Building a Life: Integration Outcomes Among Government-Assisted Refugee

Newcomers in Greater Vancouver

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on integration outcomes among government-assisted refugees (GARs) who arrived in Canada between 2007-2016. I explore how this cohort is faring relative to basic indicators like employment, health, and social connections, and I examine how GARs themselves understand integration as a concept. I explain my mixed-methods approach to answering these questions, and I present the results of fieldwork undertaken in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia in early-mid 2019. I also provide a short review of the literature of integration, and I wrestle with ethical and methodological issues raised by the process of researching a vulnerable group. I conclude that legislation changes at the federal level have impacted the demographic characteristics of refugees selected for resettlement, with newcomers facing substantial barriers with respect to labour market integration, access to stable housing, and overcoming trauma. I also conclude that refugees' own understandings of integration do not differ substantially from the framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008). Finally, I offer recommendations for future research into migration and changes to family dynamics, the impact of degree recognition programs, and facilitating the social integration of LGBT+ refugees.

Lay Summary

This project focuses on the integration of government-assisted refugees (GARs) who landed in Canada between 2007-2016. During this period, changes to federal-level legislation reshaped the demographic characteristics of refugees selected for resettlement, prioritizing the most vulnerable individuals over those who were most likely to integrate. My goal for this project was to discover how newcomers are faring relative to basic indicators of integration, but I also sought to learn how refugees themselves understand integration as a concept. To this end, I completed a mixed-methods study of GARs in Greater Vancouver, focusing on basic demographics, everyday life, and understandings of integration. I found that my participants face continuing challenges in multiple domains of integration. I also concluded that newcomers understand integration in much the same way as migration scholars. This work is important because it highlights the specific vulnerabilities of post-2007 GARs, allows refugees' own voices to be heard in the integration conversation, and provides recommendations for improving outcomes.

Preface

This thesis is draws from fieldwork completed by Grace Newton, a contracted research assistant with Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS*of*BC), in early-mid 2019. An abbreviated and revised form of this thesis will be submitted to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in order to satisfy the requirements of a grant used to fund fieldwork.

The research was approved by expedited review by UBC's Behavioral Research Ethics Board (Certificate #H18-02051).

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List of Abbreviations

BC – British Columbia

GAR(s) – government-assisted refugee(s)

IRCC – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

ISS*of*BC – Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia

IRPA – Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001); amended in 2012.

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Furthermore, I want to thank my family: Mom, Dad, Grandma Janie, Grandpa Phil, Sophie, EJ, Eli, and Esther. Thank you for supporting my studies in Canada, even though the distance gave you pause. I love you very much.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge that I am an uninvited guest on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my study participants, who opened their lives to me and made this

research possible. Thank you for allowing me to amplify your voices.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Overview

This thesis focuses on the integration experiences of government-assisted refugees (GARs) who arrived in Canada between 2007 and 2016. I begin with a literature review, and I focus on the development of integration as a concept, the factors that influence outcomes, and the extent to which the term can properly represent the experiences of refugee newcomers. I also present the results of fieldwork completed in early-mid 2019 in Vancouver, British Columbia, and I describe the mixed-methods approach I took to answering my research questions. These questions, separate but related, guided the online survey, individual interviews, and focus groups I conducted with GARs. My first research question was as follows: how is this cohort of government-assisted refugees faring in relation to economic and social indicators? My second question was more qualitative in nature: how do GARs themselves define integration? My findings are summarized in the results and discussion chapters, and I also offer recommendations for future research.

My first research question was informed by the fact that changes to federal-level legislation have altered the demographic characteristics of refugees selected for resettlement. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), ratified in 2001 and revised in 2012, established a new standard by which would-be refugees to Canada were evaluated. Prior to 2001, refugees were selected for resettlement in Canada according to ability to integrate into Canadian society; post-IRPA, claims began to be evaluated based on need for protection. This shift led to the resettlement of refugees with lower levels of education, higher rates of disability, and other personal vulnerabilities (Hyndman 2012). During this period, British Columbia also received

large flows of Syrian refugees, and this required massive mobilization on the part of the settlement sector. Finally, much of the literature of refugee integration in British Columbia has focused on specific groups (e.g. Karen, Bhutanese, or Syrian), and there is a dearth of recent, large-scale research into outcomes among post-2006 newcomers. I attempt to fill this gap by providing the results of a survey of 133 GARs who arrived between 2007-2016[1], and I contextualize these numbers within individual interviews and focus group discussions.

My second research question digs more deeply into the utility of integration as a concept and incorporates refugee voices to create a new definition. While I predicted that refugees might define integration differently from academics, their feedback was largely consistent with previous definitions offered by Castles and his coauthors (2001) and Ager and Strang (2008). Scholars from many disciplines have explored this theme, and alternative concepts like assimilation and acculturation frequently appear as synonyms, despite the definitional differences. To my knowledge, no Canadian study has ever sought to build a refugee-centered definition of integration using refugees' own voices, and I hope to fill this gap by presenting my findings.

I took a mixed-methods approach to answering these questions, and I collaborated with Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS*of*BC) to complete my fieldwork. During this period, I was employed as a contract research assistant, and my work was funded by a research grant from IRCC. I used the data collected to prepare a report for this funder, but I was also able to use the results of my fieldwork as part of this master's thesis. This partnership gave

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[1] Out of 133 responses, 72 were complete, while 61 were partial. This means that for most questions posed, n = ~80.

me the resources to conduct larger-scale research as a master's student, but it also brought up ethical concerns that are further addressed in the methodology and discussion chapters. I built and distributed a 69-question survey focusing in integration outcomes, and I followed this with 20 in-person interviews with refugees. Finally, I convened three focus groups with Arabic-speaking women, Central Americans, and refugee mothers. The number of participants ranged from 3-11. I also attempted to schedule focus groups with LGBT+ refugees and Farsi-speaking women, but I was unable to recruit participants. Once I finished my fieldwork, I analyzed my quantitative data in Excel, and I coded my interview transcripts with NVIVO. I also mapped the postal codes of respondents using ArcMap. These activities are described in the methodology and results chapters.

1.2   Chapter Summaries

Chapter One ("Introduction") provides an overview of my project, including funding, methodology, and method of analysis. I offer some background information about my target population, including a brief note about the relevant federal-level legislation that guides refugee resettlement to Canada. I describe my research questions and the rationale behind them, and I elaborate on the dual imperatives of my project. I mention the ethical concerns raised by my involvement with settlement services, and, finally, I briefly describe my methodology and results.

Chapter Two ("Literature Review") provides a brief literature review, focusing specifically on the definitions of integration proposed by scholars, the limitations of this concept, and previous refugee research in the Canadian context. I draw heavily from the work of Ager and Strang (2008), who propose a comprehensive and nuanced framework for understanding

integration. I also draw from scholars like Castles et al (2001), Goldlust and Richmond (1974), and Potocky (1996), in order to demonstrate the diversity of definitions proposed. Next, I move on to case studies that include government-assisted refugees to Canada, and I also include a limited number of studies from other locations when they help to fill in gaps in the Canadian literature. I also cite the articles that informed my methodological choices, and I focus especially on writing that delves into the ethical concerns of studying a marginalized group. This section, however, appears in the Methodology chapter.

Chapter Three ("Methodology") describes the methodological choices I made in conducting my research. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, I start with an overview of the literature that informed my methodology, especially as related to ethics. I follow this with a discussion of my connections with the settlement sector, my funding source, and the ways in which I attempted to mitigate any bias introduced by these relationships. The remaining pages are divided into three sections, and the first deals with the process of constructing, distributing, and analyzing the results of a survey of GARs in Metro Vancouver. The second discusses my interviews with 20 GARs, and it explains the interview process and method of analysis. The third section describes the process of collecting and analyzing data from three focus groups. In this chapter, I also provide technical details of how I mapped refugees' postal codes, and I describe the anonymization techniques I deployed to protect the privacy of respondents.

Chapter Four ("Results") summarizes and analyzes the results gleaned from these three research activities. I offer quantitative information on refugee demographics, health, housing and labour market outcomes, social connections, and other indicators. For the interviews, I present the themes which emerged from analysis in NVIVO, and I add quotations from interviewees to support my findings. I take a similar approach to presenting the results of my focus group

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discussions, but I highlight areas within which they differed from the individual interviews. I also describe the results of a "thought mapping" exercise, which required participants to visualize aspects of integration as interconnected bubbles. I conclude this chapter with a summary of my findings across all phases of the project, and I synthesize results from the interviews, focus groups, and online survey.

Chapter Five ("Discussion") discusses the most important results included in my thesis and describes how they help to supplement places where the literature is thin. I explain the answers to my research questions, and I acknowledge some significant limitations to the scope and relevance of my findings. I also offer some suggestions for future research. I conclude with a brief summary of my work, and I add three appendices for full-text definitions of integration provided by respondents, thought maps created by focus group participants, and data visualizations and tables.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Between 2006 and 2016, 81,125 government-assisted refugees (GARs) landed in British Columbia, and about 10% of these were destined for resettlement within the province (Statistics Canada). In 2002 and again in 2012, the federal government made changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), revising policies that evaluated would-be refugees to Canada based on ability to integrate successfully, and implemented a set of selection criteria structured around the need for protection. These changes in the policy landscape led to a shift in the demographic characteristics of government-assisted refugees in British Columbia, with the average individual being less educated, less fluent in English or French, and in poorer health than in previous years (Hyndman 2011, 10-14; Sherrell 2010; 56). Consequently, integration has become an important concern in British Columbia's refugee settlement sector, and research is needed to better understand the characteristics and needs of newly-arrived GARs.

Although there is a fair amount of research on defining and operationalizing definitions of integration, the concept remains controversial among academics and professionals in the immigrant- and refugee-service sectors. Scholars in the field of migration studies have put forth competing views of how integration should be understood. This literature review attempts to wade through the complex and contradictory literature of integration and offers a short history of how the term has been understood in Canada and elsewhere. I also discuss previous research on refugee integration in Canada. In the next chapter, I continue with an overview of ethics in refugee integration research and point to some literature that has informed my own methodological approach to migration research.

2.1 Defining Integration

Much of the early integration research focuses on measuring integration outcomes and does not interrogate the concept more broadly. In the American context, Bernard (1973) conceives of integration as a multistage process and recognizes that outcomes are dependent on both economic and social factors. He draws a distinction between integration and assimilation[2], arguing that the former is achieved "when migrants become a working part of their adopted society, take on many of its attitudes and behavior patterns, and participate freely in its activities, but at the same time retain a measure of their original cultural identity" (87). Distinct from this is assimilation, a multigenerational process within which immigrants become functionally indistinguishable from those with deeper roots in the country of resettlement. Bernard argues that the typical integration process occurs in the following stages: immediate self-maintenance, putting down roots, and adoption of the American (or host society) ideology. It is evident that Bernard regards integration as a value-neutral rubric for measuring immigrant success, and neglects to examine the ways in which it may exclude or devalue alternative ways of building a life in a new country. However, his work is cited frequently by later integration scholars, and represents an early attempt to differentiate between integration and assimilation.

Goldlust and Richmond (1974) offer one of the first models for understanding integration. These authors advocate for the use of the term "adaptation," arguing that it "has the advantage of not involving a priori value judgements concerning desirable outcomes or conveying the same ideological overtones that have come to be associated with the notion of

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[2] While American scholars continue to deploy the term assimilation in discussing settlement outcomes, Canadian policy does not conceive of integration as a unidirectional process by which refugees take on the social characteristics and values of the host society; the term is thus less appropriate in the Canadian context.

assimilation'" (195). They see adaptation as being determined by the interplay of pre-migration factors and host society characteristics. They note that integration requires "mutual adaptation" on the part of the immigrant and the receiving society, an argument which is echoed in Castles, Korac, Vasta, and Vertovec's (2001) later work on adaptation. Goldlust and Richmond argue for the relevance of pre-arrival factors, which may include level of education, urban vs. rural origins, personal characteristics, and reasons for migration. Also significant are post-arrival factors, like length of residence, political, social, cultural, and economic factors, and subjective aspects, like identification with the host society and satisfaction with life circumstances. Finally, conditions in the receiving society, such as demographics, urbanization, industrialization, government policies, ideologies of pluralism, and social stratification are determinants. This work covers many of the factors which have subsequently been seen as relevant by migration scholars and highlights the importance of pre-arrival factors in influencing outcomes.

Kunz (1981) indicates that there are three basic types of refugees, and that integration outcomes for an individual can be reasonably predicted based on classifying that individual into one of these categories. These types are defined by the relationship between the individual and her former nation. The first, majority-identified, refers to those refugees who identify strongly with their nation of origin despite holding dissident political or ideological beliefs. The second group, events-alienated refugees, includes those who were excluded from the majority identity in their country of origin. Kunz points to German Jews as a strong example of this type of refugee. The third group, self-alienated refugees, choose not to identify with the majority in their country of origin. These refugees "might retain some attachments to the panoramic aspects of their homelands, but their attitudes…[are] shaped by ideological considerations and their departure is a logical result of their alienation" (43). Kunz asserts that group affiliation is a strong predictor

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of integration outcomes, and that those in the same group typically fare similarly once resettled, regardless of ethnicity and other personal characteristics. Although this model does not allow for natural variation and the presence of mitigating factors, it nonetheless offers the interesting idea that integration outcomes can be predicted by the attitudes and social situations of migrants.

Kuhlman (1991) offers another early model for understanding integration, recognizing that both economic and social factors are significant in shaping outcomes. He makes the convincing argument that previous definitions of the concept have been "sketchy or altogether absent, and there has been little theoretical reflection on how to measure integration or on the factors that determine it" (1). Attempting to rectify this absence, he offers a theoretical framework that focuses specifically on the global south. Like previous authors, he rejects the notion of assimilation, and notes that "separate parts, while being incorporated into a larger whole, do not therewith lose their individuality" (5). Predating Berry's (2008) better-known work on acculturation, Kuhlman applies the concept more broadly, and uses it to understand integration as a two-way process by which refugees change and are changed by the host society. Next, he offers two versions of a model, one comprehensive and the other focusing specifically on economic integration. The former includes variables like personal characteristics of refugees, migration experience, characteristics and policies of the country of resettlement, adaptation, and the impact of refugee flows on the host population. The latter model suggests four criteria against which economic integration can be measured. They are: participation in the host economy, an income which permits "an acceptable standard of living," equal access to goods and services, and no negative impact on the host population (16). Kuhlman recognizes that some of these concepts are vague and can be applied in multiple ways; he suggests that these be operationalized before

use. Kuhlman's work builds on earlier writings by Goldlust and Richmond and forwards the

academic discourse by offering a specific model for the global south.

More controversially, Miriam Potocky (1996) understands integration as a state in which

refugees achieve the same social and economic status as other marginalized groups in the

country of resettlement. She focuses on the specific example of Southeast Asian refugees in the

United States. Potocky forwards Kuhlman's critique of his own work, observing that his

definition of economic integration is broad and uses terms nonspecifically. This leads her to

conclude that assessment of integration must be rooted in a specific understanding of place and

demographic characteristics, with other minority groups being a more appropriate basis for

comparison than the native-born population as a whole. In short, she argues that:

> Minimal economic integration of refugees is attained if the economic status of the
> refugees is at least equal to that of any native-born minority group, as measured by
> poverty rates, employment, welfare utilization, home ownership, and similar economic
> indicators (255).

Potocky sees as legitimate the argument that refugees who are receiving government benefits

should not be provided with a higher standard-of-living than indigenous minorities. She sees this

parity as a "minimal acceptable standard," beyond which the government should not be expected

to help (255). She notes, however, that refugees are free to further improve their living

conditions on their own. Potocky seems to accept the income gap between minority and majority

groups as inevitable and does not interrogate its existence as a product of the racial and colonial

history of the United States. From my point of view, this is a critical misstep and weakens the

foundations of her argument. Potocky's work on integration, however, remains fairly well-

known in the field of refugee economic integration.

Finally, scholars Ager and Strang (2008) offer a well-developed and influential model of

integration. These authors see integration of a function of four broad indicators: achievement in

and access to employment, housing, education, and health services; assumptions and practices around rights and citizenship; social connections with co-ethnics and others; and "structural barriers" to these connections, like differences in culture and language (166). These four categories include ten "domains" of integration: employment, housing, education, health, social bridges, social bonds, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability, and rights and citizenship. The authors' inclusion of bridging, linking, and bonding connections echoes the earlier work of Bourdieu, and emphasizes the ways in which social capital is significant in facilitating integration. Ager and Strang's model is helpful in that it incorporates many of the factors that have previously been determined to be significant to integration and acknowledges that integration is a complex process. The authors recognize that the "challenge of any framework seeking to reflect normative understandings of integration is for it to accommodate the diversity of assumptions and values of different settings while retaining some conceptual coherence" (185). They understand that an increase in conceptual coherence comes at the expense of reflecting the nuanced and highly variable experiences of refugees. This gets to the heart of why refugee integration is a difficult process to model, and why embodied, context-dependent findings are so important in understanding this issue.

2.2   Aspects of Integration

Theoretical writing on integration suggests that it is important to look at outcomes as a function of policy factors, social environment, and personal characteristics. The following section discusses some of these variables in more detail. I begin by focusing my attention on macro-level policies and positions taken up by the federal and provincial governments, and I offer a brief overview of categories of entry in Canada. I then narrow my focus to social factors like access to housing, enclaves and residential segregation, healthcare, labour market

attachment, and educational attainment and opportunities. Finally, I discuss variables related to

individual identities and experiences, and I cover connections to co-ethnics, experiences of

discrimination and othering, and the impact of age and gender on successful integration. The

structure allows me to demonstrate how individual and social factors are linked in multiple ways,

and the ways in which they play out against the backdrop of the Canadian policy environment.

