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Displaced Sudanese Voices on Education, Dignity, and Humanitarian Aid

Friedrich W. Affolter and Carine Allaf[1]

Abstract

Education is viewed by Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons as a key prerequisite for social status, prestige, socio-economic survival, and therefore human dignity. Using Sudan as a case study, the article demonstrates that humanitarian aid—which claims to ensure the basic conditions for a life with dignity—often attributes less importance to education than to other sectors such as water, nutrition, and health. Utilizing anecdotal evidence from internally displaced persons in conflict-affected regions of Sudan, this article illustrates that the humanitarian aid agenda fails to adequately address what their target population most demands: education.

Résumé

L'éducation est considérée par les réfugiés soudanais et les personnes déplacées à l'intérieur du Soudan comme une condition préalable essentielle pour le statut social, le prestige, la survie socioéconomique et donc la dignité humaine. Utilisant le Soudan comme étude de cas, l'article montre que l'aide humanitaire, qui prétend assurer les conditions de base pour une vie dans la dignité, attribue souvent moins d'importance à l'éducation qu'à d'autres secteurs tels que l'eau, la nutrition ou la santé. À l'aide de témoignages anecdotiques de personnes déplacées dans les régions touchées par le conflit au Soudan, cet article montre que le programme humanitaire ne répond pas adéquatement au besoin principal de sa population cible : l'éducation.

Introduction

The Sphere Project's *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* defines humanitarianism as "our shared conviction as humanitarian agencies that all people affected by disaster or conflict have a right to receive protection and assistance to ensure the basic conditions for life *with dignity*."[2] Later the handbook argues that the "right to life with dignity … entails the duty to preserve life where it is threatened. Implicit in this is the duty not to withhold or frustrate the provision of life-saving assistance."[3] It then continues to argue, "Dignity entails more than physical well-being; it demands respect for the whole person, including the values and beliefs of individuals and affected communities, and respect for their human rights, including liberty, freedom of conscience and religious observance."[4]

Numerous organizations' mission statements, international covenants, mandates, and resolutions call for a commitment to dignity.[5] This article aims to illustrate how the provision of basic education services in humanitarian situations continues to be underfunded and undervalued, despite the fact that populations affected by conflict or disasters consider access to education an integral component of a life with dignity. Using Sudan as an example, this article r illustrates that education is indeed a valued and sought-after asset,[6] and that humanitarian interventions that give preference to the provision of food, water, and health services only, fail to take into account the values and beliefs of their target beneficiaries.

In this article, we begin with a situation analysis of Sudan, a country suffering from "chronic emergencies" for more than a decade. We then present an education context analysis, which illustrates the dim prospects of Sudanese IDP and refugee children and youth to obtain access to adequate and

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quality education. The article will demonstrate, on the basis of a comparison of financial allocation amounts made by different humanitarian funds, that education is not being given equal priority, despite the fact that target populations consider it of equal importance. Then using voices of those affected, we present why education makes a fundamental difference in the lives of children and youth affected by crisis. We conclude by providing evidence for why education must not only be included but prioritized when funding and delivering humanitarian responses, and highlight the importance of critically looking at an education system and its impact on a nation's development and citizen building.

Sudan Situation Analysis

Prior to the referendum in July 2011 declaring South Sudan an independent country, Sudan was the largest country in Africa. After the referendum, Northern Sudan comprises 17 states, including the three protocol areas of Abyei, Blue Nile State, and Southern Kordofan State.[7] The vastness of Sudan's geographical landscape, the high number of nomadic people (roughly 8.5 per cent of the population), civil conflict, insecurity, and high incidence of drought and desertification make accurate demographic data almost impossible, and, as such, there are no accurate understandings of the needs of its people. This diverse and complicated landscape further illustrates how one country such as Sudan houses both conflict and peaceful zones side-by-side, further complicating notions of aid and development.

Sudan has been in a state of ongoing conflict since even before its independence from the British-Egypt condominium rule in 1956. Generally the civil war is described as a conflict between Muslims and Christians or Arabs and Africans, but van der Zwan writes, "The reality is that the conflict has been fuelled by the chronic underdevelopment of marginalized areas of Sudan, coupled with often violent competition for access to political and economic power. Local conflicts, over grazing rights, access to water and control over humanitarian aid, as well as ethnic and religious manipulation and mobilization, have also been fuelling instability and tensions."[8] Even after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 and the referendum of July 2011, tensions have erupted between Sudan and South Sudan, and the Government of Sudan (GoS) has continued to use military means in the three protocol areas, leading to additional displacements and alleged war atrocities and human rights violations.[9] There are also ongoing conflicts between the Dinka Ngok and the Misseriya groups in the disputed region of Abyei, as well as resistance groups and the Government in Darfur.

As a result of GoS involvement in the ongoing conflicts, the government reduced its budget by 36.5 per cent, decreasing their spending on the social sectors and lower fiscal transfers to the states for basic service delivery.[10] At the same time, high inflation rates drove food prices upwards, increasing vulnerability among rural people and the urban poor.[11]

Sudan suffers from a habitual state of endemic poverty. This is a major area of concern, because high poverty rates in disadvantaged states are correlated with conflict. Approximately 46.5 per cent of the population lives under the national poverty line of less than one dollar a day. Although political conflict is the most obvious reason for insecurity in Sudan, inter-family fighting and criminality are also key factors. In addition to poverty and insecurity, Sudan has experienced extreme demographic shifts due to urbanization for economic reasons and displacement as a result of conflict. Compounding these difficulties, over 40 per cent of the population is under the age of 15.[12] In a country where poverty and insecurity are major concerns, in addition to a quickly growing and changing population, the government's lack of capacity has increased vulnerability and decreased trust and support, making governance in Sudan a major limitation. All these factors have directly and indirectly contributed to vulnerability, conflict, and poverty.[13]

Sudan is an interesting country in which to investigate the funding of education in a humanitarian response, because it can be classified as both a conflict-affected country (where education can potentially be a part of the humanitarian response but not always a priority) and as stable or post-conflict context (where education is definitely included in development efforts). Thus various parts of the country fall onto various areas of the relief-to-development continuum. Sudan continues to have outbreaks of violence, especially in the three protocol areas, in addition to the Darfurs where conflicts are ongoing and are further complicated by flash flooding and other natural disasters.[14]

The World Bank Education Sector Report (2012) estimates that there are 4.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) either living inside IDP camps or in other "spontaneous settlements," while the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reports IDP numbers to be closer to 5 million. Prior to the separation of the two countries, Sudan had the highest number of IDPs in Africa.[15] Many of the displaced have spent almost a decade in emergency camps, although the average length of displacement for the internally displaced is roughly 20 years.[16] Ferris and Winthrop argue that "IDPs—although numbering far more than refugees—have a descriptive rather than a legal definition, having no binding international convention, and have no dedicated UN agency in charge of their protection and assistance."[17] The government is in charge of IDPs, and

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this is problematic in a context like Sudan, where the government played a role in the conflict, resulting in displacement. Interestingly, of the 10 countries with the largest IDP population (one being Sudan), Colombia, Iraq, and Turkey are the only ones that have taken steps to include IDP children and youth in their laws and policies. However, more importantly, even when there are laws and policies, "there is almost always a gap between the legal framework and the implementation on the ground."[18] Complex emergencies and natural disasters continue to result in new waves of IDP movements mainly in the Darfur states and the three protocol areas. The closing of the border points between Sudan and South Sudan will impede traditional nomadic migration routes and result in new spontaneous settlements near the South Darfur border. Over half a million school-age children are affected by this situation and, as a result, many may not have access to schooling in the new settlements.

Education Context Analysis

Across Sudan, gross enrolment in basic education remains at 72 per cent, behind schedule to meet the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education by 2015.[19] In certain population groups, such as nomadic populations, gross enrolment is below 75 per cent,[20] and other vulnerable children such as IDPs, returnees, refugees, orphans, children with special needs, and children from rural underserved communities are least likely to access education services. Additionally, according to the same statistics, one million children have never attended school, and 62 per cent of children who are not in school are girls. A poor rural girl's chances to access a quality education is 25 percentage points lower than that of a well-off urban boy.[21] As expected, areas of Sudan that are more peaceful have higher enrolment rates of education, and the conflict-affected regions have experienced higher enrolment areas with periods of peace. Yet as a result of recent and ongoing military conflicts in the three protocol areas, displacement continues to take place, leading to further decreased enrolment rates. Consequently, pressure is building on education resources in neighbouring "stable" states such as White Nile, Sennar, and North Kordofan, to support the recently displaced, straining their education system.

Under-investment in the education of children and youth irreversibly jeopardizes the hopes for a better future of millions of Sudanese children. They are bound to grow up unskilled, unhealthy, and with little chance for future employment.[22] According to the 2012 World Bank Education Sector report, Sudan "spends less as a share of total public spending and of GDP than do countries with similar incomes and other countries in the region with comparable dependency ratios" on education.[23] Sudan spends just 2.7 per cent of its GDP on education, compared with the 3–7 per cent that other lower-middle-income countries spend (such as Egypt, Morocco, and Cote d'Ivoire). Furthermore, GoS actions further complicate receiving external support. For example, because Sudan did not ratify the 2005 Cotonou Agreement, the country is ineligible to receive any money from the European Development Fund.[24] In addition, the separation of South Sudan from Sudan resulted in donors deciding to at least halve their aid portfolio for Sudan in 2011. Furthermore, Sudan's decision not to grant access to humanitarian service providers to war-affected regions prompted donors to temporarily freeze or reroute humanitarian aid earmarked for Sudan. Finally, the financial crisis hitting Europe and North America further strained donors' budgetary possibilities to support humanitarian aid efforts in Sudan.

Education as a Humanitarian Pillar

Aid allocations to education in humanitarian contexts have doubled since 2006, in part as a result of key developments that include the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), established at the 2000 World Education Forum to improve interagency communication and collaboration for education in emergencies; the expansion of the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF); country-level pooled funds such as the Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) and the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) have begun to include education; and in 2006 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) supported the formation of the Education Cluster and recognized the sector in the humanitarian response.[25] Still in humanitarian emergencies, only 2.3 per cent of all humanitarian funding goes to education. According to the Education Cluster Unit (2011), education has been one of the most underfunded sectors in the last decade.[26]

Progress to acknowledge the importance of education in humanitarian contexts continues. In October 2008, the Sphere Project announced a companionship with the INEE recognizing the quality and recommending the use of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery, as a companion to the Sphere handbook.[27] The UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/64/L.58, "The Right to Education in Emergency Settings," on 9 July 2010, which emphasized education in all stages of humanitarian response, safe and protective educational environments, reconstruction and post-emergency situations, and the importance of political will and financing of education efforts.[28] In February 2011, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) released their 2011–2015 Education Strategy, with the third goal being "Increased equitable access to education in crisis and

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conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015," and in September 2012, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon launched the Education First Initiative, reinforcing the 2010 resolution of protecting the right of children and youth to a quality education in humanitarian emergencies and conflicts.

Nevertheless, education in humanitarian contexts remains under-financed. As indicated in table 1, which compares global humanitarian funding to the education sector from 2010 to 2012, allocations to education in humanitarian contexts is small and on continued decline. Across the board, it is one of the lowest funded sectors, and the percentage of education funding of the grand total of humanitarian contributions is decreasing.

Table 1. Humanitarian funding allocated to education

Year	Total funding ($)	% of total
2010	365,682,183	2.3
2011	174,524,644	1.3
2012	66,372,836	0.7

Source: Financial Tracking Service, generated on 24 September 2012

Table 2 presents the percentage of education funding of overall ERF, CHF, and CERF funding from 2010 to 2012. Although it has remained relatively stable, it is still quite low in total contribution to education, further illustrating that education is not necessarily prioritized in a humanitarian context.

Table 2. Percentage of overall funding dedicated to education

Year	% of total
2010	3.01
2011	2.97
2012	3.04

Source: UN OCHA 2012 and personal communication with OCHA Geneva

Table 3 presents an overview of funding allocations that humanitarian sectors in Sudan absorb from ERF, CHF, and CERF 2011 funding. If actions speak louder than words, it is fair to conclude that education is not given the priority of most other humanitarian aid sectors.

Table 3. Funding allocations for humanitarian sectors, Sudan, 2012

IASC standard sector	USD committed/ contributed ($)	USD pledged ($)
Agriculture	59,468,870	0
Coordination and support services	38,072,320	0
Economic recovery and infrastructure	8,281,999	0
Education	19,940,425	0
Food	109,712,137	0
Health	164,841,354	0
Mine action	4,248,879	0
Multi-sector	61,442,236	0
Protection / human rights / rule of law	30,316,859	0
Safety and security of staff and operations	2,684,566	0
Sector not yet specified	16,843,258	43,604,137
Shelter and non-food items	56,446,889	0
Water and sanitation	82,508,803	0
Total	654,808,595	43,604,137

Source: Financial Tracking Service, generated 24 September 2012

Although it is recognized that education should be included in humanitarian responses, it continues to be under-financed. Although there are mechanisms to help increase funding of education in emergencies,[29] education is still not prioritized, despite demonstrated efforts of its impact and role in mitigating conflict and contributing to peace-building. Whereas funding for humanitarian aid gives priority to life-saving assistance, it does not for medium- to long-term restoration of livelihoods, economic development, education, or psychosocial well-being. Martone writes, "The field of humanitarian assistance is compartmentalized in such a way that our attention is focused on immediate lifesaving measures and readily quantifiable indices like morbidity and mortality rates."[30] This distinction between humanitarian and development work is an old one, and this dualism implies that humanitarian and development work are inherently different, working toward different outcomes: humanitarianism toward immediate relief and development for more long-term and sustainable programming.[31] But with many parts of Sudan in some sort of crisis, many that are chronic and exacerbated by poverty,

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how do affected populations describe the value of education in humanitarian work across the country?

Methodology

In order to explore whether or not education is an integrated component of the values and beliefs of Sudanese IDPs, we conducted education cluster-wide consultations as well as group and individual interviews. A total of 100 education officers were interviewed by the two authors in English or Arabic from 25 national and international civil society and non-profit organizations that provide education services in conflict-affected areas, as well as three United Nations agencies, and federal and state Ministries of General Education over the course of three months in the spring of 2012. Of those interviewed, 70 per cent were Sudanese, and all were working with and/or in conflict-affected states and populations in eight states: Blue Nile, Northern Darfur, Southern Darfur, Eastern Darfur, Khartoum, Northern Kordofan, Southern Kordofan, and White Nile. Each person was asked the same question: *Donors are eager to provide humanitarian assistance, but with limited resources available, have concluded that water, food and health are sectors that have more importance in emergency situations in Sudan, than education. This has resulted in lower amounts of funding for education services than other service sectors. Having worked in camps and interacted with IDP and refugee communities, would you argue that IDPs and refugees share this perspective, or do they disagree? Why? Please support your responses with anecdotal evidence.*

Because only secondary informants (i.e., field staff interacting with refugee and IDP community representatives) were interviewed, and only 100 informants were contacted, the qualitative data produced cannot be considered "representative" for all the opinions and considerations of Sudanese refugee and IDP community representatives. Nevertheless, the collection of anecdotal evidence from education cluster members working face-to-face with representatives of target populations across eight conflict-affected states was the most feasible and practical strategy to document perceptions across a vast country where communities and geographic areas are sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to access.

The arguments presented were then collected and clustered into eight recurring themes that emerged from the responses. The following section will discuss each of these themes.

Findings: Importance of Education in Humanitarian Response

Education to Get a Job

From the responses, education was framed as a way to break the poverty cycle by enabling individuals to attain jobs. One informant said, "Education is for people affected by emergencies: the only hope to rebuild and to break out of the cycle of poverty. People think that once their child is educated, it can get at least a low-paying job. They know that children who can write always have better chances to earn a job than those who do not, and they will be given priority." Education affords children an edge over others who are not necessarily as educated or educated at all. This advantage would lead them to some sort of paying position, which this informant claims is better than no job at all. Others viewed education as a way to leave Sudan for employment. One stated, "Even if you could not get a job inside Sudan, if you are educated you have a better chance for jobs if you manage to get outside of Sudan." And another participant said, "People know that many Sudanese have found employment as teachers in Gulf countries, and that by getting education they perhaps could follow in their footsteps." The bottom line is that opportunities available to the illiterate or uneducated are not the same. Access to relevant education also contributes to an increased "hope for a better future."

Displacement Facilitates Access to Education

Many respondents reported that IDPs would prefer to remain in camps where conditions may not be optimal, if there is access to education. "Availability of education services is one of the main reasons that people do not want to leave IDP camps," said one education officer. Another explained, "Wherever IDP camps provide education services, the enrolment rate is higher than the average (especially for girls who are not allowed to become breadwinners finding jobs in the market). IDP camps are no fun to live in, but people stay because of schools as well as other social services. If schools would close, some people would probably leave. Where there is access, children go to school and parents send their children to school. Grandparents comment, when looking at the facilities available in camps, that they wish they had the same opportunities [for education] when they were young."

IDP camp education, then, is framed as better than no education at all, and the elderly view it as a privilege that they did not have when they were younger. It is interesting to note how having a school in an IDP camp actually increases enrolment, with rates being higher than the average rate across the country, and with girls attending at higher rates. However, this does not mean that the education being received is of quality. Another education officer reported, "When villages outside of IDP camps are lucky enough to find NGOs who would build classrooms and provide education supplies in their localities, they usually attract returnees who are willing to resettle as long as the new locality has education opportunities for their children. People are

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unhappy in IDP camps due to lack of food aid, unemployment, and overcrowded schools. Education opportunities elsewhere could become a magnet to get people out of the camps."

This participant shares the expectation of NGOs building new classrooms and quality education and does not necessarily mention the role of the government. Furthermore, the participant describes the poor conditions of the camps, including the overcrowded schools, and explains that perhaps a way to get people to resettle and move out of the camps is to provide education services that serve as a "magnet." For Sudanese families, then, where one lives could be a function of the education they have access to. For example, one participant said that of those South Sudanese who preferred to stay in Sudan after the referendum, their main motivation was that they expected their children to get better educated in the North. Another education officer said, "IDPs from conflict-affected areas in South Kordofan send their children to live with relatives in North Kordofan and Khartoum so that they can go to school there."

Spend Limited Resources on Education

Although technically basic education is free in Sudan, there are many related costs such as uniforms, textbooks, and fees to maintain the school building, among other things. A few participants observed that families valued education so much that they would indeed pay out of their limited finances to support their children's education. One asserted, "They support construction, fence construction, digging, foundation work, watering of trees, examination fees. Government pays only for teacher salaries and incentives. Sudan's education system may face serious challenges, but without the sacrifices of the people it would be in an even worse state."

It is clear that Sudanese are proud to be able to support education in any way they can, even if it puts additional burden on an already stretched financial situation. In Al Fashir, the capital city of North Darfur, IDPs were paying the transportation fees for their children to attend the secondary school located in the city because there was only a primary school in the camp. Also, in rebel-held areas of Jabel Marra in North Darfur, teachers are not paid and purely volunteer their services. Because they do not have money to pay the teachers, parents work in the teachers' farms as a form of payment. In the same area, students attend a school with no roof and sit on rocks. "But each rock carries the name of the student. This is an indicator of commitment and management." Despite having few resources, school and education continues to take place in Jabel Marra and in other conflict-affected areas across Sudan. Hence, in addition to being valued as a stepping stone for the future, education presents a shared value, and as such facilitates community action without external intervention.

Education and Social Status

Those who have education are leaders and in positions of power. One officer maintained, "Education and community leadership go hand in hand. Communities tend to elect those members who have the highest education. And it is a historic fact that the community leaders in particular strive to give their sons the best education possible in order to protect their influential roles in the community … Parents want their children educated so that they have a chance of influencing community politics in the future."

There was also recognition that being educated affords advantage, even if one belongs to an ethnic group that is not a power holder in the political landscape of Sudan. One participant stated,

> When in the 1990s many Sudanese emigrated to neighbouring Gulf states to benefit from the economic upswing as a result of increase in oil revenues, the government [of Sudan] needed to fill many vacancies within its own political administration. Because it could not find people of capacity within their own ethnic Jaaliyin and the Shayqiya networks, but also because it wanted to appear as inclusive and open, it recruited people of capacity from other ethnic groups, including southern states where citizens' features and colour of skin is certainly less Arab than in the North. This was certainly noted by members of the less-privileged or less-influential ethnic groups, because they recognized that education is an asset that opens doors into attractive positions of governments controlled even by rival ethnic groups.

And another said, "The Sudanese government seeks to support political alliances among influential stakeholders of different ethnic groups in order to sustain its influence and control of political affairs. If possible, the government would prefer to work with influential stakeholders who are also educated and skilled, as such alliances would make governance more effective. If one looks at high-ranking officials in government, parliament, or administration, one easily recognizes that the representatives from other ethnic groups are often local power-holders with an educational advantage over their ethnic brothers and sisters."

So even members of an ethnic minority can still be afforded a position of power or an added advantage in their own ethnic group and at the same time interact with the majority and the power-holders because they are educated. So even in a marginalized situation, the educated are afforded an advantage. This sentiment was not only shared about displaced people in Sudan but also presented as an example of exiled Eritreans found in Sudanese refugee

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camps. One participant asserted, “Although we are unable to provide sources or statistics, Eritrean refugees believe they have higher chances to be accepted in North America, Europe, or Australia when they have acquired some education and skills, than if they are uneducated.” There is a general belief that education affords upward social mobility in Sudan or a way to leave the country altogether.

Education Aids Integration

Education can also level the playing field. “Nothing is common space. Not mosques, not neighbourhoods. But schools are common spaces for communities. Nobody says, ‘This is our group’s school.’ A person might own a mosque, but one person does not own a school. People [have an opportunity to] talk if both their children attend the same school.” School is seen as a place where everyone is equal and allows for a meeting ground of common expectations, to become educated. According to another respondent, “Schools facilitate co-existence. Schools where children attend are often the platform for representatives of different groups to come together and discuss their future as a people.” In Muglad in Kordofan, an education officer said, “Schools are an opportunity for estranged communities to stay in touch and to prevent separatist tendencies.” In bringing different populations together to obtain access for their children’s education, schools integrate communities and directly contribute to peace-building. In Darfur, one participant noted, “People exchange bullets, but when it comes to education, they actually can agree.” Remarkably, education facilitated collaboration even between the state Ministry of Education of South Darfur and rebel-held communities in Jabel Marra in 2010, when parents agreed to send their children to the capital city of Nyala to take their year-end exams, and the government authorities guaranteed their safe return.[32] Education, then, is seen as an area of agreement and peaceful cohabitation, free of friction and conflict, and a means to prevent further deterioration of group and community relationships.

Additionally one participant pointed out, “After education, opportunities to join the army become an adolescent’s second preferred option,” meaning that the army is for those who do not have education as an alternative. One education officer who worked closely with former child combatants noted, “Ex-combatants reflect back on their lives; they regret their spoiled time in the military, and as they have grown old and have no way to access education again. And they say, ‘Let’s all fight for our children to get an education, as this world without education is useless. We cannot do anything, and we only speak a little Arabic. We cannot even write a letter or read. But if we had gone to school before, all could be fine for us. Life is hard without school.’” Reflecting back on their lives, these former soldiers regret not being educated and hope that other children do not make the same mistake they made, enlisting in the army or participating (whether voluntarily or involuntarily is unclear) in combat as children or youth. Education is relevant to peace-building because soldiers prefer to access education rather than take up the career of a soldier.

School Is Safe

Schools are also safe spaces where children affected by conflict or disaster can re-experience a “sense of normalcy,” or where they are protected from “negative influences” of children from the streets. One participant said, “When children do not go to school, they hang around with other out-of-school children, and here the older children tend to bully and abuse younger children. They force them to join or contribute to gangs; they may become pocket thieves, start sniffing glue, and could become victims of sexual abuse.”

When children are not in school, they are exposed to negative influences, but, as another participant reported, school is “a child-friendly space that makes children more cognizant because of their exposure to information and social interaction. These children speak better, distinguish [right from wrong] better, analyze better, ask better questions, and negotiate better.” Children and youth who are in schools are safeguarded—at least temporarily—from the negative influences of being displaced, such as stress and violence, neglect, beating, and uncertainty. As one participant summed it up, “In a chaotic environment, schools are zones of safety, and the only zones that provide chances for development. Parents want their children to be in places where they are safe, and if they learn at the same time, that is an added advantage. If they do not participate in school, they will participate elsewhere, and that might not be to the best advantage of the child or family.”

Interestingly, here school is seen both as a tool to learn coping skills such as distinguishing right from wrong and becoming a critical thinker, and also simply a safe space to be shielded from the negatives that come with being displaced. In this last quote, the participant shared that if children learned something it is a bonus. But even more important is the fact that that schooling keeps children and youth out of harm’s way.

Education Affords Knowledge, Honour, and Social Prestige

For Muslims, education is a key to knowledge, and knowledge as the light of the mind. In addition, literacy and numeracy are also recognized as skills without which it is impossible to trade and communicate successfully across Sudan. The spread of Quranic schools and mosques across

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Sudan can be seen as a direct response to the religious and economic demand for basic education.[33]

Not surprisingly, IDPs and refugees view education as closely related to social prestige and honour, as well as a point of pride. Education brings "social benefits such as prestige and admiration in the community," shared one participant, and another said, "A drop-out child is not something to be proud of."

Beyond the social prestige and honour of being educated, education also serves as a way to avoid being duped or embarrassed. One respondent told us this story: "I was selling a chicken to an educated person for 5 piasters. The educated person then used the feathers of this chicken to make a pillow, which she then sold me for 10 piasters. It is education that enables the person to draw advantages from doing business with me."

Another participant shared this story: "A lady explained her appreciation for education after having received a letter that contained family secrets but that she could not read because she was illiterate. She showed the letter to somebody who could read but who loved to gossip, and soon the family secret was known to the whole community." In this example, education did not directly lead to an outcome such as a job or a position of power, but rather a sense of dignity. This woman was obviously embarrassed that because she could not read the letter, her secret was spread to the whole community.

Nomads whose migration patterns have become interrupted by conflict often are suspicious of formal education because it alienates their children from the nomadic way of life. At the same time, they acknowledge that "educated" veterinarians are able to save their cattle where traditional skills are insufficient. Trained midwifes have means to save lives that are unavailable among untrained Nomadic midwives. Leaders realize that nomads must learn to better relate to and interact with the non-nomadic world, but their way of life must be protected from influences of community life while accessing desirable social services.

Education Is the Only Way to Become Less Dependent

There was recognition that aid brought with it dependency, and that the form of aid that could help Sudanese IDPs gain independence from external support was investment in their education. "Food, water, and handouts create dependency, but education does not," said one participant. Another shared, "Handouts also create difficult attitudes, as Sudanese want to be paid and expect subsidies all the time. It spoils partnership development. Handouts kill the development [long-term] thinking of people." Another respondent relayed an elderly woman saying, "Don't just bring us sorghum. We can plant sorghum ourselves. Please help us to plant education." Another woman from Kordofan said,

> We are very sorry for this situation, but mostly we, the elderly people, have no problems, but our main problem is not this food many are talking about. Our main problem is our children's education. When peace returns we can cultivate, and good food will be available. We use rainwater that our animals drink, and we can also survive in terms of water, but the biggest question is who will cultivate education for our children. We really cry for our children to get education in whatever condition it might be, even if under trees on rocks. They have to, for their future not to turn dark. This will help them stop thinking of the past conflict, and their psychology will be upheld. Educate our children, and after that you can provide us with what is available, but prioritize their education first.

Although here education is being requested from the aid and development agencies, it is being asked for so that ultimately their dependency upon aid can be reduced. As one participant said, "Our children's minds are fertile like the Abyei soil. Cultivate education." Education is a seed that needs to be planted now, to ensure that the children and youth of Sudan can grow independent of aid and development money.

Discussion

Prosperity, safety, protection, dignity, respect, influence, and status were all cited as reasons for how and why education is important, and why education should be a priority in humanitarian response. In some instances, education was valued even more than water, food, and health, but overwhelmingly education was seen as integral and necessary part of service delivery. Education mobilizes community action in places beyond the reach of government and aid agencies.

This evidence notwithstanding, critics might rightly argue that many families choose not to send their children to school. The high number of out-of-school children in Sudan is not just a consequence of limited donor funding for education programs. Some parents prefer that their children make money in the markets or help with household chores, contributing to family livelihood. Other parents are dissatisfied with the low quality and irrelevant education their children receive at school. For others, school is too far away, and they fear for the safety of their daughters.[34]

However, our evidence from Sudan shows that education is valued, and even when families are strapped for money, they are still willing to contribute to their children's education, because they consider it an important component of survival. If they refrain from investing in the education of

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their offspring, it is mostly in response to economic or social pressures, and not because they share the opinion of some humanitarian strategists that education is less important than water, food, or health services. Education was deemed a prerequisite for breaking the poverty trap by accessing jobs or leaving Sudan. Others viewed education as a way to gain social mobility and to be seen as more valuable in their community. Education was also perceived as safeguarding children from physical harm and levelling the playing field because it is a value shared by all.

While these thoughts are not necessarily surprising or new, they are rarely documented to inform future programs and, more importantly, funding priorities. With more attention being given to conflict-sensitive education, policymakers and donors need to note what those people, who daily live and deal with conflict, are saying. Education is important and plays a critical role in post-conflict development and the future of Sudan.

Although it is clear that education is underfunded and that an increase in education financing is needed, it is also important to move beyond this argument to critically examine the quality, adequacy, and relevance of education services for children and youth living in areas affected by chronic conflict or disaster. The type of education that needs to be provided must prepare the next generation to take ownership of the reconstruction of their communities and nations, rather than "alienating the disadvantaged even further from their own roots and from their potential for self-created social and economic advancement."[35]

Conclusion

No empirical evidence supports the argument that education leads to a more dignified survival in emergencies. But the narratives collected in this article indicate multiple rationales for why citizens in Sudan (and perhaps elsewhere) who are affected by conflict still view education as an essential component of human dignity that should be honoured by humanitarian and development aid. Education officers, who value education, collected the narratives of how and why education is valuable to IDP and refugee Sudanese populations. The purpose of this article was to provide a window into the lives of children and youth in Sudan through the anecdotes of those who work closely with them in the most conflict-affected regions across the country.

Notes

1. Disclaimer: The positions and conclusions presented in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect viewpoints of the organizations they have worked for, or where they are employed.
2. The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* (Burton on Dunsmore: Schumacher Centre for Practical Action and Technology, 2011), 20; emphasis added.
3. Ibid., 22.
4. Ibid.
5. Gerald Martone, "Life with Dignity: What Is the Minimum Standard?," in *Human Rights and Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrant Workers*, ed. A. F. Bayesky, J. Fitzpatrick, and A. C. Helton, 129–44 (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2006).
6. Gerald Martone, "An Unexpected Lifeline," in *Even in Chaos: Education in Times of Emergency*, ed. K. M. Cahill, 89–108 (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2010).
7. These three areas are in strategic geographical locations between North and South Sudan and suffered the most from the ongoing war. As a result, in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, each of these areas was given its own protocols.
8. Joost van der Zwan, *Evaluating the EU's Role and Challenges in Sudan and South Sudan: Sudan and South Sudan Case Study* (London: International Alert, Initiative for Peacebuilding Early Warning, 2011), 11, http://www.ifp-ew.eu/pdf/092011IfPEWSudan.pdf.
9. Ibid., 12.
10. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2011*, https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Sudan%20CHF%202011.pdf.
11. Ibid.
12. World Bank, *The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan* (Washington: World Bank, 2012).
13. Ibid.
14. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Weekly Humanitarian Bulletin Sudan*, 20–6 August 2012.
15. Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, "*Learning in Displacement," briefing paper on the right to education of internally displaced people* (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2010); and World Bank, *The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan* (Washington: World Bank, 2012).
16. Ibid.
17. Elizabeth Ferris and Rebecca Winthrop, "Education and Displacement: Assessing Conditions for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Affected by Conflict," background paper for the Global Monitoring Report (Washington. DC: UNESCO, 2010), 7, http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d7085712.pdf.
18. Ibid., 13. Countries include Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Pakistan, Turkey, Zimbabwe, Azerbaijan, and India.
19. Government of Sudan, Ministry of Social Welfare and Social Security, *Sudan Millennium Development Goals*

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Progress Report 2010, http://www.undg.org/docs/12273/Sudan-MDG-Report-2010.pdf.

20. Government of Sudan (2008) Educational Statistics have listed 125,549 basic education students enrolled. If we assume that of the 2.62 million citizens are nomads, and 22 per cent children at the age where they should attend basic education (i.e., 576,400), then 78 per cent are not enrolled in basic education schools.
21. World Bank, *The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan* (Washington: World Bank, 2012), 8.
22. World Bank, "Investing in Your Country's Children and Youth Today: Good Policy, Smart Economics," *Children & Youth* 4, no. 1 (August 2010): 1–4, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/08/26/000356161_20130826164345/Rendered/PDF/806420NEWS0Inv00Box379809B00PUBLIC0.pdf.
23. World Bank, *Status of the Education Sector in Sudan*, 163.
24. The Cotonou Agreement is a treaty between the European Union and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP countries) and operates on four principles: equality of partnerships and ownership of development strategies; representative participation from all stakeholders, including the government and civil society; dialogue and mutual obligations that move beyond receiving money to include the upholding of human rights; and the agreements are differentiated and based on each country's unique situation. See van der Zwan, *Evaluating the EU's Role*.
25. Education is one of 11 clusters designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) with the goal of strengthening humanitarian responses in emergencies. The other clusters are camp coordination and camp management; early recovery; emergency shelter; emergency telecommunications; food security; health; logistics; nutrition; protection; water, sanitation, and hygiene. For more information, see "What Is the Cluster Approach?" Humanitarian Response, https://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach.
26. J. Sparkes, E. van Kalmthout, and E. Martinez, "Education Cannot Wait: Humanitarian Funding Is Failing Children," Humanitarian Response, http://education.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Education%20Cannot%20Wait%20-%20humanitarian%20funding%20is%20failing%20children_1.pdf
27. The Sphere Project was launched in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs, the Red Cross, and Red Crescent movements. It has produced the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response handbook, with the newest edition released in early 2011. For more information, see http://www.sphereproject.org/.
28. See "General Assembly Adopts Landmark Resolution Calling on States to Ensure Right to Education for Affected Populations in All Phases of Emergency Situations," news release, 9 July 2010, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2010/ga10964.doc.htm.
29. See Peter Buckland, "Alphabet Soup: Making Sense of the Emerging Global Architecture of Aid to Education in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings," in *Educating Children in Conflict Zones: Research, Policy, and Practice for Systemic Change*, ed. Karen Mundy and Sarah Dryden-Peterson, 155–68 (New York: Teachers College, 2011). And see Janice Dolan, "Making It Happen: Financing Education in Countries Affected by Conflict and Emergencies," Save the Children, n.d., http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Making_it_happen.pdf.
30. Gerald Martone. "An Unexpected Lifeline," in *Even in Chaos: Education in Times of Emergency*, ed. K. M. Cahill (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 94.
31. Hugo Slim, "Dissolving the Difference between Humanitarianism and Development: The Mixing of a Rights Based Solution," *Development in Practice* 10, nos. 3–4 (2000): 21–5.
32. "Second-Chance' Examination for Schoolchildren Affected by Conflict in South Darfur," UNICEF Sudan, 14 July 2010, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan_54297.html.
33. Neil McHugh, *Holymen of the Blue Nile: The Making of an Arab-Islamic Community in the Nilotic Sudan 1500–1850* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).
34. Government of Sudan, Federal Ministry of General Education, *Baseline Survey on Basic Education in the Northern States of Sudan: Final Report 2008*, 2008, http://doc.iiep.unesco.org/wwwisis/repdoc/E029336e.pdf.
35. Milton. J. Bennett, "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. R. Michael Paige (Yarmouth: Intercultural, 1993), 42.

