Reflecting on the difficulties encountered in trying to procure housing one respondent noted that "the most incredible thing is that they prefer to accept pets [but] not children".

Current Housing: Conditions and Issues

Thirty-six percent of respondents with permanent accommodation cited the condition of their current housing as a concern, a finding most pronounced amongst refugee claimants.¹¹¹ Mould, broken windows, unsafe piping, cockroaches and mice were examples provided by a number of respondents in both cities. One family in Burnaby put all of their mattresses on the outside deck of their apartment during the day because there were many cockroaches and mice in the apartment. At night, the family reported not being able to get to sleep, often staying awake until as late as 5 am, because otherwise the bugs would bite them. They would pick them off the beds and throw them away. “Mice, cockroaches and bugs are making us crazy ... but because of money we are not able to leave this place”. In Winnipeg, claimants spoke extensively about one building described as the ‘worst building in Winnipeg’ (see the case study below).

Winnipeg Case Study

One building, described as the “worst building in Winnipeg”, emerged as a place where newcomers from Africa can get started in Canada. “The worst thing is even if we have money nobody will rent to us ... We don’t have the documents they need”. Newcomers reported being able to rent in that particular building because it has a Somali caretaker who didn’t care about the necessary paperwork or identification. “In this building no one asks

¹¹¹ Respondents were asked an open-ended question about the condition of their housing. Although some provided multiple responses, others did not express any concerns. Responses to this question represent the most frequently cited concerns. A subsequent question asked respondents to identify the most significant barrier to housing; responses have been identified as such.

those questions”; they know people are desperate for housing and they take advantage of the situation.

The building had dirty carpets and pipes carrying hot water across the ceilings of the rooms, which potentially posed a safety hazard if they burst. Respondents spoke of mould, holes in the walls, cockroaches, and inadequate heating. One respondent reported having to pile blankets and put on up to six pairs of socks on to keep warm in the winter time.

It is important to recognize, however, that while the majority of households in both Winnipeg and Vancouver did not complain about the condition of their current accommodation the housing conditions were not necessarily adequate. “Good enough for now” was how one person described their current housing; while another asserted that he could not complain about the conditions in Canada because compared to where he came from (i.e. in refugee camps) he has so much more here. Certainly this sentiment arose in other interviews as well.

Neighbourhood safety emerged as a concern for respondents in a number of areas in Winnipeg, although most frequently in the downtown core and the North End of the City. “As soon as it gets dark outside you have to stay home and everything will be okay”. None of the claimants living in and around the aforementioned building, for example, reported feeling safe walking in the evening, regardless of age, gender, or even physical size. In some cases respondents’ safety concerns extended to the hallways of their apartment buildings. One family, for example, did not leave the safety of their apartment after 5 pm.

[We] won't even go in the hallways. It's scary. There are a bunch of animals. They're not even humans ... They force you to give whatever you have – your pants, your money (Anvari, a GAR from Winnipeg).

Similarly, Carter et al. (2008) reported over one in five refugee respondents felt their housing was unsafe, “usually due to inadequate security features, disruptive neighbours, or illegal activities in the building” (Carter et al. 2008, 77). Although neighbourhood safety was not as much of a concern in Vancouver as in Winnipeg, the problems reported there centred more around fears of homeless people and drug users (and/or drug paraphernalia) as a concern for their children's ability to play outside.

Problems with landlords, while cited by GARs and refugee claimants alike in both cities, were more pronounced amongst claimants. While GARs were more likely to have experienced problems with landlords revolving around failure to (promptly) complete repairs, refugee claimants spoke of more abusive relationships. In Winnipeg, problems with landlords involved racist comments or actions, and taking advantage of newcomers. In an extreme case, a respondent reported that the landlord

sends [you a] letter talking about that you have not paid your rents yet ... If you lose your receipt then you have to pay them again [K - Even though the government pays them direct?] Yes. I had to call my Income Assistance [Worker], she paid the last month, they say I owe them \$240 dollars. My caseworker was like I paid for it. Finally I talked to her I said I need proof (Gobe, a refugee claimant from Winnipeg).

In Vancouver, however, some respondents talked about the problems associated with a lack of control over their heating systems. For some, the decision to use portable heaters resulted in both safety hazards (particularly for those with small children) and/or high utility costs. Although Carter et al. (2009) identified landlords as helping newcomers, only one respondent in the current study had received assistance from their landlord. In that case the landlord took

the family shopping once a month in her car (e.g. for groceries) so they could buy heavy items.

Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Alarming Housing Experiences of Post-IRPA GARs

After the first year of federal RAP funding, those who had not obtained employment transitioned to provincial social assistance. Once on social assistance, GARs experienced pressure to obtain employment as quickly as possible. Yet, high rates of illiteracy in their first language, low education among many respondents, and prolonged exposure to war created additional barriers to successful resettlement.

While respondents in both cities faced barriers accessing adequate and affordable housing, owing to low employment participation, reliance on social assistance, above average household sizes, and the unforgiving private rental market in Vancouver, Afghan GARs in Vancouver were more susceptible to critical housing stress (spending at least 51% on housing) than are those in Winnipeg.

The difficulties of obtaining adequate and affordable housing that was of sufficient size to meet their household needs contributed to low geographic mobility, particularly among Afghan GARs in both cities. Generally, the only way to overcome critical housing stress and the associated crowding is through achieving higher income, as the majority of housing stock with 4 or more bedroom units was associated with single family dwellings, not rental apartments. Yet many Afghan respondents felt future employment opportunities were bleak owing to their low levels of formal education and limited proficiency in English. The limited stock of affordable 4 bedroom (or larger) units made it difficult to find other housing. Many

respondents expressed a desire to find more suitable housing, frequently citing overcrowding as the primary motivator, and were quick to acknowledge the challenges facing them. Similar situations faced other recently arrived GARs, including Karen refugees in Surrey (Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009). For those with little or no formal education, many of whom were illiterate in their first language, the settlement process, including obtaining employment and learning English, became much more difficult. The stresses of migration, of loss, of prolonged exposure to war and/or trauma amplified the challenges faced during resettlement.

This research initially began with the idea of examining how legal status – and by extension the rights and services an individual can access – intersected with the policy environment and local context to influence settlement outcomes. What emerged, in part, was the realization that group characteristics played an important role in housing outcomes. Consideration of groups within and between cities showed that some groups of refugees faced barriers arising from their limited formal education, illiteracy and lack of English language proficiency, necessitating further research on how immigration policy changes intersect with housing outcomes. In so doing, however, individual agency must be taken into account, as barriers might be self-imposed for some respondents. For instance, lack of motivation, the effects of trauma, and a dearth of prior work experience might reduce individuals' motivation to pursue language and employment or services to assist them in these pursuits, as well as other aspects of settlement and integration.

Low employment participation, high housing prices and insufficient social assistance rates meant that a large percentage of GARs and refugee claimants experienced significant housing affordability problems in both Winnipeg and Vancouver, a problem that is most severe in Vancouver.

Previous research on the housing trajectories of refugees in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto found that refugee claimants faced a more difficult pathway to permanent housing owing to factors associated with their journey to Canada. Lack of information and limited access to social capital, for example, were associated with more precarious housing situations among these groups (Murdie 2008; Sherrell et al. 2008; Rose and Ray 2001). Yet, my results from the Winnipeg interviews problematized these findings. Specifically, not all refugee claimants faced significant difficulties in obtaining adequate and affordable housing, an outcome which pointed to the need to consider local variation in the provision of settlement services, and the housing environment. While the results of this research confirmed that refugee claimants in Vancouver faced a more difficult pathway than did GARs, better access to temporary accommodation, financial assistance and settlement services immediately upon arrival provided claimants in Winnipeg with a stable base from which to make connections to existing community and find permanent accommodation. The inclusion of non-comparable groups in the surveys (e.g. Spanish speaking women and Somali men), however, meant that place cannot definitively be separated out as a powerful determinant of outcomes. However, it is clear that refugee claimants in Vancouver experienced greater difficulties owing to lack of information and support upon arrival. While previous research indicates that GARs have tended to fare better than refugee claimants overall, the barriers facing some GARs in this study were troubling. This finding underscores the need for a more equitable settlement environment for refugee claimants across Canada, as well as the benefits of early assistance.

Although findings such as the higher affordability problems in Vancouver and differing outcomes of GARs and refugee claimants point to the importance of legal status and provincial context in determining housing outcomes, the experiences of Afghan GARs in

both cities emerged as a new concern. Consideration of the experiences of Sudanese and Afghan GARs in Vancouver suggests that while place played a key role in housing outcomes (e.g. the effects of an unforgiving private rental market in Vancouver), certain groups faced greater barriers beyond those normally associated with legal status and place, that amplified the barriers faced by other groups. Those households with large families, low literacy, health concerns, and single headed households experienced barriers that were difficult, if not impossible to overcome. Further, in Vancouver, group characteristics intersected with local context (low vacancy rates, rising rents, small stock of 4 and 5 bedroom units) to create additional problems for large households. The shift in admission groups arising from the 2002 implementation of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) resulted in increased numbers of ‘high needs’ or ‘multi-barriered’ GARs. The experiences of (post-IRPA) GARs in both cities require further consideration. In light of the expectation for low employment outcomes amongst ‘high needs’ GARS there is a need to reconsider the provision of enhanced financial assistance. If Canada is to continue accepting ‘high needs’ refugees as our humanitarian commitments require, it is not ethical to continue providing insufficient support to enable long-term integration.

Unfortunately the finding that newcomers in this study faced difficulties with respect to housing and employment was not new, nor surprising. Previous research demonstrated high poverty and low incomes among all newcomers, a finding more pronounced among refugee newcomers. Indeed, we know housing affordability is an issue for many Canadians and newcomers alike (particularly for renters), and that people are forced to make difficult choices when money is tight. So why is this issue important? Why should we care? The following chapter will delve further into this issue.

Chapter 7: But What About Me? I'm (Going to Be) Canadian Too: Housing, Social Inclusion and Refugee Youth

If we don't spend on people's housing and young people's education, what will be then the society in the future? (Key Informant in Vancouver)

Whether it is a lack of social housing, affordability issues or substandard conditions, housing affects childrens' mental, physical and social well-being (Watt 2003, ii)

The idea of housing as an indicator of integration is relatively easy to understand. The type and quality of housing can be directly related to the amount of financial support provided by government transfers (e.g. social assistance) or employment income. Housing outcomes are further influenced by a variety of other factors, including size of family, as well as the appropriateness and availability of existing stock. For those with low incomes finding adequate and affordable housing is difficult, if not impossible. The result, as we have seen in Winnipeg and Vancouver, is that newly arrived GARs and refugee claimants often live in overcrowded conditions and experience high affordability stress. Less frequently considered, however, are the ways in which housing itself influences other aspects of people's lives. At its most basic level, housing influences household budgets – the higher the cost of housing, the less is available to pay for other necessities, such as food, transportation, clothing and utilities. While attention has increasingly been focused on the immediate housing experiences of refugees, including overcrowding and affordability challenges (Kissoon 2010; Preston et al. 2009; Hiebert and Mendez 2008; Hiebert et al. 2005), there is a need for more explicit consideration of the ways in which housing influences peoples' long-term social outcomes. Of particular concern is the situation facing refugee youth and young adults in both cities.

The concept of social inclusion provides a helpful way to frame discussions about the impact of housing on people's everyday lives. At its most basic level "[s]ocial inclusion is about making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society" (Omidvar and Richmond 2003, viii). Yet, the ability to fully participate in all aspects of society is influenced by housing. Housing, as Chisholm (2002) asserts, is intimately related to social inclusion.

Housing is a gateway through which we connect to our immediate environment and society at large. It reflects social status, belonging to community, a centre to gather with friends and family, and socially it has a direct bearing on the extent to which we experience social inclusion or exclusion (Chisholm 2002).

For some, housing provides a safe space from which to retreat from the world, while for others housing creates additional burdens. For newly arrived refugees housing represents the foundation upon which settlement unfolds. Failure to ensure newcomers, and low-income Canadians more broadly, have access to adequate and affordable housing has long-term implications on their physical, mental and social development (Watt 2003). For newcomers, the assistance provided in the period after arrival has the potential to impact respondents and their children's futures. At the least, the consequences of social exclusion include "a lack of recognition and acceptance; powerlessness and 'voicelessness'; economic vulnerability; and, diminished life experiences and limited life prospects" (Omidvar and Richmond 2003, viii). At worst, there lies the potential for the development of a multigenerational cycle of poverty.

To this point, my research has focussed upon the housing outcomes of GARs and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Vancouver. This chapter extends the analysis to consider the ways in which housing influenced their long-term social inclusion, with particular emphasis on refugee youth. Drawing upon the concept of social inclusion I argue it is not sufficient to

focus upon housing outcomes; rather, consideration must be afforded to the ways in which housing shapes long-term social inclusion for refugee newcomers.

The experiences of children and youth were not a focus of the research, yet this issue emerged as important during the course of the research. Although I did not interview anyone under the age of 18, the tendency for interviews to be held within respondents' homes meant that other family members were frequently present. The propensity for youth and young adults to have developed better language skills than their parents, and curiosity about the research, meant they would frequently sit with their parents, interjecting comments when they had something to say. It was during these moments that the dire situations and challenges facing refugee youth came to the fore.

Housing and Poverty

When people flee their own country and move to a new environment they have no knowledge of their surroundings. All that is familiar is gone. Life gets difficult because social assistance payments are so low they do not cover basic needs: health, education, employment and, of course, housing becomes difficult (Ali, a refugee claimant in Winnipeg).

Employment or lack thereof, is a key influence on housing outcomes – the higher the income, the greater choice households have in the size and quality of housing that is obtained. Those with higher incomes may allocate more to housing, while the choice of those with lower incomes is constrained. “Where housing is allocated purely on a market basis, people with low incomes are restricted to the bottom end of the housing market” (Fuller-Thomson, Hulchanski and Hwang 2000, p. 7 as cited in Cooper 2001, 7). Upon arrival, GARs and refugee claimants struggle to find housing that fits within their limited budgets *and* meets the size needs of their families. While the housing search counsellors in Vancouver and Winnipeg provide newly arrived GARs with assistance in securing permanent

accommodations, a service which is extended to refugee claimants in Winnipeg, the budgets provided through RAP are insufficient to obtain good quality, affordable housing that is of appropriate size for the family. Rather families were forced to allocate a significant proportion of their budgets to housing that was often inadequate or unsuitable to meet their needs. Further, while key informants in both cities spoke of the challenges of finding housing within limited budgets, those in Winnipeg underscored the poor quality of housing that was obtained. “The places I went they are just you don’t wish to put animals there and they are renting to people” (Moe, a refugee claimant in Winnipeg). Lack of financial means necessitates taking whatever is available; in general, respondents do not have the luxury to consider what is safe, healthy, or appropriate. As one respondent astutely noted “What I make tells me where I can live” (Maliah, a GAR in Vancouver). While the majority of respondents spoke of their desire to find larger, more appropriate accommodations to better meet the needs of their families, many reflected on the trade-off between the price and size or condition of housing. The high price of housing was often the deciding factor, particularly in light of low household incomes and dependence upon government transfers as the main source of household income. In the first few years after arrival one mother, who lived with her three children in a two bedroom basement suite, reported being so depressed at her terrible living conditions that she told others not to come to Canada. Reflecting upon her experiences she noted “something called resettlement should look like people care about you” (Mary, a GAR in Vancouver). After living in the depressing conditions and struggling to make ends meet, however, she felt staying in her country and dying would have been better than how she was living here in Canada.

In Winnipeg, for example, Carter et al. (2009) noted that the lower rents, better transportation and proximity to immigrant and refugee serving agencies found in the inner city were offset by issues associated with urban decline. “Poverty and unemployment rates are high and the incidence of crime, both property and personal crime, such as murder, attempted murder, rape and assault, is much higher in these neighbourhoods. The housing stock is also older and of poorer quality” (Carter et al. 2009, 315).

Many respondents, for example, spoke of living in units infested with cockroaches and/or mould, both of which negatively impact physical and mental health. For one family, the physical exhaustion of having to remain awake all night in order to prevent bugs from biting them impaired daily functioning and mental alertness. Another family spoke of the dampness that pervaded the children’s bedroom in the two bedroom suite. In addition to the potential ramifications on children’s physical health (e.g. increased risk of respiratory illness owing to mould), the unwillingness of the children to sleep in their bedroom increased overall crowding within the unit. For some parents, the challenges of coping with (repeated) spraying to eradicate cockroaches were amplified by the presence of toddlers who put everything in their mouths. The stresses associated with ensuring the household had sufficient financial resources to pay the rent results in “increased parental stress and preoccupation with finding financial resources, therefore having less time to spend with children” (Watt 2003, 13).

Although refugee claimants in Winnipeg spoke of the benefits of living downtown (e.g. lower housing and transportation costs), some expressed concern about the long-term impacts of living in this environment. One respondent, for example, reported being shocked to find people who had been in Winnipeg for 10 years or more living in substandard buildings in Winnipeg’s inner city (e.g. in the ‘worst building in Winnipeg’), and experiencing

widespread unemployment and poverty. When he asked why people did not try to improve themselves, to get help, people laughed and told him he would discover it for himself. He is beginning to understand how difficult it is to break out of the cycle of poverty. Many, he noted, are “running empty circles, but we still have the hope [the situation will improve]” (Abuali, a refugee claimant in Winnipeg).