2.2.1   Provincial and Federal Policy and Integration

Forced migrants typically enter Canada with one of the following designations:

government-assisted refugee (GAR), privately-sponsored refugee (PSR), landed in Canada

refugee (LCR)/ refugee claimant (RC), or blended visa office referred (BVOR). Government-

assisted refugees apply for refugee status abroad, and the Canadian government accepts them for

resettlement. These individuals are eligible for income assistance for one year after arrival

(Hyndman 2011; 1). The key difference between government-assisted and privately-sponsored

refugees is related to who bears the cost of resettlement; while GARs are financially supported

by the government, PSRs receive sponsorship and monetary support from community groups

(Hyndman 2011; 1). Claimants arrive in Canada under another category and apply for refugee

status; those who succeed in this endeavor are counted as landed in Canada refugees (LCRs)

(Government of Canada 2018, October 5). Blended visa office referred refugees (BVORs) arrive

under a fairly new program that combines private sponsorship with a shorter period of

government financial assistance (Government of Canada 2018, August 20). The literature

indicates that there are substantial differences in outcomes among these classes (Yu, Oullet, and

Warmington 2007), and it is thus important to distinguish between categories of entry in

undertaking refugee research. My thesis focuses specifically on GARs, but other refugees are

mentioned periodically in the paragraphs below.

In several cases, government policies have emerged as barriers to refugee economic success. A neglected but crucial area of research is the impact of transportation loan repayment on financial well-being. Many government-assisted refugees receive transportation loans from the federal government to come to Canada and repaying these loans (which can be several thousand dollars) is a financial burden to newcomers. Chow (2011) argues that these loans "are evidence of a refugee policy that has not adapted" to the increasingly "humanitarian direction" of refugee policy post-IRPA (iii). Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (2016a) reports that many Syrian struggle to make payments. In Vancouver, where the cost of living is already high, families may be unable to divert money from living expenses to make these payments. Requiring the payment of these loans may not be sound policy and offering debt relief or subsidizing travel is an option worth considering. Skills underutilization and lack of recognition of qualifications earned abroad are also significant obstacles. In many countries, including Canada, refugees have struggled to have their educational experience recognized, which has led to underemployment and low incomes (Bevelander and Pendakur, 2014). Given that this problem is not unique to refugee newcomers, the Canadian government would do well to consider loosening the assessment criteria for credentials earned abroad.

2.2.2 Social Factors and Integration

Access to safe and stable housing is another piece of the integration puzzle, but refugees in Canada often lack access. In larger cities like Toronto and Vancouver, the housing affordability crisis has had a strong impact on the refugee population, who often rely on limited incomes and government transfers to pay rent. Work by Hyndman (2012) indicates that, while most refugees stay in the province in which they landed, newcomers may move houses or apartments frequently. A study in Vancouver (D'Addario, Hiebert, and Sherrell, 2007) discovers

high rates of "hidden homelessness" among refugees in the region. Newcomers who cannot afford housing may stay with friends or family, sleep in non-residential buildings (e.g. churches), or live in vehicles. Although less visible than street homelessness, this crisis illustrates the impact of high housing costs on refugees. In Ottawa, too, refugees are over-represented among the homeless population (Sylvestre et al 2017). In Vancouver, Francis and Hiebert (2014) find that refugees are at a disadvantage in the housing market as compared to other categories of immigrants. They note that refugees often "inhabit inadequately maintained, overcrowded, and unaffordable housing units and experience increased risk of homelessness," which echoes the earlier findings of D'Addario, Hiebert, and Sherrell (2007). Also in Vancouver, Sherrell (2010) points to housing scarcity and poor quality as issues which impact refugees. She mentions that the regulatory environment can make it difficult for multigenerational refugee households to stay together, even when there is a strong cultural preference for cohabitation. Sherrell refers specifically to occupancy rules for social housing that limit the number of adults allowed to reside in a single unit. Access to housing is a multifaceted problem, and a solution would need to address affordability, cultural expectations, and poverty among newcomers.

Another issue related to housing affordability is residential segregation. In a comparative study of Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto, Bauder and Sharpe (2002) indicate that "visible minorities are not ghettoized, and even the most concentrated groups are not isolated among each other" (219). The authors argue that Canadian multicultural policy is broadly responsible for this outcome. Work by Hiebert (2015), however, suggests that ethnic enclaves are becoming more prevalent in Vancouver and Toronto, although the same does not hold for Montreal. Rather than seeing enclaves as "ghettos" where visible minority immigrants experience poverty and exclusion, he notes that there is often a great deal of cultural diversity

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within such neighborhoods, and "socio-economic characteristics of enclaves vary significantly" (1). He also finds no strong relationship between poverty and living in an enclave neighborhood. Finally, Hiebert (2017) offers a more contemporary look at refugees in the housing market, and again focuses on Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto. Among refugees, he notes that rates of home ownership and self-reported housing stress are very similar to the average for the population as a whole. He argues that these data make a case for "reconsider[ing] the commonplace understanding of refugees as representing a long-term burden on Canadian society" (52). So, although homelessness and access to sufficient, safe housing are pressing issues for the refugee settlement sector, the data related to residential segregation and home ownership paint a more complicated picture, especially when attention is given to outcomes over time.

Tangentially related to the issue of enclaves is the fact that, although refugees tend to integrate more smoothly when there exists a community of co-ethnics in the location of settlement (Hyndman, 2012), there may be an economic cost. A study in Toronto finds that the density of ethnic and cultural organizations has a mixed effect on integration, and refugees who participate tend to have lower incomes and poorer ties to the community at large (Couton, 2013). In this case, it is important to note that the study focuses only on formal cultural organizations and does not address informal relationships between newcomers of the same ethnicity. It is also interesting to note that the study finds a positive correlation between participation in cultural organizations and self-employment (Couton, 2013). Strong connections to co-ethnics and weaker cross-cultural ties can contribute to residential segregation, low English proficiency, and lost economic opportunity (Couton 2013; Danso 2002), but the relationship between these types of relationships and integration cannot be generalized as purely negative. The literature, then, offers

no consensus on whether cross-cultural or co-ethnic social connections are more important and implies that a balance of both may be most effective in facilitating integration.

2.2.3   Services and Integration

Access to services is another important piece of the integration puzzle. In a paper focused on Canadian refugees and immigrants, Nakhaie (2017) finds that refugees are more likely to report service needs than economic immigrants. In analyzing data collected from clients of a Windsor, Ontario YMCA, he discovers that refugees typically reported unmet needs in three areas: social integration; building social networks; and language and skills training. Among economic immigrants, privately-sponsored refugees (PSRs), and government-assisted refugees (GARs), PSRs are most likely to need help connecting with community services and finding work. Finally, Nakhaie notes a negative correlation between education, English proficiency, and connections with co-ethnics and service needs. Generally, highly educated newcomers with strong social connections need fewer services than others. This study suggests that refugees as a whole are at a disadvantage as compared to other newcomers, and that they may need additional services to integrate successfully. In another study of services in Canada, Yu, Ouellet, and Warmington (2007) note that, although refugees often lack access to sufficient services, more research is needed to understand the exact nature of the gap and how to close it. By listing the various social services available to refugees in Canada and detailing the eligibility criteria for each, the scholars find that refugee claimants are more underserved than GARs, PSRs, or landed in Canada refugees (LCRs), and are prevented (due to prohibitive cost and/or lack of subsidies) from accessing many of the language, employment, and social support services available to others. On a related note, Morantz and her coauthors (2013) discover that access to childcare is a critical barrier to integration among refugee claimants in Montreal. Participants in the study point

to "a lack of informal child care as a result of reduced social networks, and affordability as a barrier to formal child care services" (318). The authors highlight the fact that claimants are not eligible to receive childcare subsidies in Quebec and suggest that repealing this policy would alleviate this burden. So, although refugees in all categories report a lack of sufficient integration services, refugee claimants rely on an often-insufficient patchwork of government and other programs.[3]

2.2.4   Health(care) and Integration

Access to healthcare for refugees is a crucial and well-researched aspect of integration. The literature establishes that recent refugee populations have had more significant healthcare needs than previous cohorts; government-assisted refugees are selected based on 'need for protection' and as such are among the most vulnerable. A study of Syrian refugees identifies many barriers to healthcare access, including insufficient insurance coverage and low cultural competence among healthcare professionals. The authors also identify a significant gap between privately-sponsored refugees (PSRs) and government-assisted refugees (GARs). The latter report "significantly lower perceived physical and mental health, as well as…higher unmet healthcare needs" (Oda et al, 2018, para. 1). Research psychiatrists Beiser and Hou (2017) argue that refugees experience poor mental health as compared to other categories of migrants. They discover that, among Canadian refugees, perceived discrimination and sense of belonging are significant negative factors. These findings are echoed by Hyndman (2011), who also discusses the high physical and mental health needs of refugees.

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[3] For a discussion of specific services available to claimants versus other categories of humanitarian migrants in Canada, see Yu, Oullet, and Warmington (2007).

Indeed, many studies conclude that socioeconomic and demographic factors may make certain refugees more vulnerable to mental illness. In a study of immigrant and refugee men in Vancouver, Hilario et al (2018) concur with Beiser and Hou, arguing that "second-class citizenship" and discrimination contribute negatively to mental well-being in men (210). These authors find that, among refugees specifically, marginalization due to immigration category, race or ethnicity, English proficiency, and religion are widely experienced (218). Hilario and her coauthors suggest that refugee mental health is intrinsically tied to the "social climate," and that experiencing discrimination is a risk factor for poor mental health (219). In another study, Beiser and Hou (2001) explore the links between mental health, language proficiency, and employment outcomes. Among Southeast Asian refugees in Canada, they observe that unemployment increases the risk of depression for men. Among women, the causal link goes in the opposite direction, with depression as "an important predictor of employability" (1321). In other words, men without depression are likely to develop the condition when faced with unemployment, while women with depression are typically less successful in the labour market. They also note that poor language skills become a more significant predictor of depression after the initial period of resettlement, with low-proficiency refugees experiencing high rates of depression ten years after arrival. Finally, the literature suggests that refugee youth tend to exhibit emotional problems and aggressive behavior much more frequently than other immigrant youth. Beiser and Hou (2016) conclude that many refugee youth experience pre-flight trauma, and that refugee girls and visible minorities are more likely to struggle emotionally (466). They also note that boys are significantly more likely to display aggressive behavior, while girls tend to "internalize" problems (467). Walker and Zuberi (2019) discuss the impact of trauma on academic achievement among school-aged refugee youth; they also conclude that negative pre-migration

experiences can be a barrier to success in Canada. On the other side of the age spectrum, immigrant seniors are especially susceptible to depression and stress, but they are "least likely to seek out mental health services" as compared to other age groups (Koehn et al, 2014; 146). Despite this, age-specific research on refugee mental health is sparse, even as an increasing proportion of refugees are very young or old. Factors like gender, age, and visible minority status often shape health outcomes among refugees, and group-specific research allows us to understand the specific relationship between a demographic factor and health.

2.2.5   Refugees in the Labour Market

One of the most well-studied components of integration is labour market attachment, and much has been written about the relationship between place and outcomes. Haan (2008) analyzes the role of place in determining integration outcomes and concludes that settling in a "gateway city" (Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver) has little bearing in immigrant employment. He notes that while immigrants in gateway cities tend to earn more than those in other areas, they also experience higher levels of employment mismatch, which has implications for skills utilization and workplace satisfaction (751). In a comparative analysis of refugee integration in Sweden and Canada, Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) find that the earning trajectories of refugees are strikingly similar, even though refugees to Canada tend to earn higher wages. The employment rates are also consistent between the two countries (705). Unlike in Sweden, however, Canadian government-assisted refugees perform much better than other non-economic immigrants. The authors attribute this to the plentitude of settlement services available to GARs (705). Also in Canada, Frank (2013) finds that refugees of all arrival categories "obtain matches at a significantly slower rate than immigrants in the skilled worker class," and that immigrants in larger cities tend to take longer to find appropriate employment than those living in smaller cities

and rural areas. After controlling for work experience abroad, language, and educational attainment, however, the disadvantage for refugees disappears. Her findings suggest that when refugees are disadvantaged in the labour market, the explanatory variables may be language proficiency and resume quality, rather than immigration status. These scholars speak to the complicated relationship between place, category of arrival, and employment outcomes.

In many ways, labour market outcomes underpin every other aspect of integration, because they determine wages, social connections, and mental well-being. In his work on place and economic integration, Haan (2008) discovers that visible minority status is a more accurate predictor of success than location of settlement, with minorities more likely to face un- and underemployment (768). Bauder (2005) mobilizes Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explain the experiences of immigrants in the Vancouver labour market. He notes that non-economic immigrants are typically less prepared to enter the job market than those in the economic class; he attributes this to a lack of knowledge about "labour market rules" in Canada (81). Among study participants, he finds that refugees tend to do poorly in situations where "rigid conventions in the application and interviewing processes" are used (94). He notes that refugees included in his study tend to pursue different employment strategies than economic immigrants, and interestingly, are less likely to utilize social networks to find a job (94-95). In cases where refugees fail to secure appropriate employment, there may be risks to mental health. According to psychiatric researchers Affleck, Thamotharampillai, Jeyakumar, and Whitley (2018), un- and underemployment are associated with poor self-image among Canadian refugee men. In a study of Sri Lankan Tamil men, respondents reported feeling "redundant" and "useless" because of their inability to provide for their households (846). The literature supports the conclusion that

refugee economic integration is an issue of paramount importance, and that poor outcomes carry risks for mental and financial health.

2.2.6   Identity and Integration

Discrimination and prejudice against newcomers also had implications for integration. Studies in Toronto indicate that racialized refugees perceive a high degree of prejudice and connect this experience to discrimination in housing and the labour market (Danso, 2002). In Vancouver, however, the situation is seemingly more positive. Reports by Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (2016a; 2016b), a local settlement organization, suggest that Syrians[4] tend not to perceive or report discrimination in Vancouver. This finding is based on data collected from clients of ISSofBC and does not include information from other ethnic groups. A study of Syrians by Scott and Safdar (2017) has similar findings. The authors argue that this general openness to Syrians can be attributed to multiculturalism policy in Canada. However, neither study addresses the possible roles of cultural distance and racialization in differential outcomes between Syrian refugees and others. Many of the studies which find a high degree of prejudice against refugees focus on racialized populations from countries where the culture is substantially different from that of Canada. For instance, the Danso study relies on interviews with East African refugee claimants, who face different and arguably deeper forms of racialization than Syrians, who arrive with their status already confirmed. Furthermore, cultural distance (in terms of religion, rural vs. urban background, manner of dress, etc.) may play a role

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[4] Given the massive public mobilization and support around resettling Syrian refugees in Canada, it is important to avoid generalizing Syrian-specific findings to all ethnic groups.

in mitigating or exacerbating discrimination and othering of migrants. This variable, however, is difficult to measure in a rigorous way.

Refugees to Canada often experience "othering" by the Canadian-born, a behavior "which serves to mark and name those thought to be different" (Weiss, 1995, ctd. in el-Bialy and Mulay, 2005, 55). In a study of St. John's, Newfoundland, el-Bialy and Mulay (2005) find that refugees resettled in the small urban center often experience othering from their neighbors. Many refugees from visible minority groups mention receiving frequent questions about their origins. Although the refugees acknowledge that the comments are not always meant to be hostile, they still report that such conversations make them feel as if they do not belong (55). In a study of another smaller city, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Nourpanah (2014) argues that Afghan refugees are highly aware of the assumptions made about their cultures and lives. She notes that Afghan-Canadians are not a monolithic population, and that they hold on to traditional practices to different degrees while integrating in Canada. In her interviews with refugees, it is apparent that participants feel the weight of assumptions and stereotypes, especially as related to gender and religion. These studies of refugee integration in smaller communities point to "othering" behaviors and assumptions about culture as phenomena with a negative impact on outcomes.

Other scholarly work complicates our understanding of racialization, discrimination, and place. A 2013 study by Canadian scholars Ray and Preston finds that, when individuals experience "discomfort and discrimination," most visible minorities point to race as the explanatory variable. According to this study, Canadians of color report fewer instances of prejudice in smaller cities and towns and are more likely to experience racism in cities like Vancouver and Toronto. The authors attribute this to a backlash against living in an environment where many cultures are represented. This stands in contrast to research in the United States,

where rural areas present more of a challenge as compared to cities. Ray and Preston note that individuals who speak a language other than English or French, were born outside of Canada, or are less educated as compared to the sample mean are less likely to report discrimination. This supports the notion that individuals with less contact with the majority culture perceive less discrimination, while the more assimilated are more likely to pick up on and express discomfort with discriminatory attitudes. This study complicates the assumption that integration leads to fewer instances of prejudice.

As another marginalized group, newcomer youth are disproportionately affected by a lack of services, and refugees are particularly likely to have unmet needs. In a study of African refugee and immigrant youth in Vancouver, Francis and Yan (2016) note that racialized youth encounter many barriers in accessing services. Among study participants, they observe three key obstacles. The first is that existing services do not address the diverse needs of newcomers and youth are unlikely to trust service providers. This creates a reluctance to utilize existing services. As a consequence, many participants report negative integration in the form of social exclusion. Using these findings, Francis and Yan urge that the government and nonprofit sector to provide targeted services for youth and those from marginalized communities, in order to support healthy integration into Canadian society[5].

It is obvious that generic newcomer social services might not be sufficient to serve the increasingly diverse population of Vancouver, and that more granular data is needed to understand and respond to specific communities and their needs. Furthermore, a study by

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[5] Integration of youth has recently become a priority of IRCC, and there has been an associated increase in targeted programming for this group.