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Displaced Girlhood: Gendered Dimensions of Coping and Social Change among Conflict-Affected South Sudanese Youth

Marisa O. Ensor

Abstract

As wartime inhabitants, female children have often been presented as paradigmatic non-agents, victims of a toxic mixture of violent circumstances and oppressive cultural practices. Child- and gender-sensitive approaches, on the other hand, have embraced a more balanced recognition of displaced girls' active, if often constrained, efforts to cope with adverse circumstances. In South Sudan, a young country mired in unresolved conflict and forced displacement, girls must navigate multiple and complex challenges. Drawing on fieldwork conducted among South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and returnees in South Sudan, I examine ways in which gender shapes local realities of conflict, displacement, return, and reintegration, focusing on the often-overlooked experiences of girls and female youth. Study findings evidence displaced girls' remarkable determination and resourcefulness as they struggle to overcome a persistently turbulent climate of social instability, deprivation, and conflict.

Résumé

En temps de guerre, les filles sont souvent présentées comme non-agents paradigmatiques, victimes d'un mélange toxique de circonstances violentes et de pratiques culturelles oppressives. D'autre part, des approches adaptées au genre et à l'enfant font place à une reconnaissance plus équilibrée des efforts énergiques, quoique souvent limités, déployés par les filles déplacées pour surmonter des circonstances défavorables. Au Sud-Soudan, un jeune pays aux prises avec des conflits non résolus et des déplacements forcés, les filles doivent affronter de multiples et complexes défis. S'appuyant sur des recherches sur le terrain menées auprès de réfugiés sud-soudanais en Ouganda et de rapatriés au Sud-Soudan, l'auteur examine comment le genre façonne les réalités locales du conflit, du déplacement, du retour et de la réintégration en se concentrant sur les expériences souvent négligées des filles et des jeunes femmes. Les résultats de l'étude montrent la détermination et l'originalité remarquables des filles déplacées qui luttent pour surmonter un environnement toujours turbulent d'instabilité sociale, de privation et de conflit.

Introduction

As wartime inhabitants, female children are often presented as paradigmatic non-agents, victims of a toxic mixture of violent circumstances and oppressive cultural practices. Highlighting their vulnerability over all other characteristics, the perspectives espoused by most aid agencies have also tended to relegate girls to the status of members of groups with "special needs." Proximity to violent situations and breakdown of social structures may indeed increase the exposure of displaced children (primarily girls, but also boys) to sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation. In addition, it is widely recognized that discrimination in the provision of assistance during humanitarian emergencies

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and situations of protracted displacement often disproportionately affects women and girls.[1]

On the other hand, attention has also been focused on the coexistence of both agency and vulnerability, and the interplay of distress and resiliency in the face of adversity. This approach offers a more balanced perspective than the uncritical exclusive focus on vulnerability and victimhood so characteristic of traditional constructions of displaced and war-affected girls, and other children in similarly challenging circumstances. While it is still far from being the norm, scholars and child-rights advocates have progressively embraced a more positive recognition of the positive roles that young people in general, and girls in particular, can play as social actors, not just passive recipients of others' provisions.[2] The oft-cited Machel report, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,* for instance, proclaims that "adolescents have special needs and special strengths,"[3] and urges us to consider that "young people should be seen in that light; as survivors and active participants in creating solutions, not just as victims or problems."[4]

Research findings demonstrate that, in South Sudan, members of the youngest generations are being differently affected, vis-à-vis their adult counterparts by the processes shaping the socio-political landscape of their newly independent society. The position occupied by most South Sudanese girls, in particular, is not an easy one, given not only the renewed conflict and adverse humanitarian conditions, but also the pronounced gender inequalities that characterize their ethnically diverse but consistently patriarchal society.[5] Confronting deeply engrained cultural and social norms dictating a subordinate and mostly silent role for young females, however, may place girls in a difficult and even dangerous position. As other studies of conflict-affected female youth have also noted, "Resilience in the context of war often carries a high price."[6]

In South Sudan, changing attitudes towards gender roles are particularly salient among the thousands of returning refugee girls for whom reintegration into a society they do not necessarily identify as "home" is fraught with difficulties. Many returnee girls display self-assurance and express progressive views on social issues—i.e., marriage, women's participation in public life—that may be categorized as transgressive and even perceived as a deliberate affront to South Sudanese tradition. Domestic discord as well as serious incidents of physical violence and police arrests were mentioned in field interviews. It can be concluded that, for these girls, displacement entails more than a conflict-induced geographical relocation, but also encompasses a socio-cultural dislocation—displaced girlhood—that persists in the post-independence period. Efforts to address the renewed instability and human insecurity currently shaping South Sudan must thus incorporate attention to the needs and aspirations of *displaced girls,* guided by a deeper understanding of the implications of *displaced girlhood* for South Sudanese society as a whole.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted primarily among South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and returnees in South Sudan, this article presents findings of a larger study of young people's role in post-conflict reconstruction and peace- and nation-building in Africa. More specifically, I examine the multiple ways in which gender shapes local realities of conflict, survival, displacement, return, and reintegration, focusing on the experiences of girls and female youth. I begin my discussion by outlining the conceptual and methodological frameworks that guided the research on which this article is based. Next I present a brief overview of the wartime and current humanitarian conditions in South Sudan, which provide a necessary background in which to situate the experiences of South Sudanese girls. I then discuss the main findings of my study, structured around the three key dimensions of displaced girlhood in their young country: (1) domestic relations and marriage practices, (2) education, and (3) livelihood and economic opportunities. I conclude my analysis by summarizing the main findings of my research on South Sudanese girls' efforts to overcome a legacy of war and displacement, and re-emphasizing the significance of adopting an age- and gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian programing.

Conceptual and Methodological Frameworks

Although male-centred approaches remain the norm, attention to the gender-differentiated experiences of refugee women has increased over the last fifteen years.[7] Displaced children have similarly become the focus of a growing body of scholarly work from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.[8] Most of this focus on uprooted youngsters has been directed to the global south, which hosts roughly 85 per cent of the world's youth population.[9] Significantly, "the limited corpus of reliable research on Africa's youngest citizens has tended to adopt a negative outlook."[10]

While gender stereotyping is rather common, with female youth identified as "troubled" and males characterized as "troublesome,"[11] fewer studies have addressed the gendered nature of childhood.[12] The (de)gendered assumptions underlying prevalent constructions of childhood and youth as they intersect with notions of protection, deservedness, acceptable survival choices, and changing social roles during humanitarian crises and displacement also remain largely unexamined. This general inattention to gender issues among war-affected and displaced children has been attributed to the prejudicial attitudes prevalent in international development and humanitarian arenas,

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which privilege the perspectives and agendas of boys. As Nordstrom argues, "The lack of political, economic and educational development for girls is a symptom of many societies' failure … to see women as political, economic or educated actors."[13] Similarly, "Girls continue to be marginalized in programs for child soldiers at both national and community levels,"[14] despite the pervasive use of female children and youth in fighting forces across the world.

Recognizing wartime displacement as deeply gendered and generational, this article examines the experiences of South Sudanese girls in the unresolved conflict and humanitarian crises that continue to affect their country in the post-independence period. My study is inspired by the new paradigm of childhood studies articulated most explicitly by Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout,[15] and the gender-sensitive and feminist analyses of wartime displacement and post-conflict reconstruction that have become more prevalent in the last few decades.[16] The new paradigm of childhood studies emerged from an effort to refocus "current understandings of the experiences of children by demonstrating that childhood is socially, politically, economically, and culturally constructed."[17] My choice to privilege a gendered/feminist anthropological perspective stems from my recognition that, since "the experiences of women displaced by South Sudan's wars were different from those of men,"[18] their activities, views, and perspectives must be recovered from their usual invisibility. Feminist standpoints have also contributed a salutary alternative to functionalist explanations of female subordination and other forms of social inequality, rejecting the tautological premise that power hierarchies are justified by their role in preserving social cohesion.[19] The combination of these two approaches, I argue, offers a useful lens to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing South Sudanese girls in their efforts to overcome a legacy of war and displacement, coupled with patriarchal and gerontocratic attitudes often resulting in young females' exclusion and marginalization.

I draw on data obtained though field-based interviews and focus group conversations conducted in Juba, Yei, Magwi, and Nimule (South Sudan), and Kampala and Adjumani (Uganda) in June to August 2011, August 2012, and December to January 2012–13, combined with a review of the literature and official documents. Approximately 25 open-ended interviews were conducted at each location—and 50 in Juba—with some participants being interviewed more than once. Given that the terms *child* and *youth* are not defined within fixed chronological parameters in either South Sudan or northern Uganda, I relied on self-identification to determine participants' age group.[20] Additionally, I interviewed representatives from UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, donors, national, state and local government officials in both Uganda and South Sudan.

Views expressed during spontaneous conversations in both South Sudan and Uganda were also been incorporated into the discussion as relevant. I examined the ways in which conflict-induced displacement is affecting power relations along gender and generational lines. Conversations explored South Sudanese girls' hopes and priorities, and the specific challenges and opportunities they themselves identify as shaping their experiences of conflict, displacement, and reintegration. Analysis was grounded in the identification of the recurring topics and themes that emerged from the data. Initial findings were discussed with study participants, who were invited to revisit and/or elaborate on their earlier responses. The final identification of domestic relations and marriage practices, education and livelihood, and economic opportunities as the three most salient dimensions of displaced girls' experiences resulted.

Background: The Context of Displacement

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) triggered one of the worst humanitarian disasters of the twentieth century. Lasting more than two decades, Africa's longest-running civil war in recent history reportedly resulted in over two million casualties, most of them civilians, including women and children. Over five million people were internally displaced, and an estimated 500,000 sought refuge in neighbouring countries.[21] Repeated displacement was common, as people sought to cope with highly volatile wartime conditions by moving to different places before eventually returning "home" in South Sudan. Given the very young demographic composition of the South Sudanese population,[22] a high proportion of those displaced by the war were children.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed on 9 January 2005 between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) brought an end to the Second Sudanese War. The CPA paved the way for the secession of what is now South Sudan from the Khartoum-based Northern Government. In accordance with the terms of this peace accord, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) conducted a referendum on self-determination in January 2011, which resulted in an overwhelming turnout, almost universally voting in favour of secession.[23] The Republic of South Sudan became an independent nation on 9 July 2011.

The official ceasefire and subsequent independence facilitated the return of large numbers of displaced individuals, which took place both spontaneously and under the aegis of the UNHCR and the International Organization

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for Migration. According to IOM estimates, 2.5 million South Sudanese had returned by 2012, settling across all 10 states that make up the Republic of South Sudan. This is the equivalent of approximately 23 per cent of the country's total estimated population. This massive influx of returnees severely tested the country's absorption capacity and host communities' ability to share limited basic services, livelihood opportunities, and economic resources.[24] In addition, South Sudan received large influxes of nationals from neighbouring African countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Sudan who seek business, trade, and other sources of livelihood in the rapidly expanding if rather chaotic South Sudanese economy.[25]

The world's newest sovereign nation continues to face numerous challenges. Even before the recent resurgence of conflict, decades of civil war and the absence of structural investment had resulted in major gaps in infrastructure and service delivery across the country. There were significant livelihood challenges for local communities and returnees alike in basic services and infrastructure, food security and potable water, and protection. The fragile humanitarian situation was exacerbated by the implementation of austerity policies that, as has been widely documented in both developed and developing countries around the world, have a more severe impact on women and girls.[26] Severe austerity measures were imposed in South Sudan when government expenditures dramatically declined in 2012, and have yet to be restored to earlier levels. This controversial decision was triggered by the loss of oil revenue resulting from the suspension of the country's oil production earlier that same year. Disagreements over transit fees and other disputes with Sudan were cited as the main issues provoking this drastic measure.

On 15 December 2013, gunfire erupted again in the South Sudanese capital of Juba. Within hours, violence spread within and beyond the city, following what some have categorized as an attempted coup. What started as a political confrontation between power contenders within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) soon escalated, giving way to a deadly pattern of revenge and counter-revenge attacks along Dinka-Nuer ethnic lines. At the time of writing in early February 2014, the violence continues unabated and is threatening to become a full-blown civil war, should the peace dialogue led by Inter-governmental Group on Development (IGAD) fail to produce a prompt and satisfactory resolution to the conflict.[27] Also as of February 2014, an estimated 707,400 people have been displaced inside South Sudan, while 149,700 people have fled to nearby countries including Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan.[28] This article, which draws on field data collected between the summer of 2011 and early 2013, does not include the views of girls affected by this recent outbreak of violence. Nevertheless, preliminary information made available by some aid agencies working in the region report an unsurprising worsening of humanitarian conditions, and an intensification of the gendered socio-cultural trends observed in the post-independence, pre-current conflict period discussed in this study.[29]

Displaced Girlhood in South Sudan

Few groups faced greater risks and dislocation during the Sudanese civil war than the country's children. Girls were even more adversely affected as a result of patriarchal attitudes that conferred females of all ages lower status in society, legitimized gender and sexual-based violence, and undervalued young women's contribution to the war effort. As Nordstrom observes, girls in conflict-affected areas across the world "are actors in the drama and tragedy of war along with adults."[30] Regardless of age, females are typically ascribed lower status in South Sudanese society than boys and men. Females in South Sudan carry the burden of a heavy workload, early marriages, and bride prices, while gender roles and negative stereotypes contribute to the unequal distribution of resources. South Sudanese anthropologist Jok Madut Jok draws attention to gender differentials, adding, "The war in Sudan has affected women in more and different ways than men, but beyond the usual ways in which such state-sponsored violence affects women and children—through rape, abduction, sexual slavery, and labor exploitation."[31] At the same time, women's and girls' involvement in wartime survival activities—as combatants, army support personnel, or female heads-of-household—necessitated a considerable rethinking of traditional gender roles.

For the large numbers of girls who, alone or with their families, sought refuge within or across their country's borders, displacement brought about its own set of unique challenges and opportunities. Their experiences were quite diverse, depending, among other factors, on their migratory trajectories and exilic life conditions. Gender factors greatly influenced the options available to them, resulting, for instance, in unaccompanied minors' unequal access to foster families (which favoured girls) and resettlement opportunities (which targeted mainly boys). As discussed in the background section, South Sudanese refugees and IDPs had been returning home in steady numbers since the signing of the CPA. For many among the youngest generations, the terms *home, return,* and *reintegration* should be regarded as misnomers, as the move to their new county for them involved settling in the land of their elders for the first time and adopting lifestyles that seldom met their expectations.[32] Some returnee girls would have preferred to remain

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in the diaspora, at least until conditions improve in South Sudan. Others longed for resettlement in a Western country, a possibility made more remote after the CPA, but perhaps again conceivable for the growing numbers of new refugees produced by the current conflict

Younger children struggled with a much more restricted diet and more limited access to health care than was available while their families were based in internationally managed camps and settlement abroad or in Khartoum. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the needs of baby boys tended to be privileged over those of baby girls during resource-constrained times, although this is rarely openly discussed. Older girls and women lamented the loss of the greater opportunities available to them in exile. This was particularly the case for those girls who are members of the approximately 75 per cent of recent returnee families that had settled in rural areas. Unlike older generations, many returnee girls are completely urbanized and unaccustomed to rural environments and lifestyles. Some youth—more often boys but also girls if suitable arrangements are available—chose to go back to Kenya and Uganda to finish their education, believing their opportunities remained greater there. Many girls reported feeling more displaced and alienated in South Sudan than they did abroad. Long years in exile, which often comprised much or all of their childhoods, had instilled in them social values—including views on gender—that often differed from those of their South Sudan–born elders. Better-educated and more self-assured than their local counterparts, returnee girls' progressive views on social issues are often at odds with traditionally patriarchal mores.[33]

In spite of adverse circumstances and multiple challenges, most returnee girls demonstrate remarkable determination to overcome a persistently turbulent climate of social instability, deprivation, and conflict. Their experiences of displacement, return, and reintegration—and, in some cases, additional displacement—are triggering profound gendered and generational changes, both for themselves and for those who stayed behind. Domestic relations and marriage practices, education, and livelihood and economic opportunities are among the areas of girls' social arena undergoing more pronounced transformations in South Sudan.

Domestic Relations and Marriage Practices

Domestic relations in South Sudan are embedded in hierarchically structured polygynous households where a woman generally occupies a subordinate position to her husband and to her older co-wives. Although girls of marriageable age are regarded as valuable assets—as sources of both unpaid labour and potential income from dowry payment[34]—their autonomy and decision-making power are severely restricted during this stage of their lives. "I wanted to stay in school. I liked to learn," commented a 15-year-old wife in Nimule, Eastern Equatoria, "but my father said that we could not pay the fee, and that I had to marry instead. Girls' dowries are used so that their brothers can be married. My husband already had two wives and many children. Now I have a son too. There will be more soon." Traditionally, only with age and increasing numbers of born and surviving children does the social status of married women improve within their households and communities. Those in female-headed households may find themselves simultaneously enjoying more autonomy and struggling with a more constrained access to necessary resources.

In South Sudan, two out of five households are headed by females,[35] partly because large numbers of women were widowed during the war. More recently, many others have become single parents and heads of households as the result of either abandonment or spousal death resulting from escalating armed clashes and inter-tribal conflict. For these women, some of them barely out of childhood themselves, supporting their children and other dependents involves fulfilling roles that had previously been in the exclusive domain of their fathers, husbands, or brothers. Those who grew up in exile were exposed to other cultures and views on females' position in society that often contrasted with the more constraining traditional social mores of conservative South Sudan. A combination of wartime imperatives and displacement has thus had a transformative effect on gender dynamics and domestic relations, often altering the ways in which girls see their roles as daughters and sisters, and subsequently as wives and mothers.

Women often welcomed these changes more than their husbands and male relatives did, and at times that caused friction in marriages and their family relationships. The shifts also caused stress for parents and children, with parents more entrenched in traditional ideas, struggling with the ideas, values, and lifestyles that their children were exposed to at school.[36]

Research data indicate that domestic violence and rape are common and particularly prevalent in areas that received the highest numbers of returnees. Females admitted feeling insecure within their households and in public spaces. Nevertheless, while violence against women and girls was perceived as a significant community threat, over a third of women respondents claimed that they would never report cases of violence perpetrated against them or their children to formal institutions such as traditional courts or the policy.[37] Additional research is needed to elucidate the structural factors and local attitudes that continue to constrain women's and girls' access to justice in South Sudan.

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Related to domestic and gender-based violence in the post-independence environment is the trend among some families to marry off their daughters at an increasingly young age. This has been explained as a survival strategy to obtain cattle[38]—vital among pastoralist groups—money, and other assets via the traditional practice of transferring wealth through the payment of dowries, in the absence of other viable alternatives. Studies of child marriage in societies across the world indicate that this widespread practice "has a significant negative impact on women and girl's realization of key human rights, including their rights to health and education, physical integrity and the right to marry only when they are able and willing to give their free consent."[39] As is the norm in most other cases, child marriage in South Sudan takes places in a context of pronounced gender disparities and high poverty levels. Additionally, South Sudanese mothers suffer from the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, estimated at 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births.[40]

It is worth noting that, in some South Sudanese communities, child marriage is considered to be in the best interests of both girls—some of whom are as young as 12 when they are married—and their families. Marrying girls off as soon as arrangements can be made is justified as a way to protect girls from premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancies, which would decrease girls' dowry price and marriage prospects, and constitute an affront to the family's honour.[41] In traditional South Sudanese society, a girl whose behaviour is seen as dishonouring her family is categorized as particularly transgressive. Some girls are severely beaten and subjected to other forms of violence; threats of being cursed and even killed may also be employed to coerce rebellious girls to act according to the wishes of her family—typically meaning her male elders and often her brothers who hope to use their sisters' dowry payments to obtain wives for themselves.

Child marriage appears to be more common among pastoralists than among farmers less reliant for their survival on cattle obtained through dowry payment. It was also less frequently reported by returning refugees and other displaced groups than by those who stayed behind. Returnee girls, as well as local girls from better-off families, often expressed a desire to delay marriage, and the arrival of their first baby, at least until they were able to complete their education. Parents who were better educated themselves tended to support such preferences. However, this may change if deteriorating circumstances force resource-constrained families to resort to marrying off their daughters. The precarious position occupied by very young wives in South Sudan warrants focused attention, especially in light of the worsening humanitarian situation. Failure to address the often devastating and long-lasting consequences of child marriage is likely to have serious implications for the future development of South Sudan.

Education

"In this day and age, an uneducated society is a doomed society," proclaimed South Sudan's President Salva Kiir at his 22 May 2011 inaugural address. Although some notable improvements had been made since the CPA, education and skills-building opportunities remain grossly inadequate across the South. In spite of the fact that four times more children were enrolled in primary school in 2011 than in 2005,[42] there remained about 1.3 million children of primary school age without access to education even before the current resurgence of conflict. The quality of the instruction received by those in school is also cause for concern, as South Sudan suffers from an acute deficit of trained educators. Over 40 per cent of the teachers have completed only primary education, and 45 per cent have achieved a maximum of secondary education. Moreover, 10 per cent of the teachers working in South Sudan have received no formal education or vocational training.[43]

As a result, literacy levels in South Sudan remain among the lowest in the world, and only 27 per cent of males and 19 per cent of females aged 15 and over report being able to read.[44] The country also suffers from the lowest ratio of female-to-male school enrolment in the world. As in other spheres of social life, gender inequalities result in girls' far lower access to educational opportunities. Factors including child marriage and the dearth of prenatal and postnatal health-care services result in girls having a much greater probability of dying during pregnancy or childbirth (one in nine) than of completing primary school (one in one hundred).[45]

Multiple and interrelated factors cause girls' enrolment and retention rates to remain very low. Girls are traditionally responsible for household chores and the care of younger siblings. Parents often favour sons when school fees and other costs preclude them from sending all their children to school. Most girls find it difficult to continue school after marriage or becoming pregnant. In addition to facing the responsibilities and challenges of housekeeping and child care, they have to contend with the social stigma associated with schoolgirls who are also mothers. As reflected in conversations with school-aged girls in Yei, Central Equatoria, "If a girl comes back to school after having a child, other students—boys and girls, but especially boys—bully her and call her 'mama.' Young mothers are embarrassed and often do not return to school because of it." Others explained that their husbands would not allow them to continue school after marriage, alleging that they

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would be considered unfaithful if they insisted on going to school, as has also been documented in other studies.[46] This situation is contributing to the high rates of female illiteracy, limiting females' venues to access alternative training, and restricting opportunities for social and economic development.[47]

A recent IOM study also found severe gender disparities in female-to-male teacher ratios, with only 5 per cent of females teaching at schools in some states.[48] In a context where few female teachers exist to serve as mentors and role models, parents express concern about sending girls to schools that are dominated by boys and male teachers, worried that their daughters may be exposed to the risks of premarital sex and pregnancy, which would diminish their value as brides. In other cases, however, families are more inclined to send their daughters to school now than in the past, in the hope that, as educated brides, they will fetch larger dowries. These changing attitudes have been used to explain the current rise in enrolment of Dinka girls in rural areas, which, it is argued, have "less to do with an adoption of Western notions of gender equity, and more to do with pastoral economics."[49]

Also noteworthy is the significant link between displacement and education. Lack of educational opportunities was often reported as a primary reason for returnees' secondary displacement. Many of them chose to resettle in urban locations, where they expected to benefit from better access to formal education and vocational training. Returnee girls, in particular, often expressed positive views about the importance of education and what they perceived as the relatively liberating features of urban life. Some, especially those with higher education levels and good English skills, hoped to be able to find employment with international organizations or foreign companies. Access to financial resources and the possibility of autonomous livelihoods, while at times leading to considerable family discord, can also increase girls' sense of empowerment and self-esteem, and have a transformative effect on the gendered division of labour.

Livelihood and Economic Opportunities

Employment is another sphere in which gender dynamics are identified as playing an important role in girls' experiences of displacement, return, and reintegration. Those who grew up in urban areas abroad often display a negative attitude towards rural environments. Many were exposed to functioning cash economies in Kenya, Uganda, or Khartoum and arrived in South Sudan with skills for which they do not always find a market. The South Sudanese urban economy expanded in the CPA period, although not fast enough to keep pace with the rapidly increasing numbers of job-seekers. Nevertheless, some "elite" girls secured high-status, well-paid jobs with the government or with UN agencies, international donors, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most returnee girls, as well as their local counterparts, however, lacked the necessary qualifications to engage in such high-status, well-paid jobs. The main sources of employment available to them in urban areas included cleaning and cooking at restaurants and hotels, carrying water on constructions sites, and engaging in various forms of petty trade and small business.

Cultural expectations constrain the choice of jobs considered acceptable for girls. This is also the case for boys, although to a lesser extent, since it is primarily females whose virtue embodies their family's honour. Occupations that involve interacting with non-kin males—i.e., waitressing in restaurants and bars, especially at night—are considered disreputable and tend to be avoided by local girls, either on their own accord or as per their family's instructions. Nevertheless, exceptions of local girls engaging in this type of employment could be found, such as those from very poor families, and in the case of young women heads of household.[50] This pattern was illustrated by a 19-year-old female who, originally, from Nimule in Eastern Equatoria, spent most of the war years in Uganda, eventually moving to Juba after the CPA. As she remarked, "In our society, when you work in the hotels people think you're not decent; it is not respectable. But you can make a lot of money, and you can survive and feed your family. Besides, many of us don't have other options; because we were outside of the community we do not have the necessary connections."

An income-generating activity primarily associated with returnee women and girls, particularly those whose wartime displacement led them to Khartoum, is brewing and selling beer. Many displaced South Sudanese reportedly resorted to drinking as a way to cope with the frustrations of life in an IDP camp in the North, in spite of the fact that consuming alcohol is illegal in Sudan. Brewing and selling beer was one of the few income-generating opportunities available to IDP women and girls in Sudan. Many re-established their beer-brewing businesses upon return to South Sudan, where economic options are also limited and there are no restrictions on alcohol.[51]

Displaced girls appear to have a more flexible outlook on job acceptability. This attitude was perhaps born out of survival, as difficult conditions while in exile might have forced them to engage in undesirable but available livelihood strategies to which they have become accustomed; alternatively—or perhaps simultaneously—it could signal additional efforts to rebel against constraining traditional social mores.[52]

Gainful employment is a path to upward mobility for many girls, local or displaced. Some are even willing to

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court social disapproval to obtain a measure of economic and social independence. On the other hand, job allocation often reflects ethnic affiliation and generally relies on kin networks, placing girls whose families do not condone their choice of employment at a clear disadvantage. Some of these activities are harmful and/or illegal—i.e., petty crime, drug peddling, prostitution—although commonly practised, and fraught with potentially dire implications for the girls who engage in them.

Although none of the girls in my research engaged—or admitted to engage—in commercial sex, other recent studies confirm that large numbers of young women and girls are trading sexual services for money or protection in the absence of other means of survival.[53] Given that prostitution is illegal in South Sudan, sex workers are extremely vulnerable to abuse, both by their customers and by the police who reportedly harass and even rape them with impunity. Child prostitution takes place in almost every brothel in Juba, some of which have separate lodges for the youngest girls. Markets are another site where very young children, mostly girls but also some boys, engage in survival sex. Street girls, some as young as six years of age, routinely perform sexual acts in exchange for money, food, or other basic goods.[54]

These young girls can be said to have been "forcibly displaced" to the margins of society. The abuse to which they are subjected daily is one of the most heart-wrenching realities of life in post-independence South Sudan. Some aid workers believe that at least some of them may be unaccompanied or separated minors who "fell through the cracks" of the system and found themselves with no source of economic or social support. Others may have been abandoned by abusive or destitute relatives unable to provide for them. Regardless of the path that led them to their present circumstances, the current humanitarian situation does not bode well for young sex workers in South Sudan. On a more positive note, the fact that increasing attention is being focused on the particular challenges these girls face is an important first step to better understand their plight and find ways to assist them to reclaim their lives.

Looking Ahead: Conclusions and Recommendations

Dramatic changes brought about by war, renewed conflict, and displacement are having a profound effect on the traditional ideas and practices surrounding girlhood in South Sudan, and thereby influence the actual lives of young females. The progress made since the signing of the peace agreement is being threatened by the renewed violence that has engulfed all 10 South Sudanese states, provoking new waves of internal and cross-border population flows. As the previous discussion has illustrated, conflict-related displacement often entails dramatic gendered and generational changes, both for those forced to flee their hometowns and those who stay behind. Compelled by necessity to dispense with gender expectations, many displaced girls are increasingly venturing into non-traditional livelihoods, some of which are abusive and harmful. Many others, educated abroad, have introduced much-needed new skills and progressive attitudes to a country where both economic and social development were effectively halted for decades. Even if often constrained, the lifestyle choices made by these girls and young women serve to contest, reconfigure, and sometimes reinforce gender identities and unequal power relations within their households and communities. In turn, these dynamics are affecting the way in which access to material assets, education, employment opportunities, and other key resources is negotiated among and within displaced and local groups.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement followed by independence created potentially positive opportunities to address gender inequalities. The Government of South Sudan publicly endorsed gender equality and the promotion of children and women's rights in all spheres of life, often under pressure from donors and development agencies. Promising child- and women-friendly initiatives are already evident, at least at the policy level. Provisions in the Transitional Constitution, which entered into force at South Sudan's independence in 2011, guarantee women and girls the right to consent to marriage. Similarly, current Penal Code provisions criminalize "kidnapping or abducting a woman to compel her to get married."

Another relevant piece of legislation is the 2008 Child Act. Overall, the Child Act seeks to protect and extend the rights of children in South Sudan in accordance with the provisions of Article 21 of the Interim Constitution of South Sudan and human rights instruments such as the Convention of the Right of the Child and the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child. A rather comprehensive document, the Child Act guarantees girls and boys under 18 the right to non-discrimination, health, education, life, survival, development, to express their opinion, and protection from torture, degrading treatment, and abuse. Also promising for displaced girls and those confronting adverse circumstances is the fact that "empowering vulnerable groups and providing safeguards for people living in extreme poverty" was among the GoSS's stated priorities, as reflected in the South Sudan Development Plan intended to guide the "core policies on social protection … [that] are being developed."[55] The impact that the current resurgence of violence might have on these developments cannot be predicted with any certainty, but concerns that

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progress made on these issues might once again be overshadowed by conflict-related imperatives seem justified.

To have a real impact, normative measures must be followed with immediate and long-term steps to protect all girls from child marriage, domestic abuse, lack of access to education, poverty, and exploitative activities such as prostitution. While resource constraints constitute a major concern, some reforms can be made without a large investment and could thus be implemented in the short term, especially if the high levels of international and local political will evident until recently can be maintained. If empowered to benefit from the right opportunities, displaced girls, who by the force of circumstance have learned to be resourceful, can make a positive contribution to their new country's return to the path towards peace and prosperity. "In turn, empowering women [and girls] will enable South Sudan to strengthen its economic and political structures and institutions."[56] These incipient developments held the promise of more gender-equitable reconciliation and nation-building processes in the new nation, a process made even more critical by recent events.

Notes

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18. Orly Stern, "'I was once lost': South Sudanese Women in the Diaspora," in *Hope, Pain and Patience: The Lives of Women in South Sudan*, ed. Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern (Sunnyside, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2011), 216.
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20. Although I did encounter some exceptions—mainly among girls whose families had lived in exile for a significant length of time—South Sudanese females are considered "youth" only before marriage, which often takes

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place around, or soon after, reaching puberty. As a result, the category "female youth" scarcely exists in South Sudan.

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36. Stern, "'I was once lost,'" 230.
37. International Organization for Migration, *Village Assessment Survey Report*, iv.
38. While the practice of paying dowries with large numbers of cattle is particularly prevalent among pastoralist groups, dowries payment is a common expectation of marriage exchanges across South Sudan.
39. Human Rights Watch, *"This old man can feed us,"* 4.
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Social Navigation and the Resettlement Experiences of Separated Children in Canada

Myriam Denov and Catherine Bryan

Abstract
This article explores the implications of language and discourse for the experiences of separated refugee children in Canada, and the ways in which anti-refugee and anti-child discourses shape the terrain of resettlement. The article begins by tracing the academic and popular discourses of refugee populations generally, and separated children specifically. Given the formulaic and rigid portrayals and representations, we introduce the concept of social navigation, which provides a useful framework to study the resettlement experiences of separated children. Following an overview of the study's methodology, we explore the social navigation and resettlement experiences of seventeen youth. In particular, we highlight the creative, resourceful, and thoughtful ways in which the youth navigated the refugee determination system, experiences of discrimination and isolation, as well as separation and loss during the resettlement process. The article ultimately underscores the ways in which these children and youth strategically navigate resettlement, overcome challenges, and—despite significant ideological barriers and material obstacles—ensure their survival and well-being as individuals and as groups.

Résumé
Cet article explore les implications de la langue et du discours pour les expériences des enfants réfugiés séparés au Canada et comment le discours anti-réfugiés et anti-enfants façonne le terrain de la réinstallation. L'article retrace d'abord les discours savants et populaires des populations de réfugiés en général, et en particulier des enfants séparés. Étant donné des descriptions et des représentations stéréotypées et rigides, nous introduisons le concept de la navigation sociale qui fournit un cadre utile pour étudier les expériences de réinstallation des enfants séparés. Après un survol de la méthodologie de l'étude, nous explorons la navigation sociale et les expériences de réinstallation de dix-sept jeunes réfugiés. En particulier, nous soulignons les moyens imaginatifs, débrouillards et réfléchis par lesquels les jeunes évoluent dans le système de détermination du statut de réfugié, les expériences de discrimination et d'isolement, ainsi que la séparation et la perte au cours du processus de réinstallation. L'article souligne finalement la façon dont ces enfants et adolescents naviguent stratégiquement la réinstallation, surmontent des difficultés, et, malgré d'importantes barrières idéologiques et obstacles matériels, assurent leur survie et bien-être en tant qu'individus et en tant que groupes.