The issue then is the degree to which concentration in neighbourhoods of poverty acts as a barrier to social and economic integration of new immigrants and their children. Living in areas of concentrated poverty has adverse impacts on a whole range of life experiences, and in the case of new immigrants it leads to family conflicts, loss of self-esteem, and a sense of despair about future prospects in the new country of settlement. Young immigrants who grow up in such conditions can develop a culture of alienation both from their parents and their community of origin, and from that of the host society (Mwarigha M.S. 2002) (Omidvar and Richmond 2003, 10).

Unlike single newcomers – who might have been able to double or even triple up to make housing more affordable – households with children were more constrained in their housing options. In part, decisions around housing were influenced by the greater willingness of landlords at the lower price range of the rental housing spectrum to overlook National Occupancy Standards (NOS), allowing larger families to rent smaller units. In Winnipeg and Vancouver the dearth of larger units (e.g. 3-4 bedrooms or more) within the rental market intersected with very low vacancy rates and low turnover to make it almost impossible for large families to find adequate and affordable housing. “The vacancies that do exist are in older rental stock in poor condition or newer stock that is well beyond the price range affordable to most refugee households” (Carter et al. 2008, viii). In Vancouver, refugee claimant households – including those with children – were more likely to rent housing by the room, sharing the kitchen and bathroom with up to 10 other people (Hiebert et al. 2005).

While living in overcrowded, lower-quality housing may help families in balancing tight budgets, the condition of housing may have unforeseen psychological and physical consequences for the entire household. Initial results from the Health and Housing in Transition (HHiT) Study (REACH 3, 2010), for example, revealed that those who were vulnerably housed (e.g. overcrowded, unaffordable, or inadequate housing) were at high risk of serious mental and physical health problems.¹¹² For some families the need to double up (e.g. with other extended family members) might create mental health concerns. One single parent who lived with her minor children, her adult son and his family, became quite emotional when speaking of her living situation. Although the woman desperately wanted to move into a separate unit in order to escape her son's verbal abuse, this was not possible unless she obtained social housing. While she had repeatedly inquired about her application at the time of the interview she was unsuccessful in securing a unit. Further, Watt (2003) cautions that

[d]espite popular thought that some cultures are more 'resilient' to the consequences of living in crowded conditions, research indicates that all people, regardless of culture, are vulnerable to these effects (Watt 2003, 9).

For some parents, pressures about adequately providing for their children were amplified by social understandings of what is 'normal' or appropriate. In Vancouver, for example, one single mother reported her children did not understand why they shared one bedroom when Canadian children could have one bedroom for each person. Questions from their peers (e.g. why she slept in the same room with her brothers), as well as their inability to go places and do things that cost money, placed significant stress on the respondent and her children. Near tears, the respondent asked "how do you tell your children 'because there is not enough

¹¹² While greater attention is frequently given to those who are homeless, initial results from the HHiT (REACH 3, 2010, 1) indicate "people who are vulnerably housed face the same severe health problems as people who are homeless".

money’?” (Zainiba, a GAR in Vancouver). With little money remaining after paying for shelter, respondents lamented being unable to give their children fun things (e.g. games) or provide them with ‘normal lives.’

Though the majority have chosen price as the determining factor this is not true for all. One couple in Winnipeg, for example, allocates approximately 90% of their household budget to housing. When asked about their decision, the respondents spoke of having searched the ads in a comfortable price range and found nothing suitable. As the parents of two young children, one born shortly after their arrival in Winnipeg, they were concerned about how the physical condition of the housing (e.g. mould) and neighbourhood safety of the units within their price range would impact on their children’s future. After looking for areas of the city where they felt they might want to live, the respondents found a new rental building on the outskirts of Winnipeg. The building itself was located in a quiet neighbourhood with good schools and public amenities (e.g. parks, daycares, recreation centre). Although the family admitted they must scrimp on other expenses (e.g. food, clothing) they adamantly believed the long-term benefits to their children’s health were well worth these short-term sacrifices. Doing so, however, necessitated the couple “choose [a] clean place over eating” (Jane, a refugee claimant in Winnipeg).

Access to healthy and nutritious food is one area in which low income households suffer. As families are forced to “cut dietary corners in order to save enough money for shelter” (Watt 2003, 13) they are at an increased risk of malnutrition. Reliance on the food bank is high among respondents in both cities, a finding which echoes research in both Canada and the United States that link high shelter costs and dependence upon emergency food supports (cf, Carter et al. 2008; Cooper 2001). Although children and young adults were at an age when

they needed balanced diets, parents were unable to afford healthy and nutritious foods that meet all daily requirements, instead subsisting on donations from the food bank and/or inexpensive foods. Further, respondents spoke of foregoing foods such as meat, fruit, vegetables, and other staples when their prices increased. One respondent, for example, expressed frustration that her children needed healthy foods, not the cheap food she is able to purchase on social assistance; another relies primarily on the food bank, supplemented by spoiled fruit from a local produce store (see the case study below). While the respondent recognized that the fruit and vegetables that s/he bought were not of the highest quality, at \$1 per bag it was the only fresh produce the family could afford. One key informant in Vancouver asserted “if there isn’t enough [food] in the home, [parents] are sacrificing so their children can get enough to eat” (Key Informant). Being hungry sets people on edge, making it even more difficult to pay attention and take care of necessary things.

Vancouver Case Study

Taqsir, a government assisted refugee in Metro Vancouver, expressed frustration at the difficulties of trying to support his family of 9 on provincial social assistance. At the time of the interview Taqsir, who had just returned to his small, three bedroom apartment from grocery shopping, showed me the bags of spoiled fruit he had bought for his family for the week. He explained that buying *spoiled* fruit, often for \$1 a bag, was the only way his children obtained *fresh* fruit.

For Taqsir, the difficulties in paying rent were amplified by high medical expenses (e.g. multiple prescriptions), school-related costs (e.g. school supplies, fees) and the need to repay

government transportation loans. While the family's application for social housing included multiple letters of support from medical practitioners, at the time of my interview his family was unsuccessful in obtaining a subsidized housing unit.

Concerns about his children's future and overcrowding within the unit (e.g. no quiet places) amplified the stresses of resettlement.

As rents continue to rise, households must devote a greater proportion of their income to housing, leaving fewer resources to meet other basic needs. When working for \$9-10 per hour, it is difficult to pay for rent *and* other household expenses, such as food and transportation (Nyawour, a GAR in Vancouver). Further, the reliance of many respondents on public transportation makes it difficult to purchase larger and heavier items, and as such take advantage of savings offered by buying food and household items in bulk. Consequently families "are forced to allocate money that would otherwise be spending on food, clothing and other essentials toward rent payment that exceed their means" (Cooper 2001, 17). In some cases, the need to choose between rent and other expenses extends to "amenities [normally] considered a part of housing. For some refugee families, telephone service, heat and hydro are luxury items, not basic amenities" (Watt 2003, 17). A refugee claimant in Vancouver, for example, spoke of only heating one room in order to reduce total household heating costs. In Winnipeg, where colder temperatures preclude forgoing heat, families still spoke of sleeping under layers of blankets with up to six pairs of socks to keep electricity costs down.

Unlike Winnipeg, gentrification and redevelopment in Vancouver's downtown core has meant much of the least expensive housing is found in outer suburbs. Consequently outlying areas have emerged as new settlement locations. Yet, these areas are not always well-served by public transportation. One respondent, for example, spoke of her family having to walk everywhere in order to save money. While the family was able to walk to nearby stores, schools, library, and so on her husband's job was located at a distance from their home. His occasional evening and graveyard shifts were challenging because the buses shut down for the night and taxi cabs are expensive. As such, he was occasionally forced to walk long distances through unsafe neighbourhoods in order to reach home. While the emergence of new initial settlement locations, including Surrey, Burnaby and Coquitlam in Metro Vancouver, as well as the outer neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, offered lower housing costs, these savings were frequently offset by higher costs for other household expenses (e.g. transportation, childcare) as newcomers must travel longer distances to access employment, as well as necessary settlement and employment services. Some respondents in Burnaby, for example, spoke of the challenges of attending English language classes located in East Vancouver. In addition to the costs imposed by crossing a transit fare zone, the need to travel 30 minutes by transit in each direction was impossible for those with children in preschool and/or kindergarten as there was insufficient time to travel, attend class and return in time to pick up children. Consequently a number of respondents spoke of not participating in free English language classes, which has the potential to prolong the settlement process of refugees. Households in which one or both parents were working for minimum wage and who lacked access to daycare owing to both availability and cost might be precluded from taking advantage of free English language classes, employment programs, and other services

that might facilitate integration, and – in the long-run – better their household’s financial situation.

For some children of refugees in British Columbia, the difficulties of going to school were compounded by the need to obtain employment to help better the households’ financial situation. Unlike Manitoba, where the minimum age for employment was 16, in British Columbia children ages 12 and up may legally work up to four hours on a school day, and seven hours on a non school day (HRSDC 2006).¹¹³ One respondent, for example, reported that four of his five children (ages 19, 18, 15 and 14) worked and contributed to household income. At the time of the interview, his 12 year old child was the only family member who did not have a job. Although the combined household income enabled the family to rent a three bedroom apartment that was in good condition they lacked sufficient space to comfortably accommodate the family of seven. Further, the respondent expressed concern about his children’s mental health, noting that they were depressed because between working and studying they had no time to “just be children” (Ahmad, a GAR in Vancouver).

Although children’s earnings might help to raise the overall household income they also might negatively impact families living in social and/or rent-geared-to income housing, as the increased household income is offset by higher rents. In Metro Vancouver, one family expressed deep frustration that their daughters’ earnings, intended to cover college tuition, were being included as income in the rent calculation. The inability of low-income parents to afford post-secondary tuition necessitated that young adults must work to pay, or at the minimum contribute to, the costs of their tuition and books for post-secondary education.

¹¹³ Weekly maximums were also in place – children could work up to 20 hours in a week with five school days and 35 in all others. Children under 12 years of age might also be employed with the permission of the Director of Employment Standards (HRSDC 2006).

Those living in social housing faced a difficult choice – either balance full-time studies and part-time employment which increases both the stress placed upon the student as well as the household rent, or take summers off to work full time and save for the yearly tuition. Although two children in one family have been able to obtain student loans, they were required to be full-time students. If they attended classes full-time, however, it limited their ability to work and contribute to rent because they have to pay full tuition. The family had to scrimp to pay it. The intersection of social housing regulations which prohibited children 18 and over from living with their parents unless they were full time students, however, precluded the latter as a viable option (Carter et al. 2008). Consequently parents wishing to support their children's post-secondary education had to stretch their minimal budgets even farther to offset additional rents charged. Even at IRCOM house, where housing is intended to support high needs families during their first three years in Canada, the need to meet strict social housing eligibility guidelines created challenges for households.

Despite the advantages of living in public housing, several interviewees noted that public housing eligibility guidelines made it difficult for them to qualify. For example, multiple family households, expanded family households, and family households with adult children found meeting the eligibility requirements difficult (Carter et al. 2008, 119).

While rent geared to income housing aided low income families in reducing their housing costs, it might also serve to impair some families' attempts to get ahead. Similarly respondents spoke of the challenges of not being able to save money: as soon as income increases, so too does rent. As such, as their household incomes increased, a number of respondents reported having moved out of social housing in order to better their financial situation. While parents may feel their struggles are for the long-term benefit of their

children, this is not always the case. Consequently, there is a pressing need to think about how housing and poverty combine to influence ability to succeed in school and beyond.

Poverty and Education

*Beyond housing, education is the second challenge facing newcomers
(Qawdhan, a refugee claimant in Winnipeg).*

In large part respondents' concerns about overcrowding centered upon its effects on their children. For many, the lack of privacy arising from the need to have family members share bedrooms and/or sleep in the living room and dining room adversely affected the mental and physical health of all family members. Although some spoke of the need for a quiet place to rest owing to physical or mental health issues, many did not have such a space within their apartments.

Respondents expressed concern about the impact of overcrowding on their children's education. The difficulties of studying in crowded, and frequently noisy, apartments were cited by respondents and their children in both cities. Although research demonstrates that "[s]ome of the harmful effects of crowding are buffered by having a place in the home where the child can find refuge" (Watt 2003, 9), the necessity to have two or more people sleeping in each room, including the living room, leaves little space in which to pursue quiet, uninterrupted activities, such as studying. One teen, who shares his bedroom with his two older brothers, complained it is difficult to study because one of his brothers wants to go to sleep and the other wants to watch T.V. The family of six lived in a two-bedroom apartment, with the mother slept in the living room and his sisters in the other bedroom. In the absence of a quiet place in which to do homework the young man attempted to utilize quiet spaces outside the home (e.g. library, school). Unfortunately access to these areas was frequently restricted (see later for a more in depth discussion). In Winnipeg's North End and Downtown, for example, the lack of neighbourhood safety impaired students' abilities to work at the library in the evenings. One respondent, for example, reported that fears of being

assaulted while walking to or from the library meant his children could not stay at the library past dark, even if he walked over to meet them. Consequently, his children were limited to using the library during daylight hours, something which was difficult to do in the depth of winter.

While some reported their children went to the library to study, others suggested their children made excuses not to study (e.g. because they did not have a quiet space of their own). Although one single mother in Vancouver reported having arrived in Canada with the hope of her children being educated, something she herself had not achieved, the difficult financial situation facing her family had left her increasingly despondent. Her eldest child, in grade 10 at the time of the research, frequently complained he was unable to study because his younger siblings distracted him. In the absence of a quiet space in which to study (the family of four lived in a one-bedroom apartment) the respondent feared that her children would go elsewhere and engage in troubling behaviours. While concerns about the impact of crowding on education emerged most frequently in discussions with parents (particularly GARs) some refugee claimants expressed similar experiences. One refugee claimant, for example, spoke of having rented a room in a house with six other single men. Although the respondent was able to retreat to his room in order to study, the presence of six other men in close proximity precluded quiet study. By contrast, another participant (a single refugee claimant pursuing his post-secondary education) spoke of the benefits of having obtained a social housing unit near the university. The reduced rent, lack of roommate and nearness to school were all seen to facilitate quiet study and aid in academic success.

In addition to the effects of overcrowding, the meagre budgets remaining after housing had been procured left little money to cover additional expenses associated with their children's

education, including technology, tutoring and classroom-related fees. As schools move toward greater integration of technology in the classroom (e.g. online research, homework guidelines, multi-media assignments) the ability of low income students to succeed may be impaired.

Many, though not all, respondents lacked computer access at home. Teens and young adults present in interviews spoke of the difficulties of getting research and assignments done within these timelines, particularly as the availability of research materials is increasingly becoming digitized. In the absence of computers and internet at home, students were often forced to go to libraries, settlement agencies, or other public facilities to do their homework. Yet Caidi and Allard (2005) cautioned that availability was mediated by both individual barriers (e.g. basic literacy skills, self-esteem) and institutional barriers (e.g. library hours, rules and regulations governing usage). Although schools had computers, respondents noted their children could only use these occasionally outside class time. Reliance on public computers in libraries and other public locations necessitated work be completed within business hours and subject to their availability. Yet, the ability to use to computers in public spaces is constrained by daily limits (e.g. 30 minutes) (Wong et al. 2009). These limits are most strictly enforced during times of high demand. Further, the need to pay for printing in libraries, sometimes as high as 10 – 15 cents per page, created additional financial challenges for low-income families.¹¹⁴

At its most basic level the ‘digital divide’ is about access to technology, but the implications are much more far reaching. Although researchers assert the digital divide has decreased over

¹¹⁴ In Burnaby, for example, library patrons can print documents at a cost of 15 cents per sheet (Personal communication with Burnaby Public Library, April 7, 2009).

time (e.g. as the availability of the internet has expanded), increased expectations of schools and their reliance on technology has often served to further widen the digital divide. The concept of Digital Inequality, first proposed by DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) provides a more nuanced understanding of the digital divide by recognizing access is unequal even when the internet itself is widespread (see also Hargittai 2003). While the students may learn computer skills at school, students' inability to work on the internet at home (e.g. to do research) may result in digital exclusion, something which impacts academic achievement and increases the likelihood that excluded populations may be further disenfranchised (Parsons and Hick 2008).¹¹⁵ In this sense

social exclusion may also be an information problem: those without adequate access to information are socially excluded, and those who are socially excluded may also lack access to mainstream sources of information or the proper social capital (Caidi and Allard 2005, 303).

Beyond technology, respondents lamented their inability to pay for other school-related fees (e.g. workbooks, field trips). As school district budgets have become tighter parents have been expected to assume greater financial responsibility. For those newcomers with school-age children, however, the scarce resources must stretch to accommodate frequent requests for school-related fees (e.g. classroom supplies, field trips, and so on).

There is quite a need there that is linked to children – their education and the ability of those newcomers to actually settle and adjust. It's almost like a spiral because you can't work, so you can't make enough money. You can't make enough money so you can't take care of your needs. And it just goes on and on. The enormity of that problem has not actually been realized because it's not something that parents will discuss... (Key Informant in Vancouver).

¹¹⁵ For adults and older youth the lack of technology impairs their ability to obtain employment – although jobs may be available the shift towards electronic job search and application processes means those without computer education *and* access are disadvantaged.

One respondent, for example, expressed deep concern about his children's ability to partake in school-related activities. Although the respondent and his wife do not want their children to miss out on any school-related activities, he admits that with 7 children (the oldest of whom was 16 at the time of the research) it was a struggle to make ends meet. Although the family purchased school supplies at the dollar store to save money, the respondent admitted they are poor quality, necessitating they be replaced often. Further, frequent requests from their school to cover costs associated with field trips or other school related expenses (e.g. workbooks, start-up fees, bus passes) placed an additional financial burden on the family. While the amounts themselves were small (e.g. \$1-3) these costs add up quickly for low-income families with multiple children, particularly given the frequency of the requests. In some cases key informants suggested the children themselves may act as a buffer.