Tastsoglou et al (2014) finds that service providers are likely to ignore heterogeneity in the refugee population, in order to avoid stereotyping clients. However, this can backfire, with providers unable to target services to those especially in need. The Tastsoglou et al study focuses specifically on gendered service needs, but the conclusions are relevant to other targeted programs, and they suggest that agencies need to strike a balance between targeting specific needs and avoiding stereotypes.

Refugee women face gender-specific burdens in integrating, and the issues faced by this group bear examination. Women often take on the bulk of childcare responsibilities, and cultural expectations may mean that they receive little help from other family members. Women are less likely to enter the workforce, and this has implications for economic and social integration. Government-assisted refugees, however, are often eligible for free and low-cost child minding, a service which is not typically available to refugee claimants (Morantz et al, 2013; Francis and Yan, 2016). This factor may have a positive impact on female-identified GARs more specifically. Sexual violence, a pre-arrival factor that primarily affects women, has negative implications for refugee mental health, and survivors may struggle to access adequate services upon arrival. In an American study of Congolese refugees by Wachter et al (2016), the authors conclude that the painful feelings associated with this experience "do not necessarily dissipate with a change in location," and that this trauma must be tackled as part of the integration process (885). Domestic abuse is another highly gendered obstacle to integration, and stress within refugee families may lead to higher rates of domestic violence as compared to the native-born population (LeBrun et al 2016). For refugee women, experiences of domestic violence can be isolating, and social factors or lack of information can prevent survivors from seeking assistance. This has implications for social integration; while an abusive partner may isolate the victim

outright, violence can also contribute to poor mental health outcomes, which are associated with unsuccessful integration (LeBrun et al, 2016). Finally, children of immigrants are more likely to witness acts of domestic violence against a parent, and this can be harmful to development (LeBrun et al, 2016; 51). Children of immigrants and refugees are more likely to be victims of child abuse than the general population, probably due to high levels of family stress and isolation (LeBrun et al, 2016).

Finally, men, LGBT+-identified individuals, and seniors also navigate specific challenges. A Canadian study by Hilario et al (2018) notes that young refugee men frequently feel pressure to be a "useful person"; here defined as someone who provides for their family and does not rely on welfare (216-2017). Other Canadian studies (Hyndman 2011) find that men are less likely than women to complete LINC[6] classes (17), and this lower completion rate may be related to the gendered pressure to earn an income. Hyndman (2011) mentions a lack of Canada-specific research on integration outcomes among LGBT+ refugees, despite the fact that these individuals often become displaced due to identity-related violence in their home countries (30). She also notes that LGBT+ youth often have greater service needs than other young people, and the scarcity of youth-oriented services thus has a disparate impact on them (30). In a recent study of Iranian refugee men who identify as gay, Karimi (2018) found that this group faces exclusion and violence from co-ethnics and others. Participants described being fetishized and/ or excluded by the Canadian gay community, and many also faced prejudice from Iranians. Karimi urges scholars to acknowledge the complicated lives of LGBT+ refugees, and he argues that this group has specific needs that should be addressed by the settlement sector. As another vulnerable

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[6] Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is a free language-learning program funded by IRCC.

segment of the population, newcomer seniors can face family conflicts, loneliness and isolation, and elder abuse by caregivers (Koehn et al 2014; 150). There is insufficient refugee-specific research on the integration of seniors in the Canadian context (Hyndman 2011; 42), but immigrant seniors as a whole are at increased risk of depression and "relocation stress" (146-147). It is my hope that our study will shed light on outcomes within these understudied groups and will offer a point of comparison with less specific work on the elderly and LGBT+ immigrants in Canada.

2.3   Conclusion

This chapter has described a few relevant definitions of integration and has explored the strengths and limitations of each. I have also cited a few case studies that offer important background for understanding my project and illuminate specific aspects of integration, including social connections, access to services, and the relationship between personal identity and outcomes. Later in the thesis, I return to these broad themes, and I discuss the ways in which my findings dovetail with (and differ from) the literature. This chapter also cites a few important gaps in the academic understanding of integration and demonstrates that refugees' own perspectives are not typically incorporated into definitions. I continue this discussion in the next chapter, which includes a short trip through the methodological literature and describes how previous writing informed my own approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the literature which informed my methodological choices and explains the study procedures undertaken in each phase of the project. I begin with a review of the relevant methodological literature, and I follow this with sections dedicated to the origins of the project, survey design and deployment, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. I also offer technical details that help to explain the results yielded by my analysis. I conclude with a brief discussion of my decision to rely on self-reported category of entry and year of arrival to determine study eligibility, and I acknowledge the tradeoffs involved in this choice. The results produced by my methodological decisions are described in Chapter Four.

3.1   Methodological Literature

Refugees may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation in research, and it is imperative that migration scholars consider the ethical implications of research with this group. As mentioned above, refugees experience poverty, disability, and trauma at high rates, and may be less able to leave or report studies with questionable ethical standards. Re-traumatization is of particular concern; many refugees experience trauma associated with negative pre-arrival experiences, like war or interpersonal violence. Asking about these experiences is often necessary to understanding the impact of pre-arrival factors on integration, but it can be a risk to mental health (Clark-Kazak 2017). Furthermore, many refugees belong to additional marginalized groups. They may identify as LGBT+, have a disability, practice a minority religion, or belong to a racialized group. While it is important to give voice to the experiences of refugees, it is also necessary to remember that research should not violate the privacy of participants. Refugees may experience negative social consequences (both within and outside of their specific communities) related to self-identifying with particular groups (Schmidt 2007). Finally, although research in

refugee studies is necessary to answer academic questions, it may not always be beneficial to the population being studied. Findings may be used to inform policies that are harmful to refugees, or results may be irrelevant to the needs of participants (Schmidt 2007; Lammers 2007). These thorny issues make research with refugees particularly fraught, and ethics are a persistent concern within this sub-field.

Fortunately, methodological work in migration studies offers a way forward. In a 2007 piece, Anna Schmidt observes that migration typically takes place in "a highly political environment," and that both the study itself and the policy environment are shaped by choices made by the researcher (82). She argues that "the relevance of…[refugee studies] might depend at least as much on a debate about what type of questions are asked in the field than about how to go about answering them" (97). Schmidt's work emphasizes the fact that refugee research does not occur in a vacuum, and that the political context of research encourages the asking of certain questions while precluding others. It might be argued that this is a good thing; answering certain questions could put vulnerable populations at risk. Still, Schmidt calls attention to the usually overlooked question of the link between research and context.

Next, Lammers (2007) tackles the question of power imbalances between the researcher and subject. She highlights the troubling dynamic within which a researcher sees herself as "helping" the vulnerable population being studied, and the ways in which this attitude discounts the agency of research participants. Such attitudes also fail to take into account the fact that the participant is rendering a crucial service to the researcher; after all, field research cannot be initiated without participants. Lammers discusses this in the specific context of helping refugees outside of the study and mentions cases where she has given food or other assistance to participants. This is arguably an ethics violation, because she is cultivating a relationship with

participants that may compromise her findings. Nonetheless, she opines that assisting her subjects with basic needs is a moral imperative. She concludes the piece by arguing that the only way forward is to engage in "honest and self-critical reflection" on her own motives. Although the specifics of this article are not as relevant in the Canadian context, where refugees typically have access to basic needs, the question of power dynamics and the positioning of the researcher is important.

In devising my methodology, I drew especially on principles outlined by Clark-Kazak (2017) for working with forced migrants. Particularly, her work informed my methodology as related to consent, positionality, and avoiding re-traumatization. Clark-Kazak argues that, when working with a partner organization, clear boundaries should be maintained between the research and service provision. Participants should not worry that their participation (or lack thereof) will have an impact on the accessibility and quality of services offered to them. Related to the issue of consent is the availability of findings, and Clark-Kazak believes that results should be distributed to participants promptly and in a variety of languages and formats. Too, she suggests that modest honorariums be offered, in order to balance the need to compensate participants and not take advantage of the financial situation of individuals to compel participation. She also suggests that the researcher consider her position of power over participants and also consider dynamics related to race, religion, and language. Finally, she advises that researchers steer away from sensitive topics (like torture or sexual violence) whenever possible, in order to avoid re-traumatizing research subjects. As described in the following chapter, I used these ideas as guidance when interacting with those who agreed to collaborate with me.

Jacobsen and Landau (2003) address the entangled issues of methodology and ethics, arguing that most refugee research is methodologically unsound. In addition to suggesting

concrete steps to make methodology more rigorous (e.g. back-translating all documents to ensure translation accuracy), they also argue that refugee research should deliver a direct (e.g. financial) benefit to the population being studied. The authors further argue that improving scientific and ethical standards in refugee research will "create a powerful tool for policymakers, and better methods will enable the still marginalized field of refugee studies to enter into productive and critical debates" with other disciplines (201). Hugman, Bartolomei, and Pittaway (2011) also address methodology, and focus specifically on the issue of informed consent in the context of refugee research. The authors suggest a model that emphasizes the "human agency" of refugee participants (656). These authors assert that there is an inherent tension between acknowledging the vulnerability of refugees and recognizing their agency as human beings. They suggest that the best way to overcome this is through methodologies like participatory action research, within which refugees themselves take an active role in generating knowledge. By integrating refugees directly into the project as co-investigators, researchers are able to obtain informed consent while respecting refugees' privacy and competence (669). Both of these studies indicate that exploiting or infantilizing refugee research participants is both an ethics violation and an obstacle to gathering useful, relevant data.

Given that much of the methodology was written before I joined the project, I was unable to integrate these perspectives to the extent I desired. Nonetheless, I was able to make several choices within the previously-established bounds of the project. Issues of informed consent and mutual respect influenced the way I wrote my consent and assent forms, and the concept of knowledge co-creation led me to focus on refugee-centered definitions of integration. Too, Clark-Kazak's (2017) work on re-traumatization was especially helpful as I drafted my survey, interview, and focus group questions. Her suggestions about personal presentation and being

mindful of cultural dynamics shaped the way I handled my Jewishness in interviews with those

of other backgrounds. The next section focuses on the methodology used in my study, and I

describe each phase of my research in detail. My methodological approach is informed, wherever

possible, by the studies cited above.

3.2   Methodology

This project began with a funding proposal by Immigrant Services Society of British

Columbia (ISS*of*BC) to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC); the proposed

objective was to find out how a specific cohort of government-assisted refugees were faring after

being resettled. The proposal laid out a mixed methodology which incorporated an online survey,

individual interviews, and focus group discussions. In this way, ISS*of*BC hoped to capture both

the demographic characteristics and the more subjective lived experiences of former refugees.

The organization proposed to complete the project in 2020. ISS*of*BC received the grant in

summer 2018, and I was hired as the research assistant for the project, with an explicit

understanding that I would also be using the data for my thesis. To this end, I applied for and

received approval from UBC's Research Ethics Board. During this period, I also sought and

received approval for my thesis topic from the Department of Geography at the University of

British Columbia. As a secondary research question, we sought to learn how GARs themselves

define integration. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a dearth of refugee-centered

definitions of integration in the literature, and these perspectives are often neglected in favor of

frameworks that rely on concrete indicators like income, housing, and language acquisition.

Consequently, the project has separate, but related objectives for the master's thesis and the final

report to IRCC.

My graduate work was supervised by Dr. Daniel Hiebert, a professor in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. Kathy Sherrell, the Associate Director of Settlement Services at ISS*of*BC. Additionally, we assembled an advisory committee with stakeholders from academia, government, and the settlement sector; a list of names is included in the footnote.[7] This group met several times between fall 2018 and summer 2019, and I shared my progress and asked for feedback on study design, recruitment, and dissemination of findings. I also visited the Surrey Refugee Youth Council (SRYC) in Surrey, British Columbia to gather feedback on my study design. The council members, all former refugees, suggested that I add Nepali and Dari to the translation languages and provide a paper survey option. Feedback from all of these sources was used to improve the study design and guide decision-making in gathering data.

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[7] Umit Kiziltan; Director General, Research and Evaluation Branch, IRCC NHQ

Tiana Solares; Assistant Director, IRCC BC-Yukon

Aileen Murphy; Senior Planner, City of Surrey

Maia McKinley   Senior Policy Advisor, Immigration Policy Branch, Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

Chris Friesen; Director – Settlement Services, ISS*of*BC

Patrick Mackenzie; CEO, Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IECBC)

Rima Wilkes; Professor, Department of Sociology, UBC

Jennifer Hyndman; Professor, Departments of Social Science and Geography, and Director of the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

Fariborz Birjanian; CEO, CCIS, Calgary

Mario Calla; CEO, COSTI, Toronto

Our stated rationale for completing the study was that more data was needed to understand integration outcomes among GARs who arrived between 2007 and 2016. Given the changes to federal-level legislation, we hypothesized that the demographic characteristics of government-assisted refugees were changing over this time period, and earlier research suggested that demographic factors were relevant to integration outcomes. Furthermore, a study of this scale had never been conducted on government-assisted refugees in British Columbia, and previous research focused on narrower slices of the population (e.g. Bhutanese refugees or young men). Our research sought to capture a broader population, and we hoped to collect a representative sample of ethnicities, genders, countries of origin, and arrival years. Given the difference in support networks, government assistance, and paths to Canada between government-assisted refugees and other types of forced migrants, we focused exclusively on the former to reduce noise in our dataset. For ethical reasons, we also excluded youth below the age of 14 for the survey and 18 for the interviews and focus groups.

3.2.1 Survey

We chose to host our survey on Hosted in Canada, due to ethics regulations about storing data on foreign servers. I created a draft survey in late 2018, and I sought feedback from Dr. Rima Wilkes in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. She suggested several changes, and I implemented these before setting up the survey on Hosted in Canada. The survey contained 69 questions in total, but I incorporated branching logic to exclude certain questions based on the respondent's previous answers. I also coded all questions as optional, which allowed participants to skip questions as they saw fit. I also configured the survey settings to prevent users from answering twice from the same IP address. Finally, I added consent and adolescent assent forms to the first page of the study, and I required respondents to

affirm their consent before continuing to the survey questions. At the end of the survey, I added an optional short answer question where participants could indicate their interest in participating in further research.

The survey and consent forms were translated into eight languages[8], in addition to the base language (English). We purchased translation services from MOSAIC, a local social service agency. For all languages but Tigrigna and Nepali, a drop-down was available at the top of the welcome screen. Separate survey links were created for Tigrigna and Nepali, given the lack of pre-set options for these languages in Hosted in Canada. I subdivided the questions into ten sections: demographics, education, language, migration experience, employment, housing, services, social integration, health, and overall thoughts. I also added a question about basic study eligibility[9]. The survey included multiple choice, yes/no, and short answer formats. Some multiple-choice answer options were presented as five categories (most-least) and later converted to a Likert scale. Hosted in Canada collected time stamps, rates of completion, and response language data, and I used this information to monitor responses.

We first launched a smaller pilot version of the survey, and we sent invitations to ISS*of*BC's client listserv. For privacy reasons, a staff member filtered email addresses by category of arrival (only including those GARs who arrived between 2007 and 2016) and forwarded my invitation email to targets. Nine individuals responded to the survey pilot, and we closed the survey after eight days. We made two small changes to the survey questions between the pilot and the full survey. First, we added a category for agricultural work to our questions

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[8] Spanish, Farsi, Dari, Swahili, Arabic, Kurdish, Tigrigna, and Nepali. I chose these languages using a special tabulation of census data from a previous project. My selections were made based on number of speakers in Greater Vancouver.

[9] "Are you a former government-assisted refugee (GAR) who arrived in Canada between 2007 and 2016?"

about work experience. Second, we eliminated a question about whether the respondent self-identifies as LGBT+. We noticed that those who did not complete the survey tended to quit after this question, and this suggested to us that LGBT+ identity was a sensitive topic for some surveyees. Instead of asking this question, we planned to convene a LGBT+-specific focus group. This decision allowed us to respect the privacy of respondents, while still providing an opening for interested individuals to share their experiences in a small group setting.

The full survey was launched in February 2019 and remained available until August 2019, although I paused data collection for the thesis in June 2019. We hoped to collect a statistically significant sample of 400-1200 respondents[10]. To this end, we undertook survey promotion activities from February to May 2019. We first sent reminder emails to ISSofBC's listserv, and we encouraged those who did not participate in the pilot to answer the full survey. I also created and distributed study posters to interview participants who expressed interest in recruiting friends and family for the study. In April 2019, I visited three ISS*of*BC staff meetings to explain the study and distribute posters to settlement workers. I also circulated the poster in an email conversation with ISS*of*BC's settlement managers. I hung posters and talked to staff at MOSAIC and SUCCESS, two other local social service organizations that provide help to refugees. I also requested help in promoting the study from NewToBC. With the help of ISS*of*BC staff, I published a poster and study announcement to the BC Refugee Hub website, and I posted a link to ISS*of*BC's Twitter account. With the cooperation of Jenn Basu of the Surrey Refugee Youth Council, I was able to add information about the study to SRYC's monthly newsletter. I visited two local youth hubs to ask for participation from 14-18-year-olds.

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[10] We later reduced this goal to 200 due to low response rates.

I also dropped in on a Farsi women's group organized by ISS*of*BC to encourage participants to take the survey. Finally, I contacted five local mosques and churches that have been involved in refugee relief activities, and I asked them to consider helping me to spread the word about the study. These activities allowed us to collect a broader and more representative sample of former GARs in the Vancouver metropolitan area.