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> Most [refugees] are smuggled in or are queue-jumpers who lie their way into the country.
> —Hazel McCallion, mayor of Mississauga, Ontario[1]

> This legislation will help stop foreign criminals, human smugglers and those with unfounded refugee claims from abusing Canada's generous immigration system and receiving taxpayer-funded health and social benefits.
> —Jason Kenney, minister of immigration[2]

> Let me be free and give me equal opportunities, and I will show you what I can do.
> —Akin, separated refugee youth from Ethiopia

Introduction

Contrary to being a neutral medium of expression, language and discourse serve to construct unequal identities with differential material consequences, empowering and privileging some as legitimate and normative, while subordinating and rendering others as delegitimized.[3] Highlighting the power of discourse and representation, Kellner suggests that Western discourses and media depictions are neither impartial nor insignificant to the ongoing construction and entrenchment of Western thought, values, and identity.[4] Rather, reflecting the power of "meaning, metaphors, representations, images, stories, [and] statements,"[5] they inform understandings of "deviance" and "normalcy," "pathology" and "health," and "deserving" and "undeserving."[6] And as such, they "provide [the] materials out of which we forge our very identities, our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of 'us' and 'them.'"[7] Determining the parameters of belonging, discourse and language interact with and inform the practices and structures that are lived out in society from day to day,[8] delimiting issues that merit attention, as well as the populations that can legitimately claim aid and access social services. Despite the precariousness of their lives and experiences,[9] separated asylum-seeking and refugee children, who are the focus of this article, are vulnerable to the often exclusionary consequences of these discourses and processes. Yet, as we argue here, these processes and discourses do not unilaterally determine or constrain these youth. Instead, as demonstrated by the young people in our sample, separated asylum-seeking and refugee children actively and thoughtfully navigate the uneven terrain of resettlement, overcoming considerable obstacles, both ideological and material.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a separated child as "a person who is under the age of eighteen years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who law or custom has the responsibility to do so."[10] The UNHCR also estimates that of the 57.4 million people currently displaced, half are children, and that millions of these children have been separated from both parents and adults otherwise legally and/or culturally designated to care for them.[11] Each year, a small but growing number of children will seek asylum under these conditions in industrialized countries, and in Canada it is estimated that approximately 300 separated children arrive each year.[12]

These 300 young people represent one of two principle categories of separated refugee children in Canada. Like other asylum-seekers, they request asylum upon arrival in Canada, either at the border or inland. And while this is their right (as mandated by both Canadian and international refugee protection law),[13] their legal status and standing in Canada is tenuous, contingent upon a successful refugee determination process and mediated largely by the supportive services they are able to access (or not). The second group of separated children are those who arrive via the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Program. These young people arrive as refugees and, as such, are permanent Canadian residents with the rights and privileges thereof. Since 2001, however, a moratorium has restricted the settlement of separated children who do not have family in Canada. Both groups face considerable challenges upon arrival, and while the former must contend with the inconsistencies and contradictions of Canadian refugee protection,[14] both must navigate the precarious terrain of resettlement and "integration."

Drawing on the resettlement experiences of 17 separated children living in Canada, this article demonstrates the ways in which these youth traverse the complex, and at times hostile, terrain of resettlement. In so doing, the article critically engages with the discourses central to the discursive "making" of these youth. Instigated at the level of state policies and practices and propagated by the media, the meanings associated with these young people inevitably shape and inform how they are perceived, as well as the social contexts that they must adapt to. And yet, as we argue, the current popular, political, and, in some instances, academic representations of separated asylum-seeking and refugee children offer little insight into the complexity of their realities and experiences. Nor do they adequately reflect the thoughtful, tactical, and meaningful strategies and methods employed by these youth to cope with and resolve the many obstacles that they encounter during resettlement.

The article begins by tracing the academic and popular discourses and representations of refugee populations

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generally, and separated children specifically. Historically situated and reflected in state policy and practice, these discourses and representations emphasize the status of separated asylum-seeking and refugee children as both "victimized" and "troublesome" refugees and children. As a result, the ideological or discursive terrain that separated children must navigate is layered, often discordant, and precarious. Given the formulaic, yet contrastive portrayal of these youth, we draw upon the concept of social navigation. Through its emphasis on the tactical and, at times, unexpected ways in which individuals navigate circumstances beyond their control, the concept offers additional insight into the resettlement experiences of separated children by highlighting not only the discursive and material terrain these young people must contend with, but also the strategies they employ to do so. Following an overview of the study's methodology, we explore the creative, resourceful, and thoughtful ways in which the youth navigated the refugee determination system, experiences of discrimination, a lack of formalized support systems, and feelings of guilt during resettlement. These strategies challenge and defy archetypal representations and discourses pertaining to this group of young people.

The Making of Refugees and Separated Children: Discourses of the Extreme

The construction of refugees as inherently problematic has been prominent in historical and contemporary discussions. Early academic literature tended to depict refugees as "evil," carriers of disease, unruly, and immoral.[15] Writing in 1912, Bryan noted in his discussion of Mexican immigrants to the United States, the "evils to the community at large which their presence in large numbers almost invariably brings."[16] A century later, the essence of the discourse has altered little. In their analysis of the discursive construction of refugees and asylum seekers in U.K. press articles published between 1996 and 2005, Gabrielatos and Baker argue that the conservative and tabloid British press have been responsible for creating and maintaining a moral panic around refugees and asylum-seekers.[17] Baker and McEnery carried out an analysis of a corpus of British newspapers, as well as texts from the UNHCR website.[18] The authors found quantitative evidence of linguistic patterns being repeatedly used in negative constructions of refugees. Refugees were described as "invaders" and "pests." Reflecting their dehumanization, refugees were also depicted as an elemental force—a natural disaster that cannot be reasoned with—frequently through the use of metaphors of water, floods, a dangerous mass, or a heavy load. Similarly, Esses found that media depictions of refugees constructed within frameworks of criminality in Canada engendered greater contempt of and suspicion toward refugees.[19]

In contrast to the depictions of refugees as "threatening" and "troublesome" is the portrayal of refugees as victims. Emphasizing their status as being irrevocably damaged and broken, refugees have been historically cast as wholly dependent, helpless, and victimized—ultimately deserving compassion and sympathy. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Siebold's depiction of the refugee follows closely with this construction: "The emaciated, hollow-eyed ragged victim of the concentration camp has replaced, in the mind's eye, the shawl-covered peasant of earlier days."[20] Lacking agency, the refugees' ability to function in society was viewed as ultimately compromised, and "the refugee identity had itself become a signifier for impairment."[21] The image of the irrevocably damaged refugee continues to prevail. Baker and McEnery demonstrate that refugees are frequently presented as tragic victims or a collective group undergoing suffering.[22] In the media, refugees are frequently reported as "starving, dying while locked in containers, seeking solace in religion, queuing for food, and being attacked by soldiers."[23]

Perhaps not surprisingly, the constructions of separated children have tended to follow closely with negative depictions of refugees more generally. Embedded in overarching concerns with immigration control, there is a tendency amongst Western states to focus on the separated child's alien or irregular status: "Like adults, children are viewed as illegal migrants, who have chosen, or consented to, the evasion of immigration controls in order to gain access, who have lied, knowingly made use of false documents, who are coming to study or work without permission; from this point of view children's minority is a disqualification or, at best, an irrelevance."[24] Still, given the prevalence of child welfare discourse in Canada, a more sympathetic account of separated children does exist. Here, concerns over the protection of this particular group of refugees as children merges with discourses of vulnerability and deficiency. Located at the other end of the ideological spectrum, such accounts reflect refugee discourse more generally, as well as widely held constructions of children as dependent and in need of protection. Here, the focus is on emotional and developmental problems, post-traumatic stress, and psychosis.[25]

In both portrayals, the lives of separated children are decontextualized and essentialized. The representations are finite and cursory; they offer no attempt to capture or understand the complexity of the migration process, and the actual experiences of resettlement are obscured. Such representations easily generate archetypal images that eventually form an essential part of the public's conceptualization of the issues, thus perpetuating harmful stereotypes.[26] And reflecting the power of popular discourse, they persist despite a growing body of available empirical evidence to

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the contrary. For example, Kohli observes that separated children are "elastic in their capacity to survive" and "do well at times of great vicissitude."[27] Similarly, Raghallaigh and Gilligan argue that the coping strategies of separated children are "purposefully chosen" according to what they believed "to be the most compelling options available in their circumstances."[28] Finally, in her work, Goodman emphasizes that despite the often harrowing experiences of flight and separation, the separated children in her sample displayed little sense of victimhood; rather, that they saw themselves as "survivors and agents of their future."[29]

Navigating Rough Terrain: The Lens of Social Navigation

In light of the prevalence and endurance of negative depictions of separated asylum-seeking and refugee children, as well as their practical and material implications, a new way of documenting, analyzing, and understanding the realities and experiences of separated asylum-seeking and refugee children is required—one, as we have argued elsewhere,[30] that is able to address and capture the agency and active decision-making processes of these youth, in tandem with the broader structural considerations that are intrinsic to the realities of flight and resettlement. The concept of "social navigation" offers insight into how this might be accomplished. Emphasizing capacity rather than victimhood, social navigation offers insight into how agents navigate social environments characterized by volatility and rapid social change. In such contexts new opportunities and unexpected obstacles frequently emerge, demanding the reconsideration of long-term goals and the development of new tactics and strategies. Social navigation thus represents the ability to plot, to actualize plotted trajectories, and to relate one's plots and actions to the constant possibility of change. It is, as Vigh writes, "the tactical movement of agents within a moving element; it is motion within motion."[31] This perspective is particularly useful when exploring the experiences of separated children, as it enables a greater focus on how these children manage within situations characterized by social flux and change. In previous work, we explored the concept of social navigation, as it relates to separated children and their experiences of flight.[32] For participants, flight was, without question, marked by profound struggle, deprivation, and in many cases marred by violence and instability, yet, despite these conditions, our sample of youth consciously made tactical decisions and took calculated risks to ensure their survival and well-being. To further our analysis, in this article we apply the concept of social navigation to the *resettlement experiences* of these youth.

Methodology

Drawing on in-depth interviews and a focus group conducted by the authors with 17 separated children living in Canada, this analysis is part of a larger qualitative research project exploring the flight and resettlement experiences of separated children in Canada. All participants arrived in Canada under the age of 18, except for two who arrived in their 20s, but as children had fled unaccompanied to a country neighbouring their countries of origin. Of the 17 participants, 3 were female and 14 were male. This approximately reflects the percentages of female and male separated children seeking asylum in Canada.[33] All respondents were over 18, except one who was 16 at the time of our initial interview and 17 at the time of our follow-up interview. Participants' countries of origin included Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Sudan. Data collection occurred in 2008–10, at which time the youth were living in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

Navigating Resettlement: Seeking Asylum and Settling in Canada

Much like the terrain of flight, the terrain of resettlement is protracted and precarious. In addition to the challenges inherent in seeking asylum in a context increasingly suspicious of asylum-seekers, researchers and practitioners have found that upon resettlement to their host country, separated children frequently face psychosocial challenges,[34] difficulties in school,[35] and limited access to appropriate services.[36] In 2005, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights noted that "migrant children [across Canada] face a number of obstacles to settlement …, too often slipping through the cracks in service provision and education."[37] Our larger study found similar obstacles, including the challenges of facing a complicated refugee determination system, social isolation, economic hardship, feelings of guilt for having left loved ones behind in their countries of origin, and discrimination.[38] Yet participants were in no way passive and instead engaged in a series of strategies to overcome these challenges. This section follows the trajectory of the youth interviewed from arrival to resettlement in order to illuminate the strategies employed by the youth to overcome the obstacles they faced overtime.

Seeking Asylum in Canada: Navigating the Refugee Determination System

For participants, the pathway to Canada varied. For those youth who declared themselves in Canada, the challenges of securing viable protection were often protracted and acute, situated in the increasingly politically reticent context of refugee status determination in Canada. In this

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context, as Macklin argues, the dichotomy of legal/illegal migrants is no longer based on motive but on the mode of entry; legal migrants are those who obtain permission to enter Canada prior to doing so, while illegal migrants are those who enter without permission.[39] Regardless of the validity of an individual's claim for asylum, as soon as the border is circumvented she or he becomes an "illegal," warranting suspicion and harsh treatment, as opposed to compassion and protection.[40] Despite their status as children, many of the youth who sought asylum in Canada where subjected to strict security measures: some were detained for extended periods of time, others had determination processes that extended well beyond the expedited timeline recommended for children, and still others had their claims for protection denied. Akin's and Manuel's narratives illustrate these outcomes.[41]

Akin fled Ethiopia for Europe at the age of 15 after his father was arrested on the grounds of his religious affiliation. Fearful of being sent back to Ethiopia if it was discovered that his parents were alive, he told officials that they were deceased—a lie he maintained while he was in Canada: "[Lying] affected my dignity, my confidence, my self-esteem … It was a method of surviving. I hated it, but it was my only option. I considered it a life-and-death situation."

Contrary to Akin, Manuel engaged in a strategy of unmitigated trust and disclosure. Still, when he made himself known to officials, he was detained and his refugee determination process lasted nearly six years. During this time, Manuel relied heavily on a growing network of friends. He learned to speak, read, and write English. He graduated from high school. He found work. He started training for track and field. He strategically engaged in activities that fostered his integration, despite his precarious legal status. Eventually, Manuel's claim was accepted; Akin's was not.

Yet, when asked how he felt about the denial of his claim, Akin stated, "I felt very good; after that, things became more clear." Finally able to be himself, Akin employed a number of strategies to ensure his ongoing well-being, which included cultivating new relationships, working two jobs, attending university, and planning for the future. His claim for protection denied, he applied for permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. This decision, however, was not about staying in Canada permanently, nor was it about benefiting from social services (which he no longer received). Rather it was about continuing his post-secondary and, in stark contrast to popular discourse, asserting his independence: "I work and pay my tuition whenever I can," he said. "When I can't, I use my credit card and then I pay it off. I don't consider myself as the government considers me, like some impotent refugee."

Akin's explicit rejection of anti-refugee discourse characterizes one of the ways in which a number of the youth navigated the discursive terrain of resettlement in Canada. Moreover, his narrative offers important insight into the internalization of victimizing discourses, and the concurrent contestation of those discourses, as well as the importance of distrust as a coping strategy.[42] Lying, far from simply a strategy to circumvent borders and remain in Canada, was a method by which he felt he would become comprehensible to immigration authorities: "I had to lie," he stated, "because that's what they wanted to hear."

Life in Canada: Navigating Permanent Resettlement

For those fortunate enough to receive positive decisions, the refugee determination process represented a transition from claimant status to refugee status. In principle, this transition establishes the conditions through which refugees are able to participate more fully in Canadian society. Yet, as illustrated by participants' experiences, permanence does not always ensure that separated children are able to do so. Instead, many in our sample encountered a terrain of permanent resettlement characterized by pervasive discrimination, a lack of support, and ongoing conditions of poverty and underemployment. This section highlights the challenges faced by the youth and the strategies they employed to overcome them. These challenges included racialized discrimination, minimal formal support, profound social isolation, and poverty. In addition to these, the youth spoke of navigating and managing loss and separation, and struggling to attenuate feelings of guilt and remorse.

Navigating Discrimination, Exclusion and Isolation

The separated children interviewed reported experiencing high levels of exclusion and social isolation, marked by discrimination, a lack of formal support, un- and underemployment, and poverty. Yet as evident in their narratives, they were able to effectively redress these conditions through the development and implementation of strategies that were both multifaceted (remedying immediate conflict while establishing longer-term solutions) and multipurposed (resolving a number of obstacles or challenges simultaneously).

The discrimination encountered by the youth ranged from derogatory comments by service providers, including social workers, to racial profiling and verbal abuse at the hands of law enforcement officers. Reflecting patterns of racial profiling in Canada,[43] while the former was a generalized experience shared by all of the youth, the latter was experienced more typically by male participants from Africa. Some of them, arbitrarily pulled over and accused of breaking the law, found that the frequency of these

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encounters required that they develop strategies to deal with police, sometimes daily.[44]

"I am from a country where if you are a police officer, you can do anything and get away with it," said Nijam. "So when the [police officer in Canada pulled me over] I didn't know that I could take it to court, that I could fight this guy, and that he would lose … I was pretty mad, but I was like, if he's going to let me go, then it's just a matter of words."

Similarly, Edgard recollected, "[The police] pulled us over to give us a ticket … They said I failed to wear a seat belt, but I was wearing my seat belt … I tried to talk to them, but they didn't listen. So I went to my counsellor and my teacher, and they said we were going to fight it. I went to the court … I told them what happened, and the [judge] was like, 'Oh, it sounds like you didn't do anything or anything bad,' so I shouldn't have gotten the ticket. So I didn't pay it. It was $247. That's more than I make in two weeks."

Edgard, like many of the youth interviewed, relied on his network to navigate a system he was unfamiliar with. Yet not all youth were always inclined to do this. For example, Manuel recounted being pulled over by a police officer who referred to him as a "nigger" and "a dog" [sic]. When asked if he reported the incident, Manuel replied, "I guess back then I wasn't even a citizen, so I didn't want to."

Concurrently, the youth described more subtle forms of exclusion that they felt attributed to racialized stereotypes or misperceptions about refugees. Unlike with more hostile and potentially threatening encounters, the youth tended to interpret these experiences in terms of misunderstanding as opposed to more explicit and structural forms of racism. As Edgard recalled, "I told [my teacher] that it would be pretty good if [my classmates] knew who I was. I wanted them to know the things I had been through … That's when they started to know me. They came to me and said, 'Oh, we thought that you were a bad person.'"

Both Fatimah and Edgard engaged in strategies of disclosure. Sharing their experiences with their peers and teachers enhanced their relationships, facilitated acceptance, and opened them up to new possibilities. In these ways, sharing became a critical way of redressing gaps in formal support, which, following completion of the refugee determination, tended to be nominal. At the same time, as Edgard observed, disclosures helped to dispel the misperceptions about refugee youth. This was a prevalent theme in a number of youths' narratives, but particularly in Jean-Paul's.

Jean-Paul arrived in Canada after fleeing his native Sudan at the age of seven. Once in Canada and faced with an exceptionally precarious living situation characterized by poverty and lack of support, Jean-Paul cultivated as many connections as possible. In so doing, he became a visible and active presence in both his school and community, organizing events in support of refugee and youth-related issues, and soliciting help to fund the building of a school in his village of origin. He said, "I've spoken to many students [in Canada]. I go to different schools; they come to hear my story. Now, many schools have been raising money for my project. The point is not only money but to let people know that there are people within the community [who] live a hard life." He also drew a correlation between sharing and his activism: "[Telling people about my life] is hard, of course, but we need to change the way things are working, so I have to share it with people."

While most of the youth actively cultivated networks by openly sharing their stories, others preferred to keep their experiences of flight private. According to Manuel, "I don't like talking about [my life] too much because it's frustrating. One time I tried and people were like 'HUH?,' and then I was like, 'Forget it.'" Hassan's experience was similar: "It's going to be meaningless and nobody is going to care. Telling my story is not going to change my life, so I just keep it to myself and move on like a regular Canadian boy." Ama reported, "I don't like to be too close to people. I don't trust anybody. I don't get close to people … I don't talk to people."

For Manuel, silence represented a deliberate attempt to avoid reactions of disbelief, discomfort, pity, and indifference. For others, like Hassan, not opening up to other people about the experiences of flight represented a purposeful attempt to move forward. For others still, like Ama, a young woman from Nigeria, silence more closely paralleled what Papadopoulos calls "psychological hypothermia."[45] As he points out, rather than being pathological, silence offers refugees a unique vantage point from which they can reflect on their experiences, assess their lives, and mourn for what they have lost. At the same time, and not unlike Manuel and Hassan, Ama strategically withdrew as a means of avoiding hurtful interactions, and implicitly her silence, like theirs, revealed significant distrust. Much like the use of silence, distrust was deliberately employed by many in the sample as a means of avoiding harm, betrayal, and disappointment.

Yet the youth were able to cultivate supportive networks, which assumed various forms. For those who engaged more openly, these networks tended to be more diversified, reflecting the range of people the youth came into contact with. For those who did not, these networks tended to include one or two trusted adults, typically a teacher or social worker, but mostly comprised other refugee youth.

In many cases, the youth reported not simply an affinity with other separated children, but a strong sense of collective identity that was drawn on to offset the challenges of resettlement. While the importance of group relationships was evident in the narratives of many respondents, nowhere

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was it more apparent than in the focus group conducted with six participants from Sudan.

Edgard remembered, "When I came here, I was having a hard time—you know, [how] can I survive? … There were five of us who were living together in two bedrooms. [T] three of us were supporting [two] Lost Boys who were going to school. I don't know how we survived after we stopped getting support from the government."

Reflecting the multifaceted and multi-purposed nature of many of the methods of survival employed by the Sudanese youth, the cultivation of a collective identity represented a manifold strategy of support and network building, as well as what Raghallaigh and Gilligan identify as maintaining cultural continuity in a changed context.[46]

Hassan said, "Sharing is very important in our culture, as is getting together. I may have $15, but it's *our* money; I will go buy something for us both to eat. Nobody is left behind." Peter's approach was similar: "It's like our culture back home. If somebody in a family works and has a good income, they take care of everyone else; that's how we carry on … It's a good thing."

At the same time, the group dynamic of Sudanese participants interviewed was also a response to socio-economic conditions encountered in Canada. Chronically underemployed and unable to access formal state support, the Sudanese youth in our sample pooled their resources to ensure not only their daily survival, but for some (though not for all) the possibility of a different kind of future. While survival in Canada assumed a form very different from survival during flight, many of the Sudanese youth interviewed engaged in similar strategies of resource sharing.

Navigating Separation and Loss

Despite the extensive connections cultivated by most of the youth, many reported feeling a profound sense of loss, which they attributed to separation from family and community, and from significant support structures. The loss experienced by most of the youth, however, was often complicated by the conditions of flight. Unaware if parents and other family members were still alive, the majority of the youth struggled with profound uncertainty, which is reflected in what Boss has labelled "ambiguous loss."[47] She writes, "With a clear-cut loss, there is more clarity—death certificate, mourning rituals, and the opportunity to honor and dispose of remains. With ambiguous loss, none of these markers exist. The clarity needed for boundary maintenance (in the sociological sense) or closure (in the psychological sense) is unattainable."[48] Navigating ambiguous loss entailed a number of strategies that simultaneously redressed other, though often related, challenges and issues. These strategies included the maintenance of cultural practice and language, religious belief, pursuing an education, and support of friends and family "left behind."

The maintenance of cultural practice and language served several purposes. In the first instance, representing a strategy of continuity, it offered a way of remaining connected to absent family and faraway places of origin. In the second instance, it grounded the youth, reminding them of where they came from, what they had endured, and what they were capable of surviving, and it motivated them, pushing them forward toward their envisioned futures. As Nijam explained, "The thing about language and culture is that they give us [some]thing that we can hold to, to be able to survive in any situation."

Hassan agreed: "I have to maintain [my language and culture], so when I go back to see my parents or relatives, I can go to them, I can talk to them, and they will listen to me. You don't have to throw it away. It makes me who I am, so I have to maintain it." As he explained, the maintenance of language and culture represented a means by which he would remain "knowable" to his family. A strategy of hope, his retention of language and culture mirrored his faith that he would one day be reunited with his family.

Religion represented another important method of coming to terms with loss and dealing with separation. At the same time, religion served as a link between life in Canada and life before and during flight and a way of remaining hopeful about the future. "If I survived all those miles, " said John, "not having food for extended period of time, why should I not pass these hard [university] classes, why should I not do well? Instead of getting down all the time about everything, it kind of assures me that I can do it. I feel like it made me a lot stronger, and I don't regret anything. It could be better, but only God knows the whole thing." Similarly, according to Edgard, "God will help me through the experience, and I will do what I need to do. And that's how I survive; I deal with things that happen."

Faith in God helped a number of the youth in our sample understand and accept the relative privilege they enjoyed in Canada.

Despite significant hardships, once in Canada, our participants often found themselves in situations where food insecurity was no longer an issue, and health care, education, and employment were now more accessible. Given their situations relative to those left behind, resettlement and the material security it offered often brought feelings of guilt when they thought of their loved ones who continued to suffer: "In Canada you are free, but not entirely free," said Amsalu. "It's like 50/50 because of the family you are missing, what you wish you could do for the people left behind."

It was much the same for Nijam: "When your people are struggling, you can never feel at home. [In Canada] if

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you have good credit, you can go to a bank and loan some money to buy a nice house. But I would not like a nice house, because when I imagine where I was—and that my brothers and sisters are still living there … How hard the life is back home still affects us here. Even though it's thousands of miles away, it still affects our lives. When you budget, you figure out you have a couple extra bucks, and you imagine the life that we were living when we were there, and you cannot close your eyes, you cannot not send something."

As a strategy, however, remittance sending was not without its challenges. While mitigating some of the guilt associated with resettlement as well as the anxiety concerning the well-being of friends and family, assuring regular support required considerable sacrifice. This was largely compounded by the kinds of work the youth were typically able to access. Part-time and low-paid, the conditions of employment in Canada necessitated that many of the youth work two or more jobs in order to meet their needs, in addition to those of friends and family.

As Peter described it, "One job is nothing. It wouldn't pay my rent [in Canada] and [my wife's] rent in Nairobi, my food and her food, so I have to have two jobs … I go to school full-time and have full-time work. I sleep for two and a half hours every day because I have to get it done. With full-time school and a part-time job, I wouldn't be able to handle [all the expenses]."

Pursuing an education was both a short-term and a long-term strategy. Many of the youth approached the daily tasks associated with school—going to class, completing assignments—as a distraction from the loneliness of separation and the hardships of life in Canada. At the same time, all of the youth who were able to attend school applied themselves in earnest, with the intention of eventually securing well-paid work that would allow them to help family abroad, and in some instances, maybe be reunited. Fatimah, for example, arrived in Canada through World University Services of Canada. Although she was scared to leave her family, she strongly felt that access to Canadian post-secondary education would improve her life and theirs: "I didn't have a choice, because I wanted a better education. I knew that if I came to Canada and got a good education, I might have a chance, [that] maybe I would get a chance to bring my parents here to come and stay with me someday."

While Fatimah's situation was unique, all of the youth spoke of the value of education and its transformative possibilities. In addition to the immediate financial support provided to family, a number of the youth hoped to achieve broad structural changes in their countries of origin. Jean-Paul raised awareness about the situation in Sudan, Osman hoped to focus on international development studies in university, and still others hoped to return to their countries of origin following completion of their education. In these ways, the opportunity to provide assistance to family, friends, and community meant that their suffering—manifest in the physical struggles of flight, the emotional challenges of separation, and the difficulties of life in Canada—was not in vain.

Conclusion

Seen as deviating from the normative category of "Canadian" and from the increasingly idealized category of economically viable and 'contributing' immigrant,[49] many of the youth in our sample experienced Canada as a capricious and perilous terrain that required careful navigation. By encouraging a nuanced exploration of how this navigation occurs, the social navigation framework at once recognizes the discursive structures and material processes that inform the context of resettlement, while acknowledging the creative efforts of separated asylum-seeking and refugee youth to circumvent (albeit at times subtly and not always permanently) those structures and processes.

Effectively bringing into focus the intersection of agency and structure, the framework also facilitates a more nuanced understanding of actions that might otherwise appear problematic. Altering their stories, for example, represented a critical strategy for several of the youth both in the context of flight and resettlement. Social navigation complicates and contextualizes this behaviour: it is not simply the mainstay of a "bogus" refugee claim, nor is it the posturing of a fraudulent claimant; rather, it is an effort on the part of an individual, who responding to a context increasingly characterized by hostility and suspicion, acts and reacts to ensure survival.

Set against the structural realities of nominal support, discrimination, and exclusion, and alongside the sense of loss that characterizes flight and separation, life in Canada necessitated the development of strategies at arrival and throughout the resettlement process. These strategies were varied, multifarious, and complex, so that frequently they converged and coalesced, redressing multiple conditions of resettlement simultaneously. In regards to the refugee determination process, some youth engaged in strategies of unmitigated trust, while others were more guarded or, responding to the structural biases within the refugee determination system, altered their stories in ways they believed would ensure their safety. These strategies of openness and trust, and of silence and distrust were equally present throughout the resettlement process, as the youth assessed and reassessed those around them, seeking out supportive people while avoiding hurtful interactions. Yet, reflecting the complexity of their strategies, rather than signalling

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passivity or pathology, silence and distrust were, in fact, thoughtful and adaptive expressions of agency.

In a similar vein, a number of the youth sought out and cultivated group identities that helped to mitigate the emotional and material challenges of life in Canada. These youth pooled their resources and offered each other ongoing support. All of the youth spoke of the importance of language, culture, and religion. These reflected, among other things, a continuing connection to countries of origin and to families and other significant people "left behind." This connection was also realized in more direct ways, as most of the youth sent remittances to the country of origin as well as to the refugee camps where they had lived. In this way, they came to understand their experiences of flight (so often rooted in violence, insecurity, and scarcity) and resettlement (marked by isolation, loneliness, and struggle) as essential facets of who they were, what they were capable of, and who they would become. Their ability to provide short-term assistance and to work toward sustainable change validated these difficult experiences, made them valuable (though no less painful), and propelled the youth forward.

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Childhood in Exile: The Agency of Second-Generation Exiles Seeking Refuge from Apartheid

Zosa Olenka De Sas Kropiwnicki

Abstract

This paper is based on a retrospective study of children who were born in exile and/or spent their formative years in exile during apartheid. It is based on 21 in-depth interviews with men and women who spent their childhoods in an average of three different countries in North America, Western Europe, the Nordic region, Eastern Europe, West Africa, and East Africa as second-generation exiles during apartheid. This article will argue that the interplay of structure and agency in the lives of second-generation exiles in the process of migration and in the transitory spaces that they occupied should be explored. Second-generation exile children devised a range of strategies in order to challenge or cope with constantly shifting contexts characterized by inequalities, social exclusion, violence, and political uncertainty.

Résumé

Cet article s'appuie sur une étude rétrospective d'enfants nés en exil ou qui ont passé leurs premières années en exil durant l'apartheid. L'étude est basée sur 21 entrevues en profondeur avec des hommes et des femmes qui ont passé leur enfance comme des exilés de deuxième génération au cours de l'apartheid dans une moyenne de trois pays différents en Amérique du Nord, Europe occidentale, région nordique, Europe de l'Est, Afrique de l'Ouest et Afrique de l'Est. Cet article fait valoir que l'interaction de la structure et de l'entremise dans la vie des exilés de seconde génération en voie de migration et dans les espaces transitoires qu'ils occupaient devrait être explorée. Les enfants exilés de deuxième génération ont mis au point une gamme de stratégies en vue de contester ou d'affronter des contextes en constante mutation, caractérisé par des inégalités, l'exclusion sociale, la violence et l'incertitude politique.

Introduction

Between 30,000 and 60,000 people—adults and children—went into exile during apartheid following the banning of opposition political organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC), and the initiation of the armed struggle in 1961. In addition to participating in strategic planning, military training, and armed combat, exiles established dwellings all over the world. They constructed "homes," engaged in intimate relationships, and raised children. The literature tends to focus narrowly on strategic military operations and largely ignores the politics of the everyday where individuals negotiated power dynamics and waged "strategies of resistance"[1] in their new environments in exile.

Efforts have been made to elucidate the gendered dimensions of these struggles;[2] however, children's voices have remained on the periphery of academic enquiry. The agency of children growing up in exile is poorly described. They appear as invisible actors or silent bystanders—their intentional decision-making[3] and transformative action on the structures in which they were "bounded"[4] remains unrecognized. Second-generation exiles, who were born and/or spent their formative years in exile, were described as passively being acted upon by their parents and teachers, or as "sponges" simply absorbing the dominant political

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ideology—effectively denying them agency and power. There is little information about the manner in which children negotiated power relationships, waged everyday acts of resistance, or shaped their environments.

Literature Review

Exile as Strategic Space

Exile tends to be defined as physical "banishment" and geographical dislocation impelled by a political regime intent on preventing social change.[5] Exile in this study has been conceptualized not in relation to geographical place but to a historically specific "condition"[6] or process[7] associated with forced estrangement from a lived or imagined home in the context of political struggles against "norms of a nation."[8]

It is increasingly argued that the exile experience cannot be reduced to "militaristic, top down and bureaucratic"[9] power relations, and "narrow military and strategic objectives,"[10] as this obscures the diversity of experience and the extent to which "strategies of struggle"[11] are played out in a range of social relationships, all diffused with power, as argued by Foucault. A number of exile studies in a range of social science disciplines (such as political science, sociology, and historical studies) have tried to explore this complexity, such as in relation to gender,[12] marriage,[13] sexual relationships,[14] families,[15] social networks,[16] and "daily life in the camps."[17] However, the strategies waged by children in exile remain largely unexamined, particularly in relation to second-generation exiles.

Children and Difference

Studies that refer to second-generation exiles fail to acknowledge the diverse manner in which childhood is constructed and experienced.[18] This stems from an underlying essentialist approach to exile identity and experience ,which fails to account for the complex manner in which socially constructed social divisions "intersect."[19] Clifford argues that diaspora theories need to account for racialized, classed, and gendered structures,[20] but does not mention structures pertaining to generation.

Bernstein and Manghezi provide an uncritical presentation of the voices of ANC leadership's children.[21] Apart from passing reference to children of mixed nationality at Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO),[22] Morrow and colleagues do not adequately illustrate the diversity of children living in Morogoro,[23] Tanzania. Authors have provided superficial analysis of markers of difference, including birth in exile,[24] race,[25] and gender.[26] Literature referring to second-generation exiles tends to focus on the former frontier states,[27] Tanzania,[28] and the United Kingdom;[29] however, this does not elucidate the manner in which childhood was constructed or experienced elsewhere.

Children as Invisible Actors and Silent Bystanders

Said states that "exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you."[30] However, he does confer an element of agency on "the exile." Clifford argues that exiles do not simply acquiesce in a linear model of integration, acculturation, and assimilation, but actively interpret, negotiate, and influence their circumstances by drawing upon "skills of survival"[31] at an individual and collective level.

The literature on children in exile tends to focus on their role as bearers of "post-memory," because they "grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth."[32] Alternatively, children are described as targets for the transmission of collective identity and cultural practices.[33] These studies refer to clashes in notions of filial duty and children's search for their roots;[34] however, they do not fully acknowledge children's agentic engagement with the exile experience.[35]

Unlike school children who intentionally joined Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in the wake of the Soweto school boycotts in 1976 and who—according to official accounts—matured on the battleground into "youth,"[36] second-generation exiles were denied agency, as epitomized in Bernstein's statement: "Children had no choice, they were either taken or left behind, but played no part in the decision."[37] Numerous accounts refer to cadres falling pregnant or bearing children in exile, yet there is little information about second-generation exiles' experiences in the exile context.