[T]he stigma that is associated even with parents being on EI [or social assistance] is so bad that the kids will never even tell their parents there is some recreational thing that is happening in school where they have to pay. They will never tell their parents because they know their parents don't have the money. And they don't want to tell their teachers because of the stigma of being the child who never has any money and the school has to pay for them to go on the [field] trip ... [First] parents can't read them [i.e. the school notifications]... Secondly, the children who read these notifications to them never tell them there is anything like that. Half the children never take those forms home (Key Informant in Vancouver).

The ability to obtain financial assistance to alleviate this burden varies significantly within and between school districts. In the City of Vancouver, for example, help is available at some schools but not at others. Moreover, some families were not aware to even ask about the possibility. In some cases, families seeking subsidies for lunch programs, bus passes, supplies and fieldtrips were often told by schools and social assistance agents that no subsidies were available. One single mother of four in Winnipeg reported having approached both her childrens' school and the Manitoba Family Services and Consumer Affairs (formerly

Manitoba Family Services and Housing) seeking subsidies to mitigate expenses related to her younger children's monthly lunch program fees, as well as bus passes to enable her older children to travel to their high school, a journey which required two buses. Although she explained she was on social assistance and could not afford the fees, she was told by both agencies that no financial assistance was available.

Many respondents reported that although they were aware that after school tutoring would help their children in school, it was considered to be a luxury that they could not afford, given their financial situation. For some children, school related difficulties arose as a result of previous educational experiences, or lack thereof. The lack of sufficient resources available to assist refugee children and their families in navigating the school system (e.g. interpreters) was of concern to both key informants and refugee newcomers. The tendency for students to be placed in classes by age rather than their ability meant teenagers with little, or no, previous exposure to formal education might be placed directly in high schools, creating problems for the individual student, as well as their classmates. One family with six children ages 8-24, for example, arrived in Canada having had no previous formal education.¹¹⁶

Every day, one respondent asserted, it became harder and harder for the children to learn English and succeed in school. For parents, the lack of support available to help newcomers navigate the Canadian school system compounded the difficulties being experienced. Key informants at immigrant and refugee serving agencies reported parents will approach first

¹¹⁶ The differential access to education among refugee children, youth and their parents existed even within refugee groups from the same country of origin. A number of Afghan respondents, for example, noted that families arriving from Iran face greater difficulties than did those arriving from India and Pakistan owing to access to education for their children. Although children were allowed to study in Pakistan and India (e.g. English), refugee children in Iran were banned from studying.

language counsellors at immigrant and refugee serving organizations for assistance in understanding report cards, letters from the school, or other school related issues (e.g. disciplinary problems, conflicts). The concurrent withdrawal of funding from mainstream services to assist with these problems (e.g. counselling, parent support groups) have aggravated this situation and created additional stress within families.¹¹⁷ The lack of funding for interpreters for parents, for example, necessitated that parents find someone to accompany and translate for them (e.g. at parent-teacher meetings). Unfortunately counsellors at immigrant and refugee serving organizations were unable to provide this service. Further, given the lack of knowledge of English and/or the system, it became harder for parents to support their children's education. For parents, language barriers and lack of familiarity with the Canadian education system may be aggravated by their own lack of experience with formal education. The post-IRPA arrival of an increased proportion of refugees from protracted refugee situations (e.g. 15-20 years or more in refugee camps), with little or no education and high rates of illiteracy in first language means parents are likely to be ill-prepared to help children with formal homework or to fully support their learning. Reflecting on the challenges faced by refugee parents who do not read and write English, as well as those who are illiterate in their first language, one key informant asserted:

[If] parents can't read they also can't support their children's education. When children come home with homework, who's to do it with them? Who's to help them? So parents will never know when there is homework. Even when they know they don't know what to do with it (Key Informant in Vancouver).

While many respondents expressed concern about their children being placed in classes by age not ability, this was not true for everyone. For one family in Winnipeg, for example, the

¹¹⁷ The introduction of the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program in British Columbia, which was implemented in September 2007, may ameliorate some of these challenges and provide some of the necessary linkages between the school and parents.

shift from an educational system where children advanced when they were able to master the information being taught to one in Canada where age was the determining factor created a great deal of stress for the children and parents alike. Both children, in one family, for example, reported feeling bored and unchallenged in school. Although the respondent and his daughters had spoken to the administration about the children not feeling challenged by the work they were currently doing in school, all of which had been covered prior to their arrival in Canada, they had been told there was nothing that could be done.

Evidence of bullying both in schools and the neighbourhood arose both anecdotally and in the respondents' own experiences. One man spoke of his daughter having had extensive problems with physical and mental bullying both at school and in their neighbourhood. In addition to bullying at school the girl was assaulted on multiple occasions outside their apartment. Although a number of agencies have been made aware of the problems she was facing, including school representatives, the Ministry of Education, the police, ISS_{of}BC and BC Housing, no progress had been made. After refusing to attend school for over five months, the family was eventually able to transfer her to another school in another city. While the girl's situation had improved the new arrangement required her to take two buses to arrive at her new school. In some cases, key informants spoke of their clients being bullied.

Sometimes they move to the North End. It wouldn't take them two months and they come running to us telling us 'my child was beaten up yesterday' ... They come scared ... Now given the limited amount of money the government is giving them, how can they get good housing in other neighbourhoods (Counsellor in Winnipeg)

Other times, clients and their children reported having been the victim of racial slurs. The ability for children to access post-secondary education is out of reach for many respondents,

largely owing to the inability to pay high tuition rates. Those who had been able to access post-secondary education in Canada spoke of the need to work at multiple jobs in order to cover living expenses (e.g. food and housing), as well as school-related expenses (e.g. tuition and books). One student reported working three part-time jobs (over 50 hours per week) – spending days at school and working on evenings and weekends; another goes to school, works 67 hours per week *and* volunteers 16 hours per week. Between studying and working respondents reported having little time for anything else. Refugee claimants who arrived on their own as young adults, and older teens, face additional challenges. In Winnipeg, for example, young adults and older teens who arrived on their own spoke of being pressured by social assistance case workers to obtain employment as quickly as possible, regardless of whether or not the individual was enrolled in school. The requirement that claimants show they were actively trying to obtain employment by submitting job search sheets showing they had applied for up to 40 jobs per day pushed students to the limits during the school semester. Consequently, refugee respondents spoke of high dropout rates as students quit in order to focus on job search requirements. Claimants suggested many students who remained in school ended up in the ‘grey market’, working for cash under the table. The shift into the informal employment sector, however, placed them at increased risk in terms of exploitation, without benefits or job security.

Respondents noted a lack of adequate information for young adults, in terms of how to access education beyond basic English classes. The daughter of one respondent, for example, expressed deep frustration at being ineligible to attend public high school because she was

over 21 years of age.¹¹⁸ Although she wanted to be able to take other subjects besides English, including math and science, the information obtained by the family from friends and other members of the ethnic community indicated that she was ineligible. During the course of the interview the settlement counsellor who acted as an interpreter informed her she could attend adult education courses in these subjects. The issues of access to education for young adults emerged in a number of interviews in both cities, suggesting a need for better provision of information. Those who have sought education through private schools, however, were informed that it would cost almost \$10,000. One respondent spoke of his high school teachers having encouraged him to go to post-secondary school but he was unsure how he would be able to accomplish this. Because he had no family members who could help pay for housing, he worried that if he commenced school it would be difficult to pay for housing. This respondent spoke of a need for financial support or scholarships to help newcomers afford education and to make a better life in Canada.

Conclusion

For many households low incomes and high rents have necessitated living in housing that did not meet commonly used standards of adequacy, affordability and suitability. Housing is one of the largest household expenses and as such it significantly shapes the amount of resources families have to take care of their other needs. However, high affordability problems, poor quality housing and overcrowded units are the norm for the majority of respondents. While housing is often thought of as an outcome it influences many other aspects of people's lives, including their physical and mental health. In the struggle to make ends meet, newly arrived

¹¹⁸ Recently arrived Bhutanese GARs have similar experiences – the frustration of young adults whose education was not recognized in Canada (including some post-secondary) and their inability to access public high school often resulted in an increase in anti-social behaviour and interactions with police (Sherrell et al. forthcoming).

GARs and refugee claimants have little time and few resources to fully participate in Canadian society.

The need to allocate a high proportion of household income to housing necessitates that families make difficult financial choices. For respondents, the dilemma of ‘pay the rent or feed the kids’ (cf, Hurtig 2000) is amplified by pressures to support those left behind (e.g. in refugee camps or war-torn countries) and, for GARs, to repay Government Transportation Loans incurred through their resettlement to Canada. With little money left, respondents were forced to rely on food banks and/or low-cost, low-quality foods in order to meet their basic needs. Consequently, those families with growing children might lack sufficient nutritious foods to meet dietary needs, influencing their physical growth and development.

In the search for low-cost housing, GARs and refugee claimants were forced to sacrifice other considerations. In Winnipeg, for example, the cheaper housing obtained by claimants was often of poor quality and located in unsafe neighbourhoods (e.g. Downtown or the North End). In Metro Vancouver, the search for less expensive housing led newly arrived GARs and claimants to settle in outlying suburbs far from necessary services and jobs. The financial benefits of less expensive housing were often offset by higher transportation costs as newcomers had to travel farther distances to access employment and settlement services. Respondents in both cities reported troubling housing conditions, such as the prevalence of mould, cockroaches and other safety concerns. The long-term effects of living in poor quality housing where they were exposed to mould or pesticides used to control infestations of cockroaches or other pests placed low income respondents at greater risk of respiratory illness and exposure to unhealthy chemicals.

Beyond the physical health impact of poor quality housing, respondents' mental health was influenced by their housing situation. The inability to provide for their family's well-being or to 'get ahead' creates considerable stress for families. For those living in overcrowded conditions, the inability to retreat to a private space was cause for concern for both adults and children alike. Adults with physical health issues, for example, spoke of not being able to withdraw to a private space, while children and youth reported being unable to find a quiet place to study. For children and youth high rates of poverty and overcrowding combined to create barriers to their education. Widespread lack of access to technology (e.g. computers, internet) in their homes and the inability to retreat to a quiet study space necessitated students to rely on external access points (e.g. libraries, schools) in order to complete their school assignments. Further, some parents struggled to meet additional financial demands imposed by school-related costs (e.g. supplies, workbooks). In spite of the recognition that out-of-school tutoring would benefit their children, some parents reported this was a luxury that could not be provided given their current financial situation.

So why does this matter? Certainly there are many low-income families across Canada facing similar challenges of overcrowding, affordability problems and lack of suitable housing. Many GARs and refugee claimants have come to Canada with a lack of social, (recognized) human, and financial capital. This research has shown that a large proportion of respondents live in substandard, unaffordable and overcrowded housing conditions. The inability of families to meet their basic housing needs indicates poor levels of employment integration which impaired their potential for successful integration and their prospects for the betterment of their families.

For GARs in particular the confluence of low employment participation, little or no formal education, widespread dependence upon government transfers and single-headed households is troubling. Further, with few immediate prospects for employment, given their low language skills, little formal education, and a lack of previous employment experience, the situation facing some respondents looked bleak. The impacts of poverty on physical and mental health, as well as families' inability to provide the supports necessary for academic success for their children and young adults raised questions about newcomers' long-term potential for successful integration. Without additional supports there was a potential for social exclusion and the precondition for the establishment of a multi-generational cycle of poverty.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – From 'Ability to Establish' to 'Need for Protection' ... and Back: Rethinking Post-IRPA Refugee Resettlement

Introduction

This study compared the housing experiences of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian cities: Winnipeg and Vancouver. Drawing on 20 key informant interviews and 76 interviews with GARs and Claimants, this research explores the ways in which local context (e.g. housing, provincial differences in policies and programs), as well as legal status influenced refugees' ability to obtain adequate and affordable housing. In so doing, this dissertation asks, is it legal status, place or something else?¹¹⁹

Five objectives framed this research:

- Develop a better understanding of the intersections of local housing environments and federal and provincial settlement policies;
- Develop a better understanding of the effect of legal status, and by extension the rights and services to which people have access, have on the ability to obtain adequate and affordable housing;
- Better understand how variations in the provision of settlement services between cities shape housing outcomes among refugee groups;
- Develop a portrait of the housing trajectories and experiences of recently-arrived refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver; and

¹¹⁹ Although a total of 80 interviews with refugees were conducted the responses of four privately sponsored refugees were omitted from the analysis.

- Consider how housing shapes long-term settlement outcomes.

After summarizing the findings of the research presented thus far, this chapter begins to address questions around the intersections of humanitarianism and resettlement, and outline the ways in which this dissertation contributes to these discussions. The chapter concludes with policy implications and future research directions.

Summary of Findings

Immigration agreements initially negotiated in the late 1990s have provided Manitoba and BC an increased role in immigration, including the design and provision of settlement and integration programs. Responsibility for the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), however, was retained by the Federal Government. This selective devolution to provincial governments, each with unique political and economic contexts, has generated geographical differences in the provision of settlement and integration services for newcomers.

Two main factors shape the policy and service environment in British Columbia and Manitoba into which refugee newcomers settle. First, overall immigration to BC far exceeds that in Manitoba, with respect to both the immigrant and humanitarian streams. Unlike Manitoba, where demographic and labour market concerns have prompted the provincial government to actively seek to attract and retain newcomers, British Columbia continues to experience significant immigration. In the simplest of terms, while Manitoba needs immigrants to meet demographic and labour market demands, BC is a province to which immigrants are drawn. Beginning in the late 1990s, when the initial agreement was signed, the Government of BC became concerned with mitigating the cost of immigration on mainstream services, such as health care, education and social assistance programs. To offset

these costs the province transferred \$17 million of funding received for the design and provision of BCSAP services into general revenues. While the proportion of funding directed to general revenues declined over the five years as total funding transferred for BCSAP services has increased, the government has continued to divert \$17 million per year from settlement and integration programs. The variable approaches taken by the two Governments – that of encouraging migration vs. managing migration – is further evident in the stability of the immigrant portfolio. Unlike Manitoba, where responsibility for immigration has remained in the same Ministry since the late 1990s, responsibility for immigration has rested with six ministries in BC during the same time period. Stability of responsibility facilitates greater capacity for Manitoba to develop and maintain inter-ministerial partnerships to better serve newcomers.

Secondly, BC receives a much larger number of refugee newcomers, as well as a higher number of refugee claimants, than does Manitoba. By contrast, in Manitoba, claimants account for a much smaller proportion of refugee arrivals than do privately-sponsored and government-assisted refugees. These different refugee profiles have influenced policy decisions about the provision of settlement services to newcomers. In Winnipeg, relatively low numbers of claimant arrivals and a province-wide strategy to attract and retain newcomers in order to address demographic and labour-market concerns has enabled the local settlement agency to extend full settlement services, including financial assistance and – perhaps most importantly – temporary accommodation, to claimants. BC, in contrast, has been characterized by high rates of continuing in-migration in both the immigrant and refugee streams. Unlike Manitoba, concerns in BC have been focused upon mitigating the costs of immigration on mainstream services, such as health and education.

While some similarities exist between the provinces (e.g. inadequate social assistance rates, increasing gap between shelter costs and assistance rates), the differing policy environments and immigration profiles have created significant variations in settlement landscapes. Notably, claimants arriving in Manitoba have benefited from both the provincial desire to increase immigration, as well as its longstanding history of private sponsorship. While previous research has pointed to the effect of legal status on housing outcomes (cf, Murdie 2008, 2004; Hiebert et al. 2005; Rose and Ray 2001), consideration of these findings underscores the significance of place. Geography really does matter.

Income security and housing are two important elements of successful settlement. Consideration of the initial experiences of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Metro Vancouver suggest newcomers in both cities have faced low incomes, high rents and various barriers to housing. Although newcomers may access social assistance in BC and Manitoba (after RAP funding ends for GARs), rates are woefully inadequate in both provinces. Refugees encountered low vacancy rates (particularly at the lower end of the housing market), increasing rental prices, and a shrinking rental stock (owing to conversions and demolitions). Consequently, respondents demonstrated high housing affordability problems and very low homeownership rates. At the time of the research one of the 80 respondents – a refugee claimant from Winnipeg – had obtained homeownership.

As with other low income families across Canada insufficient incomes and high housing prices placed respondents at risk of absolute and relative homelessness. Yet, unlike Canadians and other newcomers, many GARs experience additional challenges owing to high rates of illiteracy, little or no formal education, and limited English language

proficiency. Further, extended periods in refugee-producing situations or refugee camps overseas meant that some GARs arrived in Canada with little or no previous work experience. Even for those with formal education and professional qualifications, such as engineers, differences in familiarity with technology (e.g. computer literacy, scientific or technological advances in their field) may make their prior knowledge obsolete. Taken together, these characteristics might impair GARs' ability to obtain employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency, resulting in the potential for long-term dependence upon social assistance. When combined with the challenges of procuring adequate and affordable housing for large household sizes, the outcomes of refugees could be bleak.

Taken within the broader context of declining fortunes and longer economic catch up rates, as well as increasing housing affordability problems and risk of homelessness among renters, the situation facing respondents in the rental market raises cause for alarm as they do not necessarily have the same financial resources or social networks to rely upon in times of economic difficulties. Unlike other immigrants, who may be able to depend upon savings brought into Canada during migration, the affordability problems brought about by low incomes and high rents mean that refugees are often forced to spend more of their incomes on housing (cf, Hiebert and Mendez 2008).