3.2.2 Interviews

During this time, I was also completing individual interviews with government-assisted refugees. Our goal was to collect 50[11] interviews, and we completed this phase of the project in May 2019. We used the survey to identify interested individuals, and I followed up with an email invitation to schedule an interview. Interviews were held at a time and place of the interviewee's choosing, and an interpreter was provided where necessary. We offered a $50 honorarium to offset transportation and childcare costs, and we sought written consent before beginning the interview. Wherever possible, I also sent a copy of the consent form to participants 24 hours before the scheduled interview, in order to give the subject time to weigh giving consent. I also solicited and answered questions before beginning the survey. Finally, I verbally reminded each interviewee that they had the right to refuse to answer any question, and that they could terminate participation at any time.

During the interview itself, I asked ten questions about integration and everyday life. The questions were designed to be open-ended, and I tried to avoid guiding the participant to give any specific response. However, I did occasionally ask follow-up questions to clarify previous answers. I recorded our conversations with a two-way microphone, and we employed two

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[11] 20 were completed before the deadline for inclusion in this thesis.

research assistants to create transcripts of the interviews. In order to protect the privacy of interviewees, recordings were deleted after transcription. Most interviews lasted from 20-90 minutes, depending on what the participant chose to share and whether we were using an interpreter. We relied on ISS*of*BC staff to retain contracted interpreters for the project, and most of those hired were former refugees from greater Vancouver. In cases where no interpreter was requested, I occasionally relied on the Google Translate app to help interviewees understand the text of the consent form and questions. In a few cases, the interviewee chose to bring a family member or friend to help with translation. Finally, I made interview transcripts available to participants on request, but only one interviewee requested a chance to review the transcript.

During the interviews, I made careful choices about my presentation and behavior. I chose to dress modestly, in order to respect cultural differences in standards of dress. I habitually wear a Magen David necklace as a reminder of my Jewish faith, but I chose to tuck it under my shirt while dealing with interviewees. I initially greeted each interviewee with a handshake, but I chose to abandon this practice after a male interviewee mentioned that his beliefs did not permit him to touch members of the opposite sex. In cases where interviewees offered me food or drink, I always accepted. These choices were made in order to make the interviewees feel comfortable and respected, and I think they were effective in creating an environment of friendliness, reciprocity, and mutual trust. I tried to keep in mind the privileged position – white-passing, English-speaking, and able to access higher education -- I occupied vis a vis my participants, and I did my best to acknowledge and mitigate the effects of this power differential. Nevertheless, certain choices I made, such as hiding visible markers of my Jewishness, did force me to question the assumptions I made about my interview participants. In the media and elsewhere, much is made of the tension between Muslims and Jews, and concerns about this dynamic

probably influenced my choice of jewelry. In one visit to an Arab women's group (primarily

Muslim women from Syria, Iraq, and Palestine), I mentioned my Jewish identity in casual

conversation, and participants' attitudes remained positive and friendly. Although

uncomfortable, this experience allowed me to rethink assumptions about my participants, and it

forced me to confront the subtle Islamophobia that influenced my decision-making.

3.2.3   Focus Groups

In April and May, I convened three focus groups of former government-assisted refugees.

The rationale was to collect data from smaller slices of the population that might otherwise have

been underrepresented in our results. The first focus group was comprised of Arabic-speaking

women from Syria and included participants (n = 11) of all ages. The second was geared towards

Spanish-speaking GARs who arrived from Central America (n = 3). The third focus group

brought together refugee moms who had participated in ISS*of*BC's HIPPY parenting group (n =

4). Rasha Youssef and Richa Karkee, both staff members at ISS*of*BC, assisted with identifying

and recruiting clients who fit into these categories, which meant that all participants were current

or former clients of ISS*of*BC. Our original goal was to include 10-15 participants in each group,

but due to our strict eligibility criteria, the final groups were comprised of 3-10 people each.

I was assisted by an interpreter for all three groups. I asked ten questions related to

integration and satisfaction with services provided by the settlement sector. I also asked

participants to create "thought maps" of integration. With pencil and paper, they worked in small groups to create a series of interconnected bubbles representing different pieces of the integration puzzle. This allowed me to understand how the GARs themselves thought about integration and let me visualize the complicated relationship between indicators and outcomes.
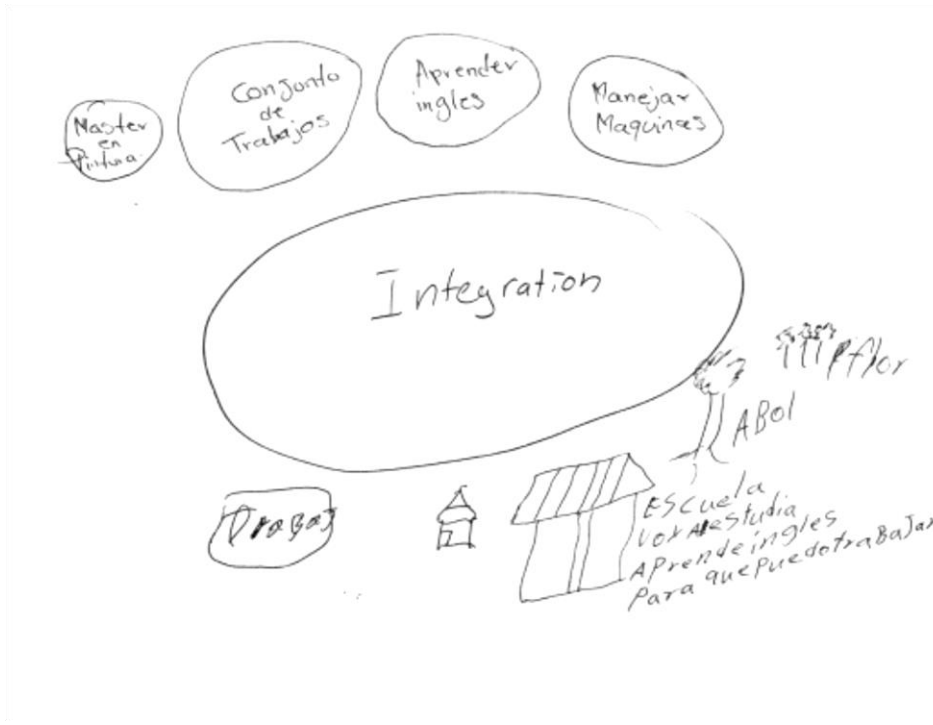
Figure 3.1: Thought Map #1
Thought map created by a Spanish-speaking participant. A rough translation of the bubbles is as follows (clockwise): create paintings, find work, learn English, [learn to] work with machines, enjoy nature [flowers and trees], and go to school in order to learn English and acquire a trade.

Some participants were not literate, and I encouraged these individuals to sketch their ideas (e.g. drawing a house to represent home ownership). I used a combination of large-group and small-group discussions to encourage participants to share their ideas, and I moderated the discussion to ensure that the tone remained respectful. Focus group members were compensated with refreshments and $10 Safeway gift cards. The groups lasted from 1.5-2 hours, and we met in a conference room at the ISS*of*BC Welcome Centre in Vancouver.

While ISS*of*BC was minimally involved in the previous two stages of the study, I relied on staff more heavily for the focus group discussions. This presented some methodological and

ethical concerns. While Kathy Sherrell was not involved in recruiting for, moderating, or analyzing the results of the focus groups, other front-line staff assisted me in recruitment, moderation, and translation. It is possible that this colored the information that participants were willing to provide about their experiences dealing with the settlement sector. While many individuals expressed dissatisfaction and concern about the quality of services rendered, most were careful to provide only gently criticism. Too, the fact that we met on Welcome Centre property may have impacted the dynamic between me, the participants, and the ISS*of*BC employees who helped me. Had we met in a more neutral space, like a library or community center, participants might have felt freer to speak candidly. Nevertheless, logistical and financial constraints[12] made it more practical to meet at the Welcome Centre. This background information is important to contextualize our findings detailed in the next chapter.

3.3   Analysis

3.3.1   Survey

I used multiple tools to analyze the data gleaned from our survey. I started by downloading an Excel file of raw data from Hosted in Canada. I used formulas and pivot tables to clean and disaggregate the data, and I removed blank responses where appropriate. I also quarantined the data from those who answered "no" to my basic study eligibility question[13]; while I counted them towards total responses, I did not include responses to specific questions with the rest of the data. When I encountered answers to free response questions in a language other than English, I relied of Google Translate to give me a general idea of the content. As

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[12] E.g. we did not need to pay to use Welcome Centre space, the location was accessible for staff and interpreters, and many participants were already familiar with the building.
[13] "Are you a former government-assisted refugee (GAR) who arrived in Canada between 2007 and 2016?"

mentioned above, I converted multiple choice questions with a gradation of five possible answers to a Likert scale. I created data visualizations using Excel and RStudio, and I analyzed my short answer responses using NVIVO. More specifically, I used this program to look at word frequency, including only nouns and excluding other, less relevant parts of speech. This allowed me to reduce clutter and see more clearly the common themes mentioned in my survey results.

3.3.2   Mapping

Additionally, I used ArcGIS to visualize the spatial data gleaned from the survey. I asked surveyees to provide their postal codes, and I cleaned these and used Google's MyMaps tool to collect XY coordinates for each code. I added these to a .csv file and read them into ArcMap. I georeferenced each point and projected the resulting layer to match my base map. I then joined my point layer to a set of polygons corresponding to census tracts in the Vancouver metropolitan area, and I was able to get a count of how many individuals resided in each polygon. Because of the general nature of this data, I was able to avoid randomly displacing points, using standard deviation instead of raw numbers, and other methods of anonymization that would have been necessary with more granular data. I also color-coded each point based on the country of origin of the respondent, which helped to clarify settlement patterns.

3.3.3   Interviews

For interviews, I recorded and transcribed conversations and imported them into NVIVO. I was assisted in the transcription process by two Arabic-speaking research assistants. Transcriptions were written more or less word-for-word, but we did exclude filler words like "like" and "um." After reading the transcripts, I began separating chunks of texts into 16 nodes; these nodes represented key themes that emerged from my conversations. These were: conflict with service providers, de-facto segregation, connections with co-ethnics, the desire to "give

back," health, housing, connections with those from different cultures, language, LGBT+ issues, leaving family behind, prejudice, skills and education, refugees and media, trauma, "starting from zero," and being a "taker." Some of these topics were combined to create a more coherent narrative in the Results and Discussion chapters. I exported each mode as a Word document, and I used these for reference when writing my results. I also kept a notebook with basic information about each interview session, including location, whether an interpreter was present, and general impressions. This helped me to contextualize my findings and consider factors that might have introduced bias into my findings. In some cases, interviewees requested that I omit certain personal information (e.g. country of origin), and I scrubbed this information before analyzing the transcripts.

3.3.4   Focus Groups

I took a different approach to analyzing my focus group results; rather than transcribing them verbatim, I listened to the recordings and took notes. I made this choice because my focus group discussions contained long, untranslated conversations in Arabic and Spanish, and also often included background noise from other participants. Because of the language situation, I was unable to utilize direct quotes from most participants. I kept my notes in a Word document, and I synthesized these to come up with a few key themes. These are discussed in the following two chapters.

It should also be noted that I relied on self-reported category of arrival to assess study eligibility, and this may have introduced some noise into my dataset. All of my focus group participants confirmed that they were GARs who arrived between 2007-2016, but the second focus group (Central Americans) contained a few individuals who may have been asylees, rather than GARs. These individuals believed themselves to be eligible for the study, but they also

related details about claiming asylum in Canada that created some confusion. I still include the feedback from this group in my Results and Discussion chapters, but this bit of context is important in understanding their answers. Asking each participant to prove his/her/their status as a GAR seemed overly burdensome and logistically difficult, and so I chose to rely on verbal confirmation from study subjects.

3.4   Conclusion

I chose to pursue a mixed-methods approach to answering my research questions, and this led me to conduct a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. My findings are informed by both quantitative and qualitative data, and they are shaped by my choice of analysis tools. This chapter has described my procedures for interviews and focus groups, the process of building and distributing the online survey, and the ways in which methodological literature informed my choices. I also dig into the ethical issues raised during my project, and I explain how I attempted to mitigate these concerns. The following chapter presents the results yielded by these activities.

Chapter 4: Results

The following chapter details the results of my survey, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. I begin with the survey, offering a general overview of the demographic characteristics of my respondents. I follow with more specific analyses for housing, health, finances, migration experience, social integration, and employment. Next, I discuss the common themes that emerged from coding and analyzing my individual interviews; I break these into five sections. Finally, I offer a similar analysis of my focus group transcripts, and I conclude with a discussion of the common themes present in all stages of the project.

4.1   Survey Results

4.1.1   Basic Demographics

The following analysis includes only those individuals who responded "Yes" or "No Answer" to the basic eligibility question asked at the beginning of the survey. Out of 155 respondents, 22 indicated that they did not meet eligibility criteria; they were excluded from the analysis. The remaining 133 were included, but 61 of these individuals chose not to answer every question. Consequently, the below percentages were calculated using the total number of GARs who answered the question, rather than the total number of respondents. Furthermore, a handful of respondents indicated that they met the study criteria, but later supplied information that cast this into doubt.[14] In these cases, I chose to trust the initial response of the surveyee, and I attributed the mismatch to typographical error. There were fewer than 5 such responses included

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[14] For example, one respondent indicated that she was a GAR who arrived between 2007-2016, but later listed an arrival year of 2003.

in my data; thus, I do not believe they significantly impact the validity of my analysis. The

following paragraphs incorporate findings from the cleaned dataset.

The demographic breakdown of survey respondents is as follows: 48 respondents identified as male, 32 identified as female, and 4 described their gender as "other." Three respondents reported an age of 14-17, 10 respondents were ages 18-24, 34 were ages 25-34, 24 were ages 35-44, 19 were ages 45-54, and one was between 55 and 64. 40 respondents were married, 39 were single, and 6 were divorced. 42 had children, while 44 did not. The average number of children was 2.66. The largest number of respondents were born in Iraq, followed by Syria and Iran. Most respondents (n = 48) hailed from the Levant region of the Middle

Table 4.1: Respondent Demographics

Item	Count	Percent[a]
Gender Dist. of Respondents		
Female	32	38.10
Male	48	57.14
Other	4	4.76
Region of Origin of Respondents		
Middle East & North Africa	65	77.38
Asia, East and Southeast	3	3.57
Europe	3	3.57
Africa	9	10.71
Latin America	3	3.57
Asia, South	1	1.19
Age of Respondents		
14-17	3	3.30
18-24	10	10.99
25-34	34	37.36
35-44	24	26.37
45-54	19	20.88
55-64	1	1.10
65+	0	0.00
Mother Tongue of Respondents		
Arabic	39	52.00
Farsi	10	13.33
Kurdish	3	4.00
Turkish	2	2.67
Spanish & French	2	2.67
Somali	2	2.67
Russian	2	2.67
Amharic	2	2.67
[a] =/= 100% due to rounding		

East. A plurality described their ethnicity as Arab (n = 22), followed by Iranian, Kurdish, Iraqi,

Middle Eastern, and Persian. Given that I coded the survey to allow free responses to this

question, some categories may overlap (e.g. Arab and Iraqi). 32 respondents had already

received Canadian citizenship, while 48 were permanent residents. 15 respondents reported

Syrian citizenship, with Iraqi, Canadian Permanent Resident, and Ethiopian falling into the second to fourth spots. Finally, 21 separate mother tongues were represented in the sample; Arabic, Farsi, and Kurdish occupied the top three spots.

4.1.2 Housing

On the whole, survey respondents were highly mobile, and only 11 were still living in their first Canadian home. In contrast, 58 had moved 1-6 times, and 3 had moved more than 6 times. 35 respondents mentioned living with nuclear family only; 27 lived with extended family; 11 lived with non-family roommates. While 34 (46.6%) surveyees were satisfied with their housing, 39 (53.4%) were unsatisfied or unsure of how to answer. Within this latter group, 18 complained of cramped conditions, 19 of high rent, and 8 of issues with physical quality. Smaller numbers mentioned distance from work and/ or social services, crime, and vermin. This indicates that the broad issues impacting the Vancouver real estate market are also experienced by refugees. Indeed, 53 (74.65%) surveyees mentioned dedicating at least 50% of monthly income to rent. Only 18 (25.3%) spent less than half of monthly income on housing. Finally, the average household size for the sample as a whole was fairly small (average = 2.79). Several respondents lived within

Table 4.2: Housing

Item	Count	Percent[a]
Income Spent on Housing		
Less than ¼	4	5.63
Less than ½	14	19.72
About ½	25	35.21
More than ½	28	39.44
Number of Moves		
None	11	15.28
1 to 3	48	66.67
4 to 6	10	13.89
6 or more	3	4.17
Housing Satisfaction		
Satisfied	34	46.58
Unsatisfied	20	27.40
Not Sure	19	26.03
[a] =/= 100% due to rounding		

large families, but the mode was 1 (single-individual households). Overall, the spread of the data was broad.

4.1.3   Health

Scholars have argued that contemporary GARs are in poorer health than previous cohorts, and my results support the assumption that wellness is a serious concern for many

Table 4.3: Health

Item	Count	Percent[a]
Self-Reported Health		
1 -- Least Healthy	3	4.17
2	5	6.94
3	23	31.94
4	30	41.67
5 -- Most Healthy	11	15.28
Ease-of-Access		
Easy	49	69.01
Difficult	22	30.99
Barriers to Access		
Cultural Issues	6	17.65
Insurance Coverage	10	29.41
Knowing Where to Go	3	8.82
Language Barrier	4	11.76
Other	11	32.35
[a] =/= 100% due to rounding		

refugees. I asked for responses on a five-point scale, with 5 representing excellent health and 1 representing extremely poor health. The average was 3.6 (corresponding to "neither healthy nor unhealthy") and the mode was 4 ("pretty healthy"). However, when asked whether it is easy to access healthcare in Canada, about 31% answered negatively. These individuals mentioned (by order of frequency): wait time, problems with insurance coverage, lack of culturally-competent care, and language barriers/ insufficient translation services. I also asked about frequency of depressive symptoms on a five-point scale, and the average was 3.15 (corresponding to "sometimes" depressed). The mode was 4 ("rarely"), but responses were fairly evenly distributed from 1-3, with a noticeable spike at 4.