Although a number of texts refer to the services children received in exile,[38] these authors paint an uncritical picture of the lived realities of children. Children's agency, perspectives, and opinions are absent in these texts. Similarly, various texts refer to their political socialization, such as through the Young Pioneers children's club,[39] but these accounts simply describe children as passive recipients of political ideology, without discussing the children's (re) interpretation or contestation of these notions.

In the above accounts, children's agency appears to play out only in terms of "anger and resentment" towards their parents.[40] However, there is little understanding of the manner in which parenthood is constructed in exile[41] or how children navigate other significant relationships, such as with their siblings, many of whom were left behind in South Africa or in camps;[42] their grandparents, many of whom became surrogate parents;[43] their peers; and other adults often described as "aunts" and "uncles."[44] Various accounts in Ngcobo's collection of life stories describe children's struggles to develop friendships in the face of racism.[45] However, these stories paint a picture of victimization, "loss and bewilderment,"[46] without acknowledging

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children's minor acts of resistance or what Scott described as "ordinary weapons of the weak."[47]

Bounded Agency as Intentionality

At a theoretical level, this article will refer to children's agency as "bounded."[48] Through the interplay of meanings, norms, and power, the social structure both constrains and enables human agency by affecting agents' aspirations, self-esteem, personal standards, affective states, and self-regulatory standards.[49] In everyday action and interaction with other actors, individuals both entrench and transform this social structure,[50] whose actions and development the structure in turn influences.[51]

Intentionality is central to agency. Foucault argues that one must account for the "aim of the struggle to overcome the effect of power."[52] Bandura argues that even children have the capacity to act with intentionality—exhibiting self-efficacy, forethought, and self-evaluation—on their own, by proxy through someone, or collectively with others.[53] They may draw upon individual or interpersonal resources to negotiate their positions in relationships,[54] fight against injustice, and attempt to circumvent the power of others, in what Foucault describes as "strategies of struggle."[55] Their strategies may involve evasion, humour, gossip, moral reasoning, manipulation, passive resistance, and open contestation,[56] "although such tactics are rarely recognised by adults."[57]

The bounded nature of children's agency and the strategies that they developed in exile will be explored in this article. The respondents presented a combination of experiences of feeling "done to," alongside expressions of agency—"doing" and "transforming."

Methodology

This research sought to understand the manner in which childhood was constructed and experienced in exile communities during apartheid and upon return to South Africa. Secondary and primary data were collected in this study. Secondary sources included academic books and accredited journal articles, as well as autobiographies, biographies, and newspaper articles.

As there is no central database or list of second-generation exiles, systematic or random sampling approaches were not utilized. Instead, snowballing (chain-referral) was used to identify "hidden" populations who met the following criteria: they were born and/or spent their formative years (0–18) in exile during apartheid, and they were residing in South Africa at the time of the fieldwork. In this exploratory study, 21 respondents were identified and interviewed using a word-of-mouth snowballing technique. As this sampling technique depends on social networks, it introduces a level of bias.[58] All attempts were made to reduce these biases by posting recruitment announcements on a range of mailing lists and websites (e.g., the H-SAFrica discussion forum). This may have introduced a self-selection bias but widened the pool of respondents and created new points of access. Although this study is not representative, it offers detailed insight into the experiences and understanding of respondents, whose voices and attempts to exercise power tend to be ignored.[59]

A life history approach was used to gather data, enabling respondents to focus on events, places, and relationships that are significant to them. Non-directive questions were then asked as triggers to open further discussion over a two- to three-hour period. With the permission of respondents, the interviews were audio recorded digitally. Transcripts were sent to the respondents, which allowed them to reflect on their responses, verify the data, or raise concerns. Apart from minor cases involving the spelling of names and places, no significant revisions were requested by the respondents. The data were analysed thematically and manually using Microsoft Word; open-coding was used to categorize and examine themes and patterns.[60] This study used a theoretically and methodologically reflexive approach, which was documented in a field diary.[61]

The study adhered to the ethical standards promoted by the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) Code of Conduct.[62] Ethical data collection and management included obtaining informed written consent; offering the right to withdraw or seal a transcript; confidentiality; anonymity and protected storage of data. Identifiable information has been obscured in the particle as a result of the political sensitivity and safety concerns raised by the respondents. Although a life history may produce "great relief and release,"[63] it might inadvertently lead to "pain caused by remembering difficult memories."[64] At the outset of the interview, respondents were provided with contact information for qualified counsellors at the University of Johannesburg, although no respondents utilized this service.

The sample (21) characteristics are as follows: 7 (33%) were male and 14 (67%) were female. Seventeen (80%) were black, 2 (10%) were white, and 2 (10%) were Indian. At the time of the interviews, 3 (14%) were younger than 30 years of age, 8 (38%) were between the ages of 31 and 35 years, 7 (33%) were aged 36 to 40 years, and 3 (14%) were older than 41 years.

The age at which the respondents went into exile is as follows: 9 (43%) were born in exile, 9 (43%) were aged 1 to 5 years, and 3 (14%) were older than 6 years. Three (14%) returned to South Africa from exile aged 0 to 10 years, 11 (52%) were aged 11 to 18 years, and 7 (33%) were 19 years

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or older. When in exile, the respondents lived in a number of different countries: 6 (29%) stayed in 1 country, 4 (19%) lived in 2 countries, 9 (43%) lived in 3 countries, and 2 (10%) lived in 4 countries. With this in mind, the respondents listed 47 countries in 6 regions in which they lived in exile: 16 (34%) lived in southern Africa, 9 (19%) lived in Eastern Africa, 1 (2%) lived in West Africa, 10 (21%) lived in Europe, 6 (13%) lived in the United Kingdom, and 11% lived in North America.[65] The majority of the respondents' parents either had refugee status or study permits.[66]

Limitations of Retrospective Interviews

Many academics have questioned the validity of memories as a source of data. As "an artefact that rusts,"[67] memories may distort or fade.[68] Others have pointed to temporal continuity, as the past experience of exile informs identity in the present, and the present informs what is "remembered" and narrated about exile.[69] Said argues that for exiles, experiences in new environments occur "contrapuntally"[70] with memories of experiences in old environments. The narration of these memories is informed by present needs.[71] The process of recollection and narration may help exiles depict themselves in a particular way, place themselves in the "starring role,"[72] "reconstitute their broken lives,"[73] find content to notions of "home" and "belonging,"[74] and/or craft and re-craft their identities in the present.[75] Memories may be selectively recovered, reshaped, and reinterpreted at a collective level under the influence of dominant discourses, political frameworks, and memoralization efforts.[76] Therefore, some academics argue that memories—and narration as the vehicle through which memories are shared—do not necessarily produce a truthful, "authentic" view of the past.[77]

During the course of the interviews, respondents questioned the "quality" of their early memories, particularly since many went into exile, over 20 years ago. Furthermore, some respondents reflected on their use of adult terms, emotions, and reference points when describing their childhoods. In this article, many quotes reveal the tension between children's perceptions and feelings in relation to particular events and behaviour, which are recalled and narrated by adults, juxtaposed against adult reinterpretations, or rationalized in hindsight. Further, the respondents' positioning and experiences in post-apartheid South Africa are likely to have influenced their selection and narration of particular memories of exile.

Notwithstanding these considerations, the narration of memories of exile provides opportunities for reflection for the respondent and researcher.[78] Some argue that narration provides partial versions and experiences, which, when viewed in relation to each other, lend credence to the Foucauldian notion that truth is a "thing of this world."[79] However, it needs to be noted that the objective of this study was not to provide a historical realist version of the "truth" but to present different perspectives of lived experiences. Narration also "gives voice" to those who have been marginalized, or, as has been argued in the South African context, as the "ritualistic lifting of the veil"[80] or the gluing together of "cracked heirlooms"[81] that represent the multiplicity of hidden voices, which were silenced by apartheid.

Findings

Childhood was constructed differently, depending on where the children came from and where they travelled through, to, or settled. The family, playground, and schoolroom were described as "political spaces" fraught with battles over gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and political ideology. It will be argued that as agents, their decision-making and action was influenced by social structures at the level of the interpersonal, but through their action some tried to resist or transform these structures. Their responses reveal a combination of feelings related to being "done to" and "doing."

Constructions of Parenthood in Politicized Settings

In this politicized context, intergenerational communication was shrouded in secrecy and silence. Many of the respondents complained that their parents never explained why they were in exile. Some attributed this to the African culture where "there is no real need to explain to a six-year-old why the world is the way it is,"[82] and "when adults came, you just had to disappear."[83] One respondent stated that he is still "mad at them"[84] for never explaining apartheid. Some respondents explained that these silences were deliberate in order to protect them, which meant that it felt like "an adventure"[85] rather than an escape from violence. Many understood this in retrospect, but at the time they felt "cut off"[86] and excluded from their parents. Some respondents stated that even when their parents tried to explain the situation to them, they simply were too young to understand: "I knew who Nelson Mandela was always and I used to draw little pictures to send to him, [but] I didn't have the vocabulary to understand what they were talking about."[87]

Parental absences were also a factor of exile, which were rarely explained to children: "Like when he went away he never told us where he was going, though he was silly because he would insist that my mother packed his case, so you could sort of figure it out: Angola or the Soviet Union. But we never knew how long he was going for."[88] For some this was simply a "normal state of affairs."[89] For others this was a source of pain and frustration, particularly when significant events were missed.

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Some respondents rationalized these absences by referring to a choice that their parents had to make: politics or parenthood. For instance, one respondent who was placed in boarding school when she was a toddler said that in her family "we [the children] weren't a priority."[90] Her mother worked long hours, while her father engaged in political activities. She recalled her parents forgetting to collect her at school and then enviously watching other children interact with their parents: "I remember sitting there and thinking, why didn't my parents do that with me?"[91]

Some parents were forced to leave one child behind in South Africa or in a camp. This had profound effects on sibling relationships. One respondent recalled having to lie to his youngest sister about the impending trip, but also secretly fearing that he would be left behind: "I didn't sleep the night before. It was a secret from the one after me, and I was worried that it would happen to me too and they would leave me behind."[92] Children themselves had little say in this type of situation; however, one respondent exercised his agency by fabricating stories of physical abuse at the hands of relatives so that he would not be left behind.[93]

In contrast, some parents insisted on remaining with their children, even if it meant taking them on training and missions. A respondent recalled being taken on one such mission: "It was great going to Swaziland for me because there were sweets and chocolates. But my brother got really scared because he knew what we were doing. He used to throw up the night before we left for Swaziland."[94] This respondent also described a moment when her mother—upon receiving a notification to send her children to Tanzania—locked herself in the bathroom until they were allowed to stay. She attributed this success to racial and socio-economic differences: "It was one of the times I noticed the difference between being middle class and white. We had a choice. We could go to the UK. Other moms didn't have a choice: they had nowhere else to go, they had no family, and they had no support. And if you speak to kids who were sent to SOMAFCO, there is a lot of resentment that they were sent away."[95]

Discipline was another factor of childhood in exile. A number of respondents referred to a "culture clash" associated with the "unquestioned obedience that children owe their parents in Africa."[96] This manifested itself in strict parenting, corporal punishment, and efforts to curtail their freedom. This was very acute for children in exile whose friends experienced a different kind of freedom in North America: "My parents were stricter than other American parents. I was beaten a lot more than them; it wasn't child abuse, it was just what we do. I complained to my parents, but they said I can't compare myself with other children because I was from different circumstances."[97]

Many of the respondents described their attempts at exercising agency and struggling for freedom. Some referred to verbal arguments with their parents, slamming doors, and leaving angry notes. A respondent referred to anger at her mother's refusal to permit her to sleep over at friend's homes in Canada: "Sleeping over wasn't an African thing … It was a massive source of tension. She couldn't control it and didn't know what we were being exposed to."[98]

Rebellion was also a form of agency. Some respondents engaged in "risky activities" such as petty theft, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse, as a means of exercising their agency. A respondent was very frustrated at his parents for putting everyone else's needs above his own: "I would speak back, I was a brat. I had no control. I had an opinion for everything. I fought with the system."[99] As a result, he was expelled from three schools in Zimbabwe. These are not unusual challenges for immigrant populations to experience, but in the case of second-generation exile children, these tensions in the home were exacerbated by other difficulties such as the frequent absence of parents who were on mission or undergoing training.

Respondents drew on inner resources when trying to cope with these interpersonal problems. One respondent coped with his father's drinking and emotional distance by spending hours reading on his own and, for the most part, relying on himself. Another stated that she coped with being placed in a boarding school from a young age by constructing a fantasy world: "I used to write stories in my head. I would live in my head how I wanted it to be. I just escaped."[100] Another respondent coped with the secrecy required of living underground with her mother by fabricating the truth about her life—beyond what was required of her: "So now I was allowed to lie, so I went the whole hog and it allowed me to be the person I wanted to be." This included constructing a fantasy of living in her grandparent's tree house.[101] As children, some respondents found solace—and a voice of protest—in their artwork, poetry, and diaries. These agentic strategies should, therefore, not be ignored.

Political Socialization

Second-generation exiles were socialized directly and indirectly into political awareness. Some recalled eavesdropping on their parents during political meetings: "When I was very small, we used to hide behind the sofa when he was having these meetings. And I think we just wanted proximity to him. And then we would get all silly like kids do and start shoving each other, and he would kick us out."[102] There were, however, deliberate attempts by their parents to inculcate a particular set of values, vision, and understanding of politics.

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Some parents gave their children books to read about South Africa. Others named their children after political leaders. Some took their children to anti-apartheid demonstrations or ANC meetings. A child recalled handing out T-shirts, stickers, and pamphlets at one such event in Spain. Another recalled the overwhelming feeling that "everyone is there for a common purpose" at rallies in the United Kingdom.[103] June 16[104] was a "public holiday" for second-generation exiles scattered across the world. A respondent recalled her sister trying to copy her father's flyers by drawing "pictures of the national liberation struggle with cute bunny rabbits on them."[105] Another respondent reflected on the toys that they were given in exile: "When we were in Zimbabwe, my father used to go and buy us toy guns … I think at the time they thought these children have to be socialized because they will have to take up the struggle."[106]

Respondents who spent a portion of their childhoods in the frontier states and at SOMAFCO spoke about the politically charged environment, characterized by Friday news readings, political songs, slogans, and "performances" such as the symbolic burning of coffins representing apartheid leaders. Many children did not understand these messages: "There was a Zulu song that the lines went 'We are going to wake up at four in the morning and going to go revolt.' I knew what revolt meant, but in terms of the bigger picture, I don't think I really understood that."[107] ANC children attended the Young Pioneers in Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe where they engaged in "political play" activities on weekends.

Political socialization was also associated with fear of political threats. A respondent recalled feeling "very embarrassed" when the ANC bomb squad detonated an envelope containing a school photograph, which she had failed to inform her parents about. She also recalled her father using code language because he was concerned that she would "blurt things out innocently."[108] Another recalled feeling scared and unsettled when trenches were constructed at SOMAFCO. Fears of infiltrations and spies meant that the children had to be careful of speaking to strangers and other South Africans, and these threats were not always unfounded. For instance, in the United Kingdom, a respondent's home was destroyed by a bomb, and she regularly noticed spies lingering on her street. A respondent in Mozambique stated that she had to walk a different route to school every day and had to stand back when the car ignition was turned, in case there was a bomb in the vehicle.[109]

Political socialization was also associated with the death of a close relative, which heightened the political sensitivity of children. The murder of one child's stepfather in Swaziland precipitated the family's move to the United Kingdom. Another recalled the loss of his mother: "I remember feeling lonely a lot of the time, and I kept believing that when we moved we would meet up with my mother. And we moved a lot, so there was this continuous feeling of disappointment."[110] A respondent's brother was killed in a bomb that was intended for his parents; he was too young to understand what happened, but knew that his brother was "not coming back." He described how his mother became extremely over-protective: "We weren't allowed to go anywhere or see anyone."[111]

Many of the respondents referred to their homes as being used as safe houses for exiles passing through on their way out of South Africa, or en route to training or military missions. As one respondent stated, "When I think of memories of home, politics was always there. There were always people sleeping at our house."[112] For some children, this was an important time in their political socialization, filled with important discussion and new acquaintances, but this also was a source of tension. As one respondent stated, "I don't think I minded, until I was chucked out of my room, and this happened often."[113] This was echoed by another respondent: "There were a lot of things that started to annoy me when I got older. Like when adults come to your house and you have to give up your bed and you have sleep on the floor in the living room. If you leave stuff in the fridge and then the next day it tended not to be there. I was teenager: what is mine is mine. And I also felt like my parents were not my own. And I think that is a very painful thing, when you know you have to share your parents."[114]

Children reacted to political socialization in different ways. One respondent described the expectation that he had to contribute to his community as a "burden."[115] He didn't understand what the rallies were about and why he had to spend 16 June 16 with his parents, when all he wanted to do was play with his friends. He stated, "I think there was plenty of resistance. You feel your parents are pushing you in a direction you don't want to go in. Why don't other kids have these problems? Why is it that other kids don't have to go to a soup kitchen and serve? Why is it that other kids don't have to deal with all this stuff? I looked at it and thought, 'Stuff this, I am going to act like other kids,' and I remember I got the biggest spanking."[116]

Another respondent stated that he made a deliberate show of not being interested in the books or news items related to South Africa: "My attitude was very much 'No, this is not me. I am somebody very different, and this is an alien and frightening country, which is responsible for destroying our family, and I don't want to get engaged with it.'"[117] Some deliberately tried to distance themselves from any association with the exile movement in order to "fit in."

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"You don't know what people's views are, so being a bit cautious about what you were saying. I told one friend that my dad was a communist, and she said her dad hated communists and wanted to kill them all. Then I realized I shouldn't have said anything."[118] Others exercised their agency by actively fighting against racism and xenophobia in their host communities.

Racism and Xenophobia

Many respondents were the targets of racism and xenophobia in North America, Western Europe, and in the Nordic countries. People treated them as a "curiosity,"[119] while others were "openly hostile."[120] One respondent's father tried to explain, "'Don't feel bad, this country [USA] is crazy and this country is not nice, it has nothing to do with you. You are black, you are female, and you are an immigrant. All three of those things don't belong in this place.'"[121]

Another respondent stated that the racism made her feel uncomfortable: "It made me question why people hate us because of our skin colour. My sister even asked my parents when we are going to be white."[122] Language differences were often used as a proxy for structural and interpersonal racism, to the extent that people—adults and children—would criticize their language skills and/or "talk down to them in a way that made [them] feel stupid."[123] This had a significant effect on peer relationships. One respondent referred to the racist "undercurrent" in the playground.[124] Another respondent referred to the "playground as a political space" characterized by racial clashes. She recalled crying after a child asked whether she eats spaghetti with her fingers or soup with a fork and knife.[125]

Even within SOMAFCO and the frontier communities there were racist prejudices. An Indian girl recalls her birthday when black children refused to play with her. Another respondent described games where she was always given the role of the "baddy" because she was white.[126] Some children spoke of the "othering" of white children who accompanied their European parents to volunteer at SOMAFCO.[127] There was also racism in relation to indigenous people. The children called the local village close to SOMAFCO the "dark city," into which they rarely ventured.[128]

Some respondents exercised their agency by intentionally trying to challenge racist practices. For instance, one respondent insisted that her history teacher give a lesson on apartheid. She also adopted the "punk rock" culture in the UK as a means of expressing her fight against fascism and racism.[129] Some respondents organized protests against racism in North American schools. One respondent stated that her teachers didn't like her because she was always "questioning" the treatment of black children.[130] Another respondent refused to return to school in Denmark when racist books were not removed from the library.[131]

In the face of racism and xenophobia, the respondents tried to overcome their loneliness by intentionally devising a range of strategies to cultivate friendships. In Bulgaria, for instance, a respondent desperately tried to "learn the culture and mannerisms."[132] Some respondents forged close friendships with other children who seemed to be coping with similar issues of death, loss, and dislocation. Many children forged friendships with children from other minority groups. For instance, a respondent stated that she befriended an Indian girl and a Columbian girl, and "we were the only people of colour in that crèche."[133] On the other hand, one respondent described her attempts to look and speak like a white Canadian person, including trying to change her accent, straighten her hair, and wear particular clothing brands.[134] Others deliberately forged relationships with adults in the community—whom they described as "aunts" and "uncles"—as a substitute extended family.

Unfortunately, developing and investing in relationships also had unintended consequences, such as a recurrent sense of loss associated with frequent migration. Many respondents said that they learnt strategically how to compartmentalize relationships so that it was easier to say goodbye. A respondent described this as her "defence mechanism": "When you are gone, you are gone. Keeping in touch is not important."[135]

Socio-economic Status

There were contrasts in the socio-economic status of exile families, depending on where they went into exile and their political standing. On arrival in exile in North America and Western Europe, many respondents moved into slums with other foreign nationals and referred to everyday socio-economic challenges faced by their parents when trying to put a meal on the table or purchase sanitary wear for girls. However, there were also significant differences when comparing exile communities in Europe to Africa. When relocating from Denmark to Tanzania, one respondent stated that she was "shocked" at the food that they were expected to eat: "It was all strange for me, coming from a developed country to an ANC camp where we had to go to this warehouse to get our rations every month."[136]

Socio-economic status was a relational concept, and constant comparisons were made within exile communities. Some exile families who were associated with the ANC leadership and strategic wing were able to afford live-in nannies, private schools, and new clothing. A child living in Zimbabwe noted the salience of socio-economic differences within the exile community—epitomized for her by the school bus that would collect the poorer children

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from government schools, followed by another bus for the wealthier exile children at private schools: "You know, in exile there was this thing of families who were just better than the rest, the big names. That's how the ANC worked, so you knew that they deserved more than the rest of us."[137] It was held that "better off" exile children had access to their favourite toys and books, even if it put others at risk to source them: "My mom would make a real effort to get books for me; comrades [fighters in the liberation struggle] used to jump the fence with a Famous Five book for me, in the face of all the danger."[138] In retrospect this respondent was "ashamed" [139] that she was treated differently.

It was evident that socio-economic status was a source of inner and interpersonal conflict for the respondents, both as children and in hindsight. For instance, a respondent was angered when his mother denied his request for Air Jordan sneakers, but soon thereafter gave the money to a needy South African family passing through Nigeria: "It was probably the most heart-sore feeling in me. How could this woman do this to me? As a child you just don't understand."[140] One respondent expressed the sense of frustration that he felt as a child because his dad was not earning an income from his political engagements: "It should pay at some point."[141] On the other hand, this was also a source of pride for some children: "My dad is unemployed, but making a difference."[142]

In order to assist their parents, some children exercised their agency by taking on part-time employment. Respondents spoke of completing basic administrative tasks in the ANC offices and working in the service industry. Others tried desperately to win scholarships to cover their schooling, even if it required extraordinary efforts to perform well at school.

Constructions of Gender

In some contexts, exile provided an opportunity for the reinterpretation of gender norms and values. Many respondents experienced the new wave of feminism in North America and the United Kingdom. This meant an emergence of new female role models, such as "black female astronauts, editors, and teachers."[143] Respondents described the new freedom and independence experienced by their mothers and a renegotiation of spatial public/private boundaries in North America and Europe. Many of their mothers became mobile, abandoned traditional dress, formed circles of male and female friends independently of their husbands, and entered the formal economy. This in turn led to a selective revision of domestic roles and responsibilities, with fathers cooking and plaiting their daughter's hair in Denmark, for example.[144]

However, exile also perpetuated gender norms and placed constraints on women's agency. As they could not rely on traditional forms of social support, including relatives or nannies, many were placed under immense pressure trying to balance employment and child care: "It was hard: there was no nanny. We had to go with her [mother] everywhere until we turned 12. In Canada a child can't be left alone in the house."[145]

Children who were sent to stay in boarding schools described feelings of abandonment, although in hindsight they understood that this was the only way that their mothers could engage in paid employment. Others resented being forced to take responsibility for the care of younger siblings so that their mothers could work: "I would always tell her [mother], 'This is unfair. I feel like I have been brought here [United States] to be a maid.' I mean, I took care of my brother. With all of this happening, I was not a child."[146]

Many female respondents referred to the new freedom that they experienced in exile in terms of their movement, relationships, and life opportunities. However, in certain contexts, restrictions were placed on girls' political agency on the grounds of protection. Two female respondents wanted to join the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and felt that if they had been boys, this would have been an option for them: "It was a gendered experience for me. I felt if I had been a boy I would have been taken more seriously."[147]

Sexuality and Violence

In some contexts, femininity was associated with victimization in the face of sexual and gender-based violence. Intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and rape were experienced by women in their families. Sexual and gender-based violence in closed-off exile communities such as Morogoro was perceived as "normal" and questioned by the respondents only upon their return to South Africa. For instance, one respondent stated, "I was raped five or six times continuously. It was not disguised. For us kids it was normal. I knew that if I was coming out of that room at the day care centre with a chocolate, the next person going into that room was experiencing the same thing and it was just that … As a kid when you are made to believe that what's happening to you is correct, you get sad only when you are older."[148]

Many respondents voiced the opinion that the needs of the "movement" were placed above the needs of girls and women. For instance, a respondent spoke of being raped repeatedly by the teenage son of her parent's political friends when in exile. Although she exercised her agency by telling her parents, there was still an obligation on her parents to take the boy shopping for new clothes: "That messed me up a little. A lot of this sexual abuse stuff was rife. You were sexually molested by a comrade's child or a comrade

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themselves. There again, in South Africa that has become part of our heritage, it has been normalized by society."[149]

The material realities of exile sometimes shaped constructions of sexuality around transactional relationships. One respondent spoke at length about her mother's relationships with powerful men in the exile community: "It was one of those relationships that my mom was in to make her life easier in exile. He was influential, and she did it to survive."[150]

A respondent described her attempts to exercise agency in this context. She saw this abuse in transactional terms, which she could then use to assist her sibling: "As I was getting older and he was rewarding me with biscuits, the strange thing was in my mind I was saying, 'Let's allow this thing to happen, if I can take food and biscuits for my younger sister.'"[151] She also spoke of trying to discourage her mother from transactional sex: "I thought it was my responsibility to protect my mother. Like maybe when he is walking away, I would throw stones at them."[152] She exercised her agency by trying to defend her mother and threaten the perpetrators.

Another female respondent complained to her father about the abuse experienced by her peers, thereby exercising her agency by proxy. Other respondents referred to their participation in feminist movements in North America and Europe in their attempts to challenge norms that supported discrimination and violence against women. Some even used poetry and music to advocate for these changes in their schools and other community spaces.

Conclusion

Exile tends to be viewed narrowly as a strategic space characterized by top-down military operations, at the exclusion of everyday power struggles and interpersonal acts of resistance. Furthermore, literature describes children as a homogenous category of invisible actors, silent bystanders, or passive targets of political socialization, without considering their perspectives, decisions, and agentic behaviour when seeking refuge. This article has argued that the interplay of structure and agency in the lives of second-generation exiles should be explored.

Difference should be considered in the manner in which childhood—as intersected with socially constructed divisions such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status—was constructed and experienced by different children, living in different families in different exile communities. This article has described the constraints—and opportunities—placed by these social structures on children's lived realities. Moreover, it has shown how these structures have influenced interpersonal relationships, which in turn have had a significant impact on respondents' agency in exile. It has been argued that *some* second-generation exiles (re)interpreted, questioned, challenged, and resisted the manner in which power was distributed by acting with intentionality in certain situations, even though they felt constrained and subjugated in others.

It is impossible to make generalizations about the extent or nature of their agentic action, but these respondents have provided insight into the complex interplay of structure and agency in exile. Children responded in different ways to these structures and, in so doing, revealed forms of agency, which have heretofore been left unexamined. Many children waged struggles for freedom within their homes, fighting against what they perceived as unjust treatment. Many questioned their parents' decisions, actions, and ideologies. In their schools and communities, many fought against injustice, racism, and sexism. Some children devised strategies to exercise their agency by proxy or collectively with peers and other adults. Alternatively, they drew on inner resources when trying to manage loss, isolation, secrecy, and disruption.

As the first article emerging from this exploratory study, there are numerous gaps, contradictions, and tensions that have yet to be explored. For instance, the issue of identity has not been adequately discussed, nor has the respondents' experiences in post-apartheid South Africa, and how this has shaped their narration of exile. These issues will be discussed in subsequent publications.

At a theoretical and methodological level, the construction and reconstruction of memory will need to be further considered. Memories do not necessarily provide an "authentic" view of the past, because they are socially constructed and therefore change in relation to the vagaries of time, fluctuating dominant narratives, ideological partialities, and shifting positionality in past and present. The quotes provided in this article have revealed the tension between memories of childhood as selectively narrated and/or constructed by adults, and adult reflections of childhood made in hindsight. These tensions should be carefully unpacked in future studies that explore historical topics and utilize the life history narrative approach.

Twenty years ago the liberation struggle culminated in South Africa's first democratic elections. This "anniversary" has spurned a new wave of reflection about the realization of the liberation struggle's goals and expectations, in relation to the realities of post-apartheid South Africa. It has also reignited discussion on the silencing of voices by apartheid and the dominant narrative of the struggle in post-apartheid South Africa. This article is, therefore, timely in that it offers a unique perspective on exile as experienced by marginalized children, many of whom are now disappointed youth in a troubled South Africa.

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Furthermore, despite the plethora of progressive legislation in South Africa promoting the protection of children's rights, regardless of nationality, undocumented child migrants are subject to numerous human rights violations associated with inequitable access to quality services, structural and interpersonal violence, discrimination, and xenophobia.[153] Many of these problems were experienced by children in exile during apartheid. This study will, therefore, contribute to the theoretical and empirical knowledge on children seeking refuge.

Notes

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5. Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 181.
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7. James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–38; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).
8. Clifford, *Diasporas,* 307.
9. Raymond Suttner, "Culture(s) of the African National Congress of South Africa: Imprint of Exile Experiences," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 2 (2003): 317.
10. Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano, "Married to the ANC: Tanzanian Women's Entanglement in South Africa's Liberation Struggle." Unpublished, 2013, 2.
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12. Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters;* Cock, *Colonels.*
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16. Mark Israel, *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); Nadja Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection* (Auckland Park, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 1991).
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18. David Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood* (London: Routledge, 1993).
19. Kimberle W. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 (2006): 193–209.
20. Clifford, *Diaspora,* 302–38.
21. Bernstein, *Rift;* Manghezi, *Maputo Connection.*
22. The ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College was an educational institution established between 1978 and 1992 in Tanzania on land provided by the Tanzanian government. It included facilities for primary, secondary, nursery, and vocational education (Morrow, *Education in Exile*).
23. Morrow, *Education in Exile.*
24. Israel, *South African Political Exile;* Bernstein, *Rift.*
25. Bernstein, *Rift.*
26. Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters.*
27. This term refers to countries bordering South Africa such as Mozambique, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Manghezi, *Maputo Connection;* Hassim, *Women's Organisations.*
28. Morrow, *Education in Exile;* Lissoni and Suriano, "Married to the ANC."
29. Israel, *South African Political Exile;* Bernstein, *Rift.*
30. Said, *Reflections on Exile,* 184.
31. Clifford, *Diasporas,* 313.
32. Marianne Hirsch, "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile," in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, Backward Glances,* ed. S.R Suleiman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 420.
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38. Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani, *Education in Exile, SOMAFCO: The ANC School in Tanzania 1978–1992* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2004); Hassim, *Women's Organisations.*
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41. Suttner, *Culture of ANC.*
42. Bernstein, *Rift*; Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*; Cock, *Colonels*; Manghezi, *Maputo Connection.*
43. Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*.
44. Morrow, *Education in Exile*; Manghezi, *Maputo Connection.*
45. Ngcobo, *Prodigal daughters*.
46. Ibid., 43.
47. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985): xvi.
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49. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (London: Polity, 1990).
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65. The countries in which the respondents lived are Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Spain, Swaziland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
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79. Ingrid de Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," in Nuttall and Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past*, 61.
80. Ndebele, "Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative," 21.
81. De Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms," 62.
82. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
83. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
84. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
85. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
86. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
87. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 8 June 2013.

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88. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
89. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
90. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 30 May 2013.
91. Ibid.
92. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 24 May 2013.
93. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 18 May 2013.
94. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 6 June 2013.
95. Ibid.
96. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
97. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 May 2013.
98. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
99. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
100. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 30 May 2013.
101. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 6 June 2013.
102. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 30 May 2013.
103. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
104. On 16 June 1976, students staged school boycotts in Soweto in the wake of attempts by the Department for Bantu Administration and Education to introduce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This was met with a violent state response, leading to the death of hundreds of children and the expansion of the school boycotts to the rest of South Africa involving approximately 20,000 students (Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid*).
105. Interview, female respondent, Pretoria, 9 June 2013.
106. Interview, female respondent, Grahamstown, 4 June 2013.
107. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 2 June 2013.
108. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
109. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 30 May 2013.
110. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 2 June 2013.
111. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
112. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
113. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 30 May 2013.
114. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
115. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
116. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
117. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
118. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
119. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 24 May 2013.
120. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
121. Ibid.
122. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 May 2013.
123. Ibid.
124. Interview, male respondent, Pretoria, 17 May 2013.
125. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 24 May 2013.
126. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 6 June 2013.
127. Interview, male respondent,Johannesburg, 2 June 2013.
128. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 24 May 2013.
129. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
130. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 May 2013.
131. Interview, female respondent, Pretoria, 9 June 2013.
132. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 7 August 2013.
133. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
134. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
135. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
136. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 9 June 2013.
137. Interview, female respondent, Grahamstown, 4 June 2013.
138. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 6 June 2013.
139. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 6 June 2013.
140. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
141. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 23 May 2013.
142. Interview, male respondent, Johannesburg, 28 May 2013.
143. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
144. Interview, female respondent, Pretoria, 9 June 2013.
145. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 3 June 2013.
146. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 12 June 2013.
147. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 22 May 2013.
148. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 June 2013.
149. Interview, female respondent, Grahamstown, 4 June 2013.
150. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 June 2013.
151. Interview, female respondent, Johannesburg, 23 July 2013.
152. Ibid.
153. Ingrid Palmary, *For Better Implementation of Migrant Children's Rights in South Africa* (Pretoria: UNICEF, 2009).

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Queer Settlers: Questioning Settler Colonialism in LGBT Asylum Processes in Canada

Katherine Fobear

Abstract

Refugee and forced migration studies have focused primarily on the refugees' countries of origin and the causes for migration. Yet it is also important to also critically investigate the processes, discourses, and structures of settlement in the places they migrate to. This has particular significance in settler states like Canada in which research on refugee and forced migration largely ignores the presence of Indigenous peoples, the history of colonization that has made settlement possible, and ways the nation has shaped its borders through inflicting control and violence on Indigenous persons. What does it mean, then, to file a refugee claim in a state like Canada in which there is ongoing colonial violence against First Nations communities? In this article, we will explore what it means to make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation and gender identity in a settler-state like Canada. For sexual and gender minority refugees in Canada, interconnected structures of colonial discourse and regulation come into force through the Canadian asylum and resettlement process. It is through this exploration that ideas surrounding migration, asylum, and settlement become unsettled.