Overcrowding and pooling of incomes were two of the ways in which families in this study had attempted to ameliorate high housing costs. The extent to which these strategies were successful was unclear, as many households continued to experience (critical) housing stress. In Vancouver, overcrowding might even be underreported as some respondents were renting housing by the room – sharing the bathroom and kitchen with up to ten other people.

As vacancy rates continued to decline in both cities, claimants in particular were often taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords. In Winnipeg, uncertain legal status, a lack of references, and insufficient financial assistance rates meant claimants were dependent upon those landlords willing to rent to newcomers without documentation. This often meant that they were constrained to low-quality housing in Winnipeg's downtown. In Vancouver, by contrast, claimants were forced to find housing on their own. In the absence of information and assistance, claimants reported having encountered numerous landlords unwilling to rent to households with children. As vacancy rates have declined landlords in both cities are able to be more selective about prospective their tenants and discriminated against large families.

The combination of smaller household sizes, often single people, access to settlement services, immediate financial assistance, and the provision of temporary accommodations, facilitated the ability of claimants in Winnipeg to begin settling into their new lives. As such, the previous finding that claimants faced a more difficult pathway to housing owing to temporary legal status was called into question. Rather, refugee claimants in Winnipeg fared the best of all respondents. This research has suggested the difficulties faced by claimants might have been be ameliorated through the provision of more generous settlement services, and, more importantly, the provision of temporary accommodation.

By contrast, Afghan GARs in both cities experienced the most significant housing challenges of all respondents. The difficulties of obtaining adequate and affordable housing that was of sufficient size to meet their household needs contributed to low geographic mobility, particularly among Afghan GARs in both cities. The limited stock of affordable 4 bedroom (or larger) units made it difficult to find other housing. While many Afghan respondents expressed a desire to find more suitable housing, frequently citing overcrowding as the

primary motivator, they were quick to acknowledge the challenges facing them. Similar situations face other recently arrived GARs, including the Karens in Surrey (cf, Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009). For those with little or no formal education, many of whom were illiterate in their first language, the settlement process, including obtaining employment and learning English, became much more difficult. The stresses of migration, of loss, of prolonged exposure to war and/or trauma amplified the challenges faced during resettlement.

The finding that GARs in both cities fared so poorly was surprising. In spite of having had access to full settlement services, financial assistance and temporary accommodation, GARs experienced significant difficulties. Examination of their income security and housing outcomes among this group of post-IRPA GARs suggested that their challenges (e.g. a high proportion with limited or no education, minimal language proficiency, large family sizes, and high incidents of trauma) might be difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. Further, there were additional barriers (e.g. social housing regulations, actions of landlords) that precluded access to housing for refugee newcomers. The increased proportion of Government Assisted Refugees arriving with multiple barriers is disconcerting owing to continued challenges in obtaining adequate and affordable housing.

For those with low incomes finding adequate and affordable housing is a daunting task. The result, as we have seen in Winnipeg and Vancouver, is that many newly arrived GARs and refugee claimants live in overcrowded conditions and experiencing high affordability stress. In the search for low-cost housing GARs and refugee claimants are forced to sacrifice other considerations. In Winnipeg, for example, the cheaper housing obtained by claimants was often of poor quality and located in unsafe neighbourhoods, including the Downtown Core and the North End. In Metro Vancouver, the search for less expensive housing has led newly

arrived GARs and claimants to settle in poorly-serviced outlying suburbs. The financial benefits of cheaper suburban housing were offset by higher transportation costs as newcomers had to travel further distances to access employment and settlement services. Respondents in both cities reported troubling housing conditions such as the prevalence of mould, cockroaches and other safety concerns. The long-term effects of living in poor quality housing where they were exposed to moulds or pesticides used to control infestations of cockroaches or other pests placed low income respondents at greater risk of respiratory illness and exposure to unhealthy chemicals.

Beyond the physical health impacts, respondents' mental health was often influenced by their housing situation. The inability to provide for their family's well-being or to 'get ahead' created considerable stress for families. For those living in overcrowded conditions, the lack of privacy was cause for concern for both adults and children alike. Adults with physical health issues, for example, spoke of not being able to withdraw to a private space, while children and youth reported being unable to find a quiet place to study. For children and youth, high rates of poverty and overcrowding combined to create barriers to their education. Widespread lack of access to computers, the internet and other technology in their homes and the inability to retreat to a quiet study space meant that students had to rely on external access points (e.g. libraries, schools) which were often limited in supply and duration of use in order to complete assignments. Further, parents struggled to meet additional financial demands imposed by school-related costs (e.g. supplies, workbooks). In spite of the recognition that out-of-school tutoring would benefit their children, parents often reported this was a luxury that could not be provided given their current financial situation.

There are many low-income families across Canada facing similar challenges of overcrowding, affordability problems and lack of suitable housing. Many GARs and refugee claimants come to Canada with a lack of social, (recognized) human, and financial capital. This research has shown that a large proportion of respondents lived in substandard, unaffordable and overcrowded housing conditions. The inability of families to meet their basic housing needs indicates poor levels of employment integration which appeared to impair their potential for successful integration, as well as their prospects for betterment of their families.

For GARs in particular the confluence of low employment participation, little or no formal education, widespread dependence upon government transfers and single-headed households was particularly troubling. Further, with few immediate prospects for employment given low language skills, little formal education, and a lack of previous employment experience the situation facing some respondents looked bleak. The impacts of poverty on physical and mental health, as well as families' inability to provide the supports necessary for academic success for children and young adults raises questions about newcomers' long-term potential for successful integration. This study suggests that without additional supports there exists the potential for the social exclusion of recent refugees in these two cities and the precondition for the establishment of a multi-generational cycle of poverty.

Contributions to the Literature

This dissertation began with the consideration of two bodies of literature: Canadian immigration and housing policy, as well as the smaller literature dealing with newcomers and housing. In so doing, this study identified three gaps in the existing literature. It is to these gaps that I now turn.

Context Matters: The Need for Cross-National Research

The changing social geography of Canadian cities has been well documented by geographers over the last twenty years. Widespread changes to Canada's immigration policy in the 1960s and 1980s have significantly altered the profile and number of immigrants arriving in Canada (cf, Hiebert 2000, 1999; Ley 1999). The introduction of new categories of entry (e.g. business class and investor migrants) and the clarification of the refugee program have precipitated the entry of increasing numbers of migrants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. As immigration has (re)emerged as a topic of concern amongst geographers and the wider academic community there has been greater recognition of the need to account for the diversity of newcomers (e.g. by gender and country of origin), including – more recently – the influence of category of entry.

The confluence of widespread changes to the immigration system, declining economic outcomes, and increasing housing affordability problems in Canadian cities has precipitated an interest in the housing outcomes of newcomers. Within the refugee literature there has been increasing recognition of the ways in which local environments influence outcomes. Factors such as the size of city, presence of co-ethnics, and availability of settlement services have been shown to be important in this regard (cf, Carter et al. 2008; Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Sherrell et al. 1995).

To date, research exploring the intersections of legal status and housing in Canada has been confined to the context of a single city or province, most notably Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (Murdie 2008; Rose and Ray 2001; and Hiebert et al. 2005). Although government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants may eventually experience the same legal status, they are afforded very different service provisions and rights in the initial period

after arrival. Findings, perhaps not surprisingly, have pointed to similar outcomes in all three cities – refugee claimants were more likely to experience a more difficult 'pathway to housing' than other newcomers. Lack of access to information and services owing to their temporary status hinders the ability of refugee claimants to develop social capital (cf, D'Addario et al. 2006).

The current research builds upon the foundation laid by Murdie (2008), Rose and Ray (2001) and Hiebert et al. (2005) in exploring the influence of legal status on housing outcomes, but does so in a way that heeds Bourne and Rose's (2001) earlier recognition of the need to explore geographic variability. At the provincial scale Bourne and Rose (2001) assert BC is the only province to have consistently demonstrated a "positive domestic migration balance" (113). With the exception of Ontario and Alberta, which have fluctuated between positive and negative depending on economic performance, all other provinces have consistently experienced net out-migration. As the immigrant population has changed so has the Canada into which they arrive. Consideration of the policy environment and service landscape in Winnipeg and Vancouver underscores the different migration profiles of the two provinces, as well as similarities and differences in the services available to GARs and Claimants. In their 2001 article, for example, Bourne and Rose underscored the uneven impacts and influences of immigration and other transformations on Canadian cities (e.g. uneven population growth), a finding which points to the need for research that moves beyond single centers to elucidate similarities and differences.

Consideration of income security and housing among GARs and claimants in both Vancouver and Winnipeg illustrates all too familiar patterns: low economic participation and widespread dependence on government transfers intersects with falling vacancy rates and

rising rents to create (critical) housing affordability problems (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Francis 2009; Carter et al. 2008). However, closer examination of the housing outcomes of GARs and claimants within the context of provincial policy and service landscapes reveals significant variations in these cities. Manitoba's aggressive efforts to attract and retain newcomers, as well as the smaller overall number of claimants settling in Winnipeg, has enabled the local settlement agency to extend full settlement services, including temporary accommodations, and immediate financial assistance. The experiences of refugee claimants in Winnipeg, therefore, diverged significantly from the earlier research on the influence of legal status on housing. The combination of better access to temporary accommodation and financial support in Winnipeg provides a more stable basis from which claimants could begin navigating the refugee claim process. For claimants in Winnipeg, access to temporary accommodation was critical in providing respondents with sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the local area, make connections with the existing ethno-cultural community, and obtain permanent accommodation. In so doing, claimants were able to develop and access social capital, something which facilitated the ability of these respondents to access information and supports.

This research also extends previous discussions of the effect of legal status on the housing outcomes of GARs and claimants through consideration of the effect of place. In so doing this research argues that research results from Canada's three largest immigrant and refugee receiving cities (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver) cannot be uncritically applied to other centres. Consideration of the context into which newcomers in Winnipeg arrive, for example, demonstrates the importance that place makes in housing outcomes. Although the smaller size of the refugee claimant population in Winnipeg may contribute to the different service

landscapes and overall settlement outcomes, it raises the question of how the provision of settlement services could influence outcomes in other Canadian cities.

Beyond Homeownership? Refocusing the Lens Beyond Homeownership as a Measure of Integration

David Hulchanski (2004a, 2002) presents a pessimistic portrayal of a Canada that is increasingly polarized with respect to income and wealth, with housing tenure identified as the line that divides these two Canadas. As the gap continues to widen, and in the absence of federal assistance to develop suitable housing units at moderate rents, renters find it more and more difficult to move into homeownership, a situation Hulchanski fears will escalate the 'dehousing trend' toward increased homelessness. Growing poverty among newcomers is evidenced by their increasing profile in poverty reports (see for instance Collins and Jensen 2006). The concepts of integration and homeownership have long been intertwined within Canadian immigration literatures – integration is associated with rising incomes, better housing and increased homeownership (Murdie 2002). Recognition of the varying housing outcomes of newcomers in Canadian cities has expanded discussions to encompass a number of housing trajectories (New Canadians Project). More recently, academics have identified three broad groups of newcomers – those who are able to purchase housing mortgage-free with wealth transferred to Canada from overseas, those who sacrifice and struggle financially in order to attain homeownership, and those left behind in the rental housing market (Hiebert 2009; Hiebert et al. 2006; Rose et al. 2006; Hulchanski 2004). Although differing trajectories are apparent, consideration of the LSIC demonstrates the majority of newcomers continue to experience an upward housing trajectory, with many obtaining homeownership. Although large scale studies such as the LSIC have painted a positive picture of housing outcomes, smaller studies on the housing outcomes of refugees have consistently revealed the majority

continue to be tenants within the (private) rental market (cf, Brunner et al. 2010; Carter et al. 2008; Francis 2009; Carter et al. 2008; McLean et al. 2005).

Within this research only one respondent in my survey – a refugee claimant in Winnipeg – had achieved homeownership, having done so through a partnership with an adult son. The low employment participation among many respondents in this survey does not bode well for attaining homeownership, at least in the near future.

The situation facing Afghan GARs in both cities merits further consideration. Changes to federal immigration policy that expanded the borders of protection have introduced a group for whom the public and private rental markets are not prepared, at least at the low end of the market. Those households with large families, low literacy, health concerns, and single headed households experience barriers that are difficult, if not impossible to overcome. Further, in Vancouver, group characteristics intersected with the local context (low vacancy rates, rising rents, and a small stock of 4 and 5 bedroom units) to create additional problems for large households. The arrival of households that are large by Canadian standards (e.g. 7+ people), often headed by single parents, face a paucity of adequate housing, particularly at the low end of the rental market. Given low prospects of employment among ‘high needs’ GARs, many are likely to be ‘left behind’ in the rental market (cf, Hiebert et al. 2006; Rose et al. 2006). Yet a dearth of new construction in the public and private rental markets, particularly at lower market rents, have contributed to falling vacancy rates (CMHC 2007a, 2007b), a situation aggravated by ongoing declines in the existing rental stock. In light of the forecast for continued rent increases and declining rental stocks in both cities, many post-IRPA GARs are at risk of increased absolute and relative homelessness.

Consideration of homeownership as a measure of integration bodes poorly for refugee newcomers, many of whom are tenants within the (private) rental market. While some may eventually struggle their way into homeownership, or – at the least – obtain better quality or more affordable housing, the situation facing others is cause for alarm. Newcomers demonstrating low prospects for employment are likely to fare poorly in the private housing market. Yet the lack of construction of adequate and affordable rental housing suited to meet post-IRPA GARs needs offers little relief. This research contributes to the discussion initiated by Mendez (2006) on the need to differentiate between the varying outcomes of tenants.

Moving Beyond Housing as an Outcome

Existing research within the housing and newcomers literature focuses upon housing as an outcome (e.g. of income security, housing tenure and housing market), with insufficient attention to ways in which housing acts as a catalyst for other measures of integration.

The idea of housing as an indicator of integration is relatively easy to understand. The type and quality of housing can be directly related to the amount of financial support provided by government transfers (e.g. social assistance) or employment income. Housing outcomes are further influenced by a variety of factors, including size of family, as well as the appropriateness and availability of existing stock. Less frequently considered, however, are the ways in which housing itself influences other aspects of people's lives. At its most basic level housing costs influence household budgets – the higher the cost of housing, the less is available to pay for other necessities, such as food, transportation, clothing and utilities. While attention has increasingly been focused on the immediate housing experiences of refugees including overcrowding and affordability challenges (cf, Kissoon 2010; Preston et

al. 2009; Hiebert and Mendez 2008; Hiebert et al. 2005), there is a need for more explicit consideration of the ways in which housing influences peoples' long-term social outcomes. This research suggests that the situation facing refugee youth and young adults in both cities is of particular concern.

This study suggested that after refugee households paid for housing there was little time, and few resources, to take care of even the most basic of needs, or to fully participate in Canadian society. Continued living within substandard, frequently overcrowded, housing negatively impacts people's mental and physical health, and often left few resources to pay costs associated with children's education. The need for children to share rooms (e.g. with opposite sex siblings, parents, other adult family members) further burdens newcomers and often created additional stresses for the entire household. In particular, the challenges facing youth and young adults came to the fore in this study. While some children of refugees faced difficulties in completing school assignments owing to the lack of quiet space to retreat and study, or the lack of adequate access to technology, the attempts of others to pursue further education was limited by a variety of factors, including low income security, social housing policies which often required students 18 years and older to contribute to rent, and a lack of access to other supports. When Minister Kenney spoke of the need for education and other opportunities to ensure newcomers have the ability to succeed in Canada. This study indicates that high housing costs, however, strain what are often inadequate family budgets, forcing families to make difficult choices. Even in Winnipeg, where housing costs were lower than in Vancouver, inadequate incomes made housing affordability an issue (cf Chisholm 2003). For those living in deep poverty, without the ability to take care of basic needs or partake in paid activities, the future looked bleak. While many newcomers spoke of

their admiration of Canada for taking them in and offering them a new life, the continued exclusion from many activities reminded me once again of the 'bird in the gilded cage'. Yes, they are safe from persecution. But they cannot fully participate in Canadian society.

To date, research within the housing and newcomer literature has predominantly focused upon housing as an outcome (e.g. of limited income security or the housing market). Consideration of homeownership attainment (Hiebert et al. 2006; Rose et al. 2006) and profiles of absolute and relative homelessness (Carter et al. 2008; Hiebert et al. 2005; Murdie 2008), have been accompanied in the literature by analyses of the barriers and strategies used to obtain housing (Hulchanski 2007; Miriftab 2000). More recently, academics have foregrounded the effects of legal status (Murdie 2008, 2002; Hiebert et al. 2005; Rose and Ray 2001), and social capital (D'Addario et al. 2006; Ray 1997) on housing outcomes. In spite of the substantial efforts invested in housing and newcomers research, however, there has been little sustained attention to the ways in which housing influences other aspects of newcomers' lives.

Living in poor quality, overcrowded housing may be a consequence of poverty and lack of income security. But it is also a contributing factor to long-term outcomes. This project diverges from earlier research through its explicit consideration of the long-term implications of housing on social inclusion. In so doing it draws upon and contributes to the social inclusion literatures (cf, Omidvar and Richmond 2003; Watt 2003; Chisholm 2002).

Summary of Contributions

This dissertation focuses upon Canadian housing and immigration literature, as well as the smaller body of research on newcomers and housing, to explore the influence of legal status

and place on the housing outcomes of individuals arriving in Canada as refugees. Through consideration of experiences of GARs and claimants in Vancouver, BC and Winnipeg, MB this dissertation makes two distinct contributions:

First, as we have seen existing research on the intersections of legal status and housing do so within the context a single city or province. In so doing, this body of research fails to account for the difference that place makes in housing outcomes. This dissertation contributes to the aforementioned literatures through consideration of the different policy and service environments in Winnipeg and Vancouver. The provincial and local context into which newcomers settle influences settlement outcomes, particularly for refugee claimants.