4.1.4   Finances

Although I was limited by ethics guidelines, I asked a few careful questions about the financial lives of government-assisted refugees, with mixed results. About 43.7% (n = 31) said

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that they remit money to relatives in the country of origin, while 56.3% (n = 40) do not send

remittances. I also asked if respondents had transportation loans to come to Canada, and 64.9%

(n = 48) answered affirmatively. Within this category, 35 had already finished paying the loan

debt, while 13 were still in the process of paying. These findings have concerning implications

for the financial stability of GARs, especially in Vancouver, where cost of living is high. The

federal government has offered large-scale transportation debt relief to Syrians, but this program

has not been extended to other refugees. When Syrians are excluded from this data (see

paragraph below), the debt rate is even higher.

4.1.5   Migration Experience

Table 4.4: Camp vs. Non-Camp Refugees

Item	Count	Average
Number of Moves		
Camp Refugees		
None	0	--
1 to 3	7	--
4 to 6	2	--
6+	1	--
Non-Camp Refugees		
None	11	--
1 to 3	41	--
4 to 6	8	--
6+	2	--
Freq. of Depression		
Camp Refugees	--	3.36
Non-Camp Refugees	--	3.11
Self-Reported Health		
Camp Refugees	--	3.64
Non-Camp Refugees	--	3.56
Life Satisfaction		
Camp Refugees	--	3.64
Non-Camp Refugees	--	3.20

I asked very few questions about pre-arrival and migration experiences in order to avoid retraumatizing research subjects. However, I did ask whether individuals had spent time in a refugee camp; for those who answered affirmatively, I also asked about duration. 85.1% (n = 63) did not spend any time in a camp environment, while 14.9% (n = 11) mentioned in-camp experience. The duration data was approximately evenly distributed within the categories provided.[15] When compared with non-camp refugees, those who reported spending

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[15] 6 months or less
7 to 11months

time in a refugee camp were more mobile, more likely to experience depression, physically

healthier, and more likely to be enrolled in school. They were also more likely to be happy with

their lives (rated on a 5-point scale) than non-camp refugees. These comparisons do not suggest

that integration outcomes are substantially different between these two groups, despite the

divergence in responses about mental and physical health.

4.1.6   Social Integration

In order to get at the social integration of my surveyees, I asked questions about

friendships and volunteer work. 84.7% (n = 61) had friends in Canada, while 15.3% (n = 11) had

no friends. Of the former group, 65.6% (n = 40) had a mix of same- and different-ethnicity

friends; 19.7% (n = 12) had only same-ethnicity connections. Finally, 14.8 % (n = 9) had friends

exclusively of different ethnicities. While friends had a moderating effect on self-reported

depression symptoms among respondents, the ethnicity of friends was not statistically

significant. In total, 51.4% (n = 37) of surveyees did not volunteer at all, while 48.6% (n = 35)

held volunteer positions. Among volunteers, the mode time spend per month was 2-5 hours, but

responses were approximately normally distributed.

4.1.7   Employment

Among survey respondents, 69% (n = 51) were employed, while 31% (n = 23) were

unemployed or out of the labour market. Only 16% (n = 8) reported working in a similar field in

Canada as in their country of origin, while 84% (n = 43) worked in a different field. The most

commonly-mentioned field was technical work (n = 13), with entry-level (n = 5), intermediate (n

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12 to 23 months
2 to 5 years, and
More than 5 years

= 4), and management (n = 4) also frequently selected. Out of 21 college-educated respondents who chose to answer the question related to vocation, 5 were unemployed, 1 was out of the labour market, 4 were in entry-level jobs, 3 were in intermediate positions, 3 were in professional or management fields, and 5 were in other sectors. 75% (n = 16) of surveyees changed fields upon

Table 4.5: Language and Employment

Item	Average
English on Arrival	
Employed	2.35
Unemployed	2.52
Current English	
Employed	3.87
Unemployed	3.52
Δ Arrival--Present	
Employed	1.52
Unemployed	1.00

arrival in Canada, while 25% (n = 4) stayed in the same or a similar type of job. Based on this information, 26% of college-educated arrivals were classified as underemployed.[16] Finally, English language ability was positively associated with employment outcomes, and employed surveyees reported a greater increase in language proficiency since arrival. The direction of this relationship is unclear; while interactions in the workplace may allow refugees to practice their English, refugees who are actively working to improve their communication skills may be more likely to secure and maintain employment.

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[16] College-educated respondents working in a field which does not require a college degree.

4.1.8   Spatial Data

Figure 4.1: Responses by Postal Code
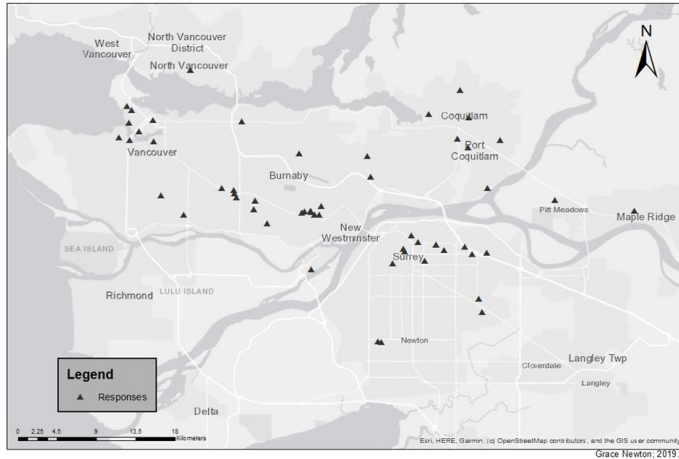
Survey Responses by Postal Code
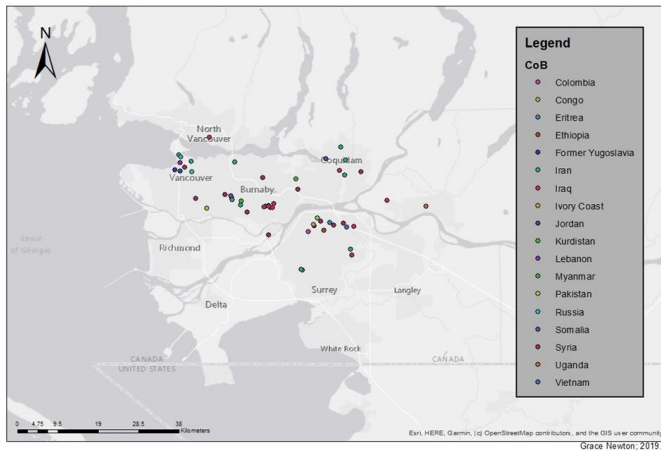
Figure 4.2: Responses by Country of Birth

Country of Birth

I mapped postal code data using ArcMap, and the results showed weak patterns in the distribution of refugee households in Metro Vancouver. There were small clusters in Burnaby, Surrey, and Downtown Vancouver, and this may speak to the availability of affordable housing in these areas. I also created a "heat map" by census tract, and the same patterns held true. I expected refugee households with children to cluster in the Southeastern suburbs, but household composition did not seem to be a strong determinant of settlement patterns. Gender, too, had little relationship with location of settlement. When I mapped responses by country of birth, I did not observe strong patterns, with two exceptions. Iraqi refugees seemed to cluster in Burnaby and New Westminster, where Skytrain service is easy to access, and Iranians were more likely to live in Coquitlam or Downtown Vancouver. These maps suggest that, while some refugees choose to settle in ethnic enclaves, other households opt for more diverse neighborhoods. Too, they

indicate that refugees are likely to settle in affordable neighborhoods and suburbs, even when these areas are not as proximate to work and social services. Finally, my findings are largely consistent with those of Vancouver researchers Jones and Ley (2016), who found that recent refugees were likely to live in low-income neighborhoods near Skytrain routes.

4.1.9   Summary

Survey results indicate that GARs are demographically diverse. They tend to struggle in the housing market, have complex financial lives, come from a variety of pre-arrival situations, and often live in the City of Vancouver and the southern suburbs. Health outcomes are uneven, and while some refugees enjoy strong social connections, others are isolated. The following two sections help to contextualize the numbers, and they help to explain why the data break down in the manner described.

4.2   Interview Results

The following paragraphs are organized according to five themes that emerged as important during the coding of 20 individual interviews in NVIVO. These are: relationships with service providers, interpersonal connections and social integration, skills (including language) and employment experience, health and trauma, and experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Although many of these variables have been previously discussed in the integration literature, I highlight noteworthy findings related to LGBT+ identity and social integration and the mixed effect of social media engagement among interviewees. These findings are discussed further in the next chapter.

4.2.1   Relationships with Settlement Services and Healthcare Providers

Many interviewees reported a contentious relationship with service providers, and satisfaction with settlement services and Canadian healthcare was not universally high. 20% of

interviewees (n = 5) complained of long wait times for medical care, especially for specialist doctors. While three interviewees mentioned individual doctors who were especially helpful, feelings of dissatisfaction were directed towards the system as a whole. One person explained that, "[b]ack home, if you need to see a specialist, you have the specialist's name. You go pay money and you see them." Adjusting to a new healthcare structure was a frustration-laden process for some refugees. Furthermore, 85% of interviewees mentioned individual conflict or dissatisfaction with service providers, and the vast majority specifically cited settlement services in their complaints. One Syrian woman described a situation in which her large family was pressured to leave a shelter before they had secured housing. Her husband explained the issue to a manager, arguing that he should have the freedom to find a decent home before vacating the shelter. An employee responded with the phrase, "[there is] no freedom here." The woman opined that:

> The staff who welcome the newcomers should be nicer. Like, nobody comes from a good situation. Nobody is happy to leave his country…with four kids, and we left our family behind...we came from a bad situation. I still hear about bad behavior from the staff. Sometimes I feel like I am not in Canada, because there is still some bad treatment.

Other interview subjects remarked that service providers were insufficiently knowledgeable about the supports available for new refugees, pushed highly-skilled refugees into inappropriate jobs, or treated clients in a way that felt abrasive and rude to some. A Somali interviewee drew my attention to the fact that there are very few Somali-speaking settlement workers in Metro Vancouver, and that this leads to long wait times for Somali-speaking clients. The interviewee waited so long for an appointment that he was forced to fill out his citizenship paperwork alone, and he made several errors that led to processing delays. Although most interviewees were

reluctant to harshly criticize social services, there was a general feeling of discontent among the majority of people interviewed.

It would, however, be misleading to characterize refugees' relationships with service providers as exclusively negative. One person described moving from Toronto to Vancouver soon after landing in Canada: "Since we came from Toronto to Vancouver, who welcomed us? The ISS of BC [local immigrant services organization]. It is the organization that helped." Other individuals mentioned volunteers who helped them settle in Vancouver. Some families formed lasting friendships with these volunteers, and mentioned learning important information and skills from them, including how to navigate public transportation. These findings suggest that service providers should explore how to replicate this positive feedback among a larger slice of the population.

4.2.2 Interpersonal Connections and Social Integration

Interviewees reported extremely varied experiences in making and maintaining intra-ethnic and cross-cultural connections. While some interviewees interacted exclusively with co-ethnics, others preferred to maintain a mixed or different-ethnicity social circle. Among interviewees belonging to a small ethnic community, in-group connections were typically stronger. One Somali interviewee mentioned spending weekends with other refugees from his country, eating as a group, playing sports, and going to the mosque together. He described how the Somali community, although tiny and concentrated in the more-affordable suburb of Surrey, was generally eager to support newcomers and offer advice. Another interviewee, from Iraq, mentioned that he interacted exclusively with other Iraqis, although he hoped to eventually forge connections with more diverse individuals. In cases where cross-ethnic connections were absent, language barriers and unemployment were key factors. For many, work provided the opportunity

to get to know others, and lack of employment or low English proficiency kept interviewees from interacting.

A Vietnamese participant shared how his workplace offered opportunities to build cross-ethnic friendships:

I work with an Indian business. I am the only Vietnamese, and there I don't feel different…I can actually speak some of the language, and I make very good chai tea. I've been working for them 7-8 years, so they treat me as family.

Another interviewee, a woman from Syria, described how she overcame initial mistrust on the part of her neighbors:

Now we spent three years here. And in this time, I become friends with the First Nations around here. Let me see anyone, we talk with them. They say that we are very, very nice. And they understand why we came here…[w]hen they see you for the first time maybe they're scared, but I think that you can connect with them.

In the first case, it is clear that employment facilitated the interviewee's friendships. In the second, the interviewee's English proficiency allowed her to get to know her neighbors.

Some interview participants refused to associate with co-ethnics. This was especially evident in the cases of LGBT+-identifying Arab interviewees. One Syrian man mentioned that other Arabs treated him coldly when they discovered his identity, while a Syrian woman shared that she found it traumatizing to interact with others from the Middle East. A third woman, who did not identify as LGBT, mentioned feeling uncomfortable with Levantine Arabic culture, preferring instead to assimilate into the Canadian population. These cases speak to the complicated relationship that many refugees have with their home countries and cultures and suggest that trauma can play a role in the attitudes held by refugees towards their co-ethnics. One

participant took the middle ground, expressed her hope that her family could hold onto the best aspects of their home culture, while also adopting attitudes and practices from others. She desired that her children would not forget their culture but would instead find a middle ground between assimilation and disconnection from Canadian national culture.

Another theme that emerged in discussions of connections with others was loneliness and isolation. Many interviewees attributed this to the local culture. One Iranian woman described Vancouverites as "cold" and "robotic," and mentioned missing the friendly atmosphere in her home country. A Russian interviewee called Vancouverites "selfish" and "unfriendly," and argued that coldness is "a cultural problem." Another woman, who requested that I withhold her country of origin, pointed out that:

> People here really care about money. Everything's about money. I think there, we are
> more generous. We focus more on our relationships with people, but they are nosy there.

In this quote, the interviewee displayed an ambivalence about whether the more solitary nature of Vancouver life was ultimately negative. Two other interviewees mentioned that they appreciated the general respect for privacy in Vancouver, even if they felt isolated by cultural norms. It seemed that loneliness was more prevalent among individuals who arrived in Canada alone; fewer family arrivals described feelings of isolation. One mother described meeting friends at her child's weekend Arabic classes, while another parent mentioned making connections with staff at her child's elementary school. It seems that having children offers ready-made opportunities to socialize with other community members, and this goes a long way in preventing feelings of isolation.

4.2.3　Skills and Employment Experience

One of the key barriers to integration mentioned by interviewees was lack of English skills and complications related to the recognition of degrees and credentials earned abroad. 75% (n = 20) of interviewees mentioned language in their interviews, and most were unsatisfied with their command of English. Several people also expressed a wish that they had started learning English before coming to Canada. One young interviewee argued that learning English was the most important factor in success in Canada. Another woman shared her struggles navigating the medical system without a firm command of English. Several interviewees relied on their children to accompany them and provide translations, which had implications for the parent-child dynamic. The most commonly mentioned barrier to access to language classes was time. One two-parent family took turns enrolling in English classes while the other adult worked; this slowed language acquisition. Other respondents struggled to schedule classes in between childcare responsibilities, work schedules, and medical appointments. Finally, a few interviewees lacked formal education beyond primary school, and low literacy presented an additional challenge to English language learners. While young people generally enjoyed a higher level of English proficiency, communication remained a challenge within all age cohorts.

Lack of English proficiency and non-recognition of degrees earned abroad were both barriers to refugee participation in the labour market. While interviewees with professional qualifications were concerned that their level of English prevented them from being hired, even applicants to entry-level jobs came up against language proficiency requirements. One woman described being interviewed for a position as a retail associate, only to fail the English test required by the employer. Other highly educated interviewees shared that they were unable to utilize degrees earned abroad. Even in cases where degrees were recognized, lack of Canadian experience hurt

refugees' chances of being hired. In some cases, settlement workers pushed highly skilled newcomers into low-paying jobs, like fast food or cleaning. One interviewee complained that workers did not want to take the time to find and suggest jobs appropriate to the qualifications of the client. This caused feelings of shame and frustration, and several interviewees described the experience with the phrase "starting from zero."

4.2.4 Health and Trauma

As hypothesized, many interviewees mentioned ongoing mental and physical health struggles. While some people described war- and violence-related injuries, others experienced chronic health conditions like hypothyroidism, digestive disorders, and kidney failure. While most refugees were satisfied with the low cost of health services in Canada, wait times were mentioned as a source of frustration. Some refugees reported working in manual labour, which put them at increased risk for workplace-related injuries. Two interviewees mentioned workplace accidents and receiving help from Work BC. Subjects seemed satisfied with the services they received through this agency. Refugees who were unsatisfied with the Canadian health system were reluctant to complain in harsh terms, and when they did voice dissatisfaction, some faced pushback from the Canadian-born. A Syrian man described a conversation with co-workers:

> if I say I was provided with better healthcare [in Syria/ Turkey] than I've been here, they will be like… that's not the comfort answer they want to hear. You came with our sponsorship and you say that? That's the truth.

The interviewee went on to complain that wait times for non-emergency treatment were often long. This exchange speaks to larger issues with collecting honest feedback from refugees, and the social pressure newcomers may feel to speak positively about Canada and Canadian institutions.