Résumé

Les études sur les réfugiés et les migrations forcées ont porté principalement sur les pays des réfugiés d'origine et les causes de la migration. Pourtant, il est également important d'aussi étudier de manière critique les processus, les discours et les structures de peuplement dans les endroits vers lesquels ils migrent. Cela a une signification particulière dans les états coloniaux comme le Canada où la recherche sur les réfugiés et la migration forcée ignore en grande partie la présence des peuples autochtones, l'histoire de la colonisation qui a rendu le peuplement possible et les moyens par lesquels la nation a façonné ses frontières en usant de pouvoir et de violence sur les populations autochtones. Quel est le sens, alors, de déposer une demande d'asile dans un état comme le Canada où persiste la violence coloniale contre les communautés des Premières Nations? Dans cet article, nous allons explorer ce que cela signifie de faire une demande d'asile fondée sur l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre dans un état colonial comme le Canada. Pour les réfugiés d'orientation sexuelle et d'identité de genre minoritaires au Canada, les structures interconnectées du discours colonial et de la réglementation entrent en vigueur dans le cadre de processus d'asile et de réinstallation. C'est grâce à cette étude que les idées entourant la migration, l'asile et le peuplement sont déstabilisées.

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Political and media attention on sexual and gender minority refugees has risen within Canada in the past ten years. This attention has focused primarily on anti-queer violence and the particularly oppressive conditions that push sexual and gender minority persons to seek asylum in Canada. While there has been some work of significance done by researchers on hetero-normativity and the Canadian asylum process, less work has been done on the historical and ongoing colonial structures that sexual and gender minority persons must navigate as they make a refugee claim in Canada. A guiding question in this article is to explore what it means to make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation and gender identity in a settler state like Canada, where there is ongoing colonial violence against First Nations communities and other racialized bodies. What are the implications? For sexual and gender minority refugees in Canada, all of these different but interconnected structures of settler-colonial discourse and regulation take effect through the Canadian asylum and resettlement process.

In this article, I approach in-state sexual and gender minority refugee asylum in Canada using a post-colonial theoretical lens. It is through this exploration that I hope to unsettle notions of migration, asylum, and settlement to critically investigate the refugee asylum process for sexual and gender minority refugees.[1] This article is not a complete review of the field of refugee and forced migration studies, queer migration studies, or post-colonial studies, but instead highlights significant literature and arguments. Because asylum encompasses a large range of legal, political, and social processes, much too broad to fully analyze for the scope of this article, this literature review focuses only on the level of the in-state refugee process, especially as it relates to sexual and gender minority refugee claims in Canada. The literature selected ranges from qualitative and legal studies on the in-state refugee process in Canada to cultural critiques of in-state asylum and immigration by post-colonial and critical race scholars. By basing the selection of literature on the defined parameters of in-state refugee claims, I hope to provide a concentrated and focused argument on the importance of a post-colonial critique on forced migration and refugee studies as it relates to sexual and gender minority refugees. Using a post-colonial framework to analyze in-state sexual and gender minority refugee claims in Canada allows us to go beyond hetero-normative and racial settler frameworks to look at the larger political, social, and legal forces at play in Canada's refugee system and its settler state.[2]

Interrogating Imperialism and Colonialism in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Interrogating refugee or forced migration research in the context of historical and ongoing colonialism and imperialism is an unruly task. The first reason for this difficulty is that refugee or forced migration studies remain a largely unstructured and diverse collection of work that span several disciplines; second, relatively few studies connect intersecting theories and historical processes of colonialism to processes of forced migration. This is a missed opportunity in forced migration and refugee studies, as it falsely places the phenomenon of forced migration and asylum into a box outside of larger social, economic, and political processes stemming from the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

The legal process and protocol of asylum, as well as the definition of "refugee," is a relatively recent development, first created by the 1951 Refugee Convention and recurrently modified in the interim. Despite this recent development, the economic, social, and political forces that cause persons to be displaced and that regulate the traffic of individuals to find asylum in other states have deep historical links with past and present colonial structures. In not situating refugee and forced migration research in historical and ongoing processes of colonialism, the phenomenon of forced migration and refugee asylum appears ahistorical. We may live in a complex world in which multiple factors come together to affect refugee migration, asylum processes, and the settlement of refugee diasporic communities, but this world has been made through the historical and ongoing processes of various and intersecting colonial and imperial histories and processes. Colonialism in its many different historical, social, and geographic forms did not end with the official end of the old empires, but instead continues to reproduce itself through ongoing dichotomies, hierarchies, and norms, as well as through the unequal exchange of power and resources. To investigate refugee and forced migration without understanding the historical and contextual mechanisms of imperialism and colonialism creates a post-colonial amnesia and a further silencing of ongoing colonial violence.

As much as forced migration studies may be a wide and diverse field, so too is post-colonial studies. Postcolonialism was first conceived by political theorists and historians as the historical period after colonial occupation and the establishment of independent states. Since then, the term has widened to incorporate more than the historical period after colonialism. Post-colonialism is now seen by the majority of post-colonial theorists as the cultural interactions between the colonized and the colonizers from the moment of colonization onwards. Post-colonial

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studies interrogates the effects of colonialism, while recognizing the specificity of each case in which it is deployed.[3] The "post" in post-colonial is regarded by most post-colonial theorists as a challenge to the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath. Instead, post-colonialism should be seen as more of an "unbroken term" to the long history of colonial consequences.[4] Within post-colonial studies, immigration has played a prominent role, especially in understanding how the regulation of colonizer and colonized persons' movement and settlement solidified national borders and created the modern state. Within Canada, post-colonial theorists work to critique and understand the ways in which settler colonialism continues to shape both Indigenous sovereignty and access to settlement and citizenship for immigrants.

Legal and qualitative studies of refugee and forced migration that have interrogated processes, structures, and discourses of imperialism and colonialism have shown how ongoing imperial processes shaped practices and policies of migration and asylum through globalization and global inequality, through the creation and controlling of geographical, political, and social borders, and through the global and national regulation of citizenship and rights.[5] This research has brought much-needed critical attention to refugee and forced migration studies by grounding it in intersecting colonial and imperial legacies. These different legacies of imperialism and colonialism intersect globally, nationally, and locally in the structural, discursive, and material factors that shape refugees' lives. Migration and settlement cannot be adequately theorized outside of spatialized relations of imperial and colonial power.[6] Therefore, histories and theories of colonization and imperialism are critical in studies of forced migration and settlement. This involves not only recognizing difference in histories and experiences, but also the different historical and contextual networks that draw people into collectives and "create micro-circuits of power, locating some in positions of influence and marginalizing others."[7]

Often the causes for forced migration lie in the past and ongoing effects of imperialism. For example, research on social conflict as well as political and social persecution has shown that often the roots of oppression, inequality, and social unrest are located in the historical legacies of imperial rule as colonized lands and Indigenous communities were arbitrarily divided, exploited, and placed on a social, economic, and political hierarchy. These processes continued in the "post" colonial world as the unequal exchange of resources and power did not end with colonialism but instead were further reproduced through globalization. As Edward Said argues, imperialism did not end with the dismantling of the classical empires, but instead laid the foundations for the global world. Western imperialism, the expansion of European and American power around the world, was already a form of globalization.[8] Global economic super-powers in the twentieth century, such as the United States, have simply redrawn old colonial maps of power and exchange in the interests of economic and capitalistic expansion.[9]

These "maps" or paths of power and exchange between different states effect migration routes and settlement processes of refugees as they negotiate state and global economic, social, and political structures in migrating and engaging in settlement. As Catherine Dauvergne notes, worldwide regulation of migration is a product of the twentieth century in which the world was firmly divided by geographic, economic, and political borders.[10] Dauvergne argues that you cannot think about migration without thinking about the construction of national borders and state sovereignty.[11] Yet, even before modern regulation of borders and citizenship by separate states, the world was already divided along colonial and imperial lines of power and exchange. The creation of nation states and the system of international law and state sovereignty were informed by historical and ongoing colonial structures. Often the borders open to refugees to cross and claim asylum are directly affected by historical and ongoing economic, social, and political relationships between certain states.

A case in point is Chowra Makaremi's work on Rwandan refugee claimants in France.[12] France's responsibility for the tribal and ethnic inequality and division of Hutus and Tutsis during the colonial era, and its actions and inactions during the Rwandan civil war, come face-to-face with the ever-increasing border control by France to refugees from the global South. Rwanda refugees seeking asylum in France continue to be caught in the colonial crossfire as they were forced to migrate from Rwanda because of ethnic and political conflict (that owes its creation to French colonial rule) with neighbouring countries. Yet when these Rwandan refugees finally make it to France and claim asylum, they are denied entry because they do not fit into France's definition of what a "legitimate" refugee should be. As Makaremi shows in her interviews with Rwandan refugees, an individual's failure to fully explain ethnicity, nationality, and often non-linear migration routes are seen as proof by the French border guards as illegitimacy. By enforcing a narrow definition of ethnicity, as well as not taking into consideration the complexity of cultural and tribal affiliations within Rwanda and the effects of trauma that Rwandan refugees have experienced because of ethnic genocide, their stories did not fit into a clean and clear narrative, which caused their claim to be discredited by French border guards.

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In addition, the global inequality between the former colonial states and the old colonial empires has meant that more often than not, asylum seekers from former colonized states are not able to take a direct migratory path to claim asylum in countries like France, and instead must relocate numerous times over a period of several years before they are able to gain enough economic and social support to seek asylum.[13] Through this entire process, intersecting colonial histories and legacies come together, directly affecting the lives of refugees. These colonial histories intersect on multiple levels: from past colonial rule either informing or being directly responsible for the causes that force individuals to migrate, through the often non-linear migration of asylum seekers to the global North because of ongoing economic, political, and social inequality, to the policing of refugee claimants at the border by cultural and racist insensitivity and xenophobic nationalism.

Seeking Refuge in a Settler State: What Are the Implications?

The definition and grounds upon which a refugee claim is made are informed by nationalistic ways of thinking about who is a legitimate refugee and who is a "bogus" refugee.[14] While the original refugee definition from the 1951 UN Refugee Convention has expanded to encompass a wider range of refugee persons, refugee claimants are ultimately defined as legal or illegal, legitimate or illegitimate, largely by the state. The state not only plays an important role in constructing categories and hierarchies of belonging, but also serves as the political and cultural production of refugee identities in the public sphere.[15] This production of identities happens during the refugee claim determination process and throughout the refugees' settlement.

A case that illustrates this point is in Wenona Giles and Penny Van Esterik's work with women refugees in Canada. "When women become defined as refugees, who they are is usually tied to notions of the relationship of backwardness and victimization."[16] By essentializing refugee women's experiences and connecting them to notions of barbarism, Canada becomes the "white knight" in providing asylum to marginalized and oppressed women from the global South. Yet this victimization and essentializing of women refugee's identities and experiences ignores confrontations of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism in education, wage work, and the social and legal services many of these women face while living in Canada.

In addition to the dichotomizing and essentializing refugees' identities and experiences, Giles and Van Esterik's work shows us the importance of focusing on how national colonial histories inform refugee subjectivities and their experiences.[17] Too often refugee and diasporic studies have focused primarily on the refugees' countries of origin and the causes for migration, yet it is important to also critically investigate the processes, discourses, and structures of settlement in the places they migrate to. Or to put it another way, one must not only ask where refugees have come *from,* but where have they come *to*.[18] This has particular significance in settler states like Canada, in which research on refugee and forced migration largely ignores the presence of Indigenous peoples, the history of colonization that has made settlement possible, and how the nation has shaped its borders through inflicting control and violence on Indigenous persons and non-Northern European immigrants.[19] What does it mean, then, to file a refugee claim in a state like Canada in which there is ongoing colonial violence against First Nations communities and other racialized bodies? What are the implications? How do refugees engage in settlement in an internally colonialized state? These questions need to be interrogated further.

For the past century, Canada has sought an international leadership position and an international identity as defender of human rights. Canada received special recognition by the United Nations for its extraordinary and dedicated service to refugees.[20] Yet even with these accolades of peacemaking, a dedication to multiculturalism, and an active involvement in refugee rights on an international level, the legal and settlement process of making a refugee claim within Canada are very much tied to racial, gender, class, and sexual dichotomies and hierarchies that stem from ongoing settler colonialism. Canada's national identity and its regulation of immigration is informed through ongoing settler colonialism in which the erasure of Indigenous persons and the control of non-white immigrants go hand-in-hand with the creation of the Canadian state and the solidifying of its borders. Investigating refugee settlement in a settler state involves looking at whiteness and national mythologies of white settler colonialism in Canada.

White settler colonialism involves the historic process of settlement of Europeans on non-European soil. Its foundation rests on the dispossession and marginalization of Indigenous populations. Through this process, a racial hierarchy is created in which white Northern European settlers are at the top.[21] This racial hierarchy is intertwined with national mythologies, discourses, and practices in which national citizenship and "legitimate" settlement or ownership of the land falls along distinct racial, gender, sexual, and class lines. The story of the land becomes a racial story in which European settlers are seen as the bearers of civilization, transforming and ultimately saving the land from its so-called primitive or savage past.[22]

This racial story informs migration as non-white and working-class whites were and continue to be seen as

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invaders or threats to the nation. Refugees are depicted as cheaters of the immigration system, uncivilized and "fresh off the boat," and that image creates an othering effect for refugees in which they are made into non-legitimate citizens who do not belong to the established, settled, and civilized Canadian nation. This othering of refugees remains, so that even after years of settlement in Canada, the refugee label is used to "distance people further away from the nation and point them to another place of belonging."[23] Equating refugees with cheating citizenship and being uncivilized reinforces the "claim of the national space by reifying both the refugee and the nation as separate entities—each having a priori a life of its own."[24] Not only are the complexities of refugees' experiences ignored, but the whiteness of Canadian settlement is maintained through the othering of refugees as inherently separate to the nation. Race, therefore, plays a significant factor, as the colour of one's skin affects how "successfully" refugees can fit in or look as though they "belong" to Canada.

Research on Sexual and Gender Minority Refugees

Ethnographic research on refugee and forced migration emphasizes the importance of viewing migration, asylum, and settlement as a process, not an event, and the diversity of today's refugees. Yet, despite attention to the diversity of refugees' experiences and migratory processes, little attention has been paid to the role of sexuality in migration and asylum. Until very recently, sexual and gender minority migrants or queer migrants were ignored by dominant migration literature.[25] Much of the literature on refugee and forced migration continues to render sexuality invisible by having heterosexuality as the "unmarked but taken-for-granted premise" for migratory relationships, desires, and processes.[26] Sexuality and migration are together disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices through migration and citizenship processes.[27] An example can be seen in Jon Binnie's research on the hetero-normativity of U.S. and British immigration regulations that exclude lesbian and gay couples from full citizenship rights and have historically limited sexual and gender minorities from entering the state.[28]

Yet focusing on just sexuality and its relation to the state is not enough to understand the complexity and intersectionality of sexual and gender minority refugees. Scholars need to look at how wider unequal global relations inform and regulate migration and the experiences of sexual and gender minority refugees, as well as the historical and current colonial and imperial structures and discourses that shape migration and settlement. This is especially the case when talking about migration of sexual and gender minorities from the global South to the global North. John Hawley has argued that the rising anti-queer violence occurring in many "post" colonial states in the global South are products of the ongoing violence brought on by colonialization and Western imperialism, and that the majority of anti-sodomy and anti-homosexuality laws that continue to be enforced owe their birth to colonialism.[29] However, despite pioneering and innovative research on the diversity of queer migrant lives, the majority of these works still organize around a narrow narrative of individuals moving from repression in the global South to freedom in the global North.[30] The danger of this linear narrative is that sexual and gender minority refugees' experiences can become appropriated to serve nationalistic foreign policy objectives, and their subjectivities and histories become represented within settler-colonialist racist understandings of culture and sexual/gender identity.[31] This not only silences the voices and complex experiences of sexual and gender minority refugees, but also ignores how sexualities are used for imperialistic, militaristic, and nationalistic aims.

As Cruz-Malave and Manalansan write, "Queer sexualities and cultures have often been deployed negatively to allay anxieties about 'authentic' national belonging in our massively migratory contemporary world and positively by nation-states in order to project an image of global modernness consistent with capitalist market exchange."[32] This does not mean that violence against sexual and gender minorities, and the routes they take to escape and resist persecution, should not be considered an important issue. Sexual and gender minority refugees often describe their experiences in their struggles against oppression and persecution, as well as how migration to another location or community has given them opportunities, dignity, and freedom that they could not find elsewhere. Sexual and gender minority refugees undertake considerable odds in moving across state borders and making a refugee claim. It is therefore important to recognize their agency in making a refugee claim and how they work within the refugee system to tell their stories and speak their truths.[33]

Their stories cannot be simply reduced to an example of Western dominance or exploitation of their lives to fuel nationalistic and imperialistic desires. The difficulty arises, though, when the search for freedom from homophobic persecution in their countries of origin become the only elements of sexual and gender minority refugee migration that are addressed in forced migration research and refugee policy.[34] What is needed, then, is a far more intersectional approach to looking at migration and settlement for sexual and gender minority refugees.

When investigating refugee and forced migration of sexual and gender minorities, we must resist oversimplifying

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complex migration processes and instead look at how globalism and imperialism have routed cultures and lives, as well as understanding the counter-hegemonic routes that many sexual and gender minorities have deployed to redirect power and discourse as they engage in migration and the refugee process.[35] Researchers need to investigate the political, economic, and social structures that not only regulate migration and the refugee process but also enforce and reproduce oppressive sexual norms that are gendered, racialized, and classed.[36] This involves paying attention to whiteness and the racialization, gendering, classing, and sexualization of discourses of inclusion and normalcy, both as these play into defining the in-state refugee process and reaffirming particular sexual, racial, gender, and class politics.[37]

Sexual and Gender Minority Refugees in Canada

In 1991, Canada was the first Western nation to grant refugee status on the basis of sexual orientation.[38] In 1993, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *(AG) v Ward* that sexual orientation should be included in the parameters of a "particular social group" under the 1951 UN Convention of the Status of Refugee within Canadian refugee law.[39] By 1995, the Canadian refugee tribunal became the first to have adjudicator training and in-house human rights information on the status of sexual and gender minorities in different countries.[40] Yet, despite this progressive legislature within Canada, hetero-normativity and cultural bias within the refugee decision-making process continues to victimize, marginalize, and ultimately penalize sexual and gender minorities when attempting to gain asylum in Canada.

Sharalyn Jordan writes that undertaking an asylum application within Canada for sexual and gender minorities "entails accessing and working within a refugee system that was not designed with sexual and gender minorities in mind."[41] Western constructions of sexual and gender identity are often forced upon claimants that may not necessarily identify with or fit into these same constructs. As research on sexuality has shown, sexuality, sexual practices, gender, and sexual subjectivities are fluid and culturally positioned. Yet, for the purpose of granting asylum to sexual and gender minorities, Euro-American notions of sexual and gender identity and citizenship have been internationally enforced by Western states to define how sexual and gender minorities fit into the category of a "particular social group" under the 1951 convention. The history of the sexual rights movement in the West; the historically and culturally specific North American and Western European framework of the hetero/homosexual binary; the identification of one's sexual practice as a primary identity and lifestyle; the attachment to specific U.S.-based political terminology, such as "being open," "coming out," and the "closet" are all embedded in Canada's determination of sexual and gender minority refugee claimants from other countries.

As most sexual and gender minority refugees come from culturally different backgrounds and are disproportionately low-income, the effort to prove to the adjudicators that they belong to a sexual and/or gender minority becomes heavily racialized and classed. Sexual exceptionalism works by first glossing over boundaries of gender, race, and class formations and then implicitly privileging white and Western gay norms.[42] Sexual and gender minority refugee claimants must "prove their authenticity of their sexual identity by reverse covering, emphasizing traits based on western stereotypes of sexual minorities."[43] Often these stereotypes are "intricately linked with race" in which the "criteria used to ascertain whether or not the applicant's identity and behavior meet the evidentiary requirements are based on racialized stereotypes and white gay norms."[44]

The gay norm that serves as the basis for a "legitimate" or authentic gay identity is based primarily on a Western, white, wealthy, gay, male lifestyle. Boxing sexual and gender minority claimants into Western sexual identity categories, lifestyles, and discourses creates confusion and inconsistent rulings in the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) as refugees are left under the scrutiny of culturally insensitive and biased conceptions of sexuality. Nicole LaViolette, Alice Miller, Sharalyn Jordan, and Edward Ou Jin Lee and Shari Brotman[45] have all given evidence of IRB adjudicators rejecting a person's claim because they looked "straight enough" by conforming to Western gender roles, had previous sexual relationships or ongoing partnerships with persons of the opposite sex, or did not show enough knowledge about (Western) gay and lesbian culture. In their work on refugee determination for sexual and gender minorities, Sharalyn Jordan and Nicole LaViolette[46] show how IRB adjudicators ask inappropriate and often traumatizing questions on a person's sexual practices and make the claimants reveal their private feelings about having sexual intercourse with a member of the same sex.

Sexual and gender minority refugee claimants must prove their sexual and gender authenticity in refugee hearings or interviews. Sexual and gender minority refugees applicants work with and against Western narratives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) identities and lifestyles in order to be recognized as a member of a particular social group, while all the time their credibility is heavily scrutinized.[47] However, unlike for some social groups based on political or ethnic persecution, the burden of proof of persecution for sexual and gender minorities relies almost entirely on their testimonies. This involves requiring sexual and gender minority claimants to explicitly document often

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hidden, heavily stigmatized identities and to disclose traumatic experiences that are deeply private. Sexual and gender identity is also seen as more "voluntary" than other identity categories making it appear as a disability that could easily be avoided if individuals learned how to hide it better.

In order to prove persecution, sexual and gender minority claimants may have to inferiorize and pathologize their ethnic, religious, or cultural communities in order to fit into Canada's national fantasies of being a safe haven to marginalized populations. This not only silences the complexity of sexual and gender minorities' experiences, but also ignores how Canada and the rest of the global North have been implicated in the violence worldwide towards sexual and gender minorities through economic, social, and political exploitation and inequality. Often culture is substituted for imperialism, as stereotypical and orientalizing images and metaphors are used to separate the racism, sexism, and homophobia in the global South from the "progressive," "developed," and "civilized" global North.

The same perils happen for sexual and gender minority refugees in Canada as their testimonies are dichotomized into a falsely linear story of their finding asylum in Canada. The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board do not have to ask themselves how Canada and the global North have contributed to and often orchestrated massive social, political, and economic upheaval in the global South that in turn produces refugees. The IRB never have to ask how Canada's policies and actions overseas have contributed to the marginalization and precarity of sexual and gender minority individuals. Never do they have to think about Canada's responsibility and accountability to these persons, and instead can demand and judge those seeking asylum on the very narrow terms and assumptions that they define. The refugee hearing ultimately becomes a stage in which the refugee claimants must prove themselves as deserving recipients for the benevolence of the Canadian state.[48] The benevolent helper myth is further reproduced in the post-9/11 Canadian press as sexual and gender minorities are framed as agentless and helpless victims to their homophobic and culturally backward home countries.[49] "This simplistic framing of what is a complicated migratory process not only results in the silencing of more complex narratives dictated by sexual minority refugees themselves, but also produces a discursive erasure of the very real forms of heterosexism and homo/transphobic violence present in Canada today."[50] Not only is it reproduced by mainstream media, but is also used by predominantly white and middle-class LGBT rights groups in Canada to further support nationalistic and imperialistic desires. Mainstream Canadian LGBT politics have taken form as a predominately white, middle-class, cisgender, and non-Native movement compatible with a white settler society that ignores ongoing colonial violence against racialized and Indigenous sexualities and sexual and gender minorities. By evoking Canada as the saviour and safe haven to sexual and gender minorities from the global South, the ongoing sexual violence and oppression of settler colonialism against racialized minorities and First Nations populations in Canada is silenced. Although many sexual and gender rights groups in Canada challenge whiteness and settler homo-nationalism, that alone may not dismantle settler colonialism and its effect on sexual politics within Canada.[51] This results in a culturally racist construction of sexuality that reinforces white settler colonialism by erasing the historical and ongoing sexual violence against racialized and Indigenous persons within Canada.[52]

Philip Marfleet writes that the "circumstances of most refugees are determined by politicians and state officials who rarely show interest in migrations of the past—indeed, denial of refugee histories is part of the process of denying refugee realities today."[53] As researchers, we need to ask how sexual and gender minority refugees' histories have been used by the Canadian settler state for national political, economic, and social reasons. We need to further investigate how sexual and gender minority refugees have been silenced through the asylum and settlement process in Canada. We must also look at how refugees' histories provide a counter-narrative to the uncluttered white-settler history of Canada by connecting refugees' histories and experiences to settler colonialism. Within Canada, refugees are silenced in the national history and are brought forward only in nationalistic efforts to reassert a white settler history of the land.

In the asylum process, refugee testimonies are confined to particular scripts that refugees can use to their advantage, but are then they are often marginalized and traumatized by them. Outside of the asylum process, refugees' plights are taken up by the national and political discourse to support xenophobic policies, while at the same time promoting an international image of humanitarianism. Refugees are silenced through the settlement process as they try to seek out the limited resources provided to them while having to face anti-immigrant, racist, and sexist public attitudes and stigmas attached to being a refugee.

The experience of sexual and gender minority refugees can be further marginalizing as they face racism within the predominately white lesbian and gay community, in addition to homophobia within their own ethnic/cultural diasporic communities. "Articulating the ways in which the present day experiences of sexual minority refugees living in Canada have been profoundly influenced by transnational histories of colonialism and imperialism will allow for a historicized and context specific analysis into the

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particular consequences of dominant, interlocking systems of race, class, gender, ability and sexuality."[54] By incorporating refugees as subjects of history, we can understand how their experiences provide a new insight into the national settler history of Canada. Further research is needed on how sexual and gender minorities engage in settlement in Canada and how their histories intersect and confront settler colonialism.

Conclusion

At the 2013 Canadian Council for Refugees Spring Consultation in Vancouver, British Columbia, a workshop was held on building social bridges between Indigenous peoples and newcomers. Sitting in a circle of chairs inside a hotel ballroom, tribal leaders of the Penelakut First Nation spoke to a group comprising refugees and settlement workers. As the two leaders of the Penelakut First Nation spoke to the group about past and ongoing political and social persecution and violence brought upon their community by the Canadian government and settler colonialism, refugees from Eastern and Central Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia raised their hands to share with the group similar circumstances that led them to seek refuge in Canada. In each story, individuals spoke about a common understanding they felt with First Nations communities in Canada and expressed their embarrassment that they did not know that this kind of violence was happening here in Canada. Many spoke about how the information they received in the media abroad and from settlement services in Canada spoke nothing about First Nations communities. Canada was seen as a land of white, blonde-haired people that was prosperous and peaceful. Canada was a land of opportunity and freedom. But, as one person said at the end of the workshop, "Canada offered me a home when my home was taken away. But, as much as Canada has done for me, I must pay attention to what Canada has done to others. It is my duty as a refugee and as a Canadian."

It is this thought on which I wish to end. As seen in this article, there is need to critically investigate the links between colonialism, forced migration, and in-state refugee determination around the world. In Canada, this need is ever more pressing as present immigration and refugee reform has sought to further discriminate and marginalize migrants from the global South. For sexual and gender minority refugees, current Canadian refugee reform has led to greater vulnerability for refugee claimants and biased decision-making in the Immigration Refugee Board. A case in point is the newly established Designated Countries of Origin in which Mexico was determined a "safe" country that protects human rights and therefore does not normally produce refugees. Yet what happens on the legislative level is always very different from what happens on the ground. Often protection against persecution is obtainable only for a very select population who have the economic means to isolate and protect themselves from the state and the general public. Sexual and gender minorities are in significant danger of persecution in Mexico. While gay marriage is legal only in Mexico City, this does not translate to the protection of sexual and gender minorities in Mexico. Those who have access to gay marriage in Mexico City are a very select and wealthy few. Every month there are international reports of gang and state violence against sexual and gender minorities across Mexico, yet their refugee claims are being denied because of Mexico's Designated Country of Origin status and having gay marriage legal in Mexico City. Further research is needed on how racial, sexual, and gender constructs inform refugee decision-making and processes of immigration. We must critically ask ourselves what the ramifications are of providing refuge in a settler-state and what it means to be a refugee in a state where there is a settler racial hierarchy that marginalizes refugees from the global South and silences ongoing violence towards Indigenous communities. It is by asking these questions that we may work toward unsettling underlying settler-colonialism in the refugee and immigration process, as well as build valuable and supportive relationships between refugee and Indigenous communities.

Notes

1. It should be stated that while I do critically investigate underlying colonial structures in forced migration and refugee determination, I do not condemn refugee protection for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons as being futile or inherently wrong. The ability for states to provide asylum to those fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation and gender identity should be honoured, supported, and protected. Likewise, I want to emphasize the tenacity, bravery, and agency of sexual and gender minority refugees in seeking asylum in places like Canada and Europe. But with this recognition of refugee protection and refugees comes the necessity for critique and investigation. It is by investigating links between colonialism, forced migration, and the in-state refugee determination process that I wish to open a much-needed conversation on refugee protection in a settler state and the implication this has for sexual and gender minority refugees.
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A Study of the Experiences of Integration and Settlement of Afghan Government-Assisted Refugees in Halifax, Canada

Shiva Nourpanah

Abstract

This article presents a qualitative study of the experiences of a sample of Afghan refugees who have settled in Canada. Using Anthony Giddens's concepts of structure and agency, the author analyzes interview data to explore how the respondents express their agency within the structural constraints of refugee life. In light of the research findings, it is argued that Afghan refugees form a diverse and heterogeneous population, in stark contrast to the essentialized and homogenous portrayals of silent, suffering victims of circumstance as found in popular media and policy discourse.

Résumé

Cet article présente une étude qualitative des expériences d'un échantillon de réfugiés afghans qui se sont installés au Canada. En utilisant les concepts de structure et d'agentivité d'Anthony Giddens, l'auteur analyse les données de l'entrevue afin d'explorer la façon dont les répondants expriment leur entremise dans les contraintes structurelles de la vie de réfugié. À la lumière des résultats de la recherche, on soutient que les réfugiés afghans forment une population diverse et hétérogène, en contraste avec les représentations essentialisées et homogènes d'eux comme muettes et soumises victimes des circonstances que l'on trouve dans les médias populaires et le discours politique.

Introduction

Government–assisted refugees (GARs) are refugees who have been recognized by the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to meet the definition of refugee as set out in the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, and referred to a third country, such as Canada, for resettlement. After further screening by the immigration officials of the third country, these people are issued documentation allowing them to leave their country of asylum and enter the resettlement country as legal residents of that country. Upon arrival in the country of resettlement, they are met by state-funded service providers who provide them with a range of services designed to ease their settlement in their new country. Thus, Afghan GARs arrive in Canada as landed immigrants, they become permanent residents shortly after arrival, and, like any permanent residents who have migrated to Canada through other channels, may apply for and receive Canadian citizenship within the foreseeable future.

Afghan refugees have typically lived in other countries of asylum neighbouring their home country of Afghanistan for several years before their entry to Canada.[1] Iran and Pakistan remain the world's largest hosts to Afghan refugees, neither of which offer stable and secure legal and physical protection systems for the refuge population within their borders.[2] From a socio-cultural standpoint, Afghans share the same religion and language as the citizens of these host societies, and many are able to integrate within the labour

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market, albeit within the black market, and with no access to labour rights.[3]

The research question and fieldwork for this article arose out of a curiosity to study the settlement experiences of Afghan GARs in Halifax, a mid-sized city on the east coast of Canada, which does not have a sizeable immigration or diverse population such as found in larger Canadian cities. Halifax is the largest urban centre east of Quebec, part of the region known as Atlantic Canada, comprising four provinces with a problematic and thorny history of welcoming newcomers in their midst.[4] This research was undertaken to develop an understanding of the integration and settlement process of Afghan GARs living in this city, and the cultural and social challenges of their new society, intending to generate new knowledge of the effects of resettlement in the lives of refugees. Utilizing the concepts of agency and structure as pertaining to the experience of refuge and subsequent settlement, I ask, from a social and cultural standpoint, how Afghan government-assisted refugees adapt to life in Canada, where the culture, values, and lifestyle of the dominant majority are very different from that of their country of origin and the country of first asylum. This study explores the answers to these questions based on 10 in-depth, qualitative interviews with Afghan GARs in Nova Scotia.

There is extensive scholarly literature critiquing the politically silenced and deliberately muted construct of "refugees," examples of which can be found in the writings of Hannah Arendt,[5] Liisa Malkki,[6] Julie Kristeva,[7] and Peter Nyers.[8] These authors vehemently criticise the popular image of refugees as victims and passive sufferers who lack agency. Do Afghan GARs conform to this image, and to what extent are they active agents, able to make valid and significant choices in shaping their new lives?

The theoretical concepts of structure and agency expounded by Anthony Giddens provided the framework for thinking about these issues and bringing together the political (individual, agentic) and the sociological (structural, societal).[9] Giddens provided the tools for examining the interaction of the individual within the social fabric, and the theoretical grounding for the "encountering" and "routinization" that form the basis for this fabric. The interview questions were developed in an effort to concretize how the encountering and routinization takes place in the lives of Afghan refugees in Halifax. How do they spend their days? Whom do they see? What are their current social and cultural practices, and what are their individual interpretations of the received practices, assumed to be uniform for all "Afghans" and, indeed, for all Muslims?[10]

Literature Review

The settlement of immigrant groups in host countries, especially in a country such as Canada, which has not only been "built" on immigration but where there continues to be an active immigration policy, has aroused scholarly and policy interest. A frequently cited definition of integration, positing it as an objective to be achieved, is: "

Key domains of integration are related to four overall themes: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment."[11]

Yet the issues surrounding the integration and settlement of refugees remain largely divergent from this mainstream literature on "integration" and its achievement by immigrants. In reviewing literature on refugee integration, the scholarly interest in mental health issues as refugees settle into new societies jumps to the forefront.