Second, previous research within the housing and newcomers literature has not explicitly foregrounded the influence of housing on other aspects of newcomers' lives. Where housing as a contributing factor in other outcomes has been considered it is primarily tangential to the other findings. Although housing is frequently used as an indicator of settlement, little attention has been afforded in the literature to the ways in which housing influences other aspects of people's daily lives and settlement outcomes. This dissertation builds upon previous research and explores the ways in which housing contributes to newcomers' physical and mental wellbeing, as well as its influence on educational opportunities and long-term social inclusion.

Limitations of the Research

This research set out to examine the ways in which legal status and place influence the housing outcomes of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Vancouver. The inclusion of non-comparable groups in these cities, however, limits the

extent to which it is possible to reach definitive conclusions about the effect of place on refugee housing outcomes. In spite of my attempts to identify similar groups (Afghan and Sudanese GARs, and Spanish-speaking claimants) in both Vancouver and Winnipeg in order to facilitate comparison, the inability to attract sufficient respondents necessitated changes be made to overall research design. Although I had some difficulties recruiting sufficient interviews in Vancouver, the challenges were most acutely experienced in Winnipeg. Unlike Vancouver, where research timelines could be extended if necessary and other contacts could be drawn upon to identify potential participants, the need to conduct all forty refugee interviews in Winnipeg in one month left me dependent upon the one refugee-specific agency in that city. Consequently a decision was made to expand both the countries of origin, as well as the time that refugees had spent in Canada, to ensure participation of forty newcomer refugees. Future research facing the same time constraints could benefit from increased use of electronic communication (e.g. video and/or telephone conferencing) to build familiarity both with agency staff and to ensure adequate understanding of the research project within the agency prior to the researcher's arrival. In spite of having spent a week in Winnipeg conducting key informant interviews and making connections prior to the main period of fieldwork, it would have been helpful to have engaged in one or more video/telephone conferences in the intervening period to ensure agency staff understood both the project and the desired sample group, and to encourage them to begin recruiting earlier.

While the dissertation considers federal and provincial policies and programs, it does not provide an extensive analysis of the ways in which settlement agencies interpret funding guidelines and implement programming. Certainly, the last four years has seen significant experimentation in programming in BC, including in 2011 the planned introduction of a

Vulnerable Populations funding stream. While beyond the scope of this research, the findings may be used to inform future research that focuses specifically on the role of immigrant and refugee-serving organizations in shaping refugee outcomes. In light of ongoing restructuring of settlement and integration programming (with the exception of RAP), this is an area for future research.

Finally, in spite of efforts to consider the ways in which interpreters shape research outcomes, it is not fully possible to account for their influence. The ways in which words are understood, and subsequently interpreted may significantly alter the meaning of questions and responses, and as such the perceived outcomes. In some cases, for example, interpreters' biases became apparent after the fact (e.g. during the debriefing, in subsequent interviews) or as familiarity with each other increased. Upon reflection, the influence of interpreters was greatest when working with family members or close friends. Yet, in the absence of trained interpreters and in the context of relatively small communities, I was dependent upon individuals identified by the agencies as having better language skills. Future research would benefit from the use of one interpreter in each language, as well as the provision of one or more training sessions, including (where possible) mock interviews. This would facilitate a better understanding of the research goals and process, as well as aid in identifying potential biases and or confusions in advance of the interviews.

Moving Forward: Where Do We Go From Here?

Two key areas will be addressed: access to settlement services and temporary accommodations for refugee claimants; and the need for a more integrated and holistic

approach to services for government-assisted refugees. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Refugee Claimants: Giving Help Where it is Needed

The situation facing refugee claimants in Winnipeg is more promising than Vancouver. The provision of suitable information and services upon arrival has facilitated the ability of claimants to access social capital, and make initial choices based upon good information and settlement support. While claimants in Vancouver would certainly benefit from full settlement services, as they have in Winnipeg, recognition of the volume of claimants arriving in Vancouver precludes this as a viable option. A great deal has changed in Vancouver since the primary research was conducted. First and foremost, claimants in Vancouver have benefitted from the November 2008 introduction of First Contact, a 24/7 multilingual information and referral line for refugee claimants. In some cases, CBSA and CIC officers provide claimants with the information card immediately upon arrival.¹²⁰ In addition to basic information (e.g. about where to obtain assistance with settlement and claim-related issues) volunteers try to assist those in need of housing by introducing them to groups who can provide temporary or short-term accommodations. In many cases, church groups have stepped in to fill the void left by Federal and Provincial governments. Further, advocacy by the Red Cross of Vancouver, refugee-specific organizations, academics, and church groups has resulted in claimants being provided access to emergency shelter at Belkin House (located beside SOS and Inland), as well as 20 units of BC Housing (10 in Burnaby,

¹²⁰It is important to recognize, however, the provision of information about where to get help is not necessarily enough. In some cases, people may not understand what is being offered, while in others claimants may be suspicious of government personnel providing help owing to previous persecution.

10 in Surrey) that are set aside for claimants. While this is a positive step, demand for units far exceeds their availability.

In 2008, the provincial Ministry responsible for the design and provision of BCSAP services made a decision to invest provincial money in order to extend services to refugee claimants – a group deemed ineligible under Federal funding guidelines. As a result refugee claimants became eligible to receive basic settlement and orientation services. While they are still unable to access many programs, including English Language Services for adults, basic help is now available. Thus, over the last three years refugee claimants in Vancouver have been able to benefit from greater access to information and services. As we move forward, it appears the pendulum is beginning to shift again. In 2010 the Federal Government passed the Balanced Refugee Reform Legislation. The changes – which are being introduced over a two year period – promise to radically transform the inland claim process, introducing designated safe countries, eliminating the Personal Information Form (PIF) and dramatically reducing the time it takes to process claims.¹²¹ At the provincial level, the latest competitive request for proposals for settlement and integration services in BC, released in March 2011, contains the introduction of a secondary client group (including refugee claimants) and imposes limitations that services to members of this category may not exceed 10% of total clients. Anecdotal evidence suggests the changes have arisen owing to pressure from the Federal government over the provision of services to refugee claimants. Therefore, after a long fight to offer certain services to refugee claimants, the policy on this matter is being reconsidered. The rapidly changing policies around services for refugee claimants means that further analysis of this issue would be premature. Certainly the findings of this research suggest the

¹²¹ For a more detailed discussion of the changes being made, as well as their potential implications, see Charlton and McDowell (2010).

timely provision of information and orientation services, together with temporary accommodation, will make a difference in the settlement outcomes of refugee claimants.

Government-Assisted Refugees: What Happened?

This research confirms previous studies that many refugees are living in overcrowded, unaffordable and poor quality rental housing in both Winnipeg and Vancouver. Unlike previous research, however, GARs included in the sample for this study appear to be no longer faring better than claimants. In spite of receiving more information and settlement assistance (financial, settlement services, and so on) than refugee claimants, GARs in both cities experience significant challenges, a situation that is not likely to change in the near future. So what happened? How is it that GARs often experience the most significant housing challenges in spite of having received the most extensive financial and settlement services?

To answer these questions it is necessary to consider the intersections of refugee resettlement and humanitarian protection. In so doing, I return to the title of this chapter “From ‘ability to establish’ to ‘need for protection’ ... and back”.

Humanitarian Protection or Formation of a Multi-Generational Cycle of Poverty?

Canada’s humanitarian program has changed dramatically over the last decade. In the wake of international criticism for selecting refugees based upon their ability to establish in Canada within 1-2 years, the 2002 adoption of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) introduced significant changes to the ways that refugees were selected for resettlement to Canada. Key among these changes was a shift from ‘ability to establish’ to ‘need for protection.’ The impact on the profile of refugees arriving in Canada has been profound.

Unlike those arriving prior to 2002, many of whom were young, well-educated, European language-speaking urbanites, refugees selected since 2002 are those in urgent need of protection. Almost immediately contracted agencies, such as ISSofBC in Vancouver, witnessed “an increase in special needs refugee cases, requiring more long-term support in order to successfully integrate into Canadian society” (ISSofBC 2007, 2). Cohorts admitted since the introduction of IRPA include an increased number of multi-barriered households, such as those with chronic diseases, large family sizes, and lower literacy levels. Further, the shifting emphasis to ‘need for protection’ has coincided with changing source regions to include more refugees from protracted refugee situations (PRS). While not an official CIC policy, the increased proclivity to select refugees from PRS has significantly altered the profile of GARs settled in Canada, a feature that has consequences on their need for programs and services. Respondents suggest, for example, that many recent GARs lack even basic skills such as the ability to understand street maps. Many face multiple barriers to settlement, including limited education, lack of official language proficiency, physical and mental health issues, and extensive trauma – brought about by extended periods in refugee camps.

At the federal level, where responsibility for the RAP program remains, there have been no significant changes in the level or type of assistance provided to GARs since the late 1990s when the RAP program was introduced.¹²² The changing profile of GARs in both provinces

¹²² Prior to 1998 services for GARs were provided through the Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP), a federally funded program in which CIC officers were responsible for client case management and monitoring. In its current form direct services to clients are provided by RAP counsellors at contracted RAP agencies, such as MIIC and ISSofBC. Through the current program GARs are provided more choice in their trajectory (e.g. whether to participate in English and/or employment programs). With respect to funding, RAP rates have remained stagnant. During the last two fiscal years RAP providers were successful in leveraging one-time funding for the introduction of a national life skills program. This funding - initially leveraged for a two year period - was regularized in the Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

necessitates the reconsideration of existing approaches and programs. At the provincial level we are beginning to see the introduction of new and different approaches to settlement services for GARs, including targeted programs (e.g. life skills, employment outreach services). The GARs arriving in Canada are no longer likely to be young, well-educated, European language-speaking urbanites, and yet that is who the RAP program is set up to support.

In spite of having been responsible for the legislative and policy changes that have radically altered the profile of GARs arriving in Canada, the Federal government has been the least responsive in adapting the existing services to better meet the needs of GARs. Rather, beyond immediate orientation and information services, costs associated with meeting the more extensive settlement and integration needs of multi-barriered GARs are downloaded to the provinces. While this may enable provinces to better meet the needs of newcomers in their communities, GARs would benefit from additional support, particularly in the early stages after arrival. While CIC penalizes newcomers if they are unable to move into permanent rental accommodation within the first 2 weeks (by clawing back part of their housing allowance, and thereby further reducing an already meagre budget) the reality is it is sometimes very difficult to identify *and* obtain adequate housing within this short time frame, particularly for large households and those with mobility impairments. Rental accommodations in both cities in this study contain a dearth of larger units suitable to meet the needs of large families. Further, those units that are available are frequently found in single family dwellings at the higher end of the rental market. Although GARs may initially view their first accommodations as okay for now – believing they will be able to move into larger, more appropriate housing once they are more settled – the reality of low employment

participation and inadequate government assistance rates dramatically reduces the possibility of this occurring. Larger families in both cities expressed the simultaneous desire for larger accommodations, while recognizing their financial situation prevented this outcome.

And what of their children? What effect will growing up in deep poverty, possibly with few role models in the work force, an inability to obtain necessary supports to better their educational outcomes, and crowded conditions have on their future?¹²³ Multi-barriered households face low overall prospects for employment resulting in the possibility of long-term dependence on social assistance; if combined with social isolation owing to language barriers and/or lack of social networks the potential exists for the rise of intergenerational poverty and relegation to a new Canadian immigrant underclass. The underclass thesis was developed in the United States to describe the intergenerational transmission of segregation and poverty experienced by African Americans in inner city locations (Wilson 1987). To date, Canadian scholars have not found evidence that the underclass thesis is relevant in the Canadian context (see Smith 2004; Ley and Smith 2000; Ley 1999). Yet the resettlement of increasing numbers of high needs refugees in the context of fiscal retrenchment and extensive housing affordability problems in Canadian cities creates the potential for the emergence of many of the factors associated with the underclass: low educational attainment, high unemployment and/or lack of appropriate job skills, high rates of welfare dependence and a large number of single-headed households. The question arises, then, of what can be done to prevent the emergence of a refugee underclass in Canada?

¹²³ Although some programs have been developed to facilitate better outcomes among multi-barriered GARs (e.g. Step Ahead, Refugee ECD Pilot projects) their capacity is well below the demonstrated need. Client caseloads for the Step Ahead project, for example, are twelve families for each of the twelve counsellors.

The RAP program was introduced in 1998 to provide temporary accommodation and financial assistance, as well as information and orientation services to newly arrived GARs. In Vancouver, the multiple barriers facing newly arrived GARs intersect with local context (e.g. low vacancy rates, high rents, small stock of 4 and 5 bedroom units) to create additional problems. The shift in admission groups arising from the 2002 implementation of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (2002) and simultaneous policy decision to resettle individuals from protracted refugee situations has increased the number of GARs experiencing multiple barriers. GARs arriving with little or no formal education, illiteracy in their first language, lack of official language proficiency and limited previous work experience find it difficult to obtain employment, particularly within the context of Canada's knowledge based economy. Further, those that do obtain employment often do so within low paying jobs offering little security and few benefits.

Those households with large families relative to the Canadian average, and who have low literacy, significant mental and/or physical health concerns and single incomes, face barriers that are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. Further, the failure of RAP and social assistance to keep pace with the cost of living in both provinces means housing affordability challenges may continue to worsen. While services exist to facilitate the settlement and integration of GARs resettled in Canada, the services were in large part designed to meet the needs of GARs selected for their ability to establish themselves in Canada.

Although we have the necessary components to facilitate successful settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada – including settlement, language and employment programs, responsibility for policy and programming frequently rests within different silos, with little communication between ministries or levels of governments. Further, the lack of

understanding of how changes in policies or programs may affect newcomers (as well as clients in other programs) creates additional difficulties.

From the stories I've heard and what I've seen of people's lives, I think there is a very unreal expectation about how long it takes for [refugees] ... to get [their] feet on the ground and run ... How about somebody who [arrives in Canada] with no language, has never had exposure to this culture before, was somebody who was probably a rural based person who had never been in an urban area before, had never had any contact with technology as we know it – whether it's electricity, running water, telephones, and bills and banks and all those kind of things and they are thrown in there and expected to make a living and become an upright citizen and contribute to the community If you don't speak English at least to a level where you can be understood, can communicate, basically means the kind of work you are able to get, the type of community that you can create is very limited. It also means that your integration really as part and parcel of society, and your ability to contribute to that society is really very limited. So you remain a newcomer, although you have been here for a number of years (Key informant in Vancouver).

In the last four years we have witnessed significant investments in settlement services across Canada. Flexibility provided by these new investments has facilitated the ability of provincial governments to experiment with new programs and services. In BC, for example, this new funding has resulted in expanded capacity for ELSA classes, with respect to both availability and Level (now available to Level 5, with Levels 6 and 7 in the Fall of 2011), as well as the introduction of refugee-focused Early Childhood Development, Youth, and Trauma programs.

The needs of GARs arriving in Metro Vancouver and Winnipeg continue to increase, yet funding for the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) has remained virtually stagnant since 2005, when there was a modest increase. By contrast, increased funding to the provinces of BC and Manitoba has permitted experimentation in the design of settlement services, and have resulted in programs targeted to meet the needs of post-IRPA GARs. More recently, eligibility for services has been expanded in BC to include refugee claimants. While

the outcomes of these services are not included within this research the continued provision of the same funding levels for RAP services is alarming. The status quo in RAP funding creates concern given the increasing needs of GARs arriving in BC and Manitoba. If Canada is to maintain their reputation for humanitarian protection there is a need to ensure GARs have the necessary supports to establish themselves in Canada.

Concluding Thoughts

In February 2011, Jason Kenney, the Federal Minister responsible for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, voiced his concerns about the multi-generational formation of immigrant ethnic enclaves. Without adequate education and opportunities for integration, Minister Kenney argued, newcomers lack the ability to successfully integrate into Canadian society. Citing the example of the Somalis who arrived in Canada in the late 1980s and 1990s, he warned many have not integrated into mainstream culture, instead becoming involved in crime and other nefarious activities. Although Minister Kenney speaks of Somali immigrants, his comments overlook an important issue, namely many of the Somalis who came to Canada during that time did so as refugees. Unlike immigrants – who choose to leave their country of origin and migrate to Canada – refugees are forced to flee their homes for fear of persecution. While he alludes to the role and responsibilities of sponsorship (e.g. as not ending when the papers for sponsorship are filed), Minister Kenney fails to address the responsibilities of government in ensuring newcomers – and particularly refugees – have sufficient opportunities to succeed.

Many of the Somalis Minister Kenney spoke of arrived here as refugees from a war-torn country, lacking work experience, fluency in either of Canada's official languages, and in many cases formal education. As refugees they should have been provided the necessary

supports – both financial and social – to help them integrate into Canada. If the Somalis have failed to integrate – it is a failure of the system as well. I do not know if Minister Kenney's assertions about the Somalis are accurate or not. Certainly the young Somali men I interviewed in Winnipeg do not conform to his statements. These young men have been able to capitalize on early financial and settlement assistance, including temporary accommodations, making linkages to the broader community that have helped them to quickly begin integrating into Canadian society. They are working (often at multiple jobs), pursuing further (post-secondary) education, and volunteering, trying to build a home in Canada and “repay” (John, a refugee claimant from Winnipeg) the country that offered them refuge.