Beyond physical health, many interviewees also mentioned trauma and mental illness as factors in integration. 25% (n = 5) of interviewees cited lack of safety as a reason for coming to Canada, and most shared that they felt much more secure in Canada than in their countries of origin. When asked what she liked most about living in Canada, one woman answered, "feeling safe." Another respondent, a North African man who identified as gay, described Canada as "95% safe." Despite the relatively secure environment in Canada, many respondents reported continuing to struggle with trauma. One woman, who requested that her country of origin be withheld, mentioned that experiences of forced marriage and domestic violence left her with PTSD, and she felt that this illness kept her from thriving in Canada. Another woman referenced trauma more obliquely, saying that, "we leave from bad situations: war, we were sick -- my husband is still sick, and they give him medical treatment here...we came from a bad situation." Another woman, who identified as transgender, described living in constant fear of physical and sexual violence in her home country, and mentioned ongoing symptoms like nightmares and depression. Some refugee parents mentioned that their children continued to struggle with past trauma. One mother related that her daughter panics when someone knocks on their door, and "always dreams at night and shouts and cries. She imagines that someone is coming to kill her." Several interviewees mentioned receiving mental health supports like therapy and medication, and most were very satisfied with the help they received from professionals. Nevertheless, symptoms like anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts continued to manifest for some interviewees.

4.2.5   Experiences of Prejudice

While several newcomers mentioned facing prejudice and discrimination, very few connected these experiences to their status as refugees. A Southeast Asian refugee mentioned

hearing remarks that refugee flows to Vancouver exacerbated the housing crisis, while a Levantine Arab refugee was bothered by comments that refugees "are taking our [established Canadians'] jobs." Among women who wore hijab, a few described being abused for their choice of clothing. A Syrian woman related that:

> I have had just one bad experience. I went to my bank, and I was waiting for the bus. One guy spoke with me, and he said, "you don't have to be here. You are a terrorist; you have to leave now." Why did he talk to me like this? I didn't answer. There was a woman across the street -- she stopped to see if he would hurt me or do something bad. He just left. I didn't want to be face-to-face with him again [while waiting]; I was scared. I think it's because I was wearing hijab, and he called me a terrorist, like "I know terrorists wear this."

Another man, a security guard from East Africa, described being the subject of nativist taunts from a patron who he removed for unruly behavior. Finally, a middle-aged Muslim woman mentioned being asked to move out of the priority seating on a bus by another rider, despite the bus being nearly empty. Most of these subjects were visibly Muslim, and most connected their experiences to Islamophobia, rather than general anti-refugee sentiment.

Interestingly, some interviewees brought up social media in discussions of prejudice. One interviewee mentioned encountering Islamophobic and anti-immigrant videos on Facebook, while another remarked that "the media [is] making the Muslim people sound so scary." A Syrian man described sharing an article that included a picture of his wife, only for commenters to make negative judgements about his wife's headscarf. One Facebook user suggested that the interviewee forced his wife to cover her hair and wrote that "I hope your wife and your daughter will get the freedom that you enjoy here in Canada." The interviewee clarified that his wife chose to wear hijab, and he was hurt by the implication that he did not treat his wife respectfully.

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On the other hand, some subjects viewed social media positively and used it to keep in touch with family in other countries. Many used Facebook and WhatsApp to talk with relatives in refugee camps or other places without reliable cell service, and one woman, an aspiring cake decorator, used Facebook to view the work of other bakers. Social media seems to be a double-edged sword in the lives of government-assisted refugees; while they may encounter harassment on these platforms, they are also helpful for communicating with family.

4.2.6   Summary

Five key themes emerged from my analysis of the individual interviews. First, many interviewees described complex relationships with service providers, and in cases where these relationships were dysfunctional, they struggled to find appropriate employment, secure housing, and get help with the citizenship process. Second, interpersonal connections were an important part of integration for many refugees, and for those who did not have friends, loneliness and lack of English proficiency often followed. Third, many refugees met with frustration when trying to enter the labour market, and underemployment was common. Difficulty utilizing degrees earned abroad, lack of Canadian experience, and weak English skills were key barriers to entry. Fourth, as predicted, this cohort of refugees required significant mental and physical healthcare, and trauma and poor physical health slowed social and economic integration for many. Finally, although few refugees encountered discrimination or prejudice based on immigration status, Muslim respondents reported Islamophobic harassment in the street, in the workplace, and online. Social media seemed to play a complex role in the lives of refugees, both facilitating connections with friends and relatives in the country of origin and exposing refugees to nativist and Islamophobic material. When combined with survey data, these findings indicate that social

and economic factors are both important in determining integration outcomes among government-assisted refugees.

4.3   Focus Group Results

The following paragraphs deal with the results of three focus groups conducted in spring and summer 2019. The information is divided into four sections: language and employment, access to services, social integration, and health. These findings echo the results gleaned from the survey and individual interviews. In the previous chapter, figure 3.1 holds a copy of a "thought map" of integration created in a focus group of Central American refugees.

4.3.1   Language and Employment

As in the other phases of the project, language was the primary concern of many focus group members. All three groups mentioned that learning English was a vital component of building a life in Canada, and some argued that English proficiency was the foundation upon which labour market success, stable housing, and education were built. One Arab mother expressed that, while her children spoke English proficiently, she and other middle-aged newcomers struggled with language acquisition. Another woman, who hailed from Central America, mentioned that she was not literate in her mother tongue, and this created additional struggles in learning to write in English. A few older Arabic-speaking participants also mentioned that they lacked reading and writing skills in their first language. One woman wished that her LINC classes had focused on practical English, rather than technical aspects like grammar. Finally, a college-aged participant, who spoke English proficiently, shared that she had difficulties comprehending and taking notes in class. Language issues were often linked with struggles in the labour market, and this is discussed below.

Some participants struggled to find appropriate work in Canada, and many attributed this to lack of English fluency. A woman argued that it is nearly impossible to find a job without a strong command of English, and another person expressed that being literate can make a person more employable. Two out of three focus groups brought up that they wished the government would provide skills training to refugees, and one person mentioned a specific desire to work with machines. Skills underutilization was an issue among highly-educated refugees; one woman had worked as an engineer in Syria, only to find that her degree was not recognized in Canada. Older refugees often found themselves working as physical labourers, and they expressed concerns about the health effects of doing strenuous labour well into middle-age. Lastly, some participants expressed a hope that the government would create more job opportunities specifically for newcomers. As in previous phases of the study, the experiences of focus group participants were complex and often sub-optimal; they offered a few suggestions for improving outcomes.

4.3.2   Access to Services

All three focus groups also brought up access to services as a determinant of integration. Several individuals described long wait times for BC Housing services, and others complained that they had not received enough guidance from settlement workers when searching for appropriate housing. Furthermore, concerns about high rents were almost universal, and one woman also brought up the problem of long commute times. Other refugees were dissatisfied with healthcare services in British Columbia, especially in cases where interpreters were not provided. When I asked about the quality of phone translation, participants agreed that it was poor. Overall opinion of the quality and efficacy of services was mixed, and individuals who arrived as part of the Syrian influx seemed more likely to be dissatisfied, possibly due to the high

burden on service providers at the time. Most individuals mentioned being happy with the volunteer programs offered by ISS*of*BC and other organizations, and a participant suggested that more first-language volunteers be recruited. On the whole, these results tracked with those collected from surveys and interviews.

4.3.3   Social Integration

Focus group subjects also talked extensively of social integration, and outcomes seemed to vary. Parents mentioned that their children who arrived before middle school seemed to acclimate quickly, while parents of middle-schoolers felt that their children struggled more acutely. One woman suggested that more targeted programs be provided for preteens. Some women mentioned navigating differing parenting expectations in Canada, and one person described Canadian teenagers as "disrespectful." Another participant pushed back, arguing that youth in Canada are more confident and independent than in Syria and Iraq. She expressed a hope that her children would adopt the most pro-social aspects of both youth cultures. Middle-aged and senior participants felt that it was more difficult for them to adapt to a new culture, and one quipped that "the train has passed." These individuals often relied on their children for translation help, and this had implications for the parent-child dynamic.

Similarly, participants described struggles with making friends in Canada. A few newcomers expressed that lack of English proficiency was a major barrier to forming cross-cultural friendships, and others related incidents of prejudice and discrimination. One man described a situation in which he was mistaken for a Mexican and called a "rapist" by a stranger at a gas

station.[17] Another, a woman who wears hijab, talked about facing street harassment for her choice of clothing. Despite this, most participants agreed that Canada is welcoming to refugees; one hijabi woman mentioned that she behaves as kindly as possible in public, in hopes that prejudiced Canadians will change their opinions. As in the interviews, Muslim women connected incidents of harassment to their religious identities, rather than immigration status. These results help to explain the lack of social connections often experienced by refugees.

4.3.4 Health

Health, both physical and mental, was often mentioned in the focus groups. As mentioned above, many refugees found it difficult to navigate the Canadian healthcare system, especially in cases where their English proficiency was low. Many people mentioned complex health needs, including kidney problems, cancer scares, and work-related injuries. Mental health was also a significant concern; many participants described episodes of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. One woman mentioned that her children continue to suffer from pre-arrival trauma, and that her preteen daughter tends to isolate herself at home due to anxiety. Worries for family members left behind were a significant emotional burden to refugees, and they expressed frustration with the complicated and expensive nature of sponsoring family to Canada. Participants who came from conflict zones explained that they had been unable to prepare for life in Canada, due to more pressing personal circumstances. These findings support the argument that recent GARs are vulnerable in multiple ways.

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[17] This echoes the remarks made in 2015 by US President Donald Trump, who opined that "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best…They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" (Staff, W.P 2015).

4.3.5 Summary

Generally, the focus group results were similar to those gleaned from individual interviews. However, focus group participants focused more strongly on health as an aspect of integration, and in cases where one person mentioned a difficulty, others quickly chimed in to share negative experiences. Refugees also discussed English proficiency, employment, access to services, and social connections as determinants of integration. Due to the larger group setting, few participants chose to bring up trauma, although many did mention worrying for family members left behind. As a supplement to the interviews, the focus groups allowed me to observe points of consensus and difference within groups.

4.4 Towards a Refugee-Centered Definition of Integration

One of the foremost goals of the project was to understand how refugees define integration, and interview and focus group respondents provided a range of answers. One common theme was the multifaceted nature of integration, while another was the desire to hold onto aspects of the home culture while adopting Canadian practices and norms. As a whole, the definitions were strikingly similar to those offered by scholars like Ager and Strang (2008), and they incorporated both economic and social indicators.

Many refugees responded to the integration question by expressing a desire to balance assimilation with preservation of their original cultures. As mentioned above, English fluency was frequently cited, along with knowledge of Canadian culture and cross-ethnic friendships. One interviewee shared that:

> People believe when you come to the west, you westernize immediately. It is not like that. Integration is the way you feel to get adapted in the community you live in. When you come here, you see a lot of multiculturalism, and it's up to you how you adapt with

that. Accept it and then live with it…Once I get my Canadian citizenship, I will get the

full privilege of voting and deciding who I want to vote for.

This individual saw adaptation to the community as a responsibility, but he also mentioned the

privileges of settling in Canada, such as citizenship and voting rights. Another interviewee

mentioned that "it's very important to respect the Canadian values, to make friends, and to have

a social life," while another stated that integration entails "making friends -- native friends,

especially, learning the culture, [and] blending with people." Finally, one woman agreed that

assimilation into the local culture was important, but she expressed the hope that she could hold

on to the positive aspects of her home culture, too. On the whole, study participants wanted to

connect with and integrate into the Canadian community, even though many still sought to

preserve their original cultural identities.

Many other interviewees presented a list of aspects they felt to be important to

integration. These individuals viewed integration in a technocratic way, and essentially defined it

as a function of social and economic variables. One man defined integration as such:

Successful integration is having a good life here, feeling that I am really a part of this

community, feeling that this country is my home, like other Canadians having a house, a

decent job, a Canadian bank account – I think that's it. Trying to help more, trying to be

active in this community, knowing my rights, practicing my rights, participating in

political life here, being active in economic life.

A woman also mentioned that:

For me, it's to fit into the community, to understand the culture, to understand the habits

and the terms when they speak. To understand…when they speak English, sometimes

something is not in the dictionary, but it has meaning and context in the culture. I'd like

to be able to understand these things. I'd like to finish my education. For me, education is the main thing in becoming part of this community.

Both of these definitions touch on multiple aspects of integration, and they cohere with much of the academic writing on the topic. While they include more subjective aspects ("having a good life"), they also incorporate more objective indicators like citizenship and English proficiency.

Finally, interviewees also reflected on the degree to which they had integrated since arriving in Canada. A mother mentioned that her younger family members had learned English quickly, while she still struggled to gain proficiency. She attributed her son's integration to the fact that "he was able to learn English fast, while my husband and I are learning slowly." Meanwhile, another person also felt unsuccessful, stating that:

[Integration] means a big thing. I have not reached it yet. I always feel that I did not do anything in my life. I tried to do something. I tried to be successful, because this my goal. Even if one day in my life I feel successful, I will be better.

Interviewees also mentioned trauma and concern for family members left behind as impediments to integration. One woman explained that:

I left my family in Syria, and I just feel like...I'm like in heaven, but at the same time, there is something missing. It's like a flower without a smell, like...that is our feeling here. We have everything, but at the same time, we feel like there is something missing in our life.

These reflections are important because they highlight the obstacles identified by refugees, and they provide guidance for improving outcomes.

4.5   Conclusion

    In this chapter, I presented results gleaned from analysis of survey data, coding of interviews, and focus groups. I presented noteworthy findings related to discrimination, LGBT+ issues, and trauma, and I pulled out key themes from my data. In the following chapter, I discuss these findings, and I present a few recommendations for future research. I also explain the limitations of my study, and the ways in which these should be used to contextualize my data. I provide more data tables and maps in the appendices at the end of this document.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1   Introduction

As I hypothesized at the beginning of the project, the integration of government-assisted refugees is a complex and multifaceted process. Although economic and social integration have often been addressed separately, they are closely related, and indicators like language proficiency help to determine outcomes in both domains. Furthermore, I found that refugees struggle with some of the same economic obstacles as other Vancouverites (and lower-income Canadians more broadly); they pay high rents, dedicate some of their income to repaying debts, and worry about neighborhood safety and crime. This cohort of refugees also reports physical health problems, mental illness and trauma, and a diverse range of educational backgrounds, from no formal education to advanced degrees. Newcomers who are not literate in their first language may find it more difficult to acquire written English, while highly-educated individuals encounter barriers to utilizing degrees earned abroad. Finally, individuals who hold marginalized personal identities, be they religious, sexual, or cultural, face prejudice and discrimination. While few respondents connected these experiences to immigration status, Muslim and LGBT+ participants were most likely to suffer negative treatment based on their beliefs and identity. These findings validate the assumption that recent refugees are vulnerable to negative integration outcomes but complicate the relationship between refugee status and experiences of xenophobia.

My study is limited by the fact that my sample was small and not necessarily representative of the GAR population as a whole. Levantine Arab respondents (especially Syrians and Iraqis) were overrepresented, and African and Southeast Asian subjects were underrepresented. Due to our reliance on online survey tools, seniors and those with lower levels of digital literacy were also less represented. The survey was available in 9 languages, but it is possible that some

monolingual refugees did not have their mother tongue represented. Responses were also clustered in the City of Vancouver and the southern suburbs, which may have impacted the demographic breakdown. My association with ISS*of*BC may also have caused interviewees to be reluctant to speak plainly, given that refugees can be reluctant to criticize organizations which provide needed services. Finally, I relied on ISS*of*BC and other local settlement services to assist with study recruitment, and that meant that my sample was limited to people who use such services. This information is important in contextualizing my findings, and I caution against treating my results as representative.

Several aspects of this topic warrant further research. First, the complex and often contentious relationship between refugees and service providers has a strong impact on outcomes; improving communication between these groups is a worthy goal. Second, underemployment and inability to qualify degrees earned outside of Canada limits the earning potential of refugees, and more research is needed to understand the economic impact of qualification programs on refugees and Canadian-born workers. Third, the relationship between experiences of prejudice and refugee status is not clear, and it seems that when refugees are discriminated against, these actions are the result of prejudice against a second identity, whether it be religious or LGBT+. Lastly, LGBT+ refugees are an under-studied group, and they face additional challenges with in-group connections, as well as social integration more broadly. Although my thesis begins to fill the gap identified by Hyndman (2011), more data is needed to make generalizable conclusions. In cases where outcomes are good, academics should try to identify what factors allowed these individuals to lead fulfilling lives in Canada.

5.2   Key Themes

5.2.1   Housing

As research by Francis and Hiebert (2014) previously established, refugees are not immune to the effects of the housing crisis in Vancouver. Refugees deploy many strategies to cope with an unstable and expensive housing market, from living with roommates to moving to more affordable suburbs. Most refugees included in this study spent more than half of monthly income on rent, and housing stock of often of poor quality. Respondents complained of buildings in disrepair, pests and vermin, local crime, and trying to fit large families into small dwellings. One interviewee mentioned moving her large family into a house infested with mice, while another complained of homelessness and drug use in her neighborhood. Although some refugees expressed a preference for living in areas with high populations of co-ethnics, there did not seem to be a high level of enclavization among those included in my study. This echoes earlier findings by Bauder and Sharpe (2002), while differing from Hiebert (2015). Syrians were most likely to live near others of the same ethnicity, possibly due to the fact that most Syrians arrived in same recent cohort. Respondents seemed aware that living with and around co-ethnics could lead to a lack of integration with the larger society, and several interviewees mentioned making a conscious effort to spend time with non-Arabs. It should also be noted that respondents mentioned long wait times for BC Housing placements; increasing supply would benefit refugee families. Overall, lack of sufficient affordable housing was a barrier to integration for many study participants.