Nann provides a detailed argument about how the "culture shock" resulting from resettlement exacerbates the stressful and precarious situation of refugees resettled from various countries to North America, and how forced migration "involves high risks to the mental health of those people [who have experienced it]"[12]: "

When migrants resettle into a new environment, they are usually exposed to a different culture, different ways of living and perhaps, to various forms of discrimination and prejudice. Previous research of migration populations has shown that homesickness often persists along with an obdurate clinging to the past, thereby prohibiting successful adaptation to the present. Among people who have been oppressed in their home country, a lingering fear of persecution may continue long after migration."[13]

While Lipson and Mileis concur that "migration is a stressful experience requiring accommodation, adaptation or coping," consequently classifying migrants and refugees amongst vulnerable populations,[14] they take issue with what they consider to be the two dominant paradigms in the literature on refugees and health: the first views refugees as "a poverty-stricken and political class of excess people," and the second objectifies refugees as medical phenomena. The authors present a critical feminist view of refugees, which instead of concentrating on health and illness, views refugees as resilient, stating that "refugees provide a vivid example of the human capacity to survive despite the greatest losses and assaults on human identity and dignity."[15]

Witmer and Culvert[16] also critically review the literature available on refugee mental health, specifically the "trauma" and resilience" of Bosnian Muslim families. They argue

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that the available research is focused on the "post-traumatic stress disorder, psychopathology, and individual-based assessment and intervention, with few studies addressing concepts of adaptation, functioning or resiliency, and even fewer focusing on the family as a unit."[17]

In a study of the role of leisure pursuits in the adaptation of Afghan immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg, the authors' point of departure is that "globally, Afghan immigrants/refugees are a marginalised minority group who encounter substantial hardships and stress in the processes of adaptation to a new environment."[18] The hardships and trauma experienced by these refugees explain the complexity of negotiating identity and prejudice (in this case, anti-Afghan prejudice) in the modern era of international wars, inter-ethnic conflict, and mass migration across the globe.[19]

Katrin Eun-Myo Park points out the gendered nature of mental health afflictions: "One of the most pressing issues facing Afghan refugees, especially women, today is their mental health, according to the World health organization (WHO) and advocates for women. Although the issue of survival takes priority, more people are recognizing the importance of the mental health of refugees … Noting that over 2 million Afghans are estimated to suffer from mental health problems, WHO urged the reestablishment of mental health services to treat them."[20]

Parin Dossa resists these tropes of mental problems in her work on Iranian immigrants. She argues that these labels hark back to the political silencing and problematizing of refugees, which was touched upon above. Referring to a dominant world order that defines the practices of multiple nation-states, she writes, "

Displaced people are as seen challenging and subverting this order, and this is why national and international bodies control and manage anyone who is perceived not to have territorial roots. A common strategy is to use the idiom of mental health as exemplified in constructs such as 'refugee mental health' and 'post-traumatic stress disorder.'"[21]

The works of Evangelia Tastsoglou on the settlement experiences of immigrant women in the Maritime provinces of Canada,[22] and Parin Dossa[23] on those of Afghan women, were particularly relevant, as many of their themes were identified in the findings of this research. Themes such as food, parenting, friendships and social networks, education, and religion were covered, with the consistent underlying motif of how to be or to remain "Afghan" while developing a sense of belonging in Canada. These will be discussed at greater length in the research findings.

Methodology: Qualitative Research, Access, and Recruitment

I conducted 10 open-ended, in-depth interviews, all with Afghan government-assisted refugees who were resettled in Canada via UNHCR within the past five years. These interviews were conducted from October 2009 to February 2010. Nine of them took place in a family setting, with the children (often young adults) and both parents present and answering the questions collectively. One interview took place with an individual (male). All took place at the homes of the interviewees, with prior appointment. I undertook one additional interview with an Iranian woman contracted by the government and NGOs to provide translation services to Farsi-speaking immigrants in Halifax, for the purpose of triangulation and validation of my data. The interviews for this study were all conducted and transcribed in Farsi, the language commonly spoken by both Afghanis and Iranians, with the quotes used in this study translated to English by the author. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

The chosen research methodology, that of qualitative research, is particularly apposite in studies on immigrants, for it provides a counterpoint to the prevalent discourse on the homogenization of immigrants, touched upon above, in which immigrants from a particular country or of a particular religion are assumed to have a "common personal history" and "a sameness of experience in Canada."[24] But "qualitative research reveals that this is decidedly not the case; immigrants (regardless of their visa status) have distinctive personal histories and are as socially, economically, and politically differentiated as more longstanding Canadians."[25]

And if qualitative research is well-suited to documenting the experiences of immigrants, for refugees in particular it can be very apt, for it has the potential to provide space for the "voices" of the refugees while critically situating the researcher in relation to the research subjects. As discussed above, refugees are typically lacking in political and legal voice. Their movements and access is heavily controlled by administrative structures with no space for critical reflexivity, and they are subject to a homogenizing discourse in both popular and academic media that emphasizes their victimhood and silent suffering. In this environment, then, "refugees' perceptions and knowledge of their problems are designated as subjective, biased and uninformed. They are even ultimately viewed as misleading because institutions interested in absorbing or rehabilitating refugees impose their own definitions of relevant facts, needs and goals in a way that the institute can 'handle them'".[26]

Harrell-Bond and Voutira detail the almost surreal bureaucratic and administrative obstacles in gaining

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"access" to refugees, whom they call "invisible actors," placed in their way by UNHCR and government authorities: "

It is the problematique of studying these refugees which was the main stimulus for writing this paper, but our concerns with the general problems of accessing refugees for research purposes and disseminating the findings led us to include a more general discussion of the challenges raised in the context of accessing the 'refugee' as a persona, as a person, and as a public perception, within spaces that are visible and identifiable, but largely inaccessible to researchers for a variety of reasons."[27]

Yet while the GARs live in Halifax openly, ostensibly free from institutional control, accessing and recruiting participants for my study proved one of the most challenging phases of my study. And once I gained some access, negotiating the (often unspoken) terms on which the interviews were carried out, and establishing rapport with the participants proved to be equally onerous. As I wasn't researching a "community" as such, rather a diffuse set of households, with very heterogeneous and diverse lifestyles (indeed, one of the main goals of this study was to document the sheer diversity of outlook and backgrounds of "Afghan refugees", ranging from atheist to extremely religious, urban to rural, and educated to non-literate, and so on), I didn't have to deal with any "gatekeeper" or "professional stranger-handler,"[28] but neither could I rely on one point of entry or the much-relied-on "snow-balling sampling" method. "Do you think you can introduce me to your friends and acquaintances, so I can interview them, similar to what we had now?," I recall asking Hussein, a male research participant, after our interview. "No, I am sorry, I cannot do that. Of course now I know you, so I didn't mind being interviewed, but others do not know you, and if, God forbid, anything unpleasant should arise from these interviews, I don't want to bear the responsibility." This was a fairly typical attitude. Public notices and requests to the local settlement NGO to pass my information to GARs proved fruitless, and at times it seemed to me each family were their own gatekeeper, in terms of their sheer (understandable) reluctance to allow a stranger in their midst to be questioned. The fact that, as refugees, they demonstrated great caution needs hardly belabouring. My breakthrough points came on two occasions: once, when I attended the Quran lessons in a local mosque, with my hair and body covered in full hijab, contrary to my general mode of dress in Canada. There, I became friendly with a pair of young Afghan sisters, who then introduced me to their father and secured an invitation for me to a large family gathering. The second occasion was at a large multicultural potluck event organized by a local NGO, where I showed up with my own family in tow, my hair and body once more wrapped in full hijab, covered with the same types of clothing I have to wear in Iran. My husband persuaded some Afghan men to let me interview them; I talked to the women, and I had five interviews lined up that evening.

Although I appreciate that "the goal of establishing true rapport requires honesty of the researcher,"[29] I felt rather dishonest showing up for those interviews while continuing to wear the hijab, but they had first seen me in full hijab, and I would have felt foolish and unwelcome if I had gone bare-headed. I strategically took my little daughter with me, to cement my position as a friendly, non-threatening, motherly, harmless figure, and a box of cookies, and the interviews were like long familial gatherings, where we were courteously welcomed in, settled in the living room, offered tea and sweets and nuts, and then simply chatted for hours, albeit a chat in which I tried to follow a structure of prepared questions.

Sylvain[30] documents the challenges of doing fieldwork in a hostile environment, where the dominant world view is totally against what she believes in. Although in no sense was the disparity in the world view between myself and my more religious participants of the same degree as that encountered by Sylvain in the racially segregated farms of the Kalahari, I experienced some inner unease in presenting myself as an observant Muslim woman to the families that I perceived to be religious. As an Iranian woman, however, I am totally accustomed to adjusting my veils and clothing in accordance with the surroundings, and soon I digested the difficulty.

As a former UNHCR professional, I also found my position problematic. I had to be clear that first, this did not mean that they were under any form of obligation to have an interview with me, and second, agreeing to be interviewed did not mean that I could use my past connection to influence the resettlement process of their relatives back in Iran. Here, I opted for complete honesty: clarifying that I used to work for UNHCR but that I no longer did (in fact, I had been a caseworker for at least one of the families who recognized me from several years ago in Iran) and that I had no intention, at that juncture, to return to my former line of work. Nobody displayed discomfort at these disclosures, and indeed, my participants were generally fairly adept at turning the tables on me, asking me at least as many questions as I asked them, not just on what I study and why, but also why I left Iran, what I do for child care, how I pay my tuition fees, how far my husband supports me in my quest for higher education, whether my parents will visit Canada, whether I intend to return to Iran, and so on.

Young meditates on the positionality of the researcher and the researched, acknowledging the "deeply unequal political structures"[31] that create the fissure between them.

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"The possibility of resolving the very real social and cultural disparities that create the gap between the self and the other—the key antimony at the heart of our discipline—through a transcendent philosophical maneuver seems dishonest to me."[32] That is, she does not want to pretend to some form of revolutionary politics in order to claim solidarity with her research subjects, nor can she assume she can somehow overcome her own social positioning and subjectivity. I, too, acknowledge our disparities and the inequalities produced by social and historical processes and do not pretend that they can be transcended in the course of an afternoon chat. To develop that sympathetic, charitable understanding, *verstehen,* the empathetic interpretation of the "Other" is not to cease thinking of oneself, but to recognize that the "Other" is not as distant, as strange as one would think, or as bureaucracies, agencies, and media would portray.

Research Findings

How Not to Forget: The Culture of Being Afghan

As I walked into the homes of the research participants, I was struck immediately by how culturally specific or "Afghanized" the surroundings were, with many traditionally Afghan furnishings and decorations: embroidered wall-hangings, sofa covers, framed calligraphy, and pictures of Afghanistan were in abundance. Of the women participants, Razieh, Sara, Meigol, Maryam, and Nasrin were veiled in traditional provincial styles, with flowered chadors—long thin sections of cloth covering the head and falling to the ground, held in place by the hands or wrapped and tied around the body. Zahra was dressed with an Iranian city-style head scarf and fashionable black *manteau*—a knee-length thin coat that has replaced the chador in the cities of Iran, often in tailored and figure-hugging styles, much decorated and embellished. Sabrina and Maliha were dressed in casual Western clothing, with no veils. Even in this small sample of women, one comes across striking differences in dress, and given the highly politicized and ongoing debate about women's clothing in religious and non-religious contexts, these differences are meaningful, indicating not just personal preferences but expressing a range of religious and political beliefs and backgrounds.

Despite the long absence from their native country, then, the identity of the research participants was firmly established as "Afghans" with plenty of visual cues even before the discussions started.

Cultural Experiments: Families, Friends, and Schools

Every so often, a horrible tale of "honour killings" spills out in the media with details of daughters of Middle Eastern or South Asian families being abused, imprisoned, and killed by their fathers, brothers, and even mothers for having boyfriends, or refusing to marry in accordance to family arrangements. "'Honour Killings' on the Rise in Canada" warns one such headline,[33] listing a gruesome series of such events perpetuated in Muslim families. These events and their construction in the media give an added urgency to the possibility of cultural conflicts in the family site, and it was of particular interest to see how Afghan parents handled the exposure of their children to Canadian culture and society.

One father remained silent on the question regarding his children's hypothetical refusal to follow their religious norms. In all the other families, the parents declared themselves willing to accept the choices of their children. Hussein and Zahra, a husband and wife who were both observant Shiite Moslems, agreed that they cannot force religion on their children: "I would not force them. We do not force our religion on anybody, though of course we would encourage them. You can see for yourself—she [their eldest daughter] is nine years old now but does not cover her hair. For us, morality is important, whether someone is good does not depend on their religion."

Indeed, their daughters receive swimming lessons at the local YMCA, which can be viewed as the sort of "cultural experimentation" referred to above. A Shiite family allowing their girls to swim is a phenomenon that would rarely be seen in their home country and is an instance of the individual modifications and adaptations of received cultural and traditional norms.

Maliha also seems willing to let go of traditions. She talks of marriage and how she sees Afghan marriage, "which is for life," different from Canadian relationships, "who are with a different person every day." Suddenly, following from the same speech, she stops talking about marriage, and exclaims, "But for us it is time to look to our own culture and to see where that has brought us! To think about illuminating ourselves, to think how we can improve and change our own culture! What has our culture done for us? I do not believe in hanging on to the past!"

In Fallah's response, himself a devout Sunni Muslim, there is a note of resignation: "But they are children, and we cannot force them. We cannot tell them to do anything they do not like. If they grow older and decide to behave differently, what can we do? Can we do anything? Once they are adults, they are eighteen, nineteen, we are released. It is up to them."

Mehrdad, a former teacher and a man who declares himself not religious, echoes a similar note, implying that parents must be able to handle the choices of their children: "

This problem that both Iranians and Afghans have, both you and us, we do not like our children too free and easy

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with their friends, to go and sleep at their friends' house and so on, yes, it is something we have to deal with."

Such generational issues are not simply religious or traditionalist matter—they can occur in any family: "Yes, it would be hurtful for me if my children got married without consulting me, or considering my opinion, but I think this is something which can happen to all parents.

The young adults seemed very considerate of their parents' sensibilities. Sabrina, a university student who comes from a family where they do not "subscribe to religious practice," says, "Actually, no, I do not like to bring my friends home, and I do not become close like that [with her Canadian friends and classmates]. What I mean is that in university we enjoy working and studying together … My brothers also, they have their friends and so on outside. I have never seen them bring their friends home."

Arezu and Bahar, sisters attending high school, also seem skilled at defusing possible tensions and negotiating tricky family waters. Upon being asked whether they socialize with their Canadian friends to the extent of inviting them home, Bahar and her father Fallah both answer simultaneously, "Oh no," while the other family members look at each other and laugh. Bahar continues, "One of them wanted to visit me, but …" She looks at her father and they both laugh.

Rostami-Povey also describes in detail the negotiations and concessions that Afghan parents and children make while living in Western countries, though her study group highlights instances of subterfuge practised by young adults on their parents, often resulting in their leading double lives.[34] Perhaps because the interviews took place in the family setting, my respondents did not mention any such practices; however, this is not to say that there are no family conflicts.

Parvin, an Iranian woman who accompanies Farsi-speaking families on official errands, confirms that there have been instances of problems about notions of family honour amongst Afghan families. However, she concurs that in general there are relatively fewer problems (compared to families of other ethnicities such as Kurds), and that Afghan girls in particular are academically successful and are flexible in adapting to the demands of both worlds. She explains, "

I think it is due to their religious affinities and traditional notions, which has positive results for the girls. The boys—they do not restrain the boys so much, and they run wild and get into all sorts of trouble—typical for teenagers. But they are careful with their girls, and so they get results."

The issue of girls' education is not a significant one in Afghan societies, and the willingness of these families to "push" the girls into academic success, as well as the declared intentions of the young girls to achieve academic success, is an important indicator of the cultural adaptation of families in Canada. Female education has long been a thorny and politically charged issue in Afghanistan, while women's human rights continue to cause controversy.[35] So when a teenage Afghan girl can sit next to her parents in Halifax and say calmly, "I have no plans to marry now. I will go to university first, and find a job. I am not thinking of marriage now," this is not just a tribute to the educational attainments of second-generation immigrants. It means that these people, in becoming refugees and stepping away from their home country, are also pushing the boundaries of their home culture, which is steeped in patriarchy. They no longer conform to the norms and demands of a country where fathers, brothers, husbands, and fathers-in-law have the final and ultimate say in all decisions relating to women.

Although the parents might declare themselves accepting of the choices of their children, that does not prevent them from trying to mould those possible choices as far as they can. This is not so very different from parents all over the world. The Rezais and Razavis send all their children to regular Quran school every Saturday, while Zahra gives her children lessons on religious principles: "Occasionally, I teach them something … I use the Internet, and I have taught them the basics. And we sometimes take them to the Bayers Road mosque. After all, I do not want them to completely forget our customs." This instruction is part of the religious lifestyle but also takes on an aspect of "remembering" and preserving their Afghan identity. Talking of the weekly Quran lessons, Maryam says, "Of course they know Quran from Iran. This is more to make sure they do not forget." And her husband, Reza concurs: "We do not want it to be said that they went to Canada and forgot everything." The message is clear: they are doing their best to bring up their children in accordance to their own values and traditions. But after the children grow up, the parents "are released."

Thus, in observing the interaction between parents and their children, and their attitude towards traditional values and norms, it can be argued that there is a sense of mutual accommodation and tolerance amongst the members of the study group. Parents agree that as children grow older, they must be free to make their own choices, whether in marriage, religious convictions, or decisions on their careers and education. Meanwhile, the young adults appear sensible to their parents' values and preferences and actively try to accommodate them. In this two-way interaction, there is a vivid demonstration of the simultaneously constraining and enabling aspects of Afghan culture. It constrains the parents from allowing their children to socialize too freely, as they see it, with their school friends. Simultaneously parents encourage or allow their children to pursue academic studies—which they clearly do not see as clashing with their

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traditional culture, and they acknowledge that ultimately the children are responsible for their own choices. And the children have a lively sense of respect for their elders that enables them to understand and appreciate their parents' mental boundaries, and so they appear willing to manage their non-familial social friendships outside the home, in a manner acceptable to their parents, but with the implicit or even explicit understanding that they are in fact free to study, to have a career, to marry when they wish, whom they wish, and to follow religious practices to the degree they wish.

The Religious and the Not So Religious

Where Tastsoglou is interested in the social aspect and the possibility that religion can ease the "social integration" of immigrants,[36] Dossa concentrates on the individual: prayers and praying is an activity through which women organize their time, their space, and find solace and ease.[37]

Religion is an area where the personal, social, and political come together, and this is reflected in the attitude of my study participants. Of the eight families interviewed, six were visibly religious. This was as evident as in the framed Quranic verses on the walls, as in the prayer beads of the men and the full hijab of the women. All the activities and social practices—their food habits, parenting, and socializing are informed by their religious world view, though some, as we have seen, more deeply than others.

The Sunni families make a point of participating in regular communal religious gatherings, most notably the Friday prayers, which have political significance as well as a purely religious one for the individual—it is supposed to be a show of the strength and solidarity of the religious community. Reza and Fallah take their elderly father with them to the prayers. And they send their children to Quranic and Arabic classes, as discussed. They engage in these activities even though there is no requirement for them to do so, because they are part of their mental and spiritual universe, not necessarily because doing so gives them social integration, as in Tastsoglou's argument.

Religion also helps them to cope with the uncertainties and challenges of their lives on a personal level. Upon questioning Maryam on how she feels about the future of her children, she responds simply, "I pray. I am always praying for my children to be good. What else can we parents do?" Fallah, describing the frustration of relying on government handouts, says, "A man must accept what is provided to him gracefully, with thanks. In Iran, we worked and earned 200,000 a month, and we were grateful. Here, we do not work, and we are still grateful."

He uses the Arabic word *shokr* for gratitude, which is a word with heavy Quranic implications—to be *shaker* or grateful is a major characteristic of a good Muslim.

For other families, religion does not appear to be such a cornerstone of their identity. True, the women are veiled, but as the little exchange above shows, it could be little more than force of habit and custom. Asking the young couple directly about their religious convictions, Razieh's husband Bahram shrugs and says, "This is the way we have been brought up. No, we are not very religious like some others. It is not so important." Sina, another young male Afghan responds in a similar fashion. They are happy enough to attend festivities based on religious events but do not make a point of attending Friday mass prayers. For them, religion has been part of their social landscape since they were born, but now that they are in a different country where religion does not have such a prominent public place, they might find themselves thinking differently, perhaps even challenging received religious wisdom that they had been taught. For example, after remarking on the kindness he has seen from Canadian officials, Hussein states, "I cannot believe that some of our mullahs and clerics would call these people blasphemers, whereas to me they are the kindest people I have ever seen." Asked about attendance at religious gatherings, Zahra says, "

Honestly we do not have time for such things. Yes, occasionally if it is an important *eid,* but, no, we cannot be going to prayers and sermons regularly. We need to concentrate on other things now, our language ability and studying."

Yet she dresses with full hijab, covering her hair and body with an Iranian-style *manteau* and scarf. During the interview, her satin scarf regularly slips back, showing her hair in a manner unacceptable for seriously devout or observant women, and she pulls it forward, adjusting it and smoothing her hair. In these families, it appears that incorporating the symbols of religion happens more or less for the same reason they stick to preparing Afghan food—it is what they know and are comfortable with, it is more of a custom than an integral part of their identity. Zahra says as much when she describes teaching her children about religion—to repeat the quote provided above: "I have taught them the basics … After all, I do not want them to completely forget our customs."

Two families are visibly non-religious, the Miris and the Abbasis. The women appear in casual Western-style clothes, and there are no religious ornaments to be seen. The point needs to be made that for people coming from countries where religion plays such a prominent public and state-mandated role, coming forward as a visually non-religious person has social (if not political) significance. A woman appearing in a public space with her hair uncovered is

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making a declaration of her affinities, whether she likes it or not. In fact, a woman with her hair uncovered is making a statement about her husband's and family's affinities as well, not just her own. Just as scholars such as Haideh Afshar argue that assuming a religious identity can be an expression of agency and liberation for women,[38] the opposite can be equally true: assuming a non-religious identity for citizens of countries where religion is woven into their constitution can be also "agentic."

Taher and Mehrdad, the fathers of the two non-religious families, both emphasize that Afghans are not all religious, and it is clear through their talk that they associate religion with ignorance and intellectual poverty. They had both been educated during the former communist regime in Afghanistan, and it is characteristic that they should not have a high opinion of religion. Sabrina, Mehrdad's daughter, uses the term *free-thinker* to describe herself and her family. They avoid the term *religion,* preferring terms such as *prejudices, sensitivities,* and *customs*. According to Mehrdad,

> In Afghanistan, people still follow very primitive, provincial lives … You can see now there is so much aid, so many international organizations, but they cannot do it [implement human rights in Afghanistan]. Historically, people prefer to continue the primitive traditions that have been handed down to them through centuries. To break free from those traditions requires sufficient stability and security, which we never had. It is very difficult. First the communists tried to bring progress to Afghanistan, but they failed. Nothing works if it is presented by force, as a sort of dogma, running counter to people's sensitivities and traditions. Slowly, gradually, perhaps some progress can be made, as people become more enlightened.

They are worldly people. The interview questions on culture and adaptation must have sounded naive to them. Says Taher, "My culture here has not changed from what I had before. I am a free person; I have lived and studied in European countries and in Russia, thirty years ago. The culture here is nothing new or shocking for me. Of course it is not the same for all families."

The categorization above is similar to that provided by Moghissi et al. and their classification of the religious tendencies of their Muslim respondents in Canada, focusing on their religious identity. They discuss four groups: the "strongly committed," "ritual practitioners," "virtual religious," and those tending to be secular, and their point is that "again, contrary to stereotypes that all people of Muslim background are very religious and their communities are similar in terms of strength of religious belief and practice, we see that the … communities are quite different from one another, and that within each community, individuals show different degrees and kinds of religious affiliation."[39]

Thus, much like the other themes discussed, religion is a construct that for some individuals in my study sample was agentic: a source of solace, an expression of identity, or a familiar social practice, while for others it was constraining feature of Afghan society, the cause of suffering and "backwardness," and their own individuality was expressed in terms contrary to perceived notions of religiosity.

Conclusion

A very strong impression of knowledgeable actors, to use Giddens's term, was built up through the interviews conducted for this study. The participants displayed skill at deploying cultural practices as a form of restating and protecting their identities as "Afghans," yet retaining a very clear sense of what they do not approve of in traditional cultural practices, thus "reifying" their Afghan identity. Although clearly appreciative of the benefits of life in Canada, they betray little desire to lose their constructed "Afghan-ness" in return for their appreciation, and their gratitude to the legal and international system that brought them here does not extend to a desire to adopt a fully "Canadian" lifestyle. Indeed, they show highly individual readings of what it means to be Afghan or Canadian and seem adept at selecting or retaining what they think will work for them, out of each set of cultural practices. They do not negate or underestimate the hardships and difficulties they have been through as refugees, as people pushed by devastating wars into insecure lives, but they do not see the whole of the meaning of their existence as bound up in that past. They deeply appreciate the safety and security of their present and are eagerly anticipating an independent and self-sufficient future for themselves and their children.

In summary, I hope to have conveyed something of the individuality and heterogeneity of the Afghan people in Halifax through this discussion and analysis. More than that, I hope to have provided the feeling of people actively engaged in reconstructing their lives and imbuing it with meaning and significance through their daily practices and hopes. They build upon the structures available to them, whether these are structures brought with them as part of their cultural baggage, such as religion and food, or those that are available here, such as education and stability. By exercising their agency, they are able to make these structures uniquely theirs, reifying and challenging stereotypes of fundamentalist, conservative attitudes. Their eyes follow their children, and they make constant reference to them—the sense of future, of planning, of developing a livelihood is very present in these families. They are highly conscious of their identity and culture as Afghans. They present

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themselves publicly and purposefully as Afghan, but they do not consider this an obstacle to their settlement and integration in the society where they have found themselves. Perhaps Taher summed up their situation best of all: “It is possible for a person to have and love two homes, you know.”

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The "Bogus" Refugee: Roma Asylum Claimants and Discourses of Fraud in Canada's Bill C-31

Petra Molnar Diop

Abstract

The passage of Bill C-31 into Canadian law in June 2012 is part of a discourse created around refugees by the current Government of Canada. Refugees are divided into "good and proper" refugees who live in camps abroad, and the "fraudulent and bogus" refugees who claim asylum at the Canadian border. The new act, Bill C-31 or Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, is analyzed with respect to changes that will result in the systematic exclusion of certain groups of asylum seekers from Canada, based on these discourses of "bogus" and "fraud," even though these groups may include genuine refugees. Drawing on the case of Czech Roma refugee claimants who come to Canada from Europe, this article shows how the Roma come to stand for the perfect "bogus" refugee—a person who wants to cheat the benevolent Canadian system without having grounds for a successful refugee status application. A critical look at the legislation provides new insights into the relations between governmentality and the regimes of citizenship, with the state performing its power in increasingly spectacular ways. Refugees act as the abject Other that legitimizes, legalizes, and reaffirms such state interventions.

Résumé

L'adoption du projet de loi C-31 en juin 2012 fait partie d'un discours créé par le gouvernement actuel du Canada autour des réfugiés. Ceux-ci sont divisés en « bons et justes » réfugiés qui vivent dans des camps à l'étranger et réfugiés « bidon et frauduleux » qui demandent l'asile à la frontière canadienne. La nouvelle loi, le projet de loi C-31 ou Loi visant à protéger le système d'immigration du Canada, est analysée en fonction de changements qui se traduiront par l'exclusion systématique du Canada de certains groupes de demandeurs d'asile, sur la base de ces notions de « bidon » et « fraude », même si ces groupes peuvent comprendre de véritables réfugiés. S'appuyant sur le cas de demandeurs d'asile roms tchèques venus d'Europe au Canada, cet article montre comment les Roms en viennent à incarner le réfugié « bidon » idéal — quelqu'un qui veut abuser de la bienveillance du système canadien en déposant une demande de statut de réfugié sans fondement. Un regard critique sur le projet de loi apporte un nouvel éclairage sur les relations entre la gouvernementalité et les régimes de citoyenneté, où l'état exerce son pouvoir de façon de plus en plus spectaculaire. Le réfugié tient lieu d'Autre abject qui légitime, légalise, et réaffirme les interventions de l'État.

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Introduction

The recent changes made to Canada's refugee determination system and the hardening of attitudes toward refugees has placed certain asylum seekers squarely at the forefront of nation-building projects. By equating refugees with "the Other," the figure of the asylum seeker becomes the vehicle through which the performance of sovereignty can be enacted, as the state promulgates a particular discourse about those who appear to be threatening state borders. This article examines the discourses that have been circulated about refugee claimants by the current Conservative Government of Canada and how such discourses create a binary between the "good" refugees who remain in refugee camps until they are brought to Canada as government-assisted refugees (GARs), and the bad or "bogus" refugees who autonomously arrive at Canada's shores, seeking asylum of their own volition.[1] This dichotomy is used to bolster the rhetoric of the benevolent and welcoming Canadian refugee system trying to cope with "fraudulent" asylum claimants clogging the process. The February 2012 introduction and December 2012 implementation of Bill C-31, fully named *The Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, the Marine Transportation Security Act and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration,* is in line with the worldwide trend toward the securitization of asylum and the enhanced policing of borders. In order to illustrate these discourses and their impact on a particular group of asylum seekers, it is useful to consider how Roma refugee claimants have been systematically presented as the embodiment of bogus refugees and denied refugee status.

For the purposes of this article, the designations *Roma* and *Romani* will be used, as they are generally seen as a self-appointed term by the Roma community in Canada. The term *refugee* must also be used critically. I examine the treatment of those who have *self-identified* as refugees in order to qualify for the Canadian refugee assessment process and have thus been designated as an entity that is treated in particular ways in Canadian immigration policy. Thus, I will be looking at *Roma refugee claimants,* not *Roma refugees,* in order avoid making judgments about whether or not they are bona fide refugees. The Roma are not geographically bounded, and in this article they are defined as a "group" based on their grounds for applying for refugee status in Canada as Czech nationals. I chose to focus on the Czech Roma in particular because their migration to Canada has been historically complicated by visa impositions. While their numbers are less than other groups of Roma who come to Canada seeking refugee status, the Czech Roma provide a representative subset of the population that has been seized on by the government and equated with being "bogus" and "fraudulent" refugees. While all Roma refugee claimants have been experiencing difficulties with the refugee determination system, the Czech Roma provide an interesting example of how government action against a particular group can crystallize in specific state mechanisms, such as visa imposition and safe-country lists. Czech Roma claimants come from a country deemed democratic and safe, a country seen as not "typically" producing refugees. They often abandon their refugee claim and either return to the Czech Republic or else enter another country in the European Union. Canada has also imposed numerous travel visas on the Czech Republic since the 1990s, in order to stem undesirable migration into Canada.[2] Thus they are construed as the perfect "bogus" refugees—persons who want to cheat the benevolent Canadian system without having grounds for a successful refugee status application.

This article provides a brief history of the Roma in Europe, followed by a short analysis of the Canadian immigration and refugee regime. I then examine the recent changes made to Canadian legislation and statements by the government concerning the Roma that have been made to bolster these changes. This article argues that the utilization of such loaded terms as *bogus* and *fraud* is done deliberately to bolster state sovereignty as the refugee regime increasingly moves toward a "guilty until proven innocent" model, with any semblance of a fair refugee determination process transformed into an uncovering of those claimants who are "bogus" and out to cheat the benevolent Canadian system.

Literature Review

While there are studies on Roma migration in the European Union, such as in the United Kingdom,[3] there are significant gaps in anthropological literature examining Roma populations in Canada. Broader literature concerning migration, in particular by Malkki,[4] Clark-Kazak,[5] Giles,[6] Hyndman,[7] and Winland[8] orients our understanding of refugee issues, state sovereignty, and regimes of control. Further work has been done on state-sovereignty and discourse formation and the impacts of the practices of the sovereign nation on migrants and refugees. Billig[9] examines the recurrent practices, banal routines, experiences, and discourses of the nation, and Gullestad[10] analyzes how social imaginaries affect how the public thinks about collective societies and social values. Vertovec[11] explores how identity is inherently tied to borders and their control.[12] The particular regimes that have been employed to regulate migration have also been extensively explored,[13] and while these particular mechanisms are beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that border surveillance is inherently tied to projects of sovereignty. In Bill C-31, the ramped up surveillance and policing of borders is evident in the creation of

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the "irregular arrivals" category and the subsequent mandatory detentions for these claimants.[14] The assemblages of knowledge that frame government interventions surrounding immigrants have also been explored by Blommaert.[15] There are clear political reactions to the influx of migrants, and ideas of ethnicity and racialization impinge on the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers.[16] Migrant identities and the relationships between migration, citizenship, and the state have been widely studied,[17] and theorists such as Ahmed, Morris, Buck-Morss, Balibar, and Stewart and Harding[18] explore the state responses to the affective impact of the refugee and alien figure. In this environment, certain language and symbols come to be used to mobilize concerns about foreigners, such as the formulation of the "bogus" or "fraudulent" refugee, which can be seen in the rhetoric surrounding Roma refugee claimants and Bill C-31.[19]

When examining the discourses around Roma migrants in particular, the works of linguist and Roma scholar Ian Hancock[20] and Ronald Lee[21] have been particularly helpful, as discourses surrounding the Roma population are historical. This particular population has been scapegoated and used in nation-making projects in Europe for centuries. In literature that concerns the Roma in Canada specifically from a social work perspective, Walsh and Krieg examine how Roma families are disadvantaged in numerous systems of governance, such as in social support.[22] I show this to also hold true for systems of refugee determination systems. Butler's 2009 work foreshadowed the binary conceptualization for legitimate/illegitimate refugees in Canada and discussed the possible consequences of imposing "safe" country lists on Roma claimants, thus intensifying the notion that Roma are "bogus" refugees.[23] There is also discussion of how increased ministerial discretion will affect Canadian refugee determination systems and how certain groups of refugees are seen as less deserving of having access to asylum adjudication.[24] Liew in particular examines Canada's country-of-origin lists and the problematic consequences of "legitimate" refugee definition based on these lists.[25] The perils of Canada's "safe lists" have also been examined.[26] Kernerman shows how these forms of governance underlie Canada's motivations to keep certain populations from being able to access Canada's supposed humanitarian refugee policies through interdiction techniques and messages that only legitimate refugees are welcome.[27] Dauverge in particular provides a thorough examination of how binaries are used in legal definitions by the state to filter certain populations out and keep migration in line with Western nationalist projects.[28]

This article builds on this lively debate and presents an analysis of what these "fraudulent claimant" discourses about the Roma can reveal about state power over citizens and non-citizens that is exerted by the sovereign state. Applying theories of state performativity to Bill C-31 shows how the persistent usage of the "bogus" refugee image bolsters the state's hard-line provisions in nation building projects. The figure of the immigrant poses a particular threat to the sovereign nation,[29] yet it can also be used to justify increased intervention and securitization of the immigration and refugee regime. The discourses that surround Roma refugee claimants and the strength with which the designations of the "fraudulent" and "bogus" refugee stick to this particular group needs to be explored through the lens of discourse formation at the state level. Their promulgation through legislation, official statements, and media portrayals gives particular discursive formations their salience and truthfulness.[30] Discourse formations work precisely because they shape people's realities, and their understanding of their and of the Others' place in the world. The perception of the public appears to be greatly influenced by policy and laws and the state portrayal of asylum seekers as "bogus" claimants whose "fraudulent" nature must be uncovered.