The shift from ability to establish to need for protection is a positive one. Those in the most need of protection are now eligible for permanent resettlement in Canada. For certain, lives will be improved and prolonged. Since IRPA came into effect tens of thousands of refugees have found a new home in Canada. But that is not enough. Government assisted refugees brought to Canada (or granted convention refugee status inland) require appropriate supports to be put in place to help them recognize their full potential. Over the last decade Citizenship and Immigration Canada has redefined the overseas protection program (e.g. the shift to need for protection) and strengthened our humanitarian commitment to settling those in protracted refugee situations. The federal government – through CIC – has changed the face of refugees coming to Canada, yet they have lagged behind in appropriately funding the necessary services and programs to support post-IRPA GARs. The RAP program was designed to meet the needs of well-educated, European-language speaking, urban refugees, but is now

straining under the pressure of meeting the needs of multi-barriered refugees, many of whom have arrived from protracted refugee situations.

As a final word I would forward a number of recommendations for policy and service provision. The challenges faced by respondents in accessing housing underscore the need for a national housing strategy focused upon increasing the stock of adequate and affordable housing. A renewed investment in low income housing would facilitate the ability of newly arrived refugees, and low income Canadians more broadly, to obtain housing that meets their household needs. Second, there is a need to revisit the issue of government transportation loans, the interest-bearing loans provided to all government assisted refugees. GARs who have not obtained employment at the end of the first year are eligible to transition to provincial social assistance, yet are required to begin repaying their loans within the first 12 months. In light of insufficient financial assistance (both social assistance and RAP), the loan payments further reduce an already tight budget. As such, I would advocate a two step process:

- Revisit the regulations surrounding government transportation loans and remove the interest-bearing requirement. While newcomers would still be responsible for repaying the medical and transportation costs of coming to Canada, the amount would not continue to increase over time; and
- As Canada's economy becomes stronger, there is a need to continue working towards the overall goal of eliminating the government transportation loans entirely.

Third, the provision of services to refugee claimants - particularly temporary accommodations - provides a stable basis for claimants to begin navigating both the legal and

settlement processes. Those individuals deemed eligible to submit refugee claims would benefit from extended settlement services.

At the Federal level there is a need to revisit current RAP programming to ensure current programming better meets the needs of those being resettled to Canada as effectively as possible. The provision of enhanced supports (e.g. extended orientation services, the ability to extend time spent in temporary accommodations when necessary) and increased financial supports would benefit GARs resettled to Canada. Second, there is a need to revisit the current provincially funded programming with an eye to ensuring the ability to provide more flexible, comprehensive models to better meet refugee clients' needs. In spite of the movement towards more integrated programming, multiple service silos continue to exist (e.g. settlement services, employment programming, and English language services). Greater flexibility in programming would enable service providing organizations to design programming to meet clients' needs. Many respondents in this study, for example, spoke of the need for programming that includes both English language and employment aspects in a single program. Finally, clients - both claimants and GARs - would benefit from funding for interpreters when they access mainstream services. Doing so would allow clients to access medical services, and other government services and reduce reliance upon friends and family to interpret.

Ultimately the issues raised in this dissertation necessitate consideration of what is refugee protection. If Canada's resettlement program intends to help people escape to a new, safer country then our program has succeeded. If it is about providing newly arrived refugees the ability to build a new life in Canada, including a sense of social inclusion, we have a lot of work to do.

Works Cited

- ABU-LABAN, B., Derwing, T., Mulder, M. & Northcott, H.C. (2001). *Lessons Learned: An Evaluation of Northern Alberta's Experience with Kosovar Refugees*, A study prepared for Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration and Population Research Laboratory (May 31, 2001).
- ABU-LABAN, B., Derwing, T., Krahn, H., Mulder, M., & Wilkinson, L. (1999). *The Settlement Experiences of Refugees in Alberta*, A study prepared for Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration and Population Research Laboratory (Revised Edition, November 15, 1999).
- ABU-LABAN, Y. (1998). Keeping'em Out: Gender, Race, and Class Biases in Canadian Immigration Policy, In Anderson, J., Eisenberg, A., Grace, S., & Strong-Boag, V. (eds), *Painting the Maple: Essays on Race, Gender, and the Construction of Canada*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 69-82.
- AFFILIATION OF MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND SERVING AGENCIES (AMSSA). (2007). *Cultures West: Rethinking Settlement Services Across British Columbia*, 25, 2.
- ARAT-KOC, S. (1999). Neoliberalism, state restructuring and immigration: Changes in Canadian policies in the 1990s, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Summer 1999, 34 (2), 31-56.
- BAI, D. (1991). Canadian Immigration Policy: Twentieth-Century Initiatives in Admission and Settlement, *Migration World*, XIX, 3, 9-13.
- BALLY, P. & Bulthuis, M. (2004). The Changing Portrait of Homelessness, *Our Diverse Cities*, 1, 119-123.
- RESIDENTIAL TENANCY OFFICE (RTO). (2006). *Know Your Rights and Responsibilities: Rent Increases and Non-Payment of Rents*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/rightsResponsibilities/rent/aspx>.
- RESIDENTIAL TENANCY BRANCH (RTB). (2004). *Residential Tenancy Policy Guideline*, Retrieved from: http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/cca/rtb/resource_list/sdinterestrate.html#rentincreaseguidelines_1.
- BC HOUSING. (2006a). *Housing Matters Supplement*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bchousing.org/resources>.
- BC HOUSING. (2008). *Waiting List Statistics for BC Housing at Fiscal Year End (1999-2007)*. Provided by BC Housing.

- BC HOUSING. (2007). *Rental Assistance Program: More Families Now Eligible*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bchousing.org/resources>.
- BEISER, M. (2006). Longitudinal Research to Promote Effective Resettlement, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 43 (1), 56 - 71. doi: 10.1177/1363461506061757.
- BEISER, M. (1999). *Strangers at the Gate: The 'Boat People's' First Ten Years in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- BOURNE, L. & Rose, D. (2001). The Changing Face of Canada: The Uneven Geographies of Population and Social Change, *Canadian Geographer*, 45 (1), 105-119.
- BRUCE, D. & Carter, T. (2003). *Literature Review of Socio-economic Trends Affecting Consumers and Housing Markets: final report*. A review prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation by Rural and Small Town Programme, Mount Allison University and Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg. Ottawa: CMHC.
- BRUNNER, L., Hyndman, J. & Friesen, C. (2010). *Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver: Settlement Among Acehnese Refugees Five Years On*, Submitted to Metropolis BC as a working paper.
- BUNTING, T., Walks, R. A., & Filion, P. (2004). The Uneven Geography of Housing Affordability Stress in Canadian Metropolitan Areas, *Housing Studies*, 19 (3), 361-393.
- CAIDI, N.T. & Allard, D. (2005). Social Inclusion of Newcomers to Canada: An Information Problem?, *Library & Information Science Research*, 27, 302-324.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2007a). *Rental Market Report: Vancouver and Abbotsford CMAs*, Ottawa: CMHC.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2007b). *Rental Market Report: Winnipeg CMA*, Ottawa: CMHC.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2007c). *Canadian Housing Observer*, Ottawa: CMHC.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2006a). *Canadian Housing Observer 2006*, Ottawa: CMHC.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2006b). *Rental Market Report: Vancouver CMA*, Ottawa: CMHC.
- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC). (2006c). *Rental Market Report: Winnipeg CMA*, Ottawa: CMHC.

- CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (CCR). (2003). *Report Card on Canada's Refugee and Immigration Programs*, Retrieved from: <http://www.ccrweb.ca/reportcard2003.htm>.
- CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CCSD). (2007). *Urban Poverty Project: Community Profiles (National Edition)*, Retrieved from: http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/upp/community_profiles/Urban_Poverty_Community_Profiles_National_Edition.pdf.
- CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. (2004). *Stats and Facts*, Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/>.
- CARTER, T., Polevychok, C. & Osborne, J. (2009a). The Role of Housing and Neighbourhood in the Re-Settlement Process: A case study of refugee households in Winnipeg, *Canadian Geographer*, 53 (3), 305-322.
- CARTER, T., Polevychok, C., Friesen, A. & Osborne, J. (2008). *The Housing Circumstances of Recently Arrived Refugees: The Winnipeg Experience*, Retrieved from: <http://geograph.uwinnipeg.ca/Carter/Publications/Journals/Refugee-Housing.pdf>
- CARTER, T., Polevychok, C., Osborne, J., Adeler, M. & Friesen, A. (2009b). *An Evaluation of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program*, A study prepared for Manitoba Labour and Immigration Division. Winnipeg, MB.
- CHAMBON, A. S., Hulchanski, J. D., Murdie, R. A., & Teixeira, C. (1997). *Access to Housing in a Canadian City: Experiences of Three Immigrant Groups*, Paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association Conference, Toronto. Retrieved from: <http://www.hnc.utoronto.ca/publish/access.pdf>.
- CHISHOLM, S. (2003). *Affordable Housing in Canada's Urban Communities: A Literature Review*. Ottawa: Canada Home and Mortgage Corporation.
- CHISHOLM, S. (2002). *Housing and Social Inclusion: Asking the Right Questions*, A study prepared for the Canadian Council on Social Development and Laidlaw Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/inclusion/bp/sc.htm>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2011). *Refugees*, Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2010a). *Refugee Resettlement from Outside Canada*, Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/index.asp>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2010b). *Sponsoring refugees: Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*. Ottawa: CIC. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/private.asp>.

- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2009). *Facts and Figures 2008 - Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents*. Ottawa: CIC. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/index>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2007). Symposium on Newcomers, Housing and Homelessness: Summary Report, Ottawa: CIC.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2006). Financial Support for Government-Assisted Refugees, Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/faq-financial.html#q3>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2004). *Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-Operation on Immigration – 2004*, Ottawa: CIC. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/agreements/bc/bc-2004-agree.asp>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2003a). Canada – Manitoba Immigration Agreement - June 2003, Ottawa: CIC. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/agreements/bc/bc-2004-agree.asp>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2003b). IP 3: In Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes, Retrieved from: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp190-e.htm>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2002a). *Refugee Protection in Canada*, Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/asylum-1.html>.
- CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (CIC). (2002b). *Rights to Employment, Education and Health Services*, Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/asylum-5.html>.
- COLEMAN, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure, 94, S95-S120.
- COLLINS, C., & Jensen H. (2009). *A Statistical Profile of Poverty in Canada*, Ottawa: Library of Parliament: Social Affairs Division. PRB 09-17E.
- COOPER, M. (2001). *Housing Affordability: A Children's Issue*, Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN) Discussion Paper No. F11. Retrieved from: <http://cprn.org>.
- COULOMBE, S. & Tremblay, J. F. (2005). *Public Investment In Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?*, C.D. Howe Institute Commentary: The Education Papers. No. 217.

- D'ADDARIO, S., Hiebert, D. & Sherrell, K. (2006). Restricted Access: The Role of Social Capital in Mitigating Absolute Homelessness Among Immigrants and Refugees in the GVRD, *Refuge*, 24 (1), 107-115.
- DOLIN, B. & Young, M. (2004). *Canada's Immigration Program*, Ottawa: Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament. Retrieved from: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp190-e.htm>.
- DOLIN, B.R. (2004). *In Brief: The Resettlement Assistance Program*, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament. Retrieved from: <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/EB-e/prb0439-e.pdf>.
- DUBE, V. (2004). Sidelined in the Labour Market, *Perspectives*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/10404/6844-eng.htm>.
- DUBE, V. & Dionne, C. (2005). Looking, and Looking, for work, *Perspectives*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001010505/4168724-eng.htm>.
- EDWARDS, R. (1998). A critical examination of the use of interpreters in the qualitative research process, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24 (1), 197- 208.
- ELWOOD, S. A. & Martin, D.G. (2000). 'Placing' Interviews: Location and Scales of Power in Qualitative Research, *Professional Geographer*, 54 (4), 649-657.
- FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES (FCM). (2008). *Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness*, Ottawa: Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Retrieved from: <http://intraspec.ca/FinalReport-FCMNationalActionPlanonHousing-Jan23.pdf>.
- FIEDLER, R., Schuurman, N. & Hyndman, J. (2006). Hidden homelessness: An indicator-based approach for examining the geographies of recent immigrants at-risk of homelessness in Greater Vancouver, *Cities*, 23 (3), 205-216.
doi:10.1016/j.cities.2006.03.004.
- FLEURY, D. (2007). *A Study of Poverty and Working Poverty among Recent Immigrants to Canada*, Ottawa: Human Resources and Social Development Canada. SP-680-05-07E. Retrieved from: http://www.rhdcc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/research/categories/inclusion/2007/sp_680_05_07_e/sp_680_05_07e.pdf.
- FLOWERDEW, R. & Martin, D. (1997). *Methods in Human Geography: a guide for students doing research projects*, Longman: Essex, England.
- FRIESEN, C. (2008). *Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Bulletin – January 2008*, Vancouver: Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia.

- FRIESEN, C. & Hyndman, J. (2005). *A System in Crisis: 2004 Inter-Provincial Report Card on Language and Settlement Services in Canada*, Retrieved from: <http://www.immigrantsandrefugees.ca>.
- GILES, W. (2002). *Portuguese Women in Toronto: Gender, Immigration and Nationalism*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- GOOGLE MAPS CANADA. (2011a). [Winnipeg, MB] [Street map]. Retrieved from: <http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>.
- GOOGLE MAPS CANADA. (2011b). [Vancouver, BC] [Street map]. Retrieved from: <http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>.
- GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA. (2007). *Budget 2007*, Retrieved from: http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/budget07/economic_strategy/strategy05.html.
- HALL, C. (2002). *Canadian Federal – Provincial and Territorial Mechanisms to Facilitate Dispersion in Immigration*, Presentation at International Metropolis Conference, Wollongong, Australia. Retrieved from: <http://www.international.metropolis.net>.
- HARAWAY, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge.
- HARDWICK, S.W. (2003). Migration, Embedded Networks and Social Capital: Towards Theorising North American Ethnic Geography, *International Journal of Population Geography*, 9, 163-179.
- HARGITTAI, E. (2003). The Digital Divide and What To Do about It, In Jones, D. C. (ed) *New Economy Handbook*. San Diego: Academic Press, 821-839.
- HIEBERT, D. (2009). Newcomers in the Canadian housing market: A longitudinal study, 2001-2005 *Canadian Geographer*, 53 (3), 268-287.
- HIEBERT, D. (2005). *Migration and the Demographic Transformation of Canadian Cities: The Social Geography of Canada's Major Metropolitan Centres in 2017*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #05-14.
- HIEBERT, D. (2002). *Canadian Immigration and the Selection-settlement Services Trade-off: Exploring Immigrant Economic Participation in British Columbia*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #02-05.
- HIEBERT, D. (2000). Immigration and the changing Canadian city, *Canadian Geographer*, 44 (1), 25-43.
- HIEBERT, D. (1999). Immigration and the changing social geography of Greater Vancouver, *BC Studies*, 121, 35-82.

- HIEBERT, D. & Sherrell, K. (Forthcoming). The Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers in British Columbia, In Biles, J., Burstein, M., Frideres, J., Tolley, E. & Vineberg, R. (eds) *Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers and Minorities Across Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- HIEBERT, D., Mendez, P. & Wyly, E. (2008). *The housing situation and needs of recent immigrants in the Vancouver Metropolitan Area*, Metropolis British Columbia Working Paper #2008-01. (NOTE: this was published in 2006 as a CMHC research report).
- HIEBERT, D., Germain, A., Murdie, R., Preston, V., Renaud, J., Rose, D., Wyly, E., Ferreira, V., Mendez, P. & Murnaghan, A. (2006). *The housing situation and needs of recent immigrants in the Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver CMAs: An overview*. A study prepared for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- HIEBERT, D., D'Addario, S., & Sherrell, K. (2005). *The Profile of Absolute and Relative Homelessness Among Immigrants, Refugees, and Refugee Claimants in the GVRD: Final Report*. A study prepared for the National Secretariat on Homelessness.
- HULCHANSKI, J. D. (1997). *Immigrants and Access to Housing: How Welcome are Newcomers to Canada? Summary of Keynote Presentation to 'Housing and Neighbourhoods' Workshop*, Metropolis Year II Conference, Montreal.
- HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA (HRSDC). (2008). *News Release; Governments Of Canada And British Columbia Sign New Training And Skills Development Agreements*, Retrieved from: http://www.workbc.ca/docs/lma_lmda/nr_02_20_08.pdf.
- HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA (HRSDC). (2006). *Minimum Age for Employment in Canada*, Labour Law Analysis, International and Intergovernmental Labour Affairs, Labour Program. Available online: [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/clli/eslc/minage\(e\).pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/clli/eslc/minage(e).pdf).
- HYNDMAN, J. & McLean, J. (2006). Settling Like a State: Acehnese Refugees in Vancouver, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19 (3), 345-360.
- HYNDMAN, J. & Walton-Roberts, M. (1998). *Transnational Migration and Nation: Burmese Refugees in Vancouver*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #99-07.
- IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (ISS_{of}BC). (2007). *Faces of Refugees: Settlement Patterns in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (January 2003 – December 2006)*, Retrieved from: http://www.issbc.org/newsletter/faces_of_refugees_6.df.
- IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (ISS_{of}BC). (2006). *New Beginnings: Insights of Government-Assisted Refugees in British Columbia into*

their Settlement Outcomes, A Study Prepared for Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

- IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD OF CANADA (IRBC). (2007). *Information Sheets: Refugee Claims*, Retrieved from: http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/media/info_sheets/rpdfacts_e.htm.
- IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD OF CANADA (IRBC). (2006). *Procedures: Process for Making a Claim for Refugee Protection*, Retrieved from: http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/references/procedures/processes/rpd/rpd_e.htm.
- INDRA, D. (1998). *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*, New York: Berghahn Press, in conjunction with the Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford.
- JIMENEZ, E. & Crepeau, F. (2002). The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, *Horizons*, 5 (2), 18-20.
- KIRSCH, G. E. (1999). *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The politics of location, interpretation, and publication*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- KOEGEL, P., Burnam, M. A., & Morton, S. C. (1996). Enumerating Homeless People: Alternative Strategies and their Consequences, *Evaluation Review*, 20 (4), 378-403.
- KRAHN, H., Derwing, T., Mulder, M., & Wilkinson, L. (2000). Educated and Underemployed: Refugee Integration into the Canadian Labour Market, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1 (1), 59-84.
- LABOUR MARKET SERVICES. (2006). *Canada-British Columbia LMA/LMDA*, Retrieved from: www.labourmarketservices.gov.bc.ca/2006_templates/documents/ServiceProviders/LMA_LMDA_FactSheet.pdf.
- LAMBA, N. & Krahn, H. (2003). Social capital and refugee resettlement: The social networks of refugees in Canada, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 4 (3), 335-360.
- LEY, D. (2005). *Indicators of Entrepreneurial Success among Business Immigrants in Canada*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #05-01.
- LEY, D. (1999). Myths and Meanings of Immigration and the Metropolis, *Canadian Geographer*, 43 (1), 2-19.
- LEY, D. & Kobayashi, A. (2005). *Back in Hong Kong: Return Migration or Transnational Sojourn?*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #05-09.