5.2.2   Conflict with Settlement Service Providers

As discussed in the previous chapter, conflict with services providers was a major theme in the individual interviews and focus groups. While participants complained that settlement

workers were not knowledgeable, did not speak their language, or were too busy to meet the needs of all clients, the most common complaint was that workers were rude or abrasive. Some interviewees mentioned being in a fragile or vulnerable state on arrival to Canada, and they expressed a wish that service providers would treat them with more sensitivity. It is unclear how much of this is due to deliberate rudeness on the part of the settlement workers; cultural differences in communication, heavy caseloads, and misunderstandings may also be plausible explanations. However, I sensed a certain anger and frustration when discussing satisfaction with services, even though many refugees were reluctant to criticize the settlement sector harshly. Many Syrians, especially, reported negative experiences with settlement workers, which may be explained by the influx of newcomers that has strained the sector in the past 5 years. Still, this dynamic may create a reluctance on the part of refugees to take advantage of settlement services, which represents a huge problem for integration.

The feedback I received, however, did point me towards solutions that could go a long way in bridging this divide. First, hiring more workers who are fluent in less-spoken languages (especially Somali) and deploying them strategically in Greater Vancouver would reduce wait times. Second, providing shelter to newcomers for a longer period of time would allow them to enter the housing market in a stronger financial position, and would prevent refugees from being squeezed into accepting inappropriate housing placements. Given that federal-level authorities determine the acceptable length of stay, this would require collaboration with local service providers (e.g. ISS*of*BC) to determine capacity and allocate additional funding. Too, funding more studies like this one would allow academics to gather feedback on the strengths and shortcomings of the settlement sector, and would give refugees a neutral place to share criticism that they might not otherwise feel comfortable expressing. Lastly, outside of the settlement

sector, increasing the availability of culturally-competent healthcare and reducing wait times for specialist appointments would remove a source of stress. Many GARs in my sample arrived with complex physical and mental health needs, and I argue that poor health is a huge hindrance to integration. For many refugees, social services are the foundation for integrating successfully, and effective service provision is an important part of creating positive outcomes. While potentially cost-prohibitive, augmenting existing programs could have long-term benefits.

5.2.3 Language

All three phases of the study reaffirmed the vital importance of English proficiency to economic and social integration. There was a strong relationship between command of English and labour market outcomes, but it was not always clear whether strong English skills helped subjects to find jobs, or whether interaction with English speakers in the workplace provided an opportunity to increase proficiency. English skills also facilitated social connections with neighbors, co-workers, and others who did not speak the subject's mother tongue, and people who were confident in their English communication skills were more likely to approach others for conversation. Beiser and Hou (2001) indicate that proficient English speakers are less likely to experience depression, and my findings suggest that the ability to connect socially may explain these more positive outcomes. Some interviewees talked about negotiating the pressures of working and taking English classes, and many wished that English instruction had been available to them in their home countries. Of all the determinants of integration mentioned by study participants, language was mentioned most frequently, and this held true in all arrival years, ages, and genders.

5.2.4   Underemployment and Degree Recognition

Underemployment was a prominent theme in survey responses and interviews, and policies around recognition of degrees earned abroad seemed to drive poor outcomes. Rates of underemployment were higher among college-educated respondents, and even holders of advanced degrees found themselves working in entry-level jobs that paid poorly. Interviewees attributed this to the long, arduous, and costly process of seeking recognition for degrees earned at foreign universities. Where refugees succeeded in leveraging degrees, they still faced an employment market that tends to value "Canadian experience" above that which is earned abroad. Bauder (2005) observes that some refugees are unfamiliar with workplace norms in Canada, and this can make navigating the interview and hiring process more difficult. Even respondents who worked in numbers-focused fields, where language of instruction is less relevant, struggled to have their qualifications accepted by employers. Professional degrees (medical doctor; midwife; attorney) were often unusable because of differing education and licensing requirements by country. The regulatory function of professional bodies may also be a barrier in some fields. Further research is needed to understand the labour market impact of recognizing more foreign degrees, as loosening requirements has the potential to harm Canadian graduates by increasing competition. However, the current situation contributes to underemployment and poverty among government-assisted refugees, and as such, requires the attention of policymakers.

The issue of debt, especially the repayment of transportation loans, is tied to that of underemployment. Many surveyees and interviewees mentioned taking transportation loans to come to Canada, and 2-12 years later, some were still struggling to pay. This issue was less evident among Syrians, who were able to take advantage of a loan waiver program offered by the

federal government, and most serious among non-Syrian families, many of whom have outstanding debts related to transportation. Combined with a high rent burden, these transportation loan debts guaranteed that a certain portion of refugee income was dedicated to repayment, and this made loan holders less able to afford everyday expenses. Furthermore, about half of surveyees sent remittances back to family in their country of origin, and this additional expense was also a part of the landscape of refugee financial well-being. Given these strains, the government should consider suspending the transportation loan program and expand waivers to non-Syrian refugees. It seems plausible that allowing newcomers to start their lives in Canada without the burden of debt would have long-term benefits for society as a whole, and that economic activity by refugees would eventually outweigh the initial expense of paying for travel expenses. Indeed, research by Chow (2011) concludes that charging refugees for transportation costs represents a "false savings" for Canadian taxpayers, because loan debt may keep refugees from succeeding economically and, in the long term, keep them reliant on social services (49). This topic warrants more attention from economists and migration scholars.

5.2.5   Trauma

Although I chose not to ask explicitly about pre-arrival trauma, this theme was nonetheless present in many of my individual interviews. Previous research by Wachter and her coauthors (2016) indicates that addressing trauma is a key part of integration, and my findings attest to the impact of adverse experiences on post-resettlement outcomes. Interviewees mentioned experiencing torture, homophobic and transphobic abuse, forced marriage, deaths of loved ones, and other significant negative experiences. As a consequence, some individuals spoke of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders. Two interviewees cited PTSD as a significant barrier to participation in the labour market and complained that symptoms kept them homebound much of

the time. Some refugee parents shared that their children struggled with trauma, especially those who had come to Canada from an active conflict zone. This dovetails with the findings of Walker and Zuberi (2019), who discovered significant trauma among young refugees from Syria. Some refugees chose to take advantage of psychiatric services, and these individuals reported that therapy and/ or medication was helpful in recovering from adverse experiences. There are particular challenges to researching trauma and integration, and it is difficult to ask about negative experiences without retraumatizing subjects. Still, when interviewees chose to mention this theme on their own, it was evident that trauma is an under-discussed barrier to integration, especially when it manifests as mental illness.

5.2.6   Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice and discrimination were mentioned by some study participants, but they tended to manifest in unexpected ways. While interviewees reported incidents of maltreatment, very few connected them to immigration status. Muslim refugees (especially women who wore hijab) were likely to report verbal abuse in public spaces, and they attributed these remarks to their religious identity. LGBT+ individuals also experienced prejudice, both within and outside of their own ethnic communities. Several Arab interviewees who identified as LGBT+ told me that they avoided interacting with co-ethnics, fearing that traditional attitudes about gender and same-sex relationships would lead to discrimination. This echoes findings by Karimi (2018), who cites discrimination by co-ethnics as a barrier to social inclusion. Only two interviewees (one Arab and one Southeast Asian) mentioned being the target of anti-refugee or xenophobic comments. In both cases, the remarks were related to competition in the labour market ("refugees are stealing our jobs"). These findings complicate the idea that discrimination against refugees can be

explicitly connected to newcomer status and indicates that holding more than one marginalized identity puts individuals at increased risk of ill-treatment.

Another interesting finding deals with experiences of hate speech online. Many interviewees reported seeing anti-Muslim and/ or anti-refugee content on social media sites. One woman mentioned encountering media which stereotyped Muslims as "terrorists" and "ISIS," and this content made her feel hurt and misunderstood. Another man was the target of xenophobic and Islamophobic remarks after posting a picture of his wife in a headscarf. Social media is a key site of social interaction, and experiences online should be considered when investigating social integration. I argue that social media should be seen as a double-edged sword in the case of refugee newcomers; it allows individuals to stay in contact with family left behind, but it also exposes users to hate speech and outright harassment. A recent study by Marlowe (2019) makes a similar argument, and the author suggests that social media can both be a site of connection for refugees and a place where users are exposed to hateful and offensive material. One of my interviewees, an aspiring baker, used social media to network and learn new skills; in this case, the site benefited her economic integration by enabling her to start building a business. Still, the impact of social media on integration is mixed, and the topic is only beginning to be addressed in the literature.

5.2.7 LGBT+ Identity

Interviews with refugees who identified as LGBT+ also yielded important results. In some cases, interviewees cited their sexual orientation of gender identity as the reason for coming to Canada. They perceived Canada as safer and more tolerant than their countries of origin, but two interviewees shared post-arrival experiences of hostility. An Arab man who identified as gay mentioned facing coldness and lack of social acceptance from co-ethnics, and he described being

forced to stay in the closet in order to maintain friendships. A transgender woman mentioned being the target of street harassment, and she felt that this was due to her gender identity. The interviews made it clear that these refugees encountered barriers specific to their LGBT+ identities, and that cultural factors remained an obstacle to social integration, despite being in Canada. Interestingly, more than one cisgender and heterosexual refugee expressed the belief that "there are no homosexuals in [my country]." Refugee parents from traditional cultures mentioned being uncomfortable with their children's exposure to LGBT+ communities in Canada. One Syrian father expressed the hope that none of his children would turn out to be gay or lesbian. Although acceptance of minority sexual orientations and gender identities has become mainstream in Canada, LGBT+ refugees still face prejudice within and outside of their ethnic communities.

Prejudice notwithstanding, all LGBT+ refugees interviewed agreed that Canada was safer than their home countries, and most found ways to build community, despite the attitudes of others. One pair of refugee men, who both identified as gay, mentioned meeting in an LGBT+ space online and forging a strong friendship. Another, also a gay man, was able to share his culture and bridge barriers with coworkers. One heterosexual refugee mother told me how she overcame her own prejudices against gay and transgender individuals, and that she was teaching her children to respect all people, regardless of identity. Interviewees from conservative societies shared that it was difficult to adjust to more open attitudes around sexuality and gender, but most understood respect for diversity to be a key Canadian value. A Muslim interviewee shared that she rarely felt judged for wearing hijab; she hoped that she could extend the same courtesy to those with beliefs and values different from her own. So, although LGBT+ refugees are at an increased risk of marginalization and exclusion, connections with others in the community and

the existence of open-minded co-ethnics help to mitigate negative outcomes. Refugees are not a monolith, and their attitudes towards LGBT+ identities are complex and often contradictory.

5.3 Limitations

This study was limited by three factors: sampling method, sample size and representativeness, my own association with ISS*of*BC, and a bias towards refugees who are connected to the settlement sector. While my results provide an interesting look at integration outcomes among different types of government-assisted refugees, they should not be taken as representative of the population as a whole. Also, although previous research establishes that recent GARs are more vulnerable than those who arrived pre-IRPA, my study does not seek to compare outcomes between these two groups. Furthermore, my association with ISS*of*BC may have had an impact on the researcher/ subject dynamic, changing the nature and severity of criticism. Finally, by utilizing service providers to promote the study and recruit participants, we ensured that refugees who have remained in contact with social services would be over-represented in the sample. These points are important to contextualize our results, and they help to explain some of the shortcomings of the study.

5.3.1 Sampling Method, Size, and Generalizability

Despite a large pool of possible participants, only 72 complete survey responses, 61 incomplete survey responses, 20 interviews, and three focus groups were incorporated into my findings. I originally intended to perform a cohort analysis, but the small sample size and weight towards recent arrivals made this unfeasible. Refugees in Metro Vancouver are over-researched, and my survey ran within the same time frame as several others, which may have depressed response rates. For recruiting interviewees, I sometimes relied on snowball sampling methods, encouraging previous interviewees to tell their friends and family that I was looking for subjects.

This may have been a factor in the over-representation of Syrian and Iranian study participants. The survey was available in 9 languages, but refugees who did not have their mother tongue available (e.g. Karen and Congolese) were less likely to participate. These issues meant that I could not complete comparative analyses for most demographic characteristics, and it also prevented me from understanding the general breakdown of economic and social characteristics of Vancouver-area GARs.

Additionally, my position as a contracted research assistant with ISS*of*BC may have made interviewees and focus group participants less comfortable speaking their minds about issues related to the resettlement sector. For ethical reasons, I explained the study's connection with ISS*of*BC in the consent and assent forms that I required each participant to sign (or click through in the case of the online survey). While some participants did share concerns related to the competence, professionalism, and knowledgeability of service providers, others may not have been comfortable bringing up these topics. Conversely, I often explained that one of the aims of the project was to assess satisfaction with social services and identify areas for improvement, and refugees might thus have felt more compelled to share negative feedback. In some cases, ISS*of*BC staff assisted with the recruitment of study participants and advertised the study to clients. I also used space at ISS*of*BC's Welcome Centres to convene focus groups, and in one case, a settlement worker provided on-the-spot translation for Arabic-speaking individuals. While I tried to limit the impact of my association with the settlement sector on my data, this relationship doubtless impacted my findings.

5.3.2   Comparisons with Previous Findings: A Note

On the whole, my findings emphasize negative settlement experiences, including conflict with service providers and financial hardship. This skew may be the result of sampling

individuals who are still "plugged in" to resettlement services after 2-12 years (i.e. individuals who have kept contact information current with ISS*of*BC); more successful GARs may not have been reached by my recruitment efforts. Too, asking open-ended and subjective questions about life satisfaction may have encouraged respondents to vent frustrations. My results are more negative than those presented by Hiebert (2017), who found high rates of home ownership among a recent cohort of refugees in Vancouver. Meanwhile, Frank (2013) argues that refugees are not disadvantaged in the labour market as compared to other immigrants. My research should be understood in the context of previous writing on the subject; while the results are concerning from an integration policy standpoint, they provide only one part of the picture.

5.4   Areas for Future Research

My results suggest four areas within which future research could be fruitful. First, the labour market experiences of highly-educated government-assisted refugees are often suboptimal, and a solution would require more solid understandings of the impact of degree recognition on refugees and local workers. Second, LGBT+ refugees often struggle to integrate within and without their own ethnic communities, and effective strategies are needed to promote community acceptance and personal resilience in the face of bigotry. Third, anecdotal evidence suggests that the process of resettling in Canada can destabilize family dynamics, and strategies for strengthening familial bonds should be identified. Finally, prejudice against GARs is more complicated that simple xenophobia, and holding multiple marginalized identities seems to put an individual at increased risk of harassment. My study brings up many questions in these four areas, and it is my hope that social scientists continue exploring these themes in the future.

5.4.1 Labour Market Integration of Highly-Educated GARs

As described in the previous chapter, my study suggests that GARs from highly-educated backgrounds are more likely to be underemployed in Canada. My data also suggests a link between poor employment outcomes and lack of recognition of degrees earned abroad. In cases where such degrees are accepted by Canadian employers, applicants may still be penalized for lack of so-called "Canadian experience." Even in cases where English proficiency is not as relevant (e.g. accounting), job seekers with strong English skills are more likely to be hired. While recognizing more foreign degrees would be a "quick fix" to this problem, it might also make the labour market more difficult for Canada-born applicants, who would face increased competition. Also, it would not account for differences in quality of degrees earned in Canada versus abroad. Studies that assess the impact of degree recognition policies on GARs, Canada-born workers, and quality of job applicants are needed. Current circumstances limit the earning potential of government-assisted refugees, and labour market integration is a key piece of successful resettlement.

5.4.2 Integration of LGBT+ GARs

A second area for future research is the integration of government-assisted refugees who identify as LGBT+. My results show that these newcomers may be more vulnerable to social exclusion within their own ethnic communities, especially within communities which stigmatize queer identities. Cisgender and heterosexual GARs are not a monolith, and a wide variety of attitudes were represented in my sample, but it is clear that refugees also display the homophobic and transphobic attitudes observable in other parts of Canadian society. This prejudice did not often manifest as overt or violent phobia; rather, anti-LGBT+ attitudes manifested more

insidiously[18]. Some LGBT+ interviewees also described feeling out of place in queer spaces; Muslim respondents, especially, were uncomfortable with alcohol use and casual sexual activity among their young, Canadian-born LGBT+ friends. The interaction of immigration status, religion, culture, and sexual/ gender identity is a complicated topic, and research would allow academics and service providers to identify more effective strategies to facilitate integration.

5.4.3   Settlement and Family Dynamics

My research also supports the idea that the process of resettlement can destabilize family dynamics. LeBrun et al (2016) have written about the connection between family stress and domestic violence rates in refugee households, and they also conclude that refugee children are at an increased risk of physical abuse. None of my respondents disclosed family violence, but many did mention the negative impact of migration on their relationships. Some adults mentioned getting divorced after arriving in Canada, and a respondent spoke that she had observed high divorce rates within the Iranian refugee community. One woman attributed divorces to the increased legal freedom that Canada offers, while another pointed to gender equality in Canada as a destabilizing force. When accessing services, some parents relied on their children to translate for them, and others mentioned that their children were less obedient once they arrived in Canada. This information suggests that migration can change the way parents and children relate to each other. Due to ethics guidelines, I avoided interviewing children for this project, but further investigation of family relationships and destabilizing forces might offer solutions to the breakdown of these relationships.