This is not to imply that consumers of public images are without agency and are blindly taken in by these discourses. Discourses are examined and reflected upon, yet their power lies precisely in their ability to constitute what is deemed to be the "truth." Rather than telling people how to behave, certain ideas become ingrained as the norm, especially if the discussion is framed as a matter of national security and protecting Canada from being fleeced by unwelcome and undesirable outsiders. When refugee claimants are presumed guilty of fraud and denied due process and fair refugee status determination, more bona fide claimants will be denied asylum. This new legislation will also arguably set a precedent for further conservative legislation affecting Canadian immigration policy and alter Canada's standing in international refugee law. A critical look at Bill C-31 provides insights into the relations between state sovereignty and the regimes of citizenship, with refugees acting as the abject Other that legitimizes, codifies, and reaffirms state interventions. With the notion of state sovereignty in flux, Western governments are increasingly turning to discourses of threat at the borders to justify increasingly hard-line measures. By controlling the movement of citizen and non-citizen bodies, setting up systems of interdiction and increased security at the border, and dwelling on the need to protect fragile economies from invading outside forces, governments are able to bolster state sovereignty with the support of the majority of the citizen-subject populace under the "truth" that this is justified and for the greater good of the weakened nation-state. In examining the power relations surrounding refugee claimants and their treatment

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in state discourse, this article hopes to insert itself into the important debates surrounding the precarity of state sovereignty and the regimes of truth and power that modern states employ in order to strengthen their projects of control.

From "Gypsy" to "Roma": Brief History of the Roma in Europe and Canada

The term *Roma* is often overused and it can homogenize a varied population whose movements have spanned the globe over the centuries. The Roma are not a unified group, and some argue that there are four distinct groups: the Kalderash, Machvaiya, Churaria, and Lovara "who share the Romanes language [but] differ in customs, beliefs, traditional laws and ceremonies."[31] While there is much dissent about and criticism of the all-encompassing label *Roma*[32] it has been adopted by many Roma as an identity marker over the other widely used and often derogatory terms such as *Gypsy* or *Czigan.*[33]

The Roma expanded out of India and into Europe in the 11th century following the expansion of the Ghaznavid Empire. For nearly as long as the Roma have moved out of India and entered Europe, they have endured widespread persecution and systematic racism and, as some authors and activists argue, "based on the definitions produced by the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951,[34] the treatment of Roma in Europe is characterized by an egregious racism clearly recognizable as systemic in nature and thus qualifies them as refugees."[35] Indeed, Roma persecution is not an isolated, present-day phenomenon, and European history is replete with examples of systematic persecution and racism. In 16th-century Britain, Roma travellers faced abuse and ill-treatment,[36] while persecution in 18th-century France was legalized through widespread court orders to hang Roma men and wilfully maim women and children.[37] Ear cutting, branding, and lynching were widespread methods of marking and executing the Roma.[38] A more recent example of systematic persecution that led to planned extermination of great swaths of the Roma population was the Holocaust during the Second World War, and "mass internment of Roma at Camps in Dusseldorf, Buchenwald, Auschwitz and elsewhere began in 1940, a period known as the *Porajmos* (the Romany word for 'the Devouring')."[39] "Over the course of the war estimates of Roma deaths range between 0.5 and 1.5 million, representing 70–80% of their European population,"[40] a staggering percentage indicative of purposeful ethnic cleansing. The Czech and Moravian Roma were essentially annihilated during the Second World War,[41] and the total loss of life in the Czech Republic and Slovakia was approximately 250,000 persons. After the war and in the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain, there appears to have been a suppression of direct attacks against the Roma. However, the Roma were forced to give up their livelihoods and homes in order to participate in the communist system and assimilate to the wider society.[42] In what can be termed an attempted cultural genocide via assimilation, the reshaping of "Gypsy behaviour"[43] in the long-range assimilation plans of the Communist Party resulted in active destruction of Roma settlements, creation of circumscribed Roma-only neighbourhoods, censorship of civil liberties, and the implementation of Special Schools for Roma.[44] After the fall of the USSR in 1989, attacks against the Roma have intensified, and "today, most Roma have abandoned their traditional way of life and are concentrated in low-income housing developments of outright ghettoes throughout Europe."[45] The continued persecution hinges on the perception that Roma are racially distinct, which has been cemented in the rise of neo-Nazism and right-wing fascist groups, especially in Hungary and Slovakia. This rise in right-wing fundamentalism routinely precipitates in violent acts against Roma in segregated Roma neighbourhoods, both by non-Roma individuals as well as states as a whole,[46] in the forms of shooting, stabbing, verbal and sexual assaults, and organized anti-Roma demonstrations, as well as the geographic segregation and racism in state institutions. As recently as 22 April 2012, ROMEA, the Roma media consortium in the Czech Republic reported on a neo-Nazi rally in the Czech town of Břeclav that gathered upwards of 2000 people chanting slogans such as "Where are those whores?," "Gypsies, you've fucked up," and "Let's stop gypsy terror."[47] Also, on 4 May 2012 ROMEA reposted that in late April, a young Roma man was killed with a crossbow shot to the head as the attacker shouted, "You black whores, I'll kill you!" near Ostrava, Czech Republic.[48] Sadly, these attacks are not restricted to the Czech Republic but have been widely reported on by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as occurring in many Eastern European states.

Notably, there have been the disturbing allegations of forced sterilization of Roma in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, which has been classified by the Czech Republic Defender of Rights as "without hesitation … a technique on the verge of meeting the attributes of a genocide."[49] In addition, the more systematic persecution and structural violence perpetrated against the Roma is evident in educational segregation, where children at the primary and secondary level are separated on the basis of their racialized categories into Roma and non-Roma (white) classrooms and schools. It is also evident in the presence of separate hospital wards for whites and Roma.[50] These reactions against the Roma have been construed as

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a profound "anti-gypsiism"[51] that permeates all facets of daily life. France began expelling Roma citizens from its jurisdiction in 2009, with Italy following in 2011.[52] Notably, most of the countries that have been enforcing such policies are part of the European Union, which is capitalized on by the Canadian government and used to argue that these countries are democratically sound and therefore cannot be producing legitimate refugees.[53] Nonetheless, an official statement made by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights states that "segregation [of the Roma] is still evident in many EU member states, sometimes as a result of deliberate government policy."[54]

Thus, as a reaction to widespread racism, segregation, and the recent rise in persecution, Roma citizens of the European Union have been seeking refuge in other countries around the world. In fact, the Roma are not newcomers to Canada, and groups of Roma have been settled here since mid-19th century.[55] Especially during the Cold War, many Roma arrived in Canada as political dissidents and were welcomed with open arms as Czech, Slovak, or Hungarian nationals, not as ethnic Roma. As Lee argues, it is very difficult to ascertain Roma-specific immigration, as Roma ethnicity was not recorded, and there was also widespread reluctance to identify as Roma.[56] According to Lee, "overall the Roma population in Canada is estimated to be at least 80 000,"[57] with over 90 per cent of Roma residing in the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario.[58] There has been steady migration to Canada through the 1990s and 2000s, and as persecution of the Roma continues to be a daily reality in Europe, Roma asylum claims will continue to be made.

While Canada presents itself as a benevolent nation welcoming newcomers and refugees with open arms, it has a long and troubled history of excluding undesirable migrants. The recent onslaught of Conservative rhetoric concerning "bogus" and "fraudulent" refugees attacking Canada's shores and taking advantage of its liberal social policies is not new.[59] It is important to consider that while the current rhetoric employed by the Conservative government is problematic, it is historically situated and is by no means the only rhetoric that has been promulgated by Canadian immigration and refugee policy throughout its history. Importantly, the actual total numbers of asylum claimants arriving at Canada's shores are rather small, and Canada is not dealing with waves or floods of claimants who are here to take advantage of the refugee system. The total number of asylum seekers has not been increasing significantly but has been hovering between 33,970 in 2009, 22,543 in 2010, 24,981 in 2011, and 20,223 in 2012.[60]

The Treatment of Czech Roma in Canadian Legislation

The treatment of Czech Roma refugee claimants has been particularly problematic in the securiticization of recent Canadian responses to this group. The visa imposition throughout the last 15 years on this group of refugee claimants is explored in greater detail by Lefebvre[61] and Levine-Rasky, St. Clair, and Beaudoin,[62] but in brief, visas for Czech travellers were first imposed in 1998 to stem the large numbers of Roma making refugee claims in Canada. However, numbers of refugee claims actually rose after the imposition of the visa,[63] as a result of the rise of overt post-Communist anti-Roma sentiments, by neo-Nazi groups as well as by the general populace. The visa requirement was then lifted in November 2007. The Czech Republic joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 and held the European Union presidency in the first half of 2009. Thus, the onus was on Canada to treat all European Union member states equally[64] and the visa requirement was subsequently dropped for a year and a half, only to be reinstated on 13 July 2009, to much outrage by the Czech government. However, the Canadian government explained their strategy of visa requirements on Czech nationals as a way to avoid bogus refugee claimants who abuse the refugee system.[65] Minister Kenney in particular stated that "the refugee claimants from Czechs make no sense because they could easily move to twenty-six other Western democracies in the European Union."[66] The rhetoric of the abuse of Canada's immigration system, and of the Roma as queue jumpers who are clogging up the asylum system, was bolstered by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) 2009 Czech Fact-Finding Mission Report on State Protection,[67] which has since been used to refute 90 per cent of Roma cases that come before the IRB.[68] It should be noted that this report is missing from the public record and the follow-up 2011 report based on a Canadian delegation to the Czech Republic to determine country conditions has not been published. However, Citizenship and Immigration Canada itself has stated that "the imposition of visas on the Czech Republic and Mexico … [protects] the integrity of the asylum program" in Canada[69] and is necessary to deter fraudulent refugees from coming to Canada. Interestingly, as of 14 November 2013, Citizenship and Immigration has announced that all visa requirements have been lifted from the Czech Republic. As Chris Alexander, the new minister of citizenship and immigration stated, "Our confidence in lifting the visa requirement is further enhanced by Canada's improvements to its asylum system, which will serve as an effective deterrence against unfounded asylum claims."[70] With Roma asylum seeker numbers dropping and Canada's economic relationship strengthening with the European Union, it remains to be seen what rhetoric will be put out

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once statistics become available for the 2013 IRB refugee determination rates from the Czech Republic.

Bill C-31 and the "Bogus" Roma Refuge

Tabled on 16 February 2012 and known as the *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act,* Bill C-31 came into force on 15 December 2012. Bill C-31 is an amalgamation of two previous bills (Bill C-11 and Bill C-4), whose hard-line natures have been subsumed in Bill C-31's new provisions, which have been presented as necessary in order to speed up Canada's refugee determination system and erase the massive backlog of refugee claimants. On 9 May 2012 the Conservative government introduced amendments to Bill C-31, which have the detention period for "irregular" migrants.[71] However, the other problematic provisions that affect Roma refugee claimants in particular were not amended before the bill became law. The overarching argument held by the Government and Citizenship and Immigration Canada is that "Canada's asylum system is broken … Canada's existing asylum system is crippled by an ever-increasing number of new unfounded claims,"[72] which must be rooted out and removed.

In brief, the bill[73] introduces numerous problematic changes to Canada's immigration and refugee policy: the barring of persons who have been convicted of a crime punishable by 10 or more years in prison, which can exclude political prisoners and activists (sections 101.2.a and 101.2.b); the revocation of permanent residence and the cessation of refugee status (sections 40.1 and 108.2); the creation of a category of designated foreign nationals (sections 95.1 and 20.1) who will be ineligible for permanent residency status for five years after their hearing based on their "irregular" means of arrival (section 20.2). There is also the linkage between the terminology of "irregular arrival" and smuggling (sections 20.1.1a and b); mandatory arrest and detention of designated foreign nationals over the age of 16 (section 3.2a and b); as well as vague and obscure ministerial powers such as in designating inadmissible foreign nationals and the imposition of conditions by the minister (sections 25.3.1) and ministerial intervention at any time during the appeal process, which is to be set up at the Immigration and Refugee Board (section 110.1). However, the most problematic provision for the Roma claimants from Eastern Europe is the ministerial power in creating designated countries of origin, or "safe" countries. Refugee claims from spontaneous asylum seekers who arrive from these designated countries of origin will run on different, much shorter timelines than the rest of the refugee determination process (section 109.1). At the time of writing, section 109.1.1 of Bill C-31 amends section 12 of the current *Balanced Refugee Reform Act,* stating:

109.1 (1) The Minister may, by order, designate a country, for the purposes of subsection 110(2) and section 111.1.

(2) The Minister may only make a designation

(a) in the case where the number of claims for refugee protection made in Canada by nationals of the country in question in respect of which the Refugee Protection Division has made a final determination is equal to or greater than the number provided for by order of the Minister,

(i) if the rate, expressed as a percentage, that is obtained by dividing the total number of claims made by nationals of the country in question that, in a final determination by the Division during the period provided for in the order, are rejected or determined to be withdrawn or abandoned by the total number of claims made by nationals of the country in question in respect of which the Division has, during the same period, made a final determination is equal to or greater than the percentage provided for in the order, or …

(b) in the case where the number of claims for refugee protection made in Canada by nationals of the country in question in respect of which the Refugee Protection Division has made a final determination is less than the number provided for by order of the Minister, if the Minister is of the opinion that in the country in question

(i) there is an independent judicial system,

(ii) basic democratic rights and freedoms are recognized and mechanisms for redress are available if those rights or freedoms are infringed, and

(iii) civil society organizations exist.

Claimants who fall under the subsection of designated countries of origin have 15 calendar days to gain access to and retain counsel if they have the means to do so, file their Basis of Claim form and all supporting documents, which have to be translated. They also do not have access to the newly created Refugee Appeal Division and can rely only on judicial review of their IRB decisions. Groups such as CCR and CARL have released official statements underlining that these timelines in section 109.1.1 are not realistic and will lead to less representation by counsel and more cases being denied.[74] Importantly, section 109.1 of the bill stipulates that such designations will be under the sole discretion of the minister, based on specific country of origin reports, such as the IRB Czech Fact-Finding Mission Report on State Protection.[75] The country will be designated as a whole, with no provisions made for regional differences. These designated or safe countries of origin are ones that supposedly "do not normally produce refugees, have a robust human

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rights record and offer strong state protection … to their citizens."[76] Nevertheless, denying refugee claimants from these countries a fair determination process undermines Canada's refugee policy much more that the supposed influx of "bogus" refugees jumping queues. Presupposing that entire countries can be designated as "safe" fails to recognize the heterogeneity of experience in any nation, based on a person's age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ethnic background, and myriad other factors. To presume that an entire country can be designated as "safe" for all groups is profoundly reductionist and allows for entire groups of refugee claimants to be labelled as "frauds" on the basis of hailing from a Designated Country of Origin.

Government Statements and Media Portrayals Surrounding Bill C-31

Since tabling Bill C-31 in February 2012, the Conservative Government has used the media in strategic ways in order to capitalize on the "bogus refugee" imagery. "To be blunt, Canada's asylum system is broken," Minister Kenney told reporters immediately after tabling the bill on 16 February 2012. "[The previous] Act went a long way to addressing problems in our system, but it's become clear that there are still some gaps and further reforms are needed. We need stronger measures that are closer to the original bill that we had tabled back in March of 2010."[77] Government critics immediately responded and stated that the bill is a "serious step backwards,"[78] and that the notion of the so-called refugee queues is "an extravagant construction"[79] rooted in the government's rhetorical pursuit of fraudulent claims. In response to a piece in the *Montreal Gazette* from 2 March 2012 entitled "Welcome to Canada—Unless We Change Our Mind," Kenney responded, "The Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act will make our refugee system fast and fair, ensuring that bona fide refugees quickly receive Canada's protection, and that those who abuse Canada's generosity and do not require our protection are quickly removed."[80] Such rhetoric of "fairness," "generosity," and "abuse" of the system by fraudulent claimants is an undercurrent of the reforms, and these discourses are enshrined in Bill C-31 itself, with clauses such as "manifestly unfounded" claims (clause 57), or "designated foreign nationals" (clause 10). According to Kenney, the apparent dysfunction of the current asylum system must be overhauled, and special interest groups have vested interests in keeping the status quo.[81] A swift response to these allegations as well as to Bill C-31 itself was mounted by a variety of these so-called special interest groups, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Roma Community Centre, CARL, CCR, Campaign against Bill C-31, and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, in the form of press conferences, official statements, and op-ed pieces in the popular press such as the *Montreal Gazette, Embassy,*[82] *Toronto Star,*[83] Global News,[84] and the *Huffington Post.*[85] The responses continued in the media, and the failure of proper investigation into "safe countries" was called into question.[86]

The treatment of Roma refugee claimants in particular has been problematic, as this rhetoric has worked to cement the association between the fraudulent refugee and the Roma refugee claimant. Fawn in particular examines how "Roma are iconoclastic for domestic and foreign perceptions of … national identity."[87] In particular, Kenney's rhetoric has focused on the idea that the Roma are prototypical "bogus" refugees who organize in particular ways so that they can flood the already backlogged asylum system in Canada and that their numbers have been steadily increasing from 2010. In a 22 April 2012 *National Post* article, Kenney stated, "We tried to circulate brochures explaining 'This is not the way you immigrate to Canada,' and it's had no impact," adding that the flood of asylum seekers is "highly organized" and "not at all spontaneous."[88] The placement of billboards in Hungary, warning people of deportation if they come to Canada, shows just how serious the government has been in trying to limit Roma migration into Canada.[89] Kenney's statements that the Czech Republic and Hungary will be placed on the "safe counties" lists and the act of placing the two countries in the top five countries assessed for increased Canadian Border Services Agency removal warrants[90] further add to the idea that claimants from these countries are not bona fide refugees and are therefore subject to removal. This rhetoric is being promulgated despite the fact that refugee claimants do continue to successfully claim asylum in Canada from these countries, albeit in small numbers, as shown by recent decisions such as *Rezmuvez v Canada,* concerning a Hungarian Roma claimant at the Federal Court of Appeal, in which the judge stated in paragraph 12 that "the Board failed to review or acknowledge the recent evidence which the applicants describe in their memorandum a follows: 'there has been a severe upswing of extremism directed against Roma and further that there is extensive evidence of the government's shortcomings in actually preventing violence against Roma.'"[91]

The Roma community and advocates around Canada have mobilized a fairly successful campaign against these government statements, and some have received extensive coverage in popular media.[92] In particular, after parliamentary testimonies from Roma advocates and lawyers on 3 May 2012, the *Tribute*[93] published a piece decrying the ministerial powers outlined in the proposed Bill C-31, even after the announced amendments on 9 May 2012. This piece prompted a swift response from Minister Kenney in the form of an editorial, in which he proclaimed that he is

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not destroying the immigration and refugee system as had been stated. According to Kenney, "We are strengthening our system by cracking down on the abuse of Canada's generosity by human smugglers, bogus asylum claimants, fake immigration marriages, crooked immigration consultants and immigration queue-jumpers … Canada's immigration and refugee system is the *most fair and generous in the world,* and will continue to be so under the new, improved system. Overheated, ideological rhetoric from special interest groups does a great disservice to Canada's tradition of openness and generosity."[94]

This idea that Canada's refugee determination system is fair, just, and generous does not match the provisions set out in Bill C-31, which will negatively affect certain groups of asylum seekers, essentially shutting them out of the same timelines afforded to other claimants and discriminating against them on the basis of their country of origin.[95] However, since the Roma fit the prototypical figure of the "bogus" refugee so well, it becomes easier to justify denying them the same process that other asylum seekers will be given under the guise of protecting Canada's refugee system from people who are known frauds.[96] Using such inferences to bolster government reform in times of decreasing national security, unstable economic climates, and fears of border infiltration and terrorism works to justify increasing state interventions and the performance of sovereign power, under the discourse of welcoming certain people and shutting out others, whose exclusion is useful for these state projects. It would appear that for current immigration officials, "none is too many"[97] when processing Roma refugee claims from the Czech Republic and the rest of Europe.

State Performativity and Discourses on Refugees: Times of Exception and Exceptional Times

The rhetoric of the "bogus" refugee acts as a catalyst for legislative change and shows its profound impact on the creation of a binary between the "deserving good refugees" versus the "irregular uncontrollable asylum seekers," who are constructed to represent threats to sovereign borders and the nation state. In this light, the concept of state performativity is useful when analyzing recent changes made to the Canadian refugee determination system in the quest to root out all allegedly manifestly unfounded and fraudulent claims. The newly implemented Bill C-31 bolsters the potent discourses of "fraud" and of the "bogus" refugees threatening Canada's borders that are present in the rhetoric of Minister Kenney and the Canadian Conservative Government.[98] According to the government, the apparent dysfunction of the current asylum system must be overhauled, and special interest groups have vested interests in keeping the status quo.[99]

Such movements point to the weakening of state sovereign power and the need to perform in spectacular ways, in order to bolster state influence and work towards nation-building projects. In particular, the creation of abject Others works to police and discipline the wider populace,[100] and it also justifies a crusade against the created common enemies that are alleged to threaten our established ways of life. In particular, "the accumulation of affective value shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds"[101] and creates a world order in which it is perfectly justified to unilaterally decide who is a fraud or a terrorist and therefore inadmissible to our countries. As Butler argues, in times when sovereignty is threatened, "the law is suspended in the name of the 'sovereignty' of the nation, where 'sovereignty' denotes the task of any state to preserve and protect its own territoriality."[102] The state does this by detaining those that have been deemed a threat, as well as denying them due process and fair judicial review. With the creation of the Designated Countries of Origin in Bill C-31 and by making it very difficult to file a claim under the new timelines, certain groups of asylum seekers will be excluded from the system and returned to their countries of origin, under the rhetoric of unclogging Canada's refugee system from persons about whom it is already known that they are fraudulent refugees.[103]

In this focus on the constructed binary between the "good refugee," who remains in a refugee camp until selected and resettled in Canada, versus the "fraudulent, queue-jumping asylum seeker," the concept of Agamben's inclusive exclusion[104] continues to inform how we divide and separate ourselves from others. As Hansen and Stepputat posit, these formulations are centred on "the figure, the outlaw, the Friedlos, or the convict, [who] was historically the symbol of the outside upon whose body and life the boundaries of the political community could be built."[105] The concretization of certain bodies into the abject Others justifies increasingly draconian ranges of intervention, not only in material realms but also in the discourses used in the justification of terror, incarceration, and violence against these abject bodies. In particular, the naturalizing of differences and the intensification of violence perpetrated against certain bodies has been seen as just and justified in the violent responses to the 9/11 attacks, whether against the Muslim terrorist or the asylum seeker threatening sovereign borders. The need to protect the threatened sovereignty of a Western nation against the attacks of the terrorists, both from the outside and in our midst, creates regimes that rationalize state interventions in a climate of fear. For the current Canadian government, a powerful symbol in vogue is the "bogus refugee."

As state sovereignty becomes more contested, the "precarious construction and maintenance of localized sovereign

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power through exercise of actual and 'spectral' violence, transmitted through rumours, tales, and reputations"[106] exhibits a peculiar paradox. On the one hand, sovereign borders are becoming much more flexible and porous, with slippages and frictions in the intersections of the global and the local. On the other, in an effort to counteract this phenomenon, governments are moving to more rigid regimes of control and toward an ossification of specific enemy figures into easily understandable and predictable depictions. The border is construed as a concrete thing, regardless of its inherent porosity, adding yet more ammunition to the rhetoric of illegal border crossing and of fraudulent asylum seekers looking to fleece the benevolent Canada. In the recent growth of cross-border migration management, certain mobilities are made legitimate while others are made abject.[107] The authority of the state and its legitimacy must be cleverly manufactured and constantly supported,[108] and the border is a particular locale where sovereignty intersects with notions of threat, security, and power. Certain bodies thus become "the agents of governmentality,"[109] and the bodies of the asylum seeker must therefore be controlled, managed, and used in the performance of sovereignty and security at the border and beyond.

Importantly, as Andreas reminds us, "public perception is powerfully shaped by the images of the border which politicians, law enforcement agencies, and the media project."[110] The figure of the outlaw, the abject Other, the Roma refugee claimant, is lambasted and paraded for the citizenry to see, a sombre reminder not to be like them in order to keep the already fraying fabric of sovereignty together in these trying, terror-ridden times. Such spectacles of means, whether in the creation of extra-legal immigration detention facilities, extraordinary rendition, or draconian legislation, make clear "the insistence on a power that must be displayed."[111] In looking for "fraudulent" asylums seekers, there is a profound reaffirmation of borders and the need to strengthen sovereignty in these uncertain times.[112] In addition, Buck-Morss posits that the particularly powerful trope of Western innocence construes the benevolent nation as being under threat by outside tides and waves of irregular migrants, terrorists, and human smugglers.[113] Interventions against terrorists and "fraudulent" asylum seekers become justified in the creation of a climate in which the very fabric of social life is under threat at the hand of the abject Other. The Roma come to stand in for the dangerous migrant who is lazy and ungovernable, one who has come to take advantage of Canada's generosity. The Roma continue to assault Canada's borders with a steady persistence, so the state creates legal barriers that facilitate faster determination of unfounded and "bogus" claims and sure deportation back to Europe. The Roma do not fit into the conception of the modern Canadian state, and as Aiken has argued, the undesirable migrant Other is seen as dangerous to sovereignty.[114]

Further, the creation of a particular form of "we" gives rise to the justification of the attacks on refugees on the grounds of humanity and the necessity to uphold and fight for ideals, such as enduring freedom and democracy.[115] The integrity of what it means to be part of the Western world, and what it may mean to be Canadian, is viewed to be under attack by those who are not with us but against us. As Vertovec argues, "Civil servants and politicians reflect, draw on, or manipulate popular notions of national versus alien culture to develop policies and manage state institutions … the issues surrounding migration stimulate, manifest, and reproduce cultural politics."[116] Thus, as frontiers become blurred and borders become untied from specific geopolitical locales, media representations bolster the state ideology and discourses, especially if the state is adept at tapping into cultural fears about a particular abject group. If the government can prove that the Roma do not have a real, legitimate basis on which to structure their refugee claim, why should they then come and take advantage in Canada? In Canada, "bogus" refugees are construed as not only undermining Canada's refugee determination system but also as posing a threat to a labile and easily disturbed economic equilibrium. The government capitalizes on the trope of the immigrant as the one who steals our jobs and takes advantage of the welfare state at the "proper" citizens' expense.[117]

Affective responses lie at the heart of the discourses and rhetoric that is being used to mobilize popular beliefs and bolster cultural constructions of our perceived enemies in the performance of state sovereignty and the justification of the control and expulsion of certain bodies. The concretization of borders, and the hyping up of border anxieties, as well as designating which bodies matter and who the perceived enemies are, is a very affective and millennial phenomenon, one that speaks to our hopes and fears in an unstable and shifting world. As Ahmed[118] cogently explores, emotions align with particular bodies, and affect sticks in very particular ways to those that have been constructed as useful in bolstering regimes and creating truths about the enemies around us. In immigration policy and the ever-present discourse of fear and threat of being overrun by undocumentable asylum seekers, Ahmed also points out that "the figure of the bogus asylum seeker is detached from particular bodies: *any* incoming bodies could be bogus, such that their 'endless' arrival is anticipated as the scene of 'our injury.'"[119] Thus, we are constantly waiting for the bogus claimants to arrive, ready to interrogate them and prove their fraud in the crusade to protect Canadian refugee determination system from the waves of "bogus" refugees, because even

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before they arrive and file a refugee claim, we already know that they are a fraud, and it is only a matter of time before they will be found out and removed.[120]

Importantly, since any body can be a threat, these objects of fear and dread become interchangeable for one another.[121] Thus, the Muslim terrorists become the immigrants who steal our jobs and make our pensions harder to get in these trying neo-liberal times, and in turn they become the fraudulent asylum seekers jumping queues and taking advantage of Canada. Such narratives of fear become the narratives of possibility, installing particular truths and regimes of governance. It is the not-yet-ness of feared bodies,[122] the uncontrollable nature of the threat that is the most potent. Immigrants and asylum seekers are dangerous because they are hard to control and thus must be detained and managed. We can never be sure of exactly when the asylum seeker arrives, and that uncertainty creates much anxiety in the state apparatus of the border. There is a profound fear of mobility and of the uncontrollable because "the asylum seeker is 'like' the terrorist, an agent of fear, who may destroy 'our home.'"[123] Such notions of an injury to the nation manifests in Canada through our "concern about cultural identity and cultural loss, the fear that someone is robbing us of our culture and that [our] authenticity will be destroyed."[124] The particular flavour of millennial apocalypticism that manifests in these fears is seen to be solvable only through strict policing and discipline of the abject. Thus, the paranoia and states of emergency organize and control the unclean, uncontrollable, dangerous, and disruptive bodies.[125] The theatre of conspicuous performance of power manifests in the equating on one particular group of asylum seekers to being dangerous, fraudulent, and unwelcome, in a high-profile spectacle of government power through new legislation, "safe country of origin" lists, and official government statements. Thus, the performance of state sovereign power, which is implicit in Canada's Bill C-31, is contingent on the spectacle of capitalizing on the affective responses to rhetoric of "fraud" and of "bogus" refugees threatening to invade our borders and destroy our Canadian identity and way of life.

Conclusions

With the 16 February 2012 introduction and 15 December 2012 implementation of Bill C-31, profound changes to Canada's immigration and refugee policy have come swiftly. I have argued that the particular discourses of "fraud" and "bogus" that underpin the supposed need for this harsher legislation stem from the increased precarity of sovereign power, as the nation must perform a particular spectacle in order to maintain its authority and control. The asylum seeker comes to embody the ultimate threat to Canada the Benevolent, and if they make it past the increasing deterrents along the way to asylum, they must be dealt with swiftly, whether by being turned away at the border, expedited through the asylum process, or incarcerated in detention centres or even geographically removed locales. The restructuring of Canada's refugee regime will have lasting repercussions for those fleeing persecution and wishing to find a safe haven in Canada. The case of Roma asylum seekers is particularly cogent as the Roma have come to embody the "fraudulent" and "bogus" refugee coming to take advantage of the Canadian welfare state. With asylum-seeker and government-assisted refugee numbers dropping, the current Conservative government of Canada has used the Roma to bolster their ideologies about which refugees are wanted and have argued that it is precisely because of the bogus refugee that further reforms to the Canadian immigration and refugee system are needed. It is important to stress that the purpose of this article is not to vilify the current Conservative government, as, throughout history, Canada has had rather harsh immigration regimes, regardless of the political party in power. However, what is very clear about Bill C-31 is that the hard-line measures it introduces presuppose which refugee claimants are the proper refugees who are welcome and which ones are inherently "fraudulent" and must be dealt with accordingly. Such presuppositions are not in accordance with international law, and Canada appears to be shirking its responsibility to provide due process to persons seeking asylum at its borders. It remains to be seen whether Bill C-31 will withstand impending Charter challenges[126] and whether it will be deemed constitutional to deny a person asylum on the basis of the discretion of someone like Minister Kenney and his apparently keen ability to pick out the bogus among the masses.

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"Waiting for a Wife": Transnational Marriages and the Social Dimensions of Refugee "Integration"

Lisa Ruth Brunner, Jennifer Hyndman, and Alison Mountz[1]

Abstract

This paper addresses the gap in research on the social dimensions of refugee resettlement. This is accomplished by examining refugee belonging and definitions of "integration" through a case study of Acehnese refugees resettled in Vancouver, British Columbia, between 2004 and 2006. We analyze findings based on a survey and in-depth interviews conducted five years after resettlement. Our findings suggest that recently resettled groups like the Acehnese, who are "new and few," face specific integration challenges. Importantly, the lengthy timelines to enact sponsorship of a spouse and/or family reunification from Aceh unwittingly inhibit the social integration of the sponsors waiting in Canada.

Résumé

Cet article traite de lacunes en matière de recherche sur les dimensions sociales de la réinstallation des réfugiés en examinant l'appartenance de réfugiés et les définitions de « l'intégration » à travers une étude de cas de réfugiés acehnais réinstallés à Vancouver en Colombie-Britannique, entre 2004 et 2006. Nous analysons les résultats sur la base d'un sondage et d'entrevues en profondeur menés cinq ans après la réinstallation. Nos résultats suggèrent que des groupes récemment réinstallés comme les habitants d'Aceh, qui sont « nouveaux et rares », sont confrontés à des difficultés d'intégration particulières. Notamment, les longs délais pour établir le parrainage d'un conjoint et/ou le regroupement des familles à Aceh empêchent sans le vouloir l'intégration sociale des parrains qui attendent au Canada.

Introduction

This article probes and enhances understandings of the social dimensions of refugee "integration" by focusing on the settlement of a small group of predominantly young, male, government-assisted refugees (GARs) originally from Aceh, Indonesia, in Vancouver, Canada. Their experiences of forced migration, extended detention in Malaysia, and Canada's resettlement and family reunification policies dramatically shaped the circumstances of their settlement. In this article, we explore a tension between the Canadian state's "integration" goals and personal aspirations to start families through marriages with Acehnese women living abroad, or "transnational marriages," so labelled in their organization across international borders.[2] We use original qualitative research to demonstrate that working towards this goal, saving money to realize it, and waiting for such relationships to materialize can impede "integration." Although Canadian immigration and refugee policy officially aspires to facilitate refugee integration, it may also unintentionally stall this process.

In what follows, we begin by providing context that explains how Acehnese refugees came to be resettled in Canada from Malaysia. We then explore meanings of refugee integration, also important to understanding discussion of Acehnese refugee resettlement experiences in Canada. The subsequent section engages ideas about social bonds and belonging as qualitative measures of integration. We then delve more deeply into the empirical material driving this article, addressing the gendering of daily life and related economic decisions made by our participants. Finally, we offer concluding thoughts and policy implications.