- LEY, D. & Germain, A. (2000). Immigration and the changing social geography of large Canadian cities, *Plan Canada*, 40 (4), 29-32.
- LEY, D & Smith, H. A. (2000). Relations between Deprivation and Immigrant Groups in Large Canadian Cities, *Urban Studies*, 37 (1), 37-62.
- LI, P. S. (2003). Initial Earnings and Catch-Up Capacity of Immigrants, *Canadian Public Policy*, 24 (3), 319-337.
- LITERACY BC. (2004). *Literacy and Poverty* Retrieved from: <http://www2.literacy.bc.ca/facts/poverty.pdf>.
- LO, L., Preston, V., Want, S., Reil, K., Harvey, E. & Siu, B. (2001). *Immigrants' Economic Status in Toronto: Rethinking Settlement and Integration Strategies (Full Text Version)*, Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement Working Paper #15-2000.
- LO, L., Teixeira, C., & Truelove, M. (2002). *Cultural Resources, Ethnic Strategies, and Immigrant Entrepreneurship: a comparative study of five immigrant groups in the Toronto CMA*, Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement Working Paper #21.
- LUFFMAN, J. (2006). Measuring housing affordability, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 7 (11). Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/11106/9519-eng-htm>.
- MAMGAIN, V. (in collaboration with Karen Collins). (2003). Off the boat, Now Off to Work: Refugees in the Labour Market in Portland, Maine, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 16 (2), 113-146.
- MANITOBA FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING (MFSH). (2007). *Employment and Income Assistance*, Winnipeg, MB.
- MANITOBA FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING (MFSH). (2006a). *Strengthening Families. Building Communities*, Manitoba Family Services and Housing 2006 Progress Report. Winnipeg, MB.
- MANITOBA FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING (MFSH). (2006b). *Manitoba Shelter Benefit (MSB) for Families*, Winnipeg, MB.
- MANITOBA INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (MIIC). (2007). *Annual Report 2006-2007*, Winnipeg, MB.
- MANITOBA INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (MIIC). (2006). *2005-2006 Annual Report*, Winnipeg, MB.
- MANITOBA INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (MIIC). (n.d.). *Settlement Services*, Retrieved from: <http://www.miic.ca/settlmnt/settlmnt.htm>.

- MANITOBA LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION, IMMIGRATION AND MULTI-CULTURALISM DIVISION (MLI). (2007). *Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2006 Statistical Report*, Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/asset_library/en/resources/pdf/mb_immigrat_reprt_06.pdf.
- MANITOBA LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION, IMMIGRATION AND MULTI-CULTURALISM DIVISION (MLI). (2006). *Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2005 Statistical Report*, Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/infocentre/pdf/mif_05_25aug06.pdf.
- MANITOBA LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION. (2010). *Vision*, Retrieved from: www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigration/index.html.
- MAYADAS, N. S. & Segal, U. A. (2000). Refugees in the 1990s: A U.S. Perspective, In Balgopal, P. R. (ed) *Social Work Practice with Immigrants and Refugees*. New York: Columbia University Press, 198-227.
- MCLEAN, J., Friesen, C. & Hyndman, J. (2006). *The First 365 Days: Acehese Refugees in Vancouver, British Columbia*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #06-07.
- MCSPADDEN, L. A. & Moussa, H. (1993). I Have a Name: The gender dynamics in asylum and resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in North America, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6 (3), 203-225.
- MENDEZ, P., Hiebert, D. & Wyly, E. (2006). Landing at Home: Insights on Immigration and Metropolitan Housing Markets from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 15 (2), 82-104.
- MING PAO. (June 9, 2008). *Almost two-thirds of new immigrants had never filed income tax return*, A4.
- MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE (MEIA). (2007). *Ministry of Income and Employment Assistance BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables*, Retrieved from: www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/rates.htm.
- MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (MHSD, formerly Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance). (2005). *BC Employment and Income Assistance Rate Tables (effective January 1, 2005)*, Victoria, BC.
- MIRAFATAB, F. (2000). Sheltering refugees: the housing experience of refugees in metropolitan Vancouver, Canada, *Canadian Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 9 (1), 42-62.
- MITCHELL, J. C. (1983). Case and Situation Analysis, *Sociological Review*, 131, 187-211.
- MOORE, E. & Skaburskis, A. (2004). Canada's Increasing Housing Affordability Burdens, *Housing Studies*, 19 (3), 395-413.

- MOUNTZ, A., Wright, R., Miyares, I., & Bailey, A. J. (2002). Lives in Limbo: Temporary Protected Status and Immigrant Identities, *Global Networks*, 2 (4), 335-356.
- MULLIGAN, S. (2008). *An Examination of Rental and Social Housing in Winnipeg, Manitoba*, A study prepared for Byron Williams, the Public Interest Law Centre, Legal Aid Manitoba. Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: <http://intraspec.ca/Low Income Housing.pdf>.
- MURDIE, R. A. (2008). Pathways to Housing: The Experiences of Sponsored Refugees and Refugee Claimants in Accessing Permanent Housing in Toronto, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 9 (1), 81-101.
- MURDIE, R. A. (2004). Housing Affordability: Immigrant and Refugee Experiences, In Hulchanski, J. D. & Shapcott, M. (eds) *Finding Room: Policy Options for a Canadian Rental Housing Strategy*. Toronto: CUCS Press, 147-158.
- MURDIE, R. A. (2003a). Housing Affordability and Toronto's Rental Market: Perspectives from the Housing Careers of Jamaican, Polish and Somali Newcomers, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 20 (4), 183-96.
- MURDIE, R. A. (2003b). Immigrants, Housing and the Rental Affordability Problem, *Canadian Housing*, 20 (2), 23-25.
- MURDIE, R. A. (2002). The housing careers of Polish and Somali newcomers in Toronto's rental market, *Housing Studies*, 17 (3), 423-443.
- MURDIE, R. A. (1999). "The Housing Careers of Polish and Somali Newcomers in Toronto's Rental Market", Paper presented at the Fourth International Metropolis Conference. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from: <http://www.hnc.utoronto.ca/publish/careers.pdf>.
- MURDIE, R. A. & Teixeira, C. (2003). Towards a Comfortable Neighbourhood and Appropriate Housing: Immigrant Experiences in Toronto, In Anisef, P. & Lanphier, M. (eds). *The World in a City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 132-191.
- MURDOCH MANAGEMENT. (2006). *IRCOM House*, Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: <http://www.lifelease.ca/projects/IRCOM.html>.
- NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WELFARE (NCW). (2006). *Fact Sheets from Welfare Incomes 2005*, Retrieved from: http://www.ncwcnbes.net/htmldocument/principales/Fact sheetsWI2005_e.htm.
- NOVAC, S., Darden, J., Hulchanski, D. & Seguin, A. M. (2002). *Housing Discrimination in Canada: The state of knowledge on housing discrimination*, A Report Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- OFFICE OF HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS (OHCS). (2006). *Housing Matters BC: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia*, Victoria, BC.

- OMIDVAR, R. & Richmond, T. (2003). *Perspectives on Social Inclusion: Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada*, A study prepared for the Laidlaw Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.laidlawfdn.org>.
- OREOPOULOS, P. (2009). *Why Do Skilled Immigrants Struggle in the Labour Market?: A Field Experiment with Six Thousand Resumes*, Metropolis British Columbia Working Paper #2009-03.
- OWUSU, T. (1999). Residential Patterns and Housing Choices of Ghanaian Immigrants in Toronto, Canada, *Housing Studies*, 14 (1), 77-97.
- OWUSU, T. (1998). To buy or not to buy: determinants of home ownership among Ghanaian immigrants in Toronto, *Canadian Geographer*, 42 (1), 40-52.
- PARSONS, C. & Hick, S. (2008). Moving From Digital Divide to Digital Inclusion *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 7 (2), 1-16.
- PICKVANCE, C. (1995). Comparative Analysis, Causality and Case Studies in Urban Studies, In Rogers, A. & Vertovec, S. (eds) *The Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and Situational Analysis*. Herndon, VA: Berg Publishers, 35-54.
- PICOT, G. (2004). The Deteriorating Economic Welfare of Canadian Immigrants, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 13 (1), 25-45.
- PICOT, G. & Hou, F. (2003). *The Rise in Low-income Rates Among Immigrants in Canada*, (No. 11F0019MIE No.198). Statistics Canada, Ottawa.
- POTOCKY-TRIPODI, M. (2002). *Best Practices for Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- PRESTON, V. (2003). Immigrants' Economic Status in Toronto: Stories of Triumph and Disappointment, with L. Lo and S. Wang, In Anisef, P. & Lanphier, P. (eds.) *Worlds in the City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 192-262.
- PRESTON, V., Murdie, R., & Murnaghan, A. M. (2006). *The Housing Situation and needs of Recent Immigrants in Toronto CMA*, A Study Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Housing and Homelessness Branch.
- PRESTON, V., Murdie, R., Wedlock, J., Agrawal, S. K., Anucha, U., D'Addario, S., Kwak, M. J., Logan, J. & Murnaghan, A. M. (2009). Immigrants and Homelessness: At risk in Canada's outer suburbs, *Canadian Geographer*, 53 (3), 288-304.
- PUBLIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE. (2005). *Briefing Note - Social Capital: A Tool for Public Policy*, Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from: http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/doclib/R4_PRI%20SC%20Briefing%20Note_E.pdf
- RAPLEY, T. (2004). Interviews, In Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. & Silverman, D. (eds). *Qualitative Research Practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 15-33.

- RAY, B. K. (1998). *A Comparative Study of Immigrant Housing, Neighbourhoods and Social Networks in Toronto and Montréal*, A study prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- RAY, B. K. (1994). Immigrant settlement and housing in metropolitan Toronto, *Canadian Geographer*, 38 (3), 262-265.
- RAY, B. K. & Moore, E. (1991). Access to homeownership among immigrant groups in Canada, *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 28 (1), 1-28.
- REITZ, J. G. (1998). *Warmth of the Welcome: The Social Causes of Economic Success for Immigrants in Different Nations and Cities*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- RENAUD, J., Piche, V. & Godin, J. F. (2003). One's bad and the other one's worse: differences in economic integration between asylum seekers and refugees selected abroad, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 35 (2), 86-99.
- RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BRANCH. (2007a). *Rent Increase Guideline*, Winnipeg MB: Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Retrieved from: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/cca/rtb/rentincreaseguideline/2007rentguideline.html>.
- RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BRANCH. (2007b). *Facts About: Rent Increase Guidelines*, Winnipeg MB: Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Retrieved from: http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/cca/rtb/resource_list/sdinterestrate.html#rentincreaseguidelines_1.
- RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BRANCH. (2005). *Policies and Procedures Guidebook*, Winnipeg MB: Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Retrieved from: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/cca/rtb/gbook/index.html>..
- ROSE, D. & Ray, B. (2001). The Housing Situation of Refugees in Montreal Three Years After Arrival: The Case of Asylum Seekers Who Obtained Permanent Residence, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2 (4), 493-529.
- ROSE, G. (1997). Situating Knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics, *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, 305-320.
- ROSE, D., Germain, A. & Ferreira, V. (2006). *The Housing Situation and Needs of Recent Immigrants in the Montreal Metropolitan Area*, A Study Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Housing and Homelessness Branch.
- RYEN, A. (2004). Ethical issues, In Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. & Silverman, D. (eds). *Qualitative Research Practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 230-247.
- SEALE, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. & Silverman, D. (eds). (2004). *Qualitative Research Practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- SHELDRIK, B. M., Dyck, H., Myers, T., & Mitchell, C. (2004). *A Profile of Income Assistance Recipients in Winnipeg's Inner City*, A study prepared for the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance.
- SHERRELL, K. (2010). Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver, *Canadian Issues*, Fall 2010, 52-57.
- SHERRELL, K. (2009). *A proposal for a new service delivery model for government-assisted refugees in British Columbia*. A report prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development as part of a MITACs-Metropolis BC Internship.
- SHERRELL, K. (2008). *A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs*, A report prepared for the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat.
- SHERRELL, K. (2003). *Non-Metropolitan Resettlement of Refugees in British Columbia*, Unpublished Master's Thesis. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University.
- SHERRELL, K. & ISSofBC. (2009). *At Home in Surrey? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Surrey, B.C.* A report prepared for the City of Surrey.
- SHERRELL, K., D'Addario, S. & Hiebert, D. (2007). On the Outside Looking In: The precarious housing situations of successful refugee claimants in the GVRD, *Refuge*, 24 (2), 64-75.
- SHERRELL, K. & Hyndman, J. (2006). Global minds, local bodies, *Refuge*, 23 (1/2), 16-26.
- SHERRELL, K., Hyndman, J. & Preniqi, F. (2005). 'Sharing the Wealth, Spreading the 'Burden?': the settlement of Kosovar refugees in smaller British Columbia cities, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 37 (3), 76-96.
- SILVERMAN, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook (Second Edition)*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- SIMICH, L., Beiser, M. & Mawani, F. (2002). Paved with Good Intentions: Canada's Refugee Destining Policy and Paths of Secondary Migration, *Canadian Public Policy*, 28 (4), 597-607.
- SMITH, H. A. (2004). *The Evolving Relationship between Immigrant Settlement and Neighbourhood Disadvantage in Canadian Cities, 1991-2001*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #04-20.
- SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF WINNIPEG (SPCW). (2008). Welcome to Manitoba: High Expectations of Recent Immigrants Met with Low Incomes *Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's Poverty Barometer*, Winnipeg: MB. Retrieved from: <http://www.spcw.mb.ca/files/file/Poverty%20Barometer%20080813.pdf>.

- SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF WINNIPEG (SPCW). (2006). *Growing Opportunities, Shrinking Options: Implications in the Growth, Retention and Integration of Immigrants Locating in Winnipeg*, Winnipeg, MB: Social Planning Council. Retrieved from: <http://www.spcw.mb.ca>.
- SPIVAK, G. C. (1992). The Politics of Translation, In Barrett, M. & Phillips, A. (eds) *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 177-200.
- STATISTICS CANADA (Statcan). (2007). *Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada" Canadian Social Trends (Special Edition)*, Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.
- STATISTICS CANADA (Statcan). (2005). *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: A Portrait of Early Settlement Experiences*, Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Special Surveys Division.
- STATISTICS CANADA (Statcan). (2003a). *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Progress and Challenges of New Immigrants in the Workforce*, Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division.
- STATISTICS CANADA (Statcan). (2003b). *Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/booc/booc/pdf>.
- STONE, W. (2003). Towards building capacity and sustainable communities: Bonding, bridging and linking with social capital, *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4, 13-16.
- TASTSOGLOU, E. & Preston, V. (2005). Gender, Immigration and Labour Market Integration: Where We Are and What We Still Need to Know, *Atlantis*, 30 (1), 46-59.
- TASTSOGLOU, E., Ray, B. & Preston, V. (2005). Gender and Migration Intersections in a Canadian Context, *Canadian Issues*, Spring, 91-93.
- TEIXIERA, C. (2009). New immigrant settlement in a mid-sized city: A case study of housing barriers and coping strategies in Kelowna, British Columbia, *Canadian Geographer*, 53 (3), 323-339.
- TEMPLE, B. (2002). Crossed Wires: Interpreters, Translators, and Bilingual Workers in Cross-Language Research, *Qualitative Health Research*, 12 (6), 844-856.
- TEMPLE, B. (1997). Watch your tongue: Issues in translation and cross-cultural research, *Sociology*, 31 (3), 607-618.