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[18] One father, for example, expressed that while he tolerated LGBT+ identities, he hoped that his children would not identify as gay or transgender.

5.4.4   Identity and Prejudice

Lastly, my work suggests that experiences of prejudice are fueled by more than simple xenophobia, and that a combination of personal factors may make an individual more vulnerable to bad treatment. As discussed in the previous chapter, some respondents did experience xenophobic abuse, and most of the comments were related to perceived competition with Canadian-born workers in the labour market. LGBT+ refugees also faced prejudice, but they often connected this with their personal identities, rather than category of arrival. One woman mentioned explicitly that strangers were more likely to focus on her transgender identity than her status as a GAR, and that all of the street harassment she has experienced was centered around her gender. Many Muslim respondents, especially women who wore hijab, described incidents of Islamophobia. These typically took place on the street or on public transit, and they nearly always involved comments about terrorism. This contrasts with the findings of Scott and Safdar (2017), who found that few Syrians reported prejudice, despite being a predominantly Muslim group. It is possible that, two years later, Syrians are becoming more aware of negative attitudes; this could be related to improved English and more interaction with non-refugee populations. Within my sample, visible minorities also reported more abuse than white or white-passing respondents. Future research should focus on experiences of discrimination and prejudice among visible minority GARs, LGBT+ GARs, and Muslim GARs. Such research would help to confirm that these three groups are more vulnerable to harassment and might suggest some strategies for preventing negative experiences.

5.5   Conclusion

Government-assisted refugees are a diverse group, and legislation changes at the federal level have led to changes in the demographic characteristics of recent cohorts. As predicted, recent

arrivals have complex heath needs, often suffer from trauma, and come from a variety of educational backgrounds. As such, providing effective services has become more fraught, and there are significant gaps in the assistance provided by the settlement sector. While access to services is a key domain of integration, my study echoes previous research by Ager and Strang (2008), who predicted that language, labour market attachment, social integration, and housing are some of the most significant factors. Scholars like Francis and Hiebert (2014) and Sherell (2010) have written extensively about the struggles of refugees in the housing market, and the situation still causes significant personal and financial stress to refugee families. The previous chapters outlined noteworthy findings related to trauma, discrimination, and LGBT+-identified refugees, as well as a few recommendations for future research.
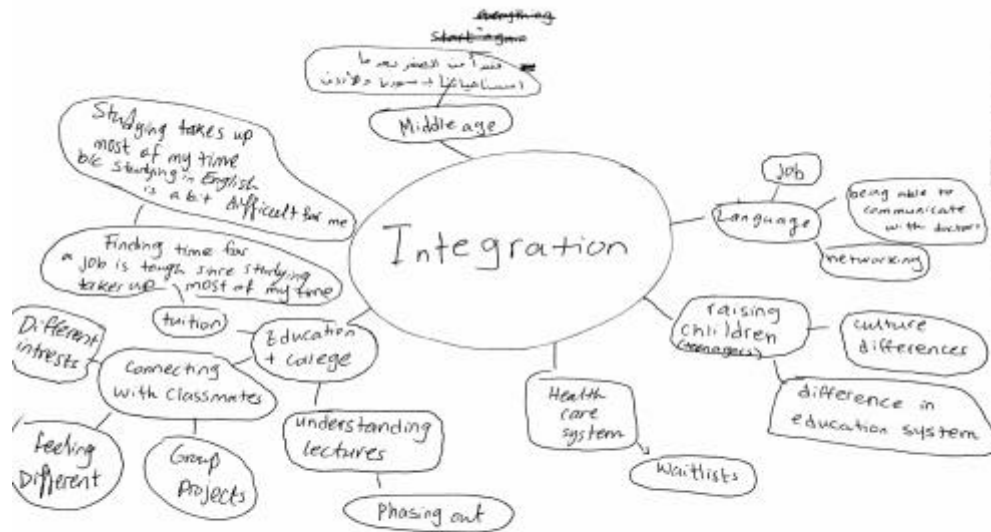
5.5.1   How Do Refugees Define Integration?

One of the most illuminating aspects of this research was collecting responses related to the concept of integration. Refugees pointed to some of the same domains as previous research covered, and they strongly emphasized language as the most important piece of the integration puzzle. They also talked about the trauma of leaving family members behind and expressed that they would be perfectly satisfied with their lives if they could sponsor their relatives to Canada. Guilt was a commonly-mentioned emotion, and some respondents struggled to enjoy their new lives while worrying about family in the country of origin. About a quarter of interviewees

specifically asked me to include this information in my report to IRCC, and they expressed the hope that sponsorship rules would be relaxed in the future. Finally, access to services featured prominently in refugees' conceptions of integration, especially assistance with finding employment and appropriate housing. Many of the answers to the

Figure 5.1: Thought Map #2
Thought map. Here, the creator sees integration as a complex set of variables, much like Ager and Strang (2008).

integration question are included in Appendix C, and they offer a unique perspective on the integration concept.

Overall, my findings reinforce the idea that integration is a complicated process, and it is impossible to classify the refugee population binarily as "integrated" and "not integrated." Furthermore, as noted by Castles and his coauthors (2001), the term begs the question, "integration into what?" For the purposes of my research, I defined integration as "the process of building a life in Canada," and it should be acknowledged that there are many ways of approaching this task. While my thesis answers the basic question of outcomes among recent GAR newcomers and echoes previous definitions of integration, it also raises important questions about the role of degree recognition programs, the feasibility of transportation loan

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repayment, and the impact of resettlement on family dynamics. It also highlights that some of the larger-scale social issues in Metro Vancouver (housing affordability; debt; public safety) affect refugees. It is my hope that migration scholars continue to investigate these themes, in order to improve outcomes among government-assisted refugees.

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Appendices

Appendix A : Survey Questions

A.1

GAR

Are you a former government-assisted refugee (GAR) who arrived in Canada between 2007 and 2016?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Demographics

How old are you?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 14-17

- 18-24

- 25-34

- 35-44

- 45-54

- 55-64

- 65 or older

What is your postal code?

Please write your answer here:

What is your gender?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Male

- Female

- Non-Binary

- Other

- Prefer not to respond

What is your marital status?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Single

- Married

- Divorced

- Common Law

Do you have children?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

How many children do you have?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '6 [A6]' (Do you have children?)

 Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

-

How many of your children were born in Canada?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '6 [A6]' (Do you have children?)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None

- Some, but not all

- All

Where were you born? (examples: Syria, Sudan)

Please write your answer here:

What is your ethnicity? (examples: Chinese, Punjabi)

Please write your answer here:

When did you come to Canada?

Please enter a date:

If you arrived in a province other than British Columbia, when did you come to British

Columbia?

Please enter a date:

Are you a Canadian citizen?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

When did you become a citizen?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '13 [A13]' (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please enter a date:

What is your citizenship?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '13 [A13]' (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please write your answer here:

Why are you not a Canadian citizen?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '13 [A13]' (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please write your answer here:

Do you intend to apply for Canadian citizenship in the future?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '13 [A13]' (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

- Not Sure

Education

How much education do you have?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No formal education

- Finished primary school

- Finished secondary school

- Some post-secondary training

- Finished training in trades or technical skills

- Finished university/college degree

- Finished advanced degree

Where did you get your education?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was at question '18 [A18]' (How much education do you have?)

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Canada

- Some other country

- Both Canada and some other country

Are you currently a student?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Language

What is your mother tongue? (examples: Dari, Arabic)

Please write your answer here:

How would you rate your English when you arrived in Canada?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No English

- A little English

- Intermediate English

- I spoke English well

- I spoke English fluently

How would you rate your English now? (check one)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No English

- A little English

- Intermediate English

- I speak English well

- I speak English fluently

Have you accessed English classes (e.g. through LINC)?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Why have you not taken English classes?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '24 [A24]' (Have you accessed English classes (e.g. through

LINC)?)

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No childcare

- No transportation

- Location of classes

- Time of day

- I do not need help with my English

If you have used LINC, what level are you?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '24 [A24]' (Have you accessed English classes (e.g. through

LINC)?)

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Basic

- CLB1

- CLB2

- CLB3

- CLB4

- CLB5

- CLB6

- Not Sure

- My English classes are not through LINC

Migration Experience

How many years did you spend outside your country of origin before arriving in Canada?

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

-

Did you spend time in a refugee camp?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

How long did you spend in a refugee camp?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '28 [A28]' (Did you spend time in a refugee camp?)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Less than 6 months

- 7-11 months

- Between 12 and 23 months

- 2-5 years

- More than 5 years

Employment

Do you currently have a job?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Why do you not have a job?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

Please write your answer here:

Are you: (check all that apply)

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Self-employed

- Employee

- Part-time

- Full-time

What kind of work do you do?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Management (e.g. restaurant manager)

- Professional (e.g. doctor)

- Technical job or skilled trade (e.g. electrician)

- Intermediate job (e.g. truck driver)

- Entry level job (e.g. cleaner)

- Agriculture (e.g. farmer)

- Other:

How many total hours do you work per week?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1-10

- 11-20

- 21-30

- 31-40

- 41-50

- 51-60

- More than 60

Do you hold more than one job at the moment?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

How many different jobs are you doing?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '35 [A35]' (Do you hold more than one job at the moment?)

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

-

How long have you worked in total in Canada?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1-5 months

- 6-11 months

- 12-23 months

- 2-5 years

- More than 5 years

When you came to Canada, how long did it take you to find your first job?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1-5 months

- 6-11 months

- 1-2 years

- More than 2 years

- I could not find a job

- I did not look for a job

Do you do the same/ a similar job in Canada as you did before arriving?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [A30]' (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

What type of job did you hold before coming to Canada? (check all that apply)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Management (e.g. restaurant manager)

- Professional (e.g. doctor)

- Technical job or skilled trade (e.g. electrician)

- Intermediate job (e.g. truck driver)

- Entry level job (e.g. cleaner)

- Agriculture (e.g. farmer)

- I did not work before coming to Canada

- Other:

Do you send money back to friends or relatives in your country of origin?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Did you take a transportation loan to come to Canada?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

How close are you to paying off the loan?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '42 [A42]' (Did you take a transportation loan to come to Canada?)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Loan is paid

- More than halfway finished

- About halfway finished

- Less than halfway finished

- Have not started paying

What is your primary source of income?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Government transfers

- Paid work

- Other

What are your secondary sources of income?

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Paid work

- Government transfers

- Other

Do you volunteer? If so, how much time per month do you spend volunteering?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Less than 2 hours

- 2-5 hours

- 6-10 hours

- More than 10 hours

- I do not volunteer

What kind of volunteer work do you do?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was at question '46 [A46]' (Do you volunteer? If so, how much time per month do you

spend volunteering?)

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Education (e.g. tutoring)

- Ethnic or cultural organization

- Recreation (e.g. youth sports; knitting class)

- Settlement organization (e.g. volunteer translator)

- Religious (e.g. mosque or church)

- Other:

Housing

How many people live with you?

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

-

Are they all family members? If not, who else lives with you? (e.g. friend)?

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Immediate family (spouse and/ or children)

- Mother or father

- Grandparent or great grandparent

- Grandchild or great grandchild

- Brother or sister

- Aunt or Uncle

- Cousin

- Other family member (e.g. brother's wife)

- Friend(s)

- Roommate(s)

- Other:

How many times have you moved since getting your first house/ apartment in Canada?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I have not moved

- I have moved 1-3 times

- I have moved 4-6 times

- I have moved more than 6 times

Is your housing here in Canada comfortable/ appropriate for you and your family?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

- Not sure

Why are you unhappy with your housing?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' *or* 'Not sure' at question '51 [A51]' (Is your housing here in Canada

comfortable/ appropriate for you and your family?)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Too small

- House is old/ dirty/ in bad repair

- Rent is too expensive

- House/ apartment is too far from my job

- House/ apartment is too far from social services

- Neighborhood is not safe

- Other:

How much of your monthly income do you spend on housing?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Less than ¼

- Less than ½

- About ½

- More than ½

Services

What social services/ assistance have you accessed in Canada? (examples: LINC, BC Housing)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- LINC

- BC Housing

- ISSofBC

- MOSAIC

- S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

- BC Disability Assistance

- Other:

Is it easy for you to access social services?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Why is it difficult for you to access services?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '55 [A55]' (Is it easy for you to access social services?)

Please write your answer here:

Social Integration

Do you have friends in Canada?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

Why do you not have friends?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '57 [A56]' (Do you have friends in Canada?)

Please write your answer here:

Are your friends of the same ethnicity as you?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '57 [A56]' (Do you have friends in Canada?)

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Same ethnicity

- Different ethnicity

- A mix of same and different ethnicity

Health

How would you describe your health?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Very healthy (5)

- Healthy (4)

- Neither healthy nor unhealthy (3)

- Unhealthy (2)

- Very unhealthy (1)

Do you often feel sad/ depressed/ have a low mood?

 Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- All the time (1)

- More than half the time (2)

- About half the time (3)

- Occasionally (4)

- Never (5)

Do you feel that it is easy to access healthcare in Canada?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

What makes it difficult to access healthcare in Canada?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '62 [A61]' (Do you feel that it is easy to access healthcare in

Canada?)

 Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- It is difficult to find healthcare workers who understand my culture

- My insurance does not cover what I need

- I do not know where to go to get healthcare

- Language barriers or lack of interpretation services

- Other:

Overall Thoughts

Overall, how happy are you with your life?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Very happy (5)

- Pretty happy (4)

- Neutral (3)

- Unhappy (2)

- Very unhappy (1)

When you arrived in Canada, did you feel prepared to start your life here?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

What would have helped you to be more prepared?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'No' at question '65 [A64]' (When you arrived in Canada, did you feel prepared to

start your life here?)

Please write your answer here:

How would you define integration in Canada?

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Becoming a citizen

- Learning English

- Buying a house

- Making Canadian friends

- Getting a degree in Canada

- Raising children in Canada

- None of the above

- Other:

In your own words, what is 'successful' integration?

Please write your answer here:

Participation in Future Research

Are you interested in participating in the next phase of this research project? If yes, please type

your email address or telephone number below:

Please write your answer here:

Thank you for participating!

Appendix B : Individual Interview Questions

B.1

1. Tell me about yourself. What is a typical day in your life like?

2. What does 'successful' integration mean to you?

3. Do you feel that you and your family have integrated successfully? Explain.

4. What things (e.g. friends, social services, religious community) were most helpful to you in integrating?

5. What challenges did your family face in integrating? How have you navigated these challenges?

6. What goals do you have for the next five years (e.g. buy a house, bring relatives to Canada, go to university)?

7. If you have children, what do you hope for your children? (e.g. I hope my children go to university, get married, take over my small business, etc.)

8. What is your favorite part of living in Canada? Your least favorite?

9. Do you have friends in Canada?

      a. If yes, where did you meet them?

      b. If not, what things have made it difficult for you to find friends?

10. What cultural differences have you observed between your country of origin and Canada? How do you navigate these differences?

11. How often do you interact with people from your ethnic group? How often do you interact with people outside of your ethnic group? Where do these interactions occur?

12. Do you think that there are negative stereotypes about refugees in Canada? If yes, what are they?

13. If you have a job, how did you find that job (e.g. through a co-ethnic friend, through an advertisement)?

14. What advice would you give to a refugee coming to Canada?

15. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experience in Canada? Feel free to share whatever you'd like.

Appendix C : Focus Group Questions

C.1

1. (Entire group) When I say the word "integration," what do you think of?

2. (Split into smaller groups) Activity: drawing "thought maps" of integration. Participants will be given large pieces of paper and markers and instructed to draw a large bubble in the center. The bubble will be labeled "integration." Participants will then be encouraged to draw smaller bubbles and connect them to each other/ the center bubble, labeled with different aspects of integration. See below for example "thought map" created by the research assistant.
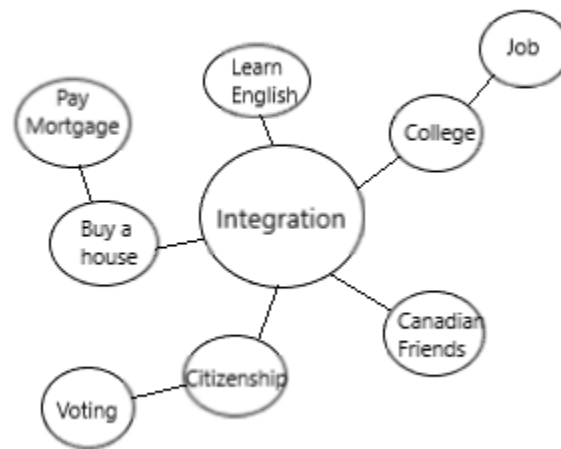
3. (Entire group) Smaller groups will be encouraged to share their maps with the rest of the room.

4. (Entire group) Did making the map/ seeing others' maps change the way you think about integration?

5. (Entire group) Do you think it is accurate and helpful to talk about refugees' experiences in Canada in terms of integration? Why might it be a good term to use? How might it be bad?

6. (Split into smaller groups) Participants will be encouraged to discuss the two questions below:

    a. Do you think it is easy to access services in Canada (examples: LINC, BC Housing)?

    b. What would make it easier to access services?

7. (In smaller groups) Participants will be encouraged to discuss the four questions below:

    a. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees?

    b. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees who are also religious minorities (e.g. Muslims, Sikhs)?

    c. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees who are visible minorities (e.g. Congolese, Persians)?

    d. How might we make Canada more welcoming to refugees, including those who are religious/ ethnic minorities?

8. (Entire group) Smaller groups will be encouraged to share their answers.

9. (Entire group) What advice would you give to a refugee who has just arrived in Canada?

10. (Entire group) What advice would you give to the settlement sector to help refugees integrate more smoothly?