- TEMPLE, B. & Edwards, R. (2002). Interpreters/translators and cross-language research: Reflexivity and border crossings, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1 (2), Article 1. Retrieved from: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/>.
- UNHCR. (2008). *41st Meeting of the Standing Committee, 4-6 March 2008* - presented by the Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) and the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection), Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/47d6a6762.pdf>
- UNHCR. (1977). *Notes on Non-Refoulement* (Submitted by the High Commissioner), August 23, 1977. Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae68ccd10.html>
- VANCOUVER REFUGEE SERVICES ALLIANCE (VRSa). (2006). *Vancouver Refugee Services Alliance*, Retrieved from: <http://www.vrsa.ca>.
- VERTOVEC, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30 (6), 1024-1054.
- VINEBERG, R. (2009). *History of Federal-Provincial Relations in Immigration and Integration*, Presentation to a Metropolis Seminar. Retrieved from: <http://www.canada.metropolis.net>.
- VINEBERG, R. (1987). Federal-provincial relations in Canadian immigration, *Canadian Public Administration*, 30 (2), 299-317.
- WALLACE, B., Klein, S. & Reitsma-Street, M. (2006). *Denied Assistance: Closing the front door on welfare in BC*, Co-Published by the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- WATERS, J. L. (2002). *The Flexible Family: Recent Immigration and 'Astronaut' Households in Vancouver, British Columbia*, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper #01-02.
- WATT, J. (2003). *Adequate and Affordable Housing; A Child Health Issue. An Overview of Research Linking Children's Health Status to Poor Housing*, Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario.
- WAXMAN, P. (2001). The Economic Adjustment of Recently Arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in Sydney, Australia, *International Migration Review*, 35 (2), 472-505.
- WAYLAND, S. (2006). *Policy Brief: Processing Fees for Refugees*, A report prepared for the Maytree Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://dropthefee.com/pdf/maytree>.
- WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (WRHA). (2008). *Working with Immigrant Communities: A Guide for Service Providers*, Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: http://www.wrha.mb.ca/community/improvingaccess/files/Guide_Section1.pdf#page=2

- WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (WRHA). (2004). *Community Health Assessment Report 2004*, Winnipeg, MB. Retrieved from: www.wrha.mb.ca/howcare/cha.
- WONG, Y. C., Fung, J. Y. C., Law, C. K., Lam, J. C. Y. & Lee, V. W. P. (2009). Tackling the Digital Divide, *British Journal of Social Work*, 39, 754–767.
- WORK BC. (2008). LMA/LMDA, Retrieved from: <http://www.workbc.ca/WorkBC/LMA+LMDA/>.
- ZETTER, R. (1999). International perspectives on refugee assistance, In A. Ager (ed). *Refugees: Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration*. New York: Pinter, 46-82.
- ZINE, J. (2003). *Living on the Ragged Edges: Absolute and Hidden Homelessness among Latin Americans and Muslims in West Central Toronto*, Toronto: Informal Housing Network Project.

Appendices

Appendix A: Contact Letters and Informed Consent Forms

A.1: Sample Contact Letter: Business Professionals (Focus Group)

(To be written on UBC letterhead)

Date

For <Name(s)> of the <Service Organization>

Title: **A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**

My name is Kathy Sherrell; I am a PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. I am writing this letter to ask for your help in my PhD dissertation research project.

The project is titled “**A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**”. Under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Hiebert, I am inviting you to participate in research aimed at developing a better understanding of the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Vancouver and Winnipeg.

To begin, we wish to invite immigrant and refugee-serving organizations to attend a focus group meeting, the purpose of which is to seek input and invite participation to the research project. We are inviting you to participate this focus group. The focus group session will be conducted at a time that is convenient to all who are being invited, and will last for approximately two hours.

Your decision to participate in this project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your own interests. However, I would greatly appreciate your participation. To confirm your participation in the project, I will contact you again soon, by telephone.

If you have any questions or concerns on the project, my supervisor, Dr. D. Hiebert, would be happy to discuss them with you. You may reach him at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In addition, if you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Sherrell

A.2: Contact Letter: Business Professionals (Interview)

(To be written on UBC letterhead)

Date

For <Name(s)> of the <Service Organization>

Title: **A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**

My name is Kathy Sherrell; I am a PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. I am writing this letter to ask for your help in my PhD dissertation research project.

The project is titled “**A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**”. Under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Hiebert, I am inviting you to participate in research aimed at developing a better understanding of the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

To obtain information I will conduct individual interviews. During the one-hour long interview, I will ask questions about a number of topics including services available to refugee groups in your city and by your organization specifically; refugee claimants and government-assisted refugee specific needs; and the housing situation of refugee groups. The interview will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you.

Your decision to participate in this project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your own interests. However, I would greatly appreciate your participation. To confirm your participation in the project, I will contact you again soon, by telephone.

If you have any questions or concerns on the project, my supervisor, Dr. D. Hiebert, would be happy to discuss them with you. You may reach him at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In addition, if you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Sherrell

A. 3: Contact Letter: Government-Assisted Refugees and/or Refugee Claimants
(Interview)

(To be written on UBC letterhead)

Date

For

Title: **A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**

My name is Kathy Sherrell; I am a PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. I am writing this letter to ask for your help in my PhD dissertation research project.

The project is titled “**A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs**”. Under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Hiebert, I am inviting you to participate in research aimed at developing a better understanding of the housing careers of newcomers to Winnipeg and Vancouver.

To obtain information I will conduct individual interviews with newcomers in Vancouver and Winnipeg. During the one-hour long interview, I will be asking questions about your current and previous housing since arriving in Canada; settlement services you have received; as well as your current employment situation. The interview will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you.

Your decision to participate in this project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your own interests. However, I would greatly appreciate your participation. To confirm your participation in the project, I will contact you again soon, by telephone.

If you have any questions or concerns on the project, my supervisor, Dr. D. Hiebert, would be happy to discuss them with you. You may reach him at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In addition, if you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Sherrell

A.4: Sample Consent Form

A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs

Principal Investigator: Dr. Daniel Hiebert, Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Co-Investigator: Kathy Sherrell, Doctoral student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx. This research forms part of her doctoral thesis.

Purpose: This sub-study seeks to conduct data collection on the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs: Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Study Procedures: This study involves a focus group with stakeholders from immigrant and refugee-serving organizations and housing service providers in the three centres. The focus group will take no more than 2 hours. Interested participants will be invited to participate in an individual interview at a later date, lasting no more than 1 hour. If you wish, you will receive a copy of the final report.

Confidentiality: Any identifying information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential unless specific consent for attributable statements is granted in advance of any public dissemination. Identifying materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or be computer password protected in electronic format.

Contact for information about the study: Please contact either Dan at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Kathy at xxx-xxx-xxxx, if you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed Name of Subject

A.5: Sample Consent Form (NGO Interview)

A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs

Principal Investigator: Dr. Daniel Hiebert, Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Co-Investigator: Kathy Sherrell, Doctoral student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx. This research forms part of her doctoral thesis.

Purpose: This sub-study seeks to conduct data collection on the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs: Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Study Procedures: This study involves individual interviews with stakeholders from immigrant and refugee-serving organizations and housing service providers in the three centres. The interview will take place only once and will last for about one hour. During the interview you will be asked questions about the services provided by your organization, as well as the needs and/or services available to refugee claimants and government-assisted refugees. If you wish, you will receive a copy of the final report.

Confidentiality: Any identifying information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential unless specific consent for attributable statements is granted in advance of any public dissemination. Identifying materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or be computer password protected in electronic format.

Contact for information about the study: Please contact either Dan at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Kathy at xxx-xxx-xxxx, if you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed Name of Subject

A.6: Sample Consent Form (GAR/RC Interview)

(To be written on UBC Letter Head)

A comparative analysis of housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs

Principal Investigator: Dr. Daniel Hiebert, Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Co-Investigator: Kathy Sherrell, Doctoral student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx. This research forms part of her doctoral thesis.

Purpose: This sub-study seeks to conduct data collection on the housing trajectories of government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants in two Canadian CMAs: Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Study Procedures: This study involves an individual interview with newcomers to Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. The interview will take place only once and will last for about one hour. During the interview I will be asking questions about your current and previous housing since arriving in Canada; settlement services you have received; as well as your current employment situation. If you wish, you will receive a copy of the final report.

Confidentiality: Any identifying information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential unless specific consent for attributable statements is granted in advance of any public dissemination. Identifying materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or be computer password protected in electronic format.

Contact for information about the study: Please contact either Dan at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Kathy at xxx-xxx-xxxx, if you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed Name of Subject

Appendix B: Key Informant Interview Schedule

B.1: Interview Schedule: Immigrant and Refugee-Serving Organizations and Housing Service Providers

Name of agency:

City:

Name of interviewee:

Job title:

Telephone:

Fax:

E-mail:

All interview participants will receive a one- to two-page summary of findings from the research. Electronic findings of the full report available upon request.

Full electronic copy requested? Yes No

To be detached and stored separately once completed

Interview #: _____

Before we begin I would like to thank you for your participation in this research. All answers are voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. All answers are confidential.

I would like to begin by asking you a bit about your organization

1. What services does your organization provide? (e.g. employment, language classes, housing information, immigrant settlement services).
2. Does your organization offer assistance with:
 - initial settlement? (e.g. medical, dental)
 - temporary and/or permanent shelter? (e.g. Welcome House)
 - assistance obtaining housing?
 - help finding employment?
 - English-language classes?

If so, tell me more.

3. Who can access your services? Are there any limitations on assistance (e.g. time periods, particular ethnic groups?, specific immigrant entry classes).
4. What other services – if any – do you feel should be offered?
5. Do you think there are any group-specific needs? (e.g. owing to category of entry)

Ask some questions specific to government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants.

6. On average, how many government-assisted refugees does your organization assist in a given year? What proportion is that of your total clients?
7. On average, how many refugee claimants does your organization assist in a given year? What proportion is that of your total clients?
8. With respect to government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants specifically are there differences in the availability of services? If so, can you tell me more?
9. Are fees levied for services? If so, are there subsidies and/or exemptions for those who cannot pay? Tell me more.
10. Are you aware of any other agencies in <location> that assist government-assisted and/or refugee claimants? If so, tell me more.
11. What do you think are the most important factor(s) influencing housing outcomes? (e.g. services people have access to; housing costs and vacancy rates; type of assistance available). Can you tell me more?
12. Is there anything else you would like me to know (e.g. about your organization? Refugee groups in your city?)
13. May I contact you if I require clarification or more information? Yes No N/A D/K

Thank you again for participating in this research. If you have any comments or concerns please contact Kathy Sherrell or Dr. Dan Hiebert.

Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Government-Assisted Refugees and Refugee Claimants

Thank you for your participation in this research. All answers are voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. All answers are confidential.

1. Gender: Male Female Other
2. Age: _____
3. Level of Education:
No school Elementary Some High School Graduate High School Post secondary
4. Place of Birth: _____
5. Country of last permanent residence?: _____
6. Do you have any children? Yes No
 - a. If yes, how many? _____
7. When did you arrive in Canada? (year) _____
8. Did other family members arrive with you? Yes No
 - a. If yes, do they live with you? Yes No
9. Which city did you arrive and initially settle in? _____
10. How did you come to Canada?
GAR Tourist Student Refugee Claimant Other _____
 - a. If not as a GAR, have you (or do you intend to) file a refugee claim? Yes
No
 - b. Where did you file your claim (e.g. airport, CIC office)

 - c. Have you received a decision on your claim? Yes No
 - d. If yes, when did you receive the decision? (m/y)

11. What is your date of official landing? (m/y) _____

Period immediately following your arrival in Canada

12. If you arrived at the airport, where you met by anyone? Yes No
 - a. If so, who?
Representative from immigrant and refugee-serving organization
Church or ethnocultural group
Family member
Friend
Other _____
 - b. If not (or if you did not arrive at the airport) how did you find out where to get help? Who did you approach for assistance/information? (e.g. IRSA, CIC, family, friends)
13. Where did you spend your first few days?
Refugee reception house
Emergency shelter
Hotel

Airport

Family/Friend

Other _____

- a. How did you find out about this place?
- b. Did you have to pay for the temporary shelter? How much did it cost per day?
How did you pay for it?

14. When you first came to Canada, which of the following settlement services – if any – did you receive?

Transportation from the airport

Information about where to get help (e.g. emergency shelter)

Help filling out forms (e.g. SIN, registering children for school)

Information about settling in Canada (e.g. safety, transportation, etc)

Help finding employment

Help finding housing

English-language classes

Help with submitting your refugee claim

Other _____

a. Who did you receive this help from?

IRSA Friends Family Church Other

b. How did you get in contact with these people?

15. Outside of refugee agencies, have you been able to get help from family or friends living in Vancouver? (e.g. about housing, information) If so, who?

a. What type of help have you received (e.g. room in house, financial help).

16. Are there any (other) services that would have made settlement easier? If so, can you tell me more.

Employment and sources of income:

17. Have you worked since coming to Canada? Yes No

18. Are you currently working? Yes No

a. If so, where?

i. How long have you worked there?

ii. How many hours a week do you work?

iii. Is this the same type of work you did before coming to Canada? Yes
No

iv. If not, what type of work did you do?

b. If not, are you looking for work now? Yes No

19. Have you ever had any of the following problems getting a job?

Language/accents problems

Not knowing how to find a job

Not knowing way around the city

Qualifications or job experience from outside Canada not accepted

Not having enough job experience in Canada
 Not having enough job references from Canada
 Not having family or friends who could help
 The lack of employment opportunities
 Not being able to find a job in your field
 Not having connections in the job market
 Not knowing enough people who were working
 Discrimination
 Transportation constraints
 Not being able to find/afford child care
 Have looked for work and not had any problems
 Haven't looked for work
 Other – Specify _____

20. Do you have any other sources of income (e.g. social assistance, RAP, help from family/friends)

Housing: Current housing situation

21. What is the postal code or nearest intersection to where you currently live?

22. Can you tell me a bit about where you live now?

Type of Housing (house, apt, suite, room) and number of bedrooms	Rent (R) or Own (O)	Public (Pub) Or Private (Priv)	# living in home Who? (friend/family)	Cost per month? (incl rent, hydro, electricity, gas)	What % of monthly household income is used for housing?
					<30 % 31-50 % 51-75 % >75 %

23. How long have you lived there? _____

24. How did you find out about that place?

Newspapers
 Internet
 Friend
 Family
 Employer
 IRSA
 Government agency
 Real estate agent
 Walked/drove around
 Other

25. Are you happy with where you are living? [e.g. Do you have enough space?
26. Are there any safety concerns? Is the housing in need of major repairs? Problems with landlord?
27. If you think about your housing before you came to Canada, are there any elements missing in your current housing that are necessary for your well-being and comfort? (e.g. access to outside areas)

Housing: initial housing

28. Have you lived in more than one place since arriving in Canada? If so, how many?
29. What is the postal code or nearest intersection to where you first lived in Canada?
30. Can you tell me a bit about where you first lived when you came to Canada?

Type of Housing (house, apt, suite, room) and number of bedrooms	Rent (R) or Own (O)	Public (Pub) Or Private (Priv)	# living in home Who? (friend/family)	Cost per month? (incl rent, hydro, electricity, gas)	What % of monthly household income is used for housing?
					<30 % 31-50 % 51-75 % >75 %

31. How long did you live in your initial housing? _____

32. Why did you move?

Found cheaper place

Got into subsidized housing

Found better quality housing

To have more privacy/not sharing with another person

Need more space

Better/quieter neighbourhood

Near work

Other _____

33. How did you find out about that place?

Newspapers

Internet

Friend

Family

Employer

IRSA

Government agency

Real estate agent

Walked/drove around

Other _____

34. Were you happy with the first place you lived in Canada? [e.g. enough space? Good condition?]
35. Were there any safety concerns? Was the housing in need of major repairs? Problems with landlord?
36. If you think about your housing before you came to Canada, were there any elements missing in your initial housing that are necessary for your well-being and comfort? (e.g. access to outside areas)

Longest Housing: I want to talk for a bit about the place you lived for the longest period since coming to Canada?

37. What is the postal code or nearest intersection to where you first lived in Canada?

38. Can you tell me a bit about where you have lived for the longest period since coming to Canada?

Type of Housing (house, apt, suite, room) and number of bedrooms	Rent (R) or Own (O)	Public (Pub) Or Private (Priv)	# living in home Who? (friend/family)	Cost per month? (incl rent, hydro, electricity, gas)	What % of monthly household income is used for housing?
					<30 % 31-50 % 51-75 % >75 %

39. How long did you live there? _____

40. Why did you move?

Found cheaper place

Got into subsidized housing

Found better quality housing

To have more privacy/not sharing with another person

Need more space

Better/quieter neighbourhood

Near work

Other _____

41. How did you find out about that place?

Newspapers

Internet

Friend

Family

Employer
IRSA
Government agency
Real estate agent
Walked/drove around
Other _____

42. Were you happy with the condition of this housing? [e.g. enough space, good condition]
43. Did you have any safety concerns? Was the housing in need of major repairs? Problems with landlord?
44. If you think about your housing before you came to Canada, were there any elements missing in the place you lived the longest that are necessary for your well-being and comfort? (e.g. access to outside areas)

Housing: General

45. What problems or difficulties have you had in finding housing? (mark all that apply)

Language problems
Not knowing how to find a house or apartment
Not having family or friends who could help
Not knowing the city or town
Financial constraints
Not being able to find what I need or want
Transportation constraints
Discrimination
Not having a guarantor, co-signer or credit rating
Not having a job
Availability of housing (e.g. low vacancy)
Having to pay in advance (e.g. prepaid rent, damage deposit)
Other _____

46. Overall, what do you feel is (or has been) the most difficult thing about trying to get housing? Can you tell me more?
47. What is the most important thing about where you live? (e.g. near schools, affordable, neighborhood, near transportation). Have these changed over time?
48. Do you think you will be moving over the next year? If so, can you tell me more?
49. Is there anything else you would like to share with me? (e.g. about services received and/or desired; housing situation).

Thank you again for participating in this research.