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Context: Single Male Acehnese and the Road to Integration

Of the estimated 10.5 million refugees in the world,[3] the Canadian government resettles up to 8,000 individuals annually through its government-assisted refugee (GAR) program.[4] Following the passage of the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), Canada selects these individuals on the basis of their needs for protection, as determined by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Between 1999 and 2005, over 300,000 Acehnese were displaced within Indonesia and beyond its borders, to escape danger in the province.[5] Flight was particularly widespread following the May 2003 Indonesian military offensive in Aceh Province, the largest since its 1975 invasion of East Timor.[6] Thousands of Acehnese—young men, in particular—fled to Malaysia because of its similar language and culture.[7] In 2003, the UNHCR office in Malaysia estimated that between 8,000 and 9,000 Acehnese "of concern" were living undocumented in Malaysia.[8] After eligible Acehnese refugees had languished for several years in Malaysian detention centres, Canada and other major resettlement countries agreed to resettle eligible Acehnese refugees from the detention centres. The Canadian government processed the files of a group of 154 Acehnese individuals—predominantly single men but also some families, including women and children who accompanied the principal applicant. All were resettled in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, between 2004 and 2006.[9] Canada had no history of resettling refugees from Indonesia, let alone from Aceh Province; as such, the refugees were considered "new and few."[10] When the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, or GAM) rebels and the Indonesian government in August 2005 brought relative peace to Aceh, it marked an abrupt end to Acehnese refugee resettlement to Canada.

Ideally, the Canadian government, researchers, and/or service providers would trace settlement experiences of refugees over time by conducting longitudinal, transnational research. However, such data are expensive and challenging to collect, particularly amongst "new and few" groups for whom so little baseline data exist. Not only is information in Canada disaggregated to an Acehnese level non-existent, it is also difficult to conduct research in Aceh as a result of the nature of the conflict and limits on foreign researchers. In an effort to fill the gap in knowledge on "new and few" refugee resettlement, research with the resettled Acehnese was conducted in 2005 (one year after most arrived) and again in 2009 to ascertain settlement outcomes.

Initial research conducted in 2005 found a significant gender imbalance that skewed towards single, young men in their late 20s and early 30s.[11] The refugees from Aceh sponsored for resettlement in Canada were in detention in Malaysia. At that time, of 70 people surveyed, 66 respondents were male; the average age of respondents was 29, and only 18 of the 66 men were married.[12] This article is based on subsequent research in the same urban area conducted in 2009, with approximately 73 adult men and 25 adult women living in Metro Vancouver, many of them the same respondents as in 2005. Our aim was primarily to gauge settlement success, but also to follow up on and analyze the implications of the gender imbalance.

For this study, the lead author of this paper conducted 75 surveys (with 51 men and 24 women), and from among the 75 surveyed, conducted 50 subsequent in-depth semi-structured interviews (with 28 men and 22 women). We intentionally sought out a comparable number of female participants, despite the lower actual percentage of women in the community. The two-stage methodological approach, starting with short surveys, allowed us to ascertain interest among participants for a second-stage semi-structured interview with an interpreter present. In a 2010 paper, authors from the research team outlined detailed methods and overall settlement outcomes in housing, official language acquisition, employment, and participation in Canadian society among both men and women.[13]

Among the 51 men surveyed in 2009, the average age was 35 years, and 16 of these had a spouse in Canada. Of these 16, only 1 had married in Canada after his arrival, to a non-Acehnese Indonesian woman who had immigrated previously to Canada through the Live-in Caregiver Program. The rest were married before coming to Canada and sponsored their wives' immigration. Eight more men married Acehnese women, and 1 was engaged since arriving in Canada. All of these men remained separated geographically from their partners, who were still waiting to come to Canada in 2011. At the time of the survey, none had yet been successful in bringing an Acehnese spouse to Canada.[14] Two men were married when they arrived in Canada but became widowers when their wives died in the December 2004 Indian Ocean Basin tsunami. The remaining (24) men were never married.[15]

Among the men surveyed, 33 had arrived in Canada *unattached,* having fled Aceh to Malaysia as young unmarried men. They told us that they had few opportunities to get engaged or marry, especially once the Malaysian authorities detained them. The men spent an average of four years in detention before their resettlement in Canada, with the minimum time in Malaysia being 1 year and the maximum 12 years.

Although we did not set out to study marriage aspirations, the desire to marry among single men emerged in nearly

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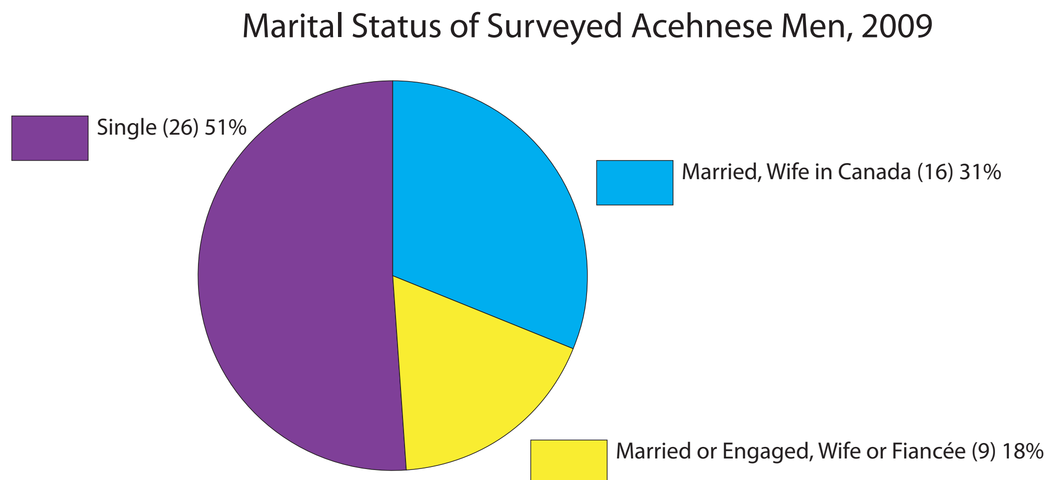
Figure 1: Marital status of Acehnese men, 2009



Source: Participant surveys

every interview and became a central research finding pertaining to integration processes. A clearly hetero-normative perspective of marriage as a common life goal was shared among our respondents.[16] Although research on Acehnese culture remains limited and difficult to find,[17] marriage is described as "essentially universal,"[18] with "considerable early marriage" in Indonesia.[19] Five years after their arrival, the initial excitement of life in Canada had been replaced with a sense of waiting and angst among most single male respondents. The resettled refugees' concerns about isolation from wives and potential wives were clearly expressed but difficult to act upon.

In this article, we focus on the social "integration" of the single men from Aceh in relation to their married peers and to Acehnese women. We define and discuss "integration" in some depth below, but use scare quotes around the term to mark its meaning as a state-directed policy goal of refugee resettlement. This is not to negate its importance, but to qualify its antecedents and authors. To us, integration is a proxy for refugee belonging in Canada and participation in all facets of Canadian society. For the refugees with whom we worked, many of whom are now citizens, coming to Canada was less about integration (the need to "fit in") than protection (the need to be safe). Hence, we aim to balance the motivations of both state policies and those refugees whom they effect in our analysis.

Additionally, our focus on the experiences of single men—rather than on the role of the family in refugee integration in Canada—is intentional. While we acknowledge important literature on family and integration processes,[20] we look to scholarship on integration. This decision reflects our specific focus on the experience of individuals who were resettled in Canada without families and are now asking the Canadian government to improve the process of spousal sponsorship through faster processing of finances and faster reunification with wives and children. This is a concern shared by other immigrant groups, beyond government-assisted refugees, as well, but affects this group of Acehnese GARs in very specific ways.

Meanings of Refugee "Integration"

Despite its frequent usage by government, media, settlement organizations, and academics, the term *integration* is rarely defined.[21] The inconsistency in definitions is partially due to the "great deal of disagreement about what constitutes integration, how one determines whether strategies for promoting integration are successful, or what the features of an integrated society are" in relation to migration.[22] In one view, the broadness of the concept makes a precise definition difficult, contributing to its controversy and "hot debate."[23] There are questions of whether integration functions as a "two-way" process in practice, or just conceptually.[24] A different body of literature suggests that "integration" may be used to stress a genuine "two-way interchange of culture and understanding," implying adaptation by both the "host" community and its institutions and newcomers. In this view, "integration" can begin "with arrival and ends when refugees are in an equal position to the majority."[25] It is not difficult to understand why both a definition and clear measurements of "integration" are elusive.

In a Canadian context where the Multicultural Act of 1988 and the Federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms "institutionalize not only respect for difference but also the rights of being different,"[26] the term *integration* often refers to a

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desirable policy goal. Integration is compared to assimilation, an implicitly ethnocentric mode of immigrant incorporation usually associated with U.S. immigration policy.[27] Policy-makers may be employing "integration" *in place of* rather than *in contrast to* assimilation.

Some scholars argue that *integration* is, in practice, just another word for assimilation. Geographer David Ley, for instance, contends that *integration* imposes an unfair expectation that newcomers adapt to the norms of a receiving society. He makes a version of this argument in his work on the "erosion" of multiculturalism in Canada and his conclusion that integration is not a multicultural value but rather "disguised assimilationism."[28]

Although Canada implicitly commits to provide "the appropriate reception and integration of resettled refugees" under UNHCR's Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement,[29] refugee integration is a nebulous term in Canadian policy.[30] Where are the distinctions made between integration among economic or family class immigrants, and those who come as refugees? Yet this distinction is significant for a number of reasons,[31] not least of which is Canada's identification of integration as an important policy aim of the Canadian state in relation to refugee settlement. There is thus a critical need to interrogate the meaning of refugee "integration" and the government's role in its success in Canada.

Refugees resettled in Canada receive income assistance provided by the federal Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for up to a year, after which the Canadian government expects them to utilize services for immigrants more generally.[32] Since the implementation of IRPA, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) "recognizes that current resettlement programming may not adequately meet the unique and changing needs of refugees."[33] The barriers refugees face in securing and maintaining adequate employment, housing, education, and language are well documented.[34] The economic measures of refugee integration show lower incomes than most other immigrant groups,[35] poorer housing conditions,[36] and less competence in English or French, as our 2010 study found.

Far less is known about the *social* life of refugees, because such relations are difficult to quantify. And yet research shows that social ties function as mechanisms for support during refugees' initial settlement in Canada.[37] Laura Simich notes that refugee "resilience" is a resource in coping with settlement challenges, and yet it is very difficult to measure. Compared with other classes of immigrants arriving in Canada with human and/or financial capital, "one of the few resources available to most refugees is social capital in the form of social support networks."[38] Yet for refugees such as the Acehnese who are "new and few," the lack of social support networks may present additional hurdles to social and economic participation in Canadian society.[39]

Bonds and Belonging as Qualitative Measures of Integration

Our purpose in probing marriage choices among Acehnese in Canada is not to imply that marrying an Acehnese spouse *in itself* indicates either a path or an impediment to "integration." Rather, it is to show how the men's declared need for Canadian citizenship and the economic means to travel to Aceh and marry, coupled with family reunification requirements and timelines, together create a long waiting period and one sequence of events that impedes access to official language skills, one pathway to social integration.

The desire to form bonds with—and, in this case, marry—someone from the same ethnic group who speaks the same language and shares the same interpretation of faith is not uncommon. Ager and Strang's (2008) distinction between social *bonds* (connections linking members of a group) and social *bridges* (connections between groups) is useful to understanding integration. The maintenance of ethnic identity through connections with "like-ethnic groups" (social bonds) "in no way logically limit[s] wider integration into society"[40] and is instead associated with "various benefits contributing towards effective integration."[41] Although social bridges are also usually positive, "involvement with one's own ethnic group (bonding capital) influence[s] 'quality of life' independently of involvement with the local community (bridging capital)."[42]

In their discussion of social bridges, Ager and Strang make another important distinction between those reflecting "friendliness" (or a "lack of conflict and sense of acceptance") and "more intense involvement with the local people," or connections.[43] Although "friendliness" bridges are linked with safety, security, and positively self-judged "quality of life," the latter form of bridge is "crucial in bringing longer-term social and economic benefits to a community" such as employment opportunities.[44]

In our study, both men and women were quick to describe "friendliness" as one respondent does here:

> I feel happy in my life because the people [in Canada] are very friendly, even at work … It's not only your employer or a subcontractor. At the jobsite, we are team players. I feel very happy. Wow. If you need help from other workers [and ask], "Hey, can you give me a hand please?," they just help right away … In Hong Kong [and Malaysia where I worked,] when I asked, "Excuse me sir, can I ask [a question]?," they didn't even look at me. Here [in Canada when I say], "Excuse me sir?," [they say] "Yes? How can I help you?" That's the happiest thing for me. (Man, interview #45, p. 6, 09/13/09)

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Although Malaysia offers more similarities to Acehnese culture and language than Canada, cultural views of class and cultural differences prevented the formation of social bridges in the Malaysian workplace. Yet in Malaysia, many Acehnese were still able to work prior to detention (albeit undocumented), despite their lack of rights; even though resettlement to Canada provides the *right* to work, it does not automatically provide *access* to a stable job. On this level, integration may proceed at different rates, based on the stratification of the society rather than the cultural similarities.

The latter "more intense" social bridges appeared less commonly in the interviews. Indeed, descriptions of significant social bridges were virtually non-existent among the single men to whom we spoke.

The surveys reflect this phenomenon on a larger level. Of the 75 Acehnese men and women surveyed, 70 reported regular attendance at the Acehenese Canadian Community Society (ACCS) (at least once a week), and the remaining 5 attended at least monthly, one indicator of well-developed social bonds.[45] Social bridges in general were much weaker, with 11 men out of 51 reporting they do "no" activities with non-Acehnese people. A minority (fewer than 5 each) mentioned talking to neighbours, fellow public transportation passengers, and people at Muslim celebrations or in coffee shops, while community leaders mentioned meeting with people from other immigrant groups to discuss community-building. Among women, 8 out of 24 surveyed reported doing "no" activities with non-Acehnese people. Yet women who did participate in activities with non-Acehnese people cited positive and potentially "more intense" social bridges through drop-in parenting programs at community centres and neighbourhood houses, shopping, food banks, and volunteering at their children's schools.

What does this mean for the community's gender imbalance? In Ager and Strang's framework, men in particular have strong social bonds with each other, but weak social bridges beyond the community, leaving few opportunities to meet and develop relationships with unmarried women in Canada. Indeed, male respondents noted the lack of opportunities to meet women as a major hindrance to their aspirations to start a family. This is especially significant in the context of the gender-segregated nature of Acehnese events. Although two men mentioned meeting and dating non-Acehnese women in English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) classes, none of the respondents was enrolled in ELSA at the time of the study. A lack of official language skills is one possible explanation for the absence of such social bridges. Additional indicators of language, "cultural competency," and conflicting values further complicate the picture.

Gender Imbalance, Marriage, and the Social Integration of Resettled Refugees

Social geographies of family relations in general and gender issues specifically remain understudied in refugee studies.[46] Bernhardt, Landolt, and Goldring interviewed 40 Latin American women in Greater Toronto who experienced tension, guilt, and isolation in relation to the long periods of family separation they experienced.[47]

Sex ratios in Canadian refugee resettlement policy are known to historically favour men, even when spouses and dependents are considered. This gap has closed in the last decade, especially with the increased focus on protection and reduced emphasis on admissibility criteria introduced in IRPA legislation. Yet sex ratios still vary widely, based on country of origin.

In the case of Acehnese resettled in Vancouver, men outnumber women acutely. All of the Acehnese women we spoke to (and reportedly all who live in Greater Vancouver) were already married. While unusual, the extreme gender imbalance among the Acehnese reflects the conditions of flight and detention in Malaysia from which they came. Predictably, detention inhibited their social contacts with family and friends, and their abilities to marry.

Gender norms and expectations of marriage in Aceh differ widely from those in Canada. Since the creation of the modern Indonesian nation-state, gender relations have been reconstructed so that "on the one hand Aceh is represented by Acehnese Muslim nationalists as having a long tradition of 'strong, fighting women' and on the other hand … by the Indonesian state and military since the New Order under Suharto as the cradle of 'Islamic fundamentalism.'"[48] Distinct gender identities and different marriage norms are evident in responses from research participants.

We aim to highlight some of the difficulties posed by integration for resettled refugees who have spent considerable time detained in limbo and for whom the cultural limbo of adjustment continues. In a study of Southeast Asian refugees in California, the previously "illiterate, hill-tribal Hmong who came from a geographic setting that was most divergent from urban America were the most likely to suffer the greatest cultural dissonance upon arrival in the United States,"[49] when compared to other resettled refugee groups. Aceh, too, is a largely rural province of Sumatra, despite a pattern of coastal settlement for the majority. This is dramatically different from Canada, where 80 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. Canadian norms of gender equality were not as important to respondents as gender-segregated spaces for learning, for example. Respondents revealed significant struggles with the unfamiliarity of ELSA classroom settings in a secular, non-Muslim society where men and women learned together.

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In terms of marriage practices, "the prospective husband or wife must be a Muslim … And, in any case, it is very rare for an Acehnese to convert to or follow a different religion."[50] Despite expressed interest in marrying "Canadian women" (often used interchangeably by participants with "white women," and almost always implying non-Muslim), Acehnese men find their religious and cultural backgrounds inhibit their searches for a spouse in Canada, as one man notes:

> I like white girls, but when I talk to white girls, the conversation doesn't go smoothly … That's why I'm not happy in [Canada.] If you want to have a white girl, you have to go to a club and drink alcohol … it's unacceptable in my culture. I tried but it didn't work … I'm thinking to get a girl from my culture, because [in Aceh] when men come home from work the food is already on the table so the husband just eats, and if the husband gets mad, his wife never talks back or complains. This is my culture … If I can find a white girl, I will not go back to Aceh, but it's so difficult to find a local girl. (Man, interview #18, pp. 4–5, 8, 07/28/09) [51]

The absence of family ties in Canada may also augment the difficulties single Acehnese men face in finding a wife.[52] One respondent in our study captures this sentiment well:

> In Aceh it's easier [than in Canada to find a wife]. Here you have to have a personal relationship with a girl, then after living together for awhile you decide if you want to get married. In Aceh the parents or family members just introduce you and … it's not based on a relationship. If the man likes the girl, they get married. Easy. There's no need for a slow process … here you can test the water. You can test if you fit together … because here [Canadians] have a perception that you marry only one time, so when they get married they really get together. In my culture it's different. I can have another wife. (Man, interview #33, p. 6, 08/12/09)

At least two observations emerge from this excerpt. First, the "social division of labour"—the role of matching young men and women for marriage—is done by parents, not by the brides or grooms themselves. Indeed, since kinship is central to the social structure in Aceh, marriage is a village affair in Aceh and used to build alliances.[53] The absence of such supports in Canada and the shift in responsibility must be considered in the Canadian context. A second important observation involves culturally distinct understandings of marriage.

Only one man revealed a sustained relationship with a non-Acehnese woman in Canada. This particular man spoke English relatively well and was the only individual to live by himself in a neighbourhood with no other Acehnese. Nonetheless, he appeared conflicted about his future:

> I have a girlfriend in Aceh and I have a girlfriend [from China] in Canada also … I don't know [what to do] because everything is different. I need to really, really think about which way is better … I need to respect [the Acehnese community.] I need to do [what is good.] If I do something not good, if they know—my religion is different. So if I have a girlfriend from a different country, if that girl wants to come to my religion, maybe I will get married. But if not, most people [won't accept it]. [With] different religions it's very hard. (Man, interview #39, p. 6, 08/19/09)

Men's expectations generally contrasted with the perspectives of married Acehnese women who lived in Canada for three or four years. In general, women spoke positively of working outside the home in Canada. Acehnese women also described changes in their sense of independence in relation to their husbands, based on examples of other women witnessed while in Canada:

> The first time I arrived here I felt it was so hard. I did not know how to communicate, did not know where to go. I did not have the courage to go by myself. Everywhere my husband went I had to follow. I always needed my husband's guidance … but now I feel that I have more courage. I can go everywhere by myself. [It changed because] in my mind, it's impossible to always follow the husband. Why can other people make it? Why can't I? I have to try also. If other people can do it, I will try. I can do it also. (Woman, interview #3, p. 4, 07/12/09)

For both men and women respondents, shifts in cultural norms are selective. Some Acehnese norms, such as patriarchal views of marriage, are praised and retained by several of the Acehnese-Canadian men, while others, such as hierarchical power structures in employment settings, are criticized when compared to Canadian norms. If integration requires refugees to "adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity,"[54] then this balance must be better understood. What one should preserve and what one should adapt are not always clear.

Yet despite the difficulty in finding a wife in Canada, the alternative—facilitating a transnational marriage—presents its own set of challenges: "If I can find a girl here [in Canada], I want to be married here because if you sponsor a wife you have to wait" (Man, interview #41, p. 7, 08/20/09). As this quote suggests, a transnational marriage with an Acehnese spouse requires Canadian citizenship and considerable funds to travel home and pay for the wedding. This is true for all immigrants who sponsor family members abroad, but for these men, their status as single men and refugees with attendant loan repayment and modest incomes make their challenges distinct. Additional money is required to pay remittances to support fiancées during the process of

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family reunification. On top of these demands, one must also be committed to enduring the wait.

Because a major goal of the single men we interviewed was to marry Acehnese women, they faced even more pressure to save money to cover associated costs. GARs have one to three years before they are expected to pay back their initial transportation loan; the subsequent interest that accrues after the first year is not permitted in the strict Acehnese interpretation of Islam. Additionally, interviewees expressed concern that any debt to the government may hamper their financial ability to sponsor a spouse. Other expenses relate to communication, such as calling cards to contact potential wives, fiancées, and wives back in Aceh. Still more resources are required to support additional family in Aceh: "Single [men] who married [someone] in Aceh have to send money every month [and] support three families now because they have to support themselves, they have to support their wife, and they have to support their own parents. So they have to send three [times the money]. So that's why they have to look for another job" (Man, interview #31, p. 13, 08/11/09).

Remittances from Vancouver have been critical for many families in Aceh after the 2004 tsunami devastated the coast. Even so, about half of all respondents in our study said they wanted to send more money than they can. Sponsorship is another significant expense: "There is a certain doctor [approved] to do the medical tests [for the Citizenship and Immigration Canada sponsorship application], and unfortunately the doctor [is] only in Medan, about one day from Banda Aceh. I have money difficulties right now because [of my] economic situation. I have to send money back home in order for [my wife] to travel to go to Medan and to pay for the doctor too, right?" (Man, interview #22, p. 8, 08/04/09). The largest financial outlays for prospective grooms are threefold: the airfare back to Aceh, the "bride wealth" or "bride price" (called *mahr* in Arabic), and the cost of the wedding. A return economy airfare to Banda Aceh runs approximately CAD$2000 and the *mahr* ranges from CAD$2000 to CAD$5000,[55] so these amounts prove difficult to produce, particularly for individuals in the seasonal or part-time labour market or on social assistance. For strictly observant Muslims who cannot pay interest on loans, accessing credit proved to be difficult for many Acehnese—not only those saving for travel and marriage costs, but also for entrepreneurs who were committed to opening new businesses or those repaying transportation loans before interest began to accrue. Negotiating their faith with market values in Canada creates obstacles to financial independence and ultimately larger life goals.[56] In addition, traditional long-term financial obligations to both the man's family and his spouse's family add additional pressure for a continuous source of dependable remittances.[57]

In short, the desire and costs to marry someone from Aceh are high, and one must wait in Canada to save funds to cover the cost of a passport, travel, the ceremony, and other financial obligations. While a GAR applicant with a spouse or children is permitted to include these family members on his initial application for resettlement, an unmarried GAR must follow many steps before being able to find and sponsor a spouse from the home country. Such efforts, however, are also at odds with "integration" in some sense. While participation in the labour force is avid (when work is found), jobs are low-skilled and often temporary.[58] The survey revealed that 19 of the 52 men were unemployed, although anecdotally we learned that this proportion grew significantly as the 2009 recession progressed.[59] Amongst those men who were employed, the average wage was reported to be $18.30 per hour, although only roughly two-thirds of those employed were willing to give an exact number.[60] Official language skills are poor: among those surveyed, the average ELSA level achieved is between 2 and 3 among men out of 6 possible levels.[61] Official language learning appeared to be a much lower priority for the Acehnese single men than the economic imperatives of repaying transportation loans and establishing families of their own.

Employment and official language learning may well be at odds with one another.[62] One needs to hold several jobs in order to save for a transnational marriage; this can preclude attending ESL classes in Vancouver. The skewed sex ratio of those Acehnese who came to Canada (far more men than women) explains some of this conundrum. In any case, these findings prove significant in understanding barriers to social integration for resettled refugees with family members overseas whom they wish to sponsor or who wish to marry someone from abroad.

Lives on Hold, Narratives of Waiting, and the Quest for Citizenship

For refugees—both those from protracted refugee situations in camps and asylum seekers—waiting "has become the rule, not the exception."[63] In an unfortunate twist, waiting can also persist *after* refugee resettlement. For the few who are able to pass the Canadian citizenship test, acquire a passport, and accrue enough money, the years of waiting to return to Aceh ends with the start of a second phase of waiting. After getting married in Aceh, the men (who are now Canadian and lack Indonesian passports) return to Canada, where they begin processing their wives' sponsorship applications if they have sufficient funds. The reunification process is lengthy. At time of press, the average processing time for permanent resident applications submitted by spouses

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from within Indonesia was 30 months, not including the additional approval step for the Canadian sponsor.[64] Yet the saving and preparing for marriage, let alone the sponsorship application, take many more years. After experiencing protracted detention, the waiting continues.

In addition to financial resources, transnational marriage also involves transitions in legal status. In the case of the Acehnese men we interviewed, acquisition of Canadian citizenship is a prerequisite. The first step towards sponsoring an Acehnese spouse is either a travel document or a passport in order to travel back to Aceh and get married. Because almost all the Acehnese men we interviewed were hesitant to deal with the Indonesian Embassy in Canada, the acquisition of Canadian citizenship has a specific purpose and sense of urgency for these single men as a step towards marriage.

Although GARs arrive in Canada and gain permanent residency very quickly, obtaining citizenship—and, hence, a passport—is another matter. Basic English or French is required and yet not acquired by several of the men we interviewed. As one man explained, marriage was simply not an option for him in the near future because he lacked a combination of money, work, citizenship, and a passport: "I have no plan [to get married] because I am too young. I have no passport and no job, so I can't. Not in the short term" (Man, interview #34, p. 13, 08/14/09). Although he describes himself as young, this man is also referring to his age in relation to saving enough money, obtaining citizenship, and travelling to Aceh. For the men with official language and employment struggles, the promise of marriage and starting a family in Canada remains far off. The resulting waiting period puts lives on hold and does little to improve prospects of social "integration," especially given the explicitly economic imperatives to work to realize these goals.

Our respondents recounted varied "waiting" narratives. One man, for example, was engaged in 2002 but fled to Malaysia in 2003 and was later put into detention there before coming to Canada. Because he did not list his fiancée on his initial resettlement application to Canada out of fear of rejection, he came to Canada alone. Despite constant contact with his fiancée, he has not seen her for eight years and reported that she is growing impatient. Another man explains that the waiting can be intolerable: "Before [coming to Canada] I had a girlfriend, but she married [someone else] because she was worried I could not go back [to Aceh] … When she told me, I cried. And right now I'm just single" (Man, interview #43, p. 5, 09/06/09). Another man met his fiancée while working in Malaysia before being detained and was separated from her for five years until recently returning to Aceh to marry her. At the time the study concluded, they were again enduring a second separation period while waiting for Canada to approve her sponsorship.

Even after sponsorship approval, difficulties related to separation can ensue, particularly in a context of "new and few" refugee resettlements lacking the established narratives of migration. As one man describes it,

> [I was told] after the approval it takes only six to months. [My wife] was approved [almost a year ago], but she doesn't have a visa [or an interview] yet. So right now the problem is … my wife feels like oh, maybe I am playing around, not telling the truth … In Indonesia when you get married to somebody far away, neighbours and family [get suspicious] and ask if he will fulfil his promise. [Especially] my wife's parents. So right now there's some bad gossip. [They say I'm] like a sailor. So whenever I talk about coming to Canada, my wife is a little bit stressed because she doesn't want to talk about it. (Man, interview #30, p. 7, 08/11/09)

All this is to ignore the sheer difficulty of being separated from one's partner. Participants reported forms of emotional and physical distress resulting from this wait: "I can't sleep because I miss her … if the government delays too long I will become crazy" (Man, interview #8, p. 7, 07/19/09). Another said, "Being separated is very hard. We were together not even two months [in Aceh], and then I had to come back [to Canada]. I don't know how to express it. I know she feels [the same]. She cries every night. We both want to be together [all the time], everywhere. Not just here [in Canada]—everywhere. [We both want to be] together. Just like that" (Man, interview #45, p. 4, 09/13/09).

For the majority of Acehnese men, however, the waiting is not for a particular person but for the nebulous hope of returning to Aceh in the future to get married. For these men, waiting to get married was commonly accepted as inevitable, and its perpetual presence served as a backdrop for all decisions. This waiting has inhibited enrolment in ELSA classes, prevented men from making long-term commitments to housing and employment, and generated an angst that permeates the wider community. Integration, ironically, was not impeded by the trauma of prior detention, except perhaps by the skewed sex ratio it shaped, but by the policies and procedures of immigration that made the resettled refugees wait for a spouse.

Given these conditions, many of the Acehnese men are single today as an outcome of the *combination* of forced migration to Malaysia, detention there, and Canadian family reunification policies. Single men work when possible, wait, and save to obtain Canadian citizenship and enough resources to marry a partner from Aceh. No isolated factors created this social isolation, yet personal goals may well get in the way of "integration" as construed by

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the Canadian state. These men remain in limbo in Canada, "waiting for a wife."

On a final note, a new problem is emerging for some respondents from our study: among those who have returned to Aceh to get married, some now have pregnant wives still in Aceh or even newborn children who are waiting for legal entry into Canada. In at least one instance, the birth of the child has complicated and prolonged the sponsorship processing time of the wife, worrying other community members that the same will happen to them. The protracted separations and isolation thus continue in new ways.

Conclusion

As governments, NGOs, and researchers continue to test, monitor, and evaluate group settlement strategies, further research is sorely needed on settlement outcomes such as social inclusion and integration. To focus solely on the more measurable aspects of settlement and integration (e.g., housing, official language acquisition, and employment) without attending to the social dimensions that shape inclusion and participation in Canadian society (e.g., sex ratios, community cohesiveness, and geographical concentrations) misses some of the nuanced antecedents to social dislocation that we illustrate here. In the case of the Acehnese, the combination of factors leads to unique struggles, and their attempts to solve these struggles may in fact impede integration.

While this research could not trace the direct effects of detention in Malaysia on refugee settlement in Canada, it is clear that the secure and closed conditions of detention shaped the selection of who came to Canada and detainees' access to family and friends during their incarceration. The detention dimension of their forced migration can only exacerbate their feelings of isolation.

Family reunification policies could be more effective if integration was clearly defined. The expectation that newcomers respect "basic Canadian values" and Canadians respect the "cultural diversity" newcomers bring to Canada needs to be operationalized, especially the latter.[65]

Post-IRPA GARs are different from those resettled before IRPA. Likewise, the decision to enact group processing of resettled refugees from protracted situations generates distinct cohorts of refugees. During the 2000s, Canadian group processing brought resettled refugees from protracted refugee situations created by source countries like Burma (Karen refugees via Thailand) and Bhutan (Lhotshampas via Nepal). These groups are also relatively "new and few" with specific settlement challenges of their own.[66] Recent changes enacted by the Canadian government to create the "visa office referred" refugee category will also demand new research. Government, settlement agencies, and researchers can more carefully define and address refugee "integration" in particular. Interviews with Acehnese men reveal significant differences between some men's understandings of gender and marriage expectations and Canadian norms.

Quite invisible in this discussion is the "two-way street" aspect of "integration." The question remains whether "integration" truly is a mutual process of engagement and accommodation, or largely unidirectional. Refugee resettlement is a *humanitarian* form of "premeditated, state-planned, government-managed migration and settlement"[67] and thus involves a role for the state that is somewhat distinct from its role in other forms of immigration. At least in the Acehnese case, the two-way definition of integration seems limited in practice, and we echo Daniel Hiebert and Kathy Sherrell in their call for a larger role for Canadian society in facilitating "integration."[68]

The social is often connected to the economic realities of wanting to make marriage happen.[69] Affording a family is the first hurdle. In this context, the Canadian government could contemplate an expedited spousal sponsorship process for all GARs who were detained by a third country government for a period of years before their arrival. An expedited spousal sponsorship process could also be warranted in light of the skewed sex ratio among the refugees who were selected to come to Canada. This is critical because no extant co-ethnic Acehnese community met this group; they were "new and few."

Such change could allow the Acehnese to shift their gaze from Aceh to Greater Vancouver; from working multiple jobs to afford travel to Aceh to accessing English / official language learning that promises better jobs in Canada and more meaningful contact with other Canadians; and from negotiating Canadian immigration regulations to negotiating Canadian society. Belonging to Canada could continue apace.

Notes

1. The financial support of Metropolis British Columbia (MBC) provided crucial financial support to this study, and our community partner, the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, both inspired the study and provided invaluable assistance. We also extend our gratitude to Samsidar Halim and Fredy Tanumihardja for their interpretation services and tireless assistance scheduling interviews. Above all, we are indebted to the Acehnese Canadian Community Society for their willingness to participate in our study. Any errors remain ours alone.
2. Judith K. Bernhard, Patricia Landolt, and Luin Goldring, "Transnationalizing Families: Canadian Immigration Policy and the Spatial Fragmentation of Care-giving among Latin

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10. Jennifer Hyndman and James McLean, "Settling like a State: Acehnese Refugees in Vancouver," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, no. 3 (2006): 345–60.
11. Ibid., 356. We use the terms *gender imbalance* (the ratio of women to men) and *sex ratio* (the number of females compared to males in a population) somewhat interchangeably here, despite the differences between sex and gender. We take gender to be socially constructed as a reference to men's and women's identities and relations to one another, and sex to be a biological reference to females and males.
12. Ibid.
13. Lisa Ruth Brunner, Jennifer Hyndman, and Chris Friesen, "Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver: Settlement among Acehnese Refugees Five Years On," Working Paper Series, no. 10–12 (Vancouver, BC: Metropolis British Columbia, 2010), http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2010/WP10–12.pdf.
14. At the time of the dissemination event in July 2010, the first sponsored Acehnese spouse had just arrived in Canada.
15. Brunner, Hyndman, and Friesen, *Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver*.
16. We recognize the potential pitfalls of hetero-normativity by focusing on marriage. Although gender-neutral terms such as *spouse* were used by the interviewer, they were likely understood in hetero-normative terms (e.g., *wife*). At the time of writing, homosexuality is illegal in Aceh under a provincial bylaw ("Indonesia Must Repeal 'Cruel' New Stoning and Caning Law," *Amnesty International News*, 17 September 2009, http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/indonesia-must-repeal-cruel-new-stoning-caning-law-20090917), although this of course does not mean homosexuality does not exist there. Throughout the research, all male respondents who were married or discussed their desire to get married referred to women.
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23. Castles et al., *Integration*, 114.
24. Ibid., 113, emphasis in original.
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26. David Ley, "Post-Multiculturalism?," Working Paper Series, no. 05–18 (Vancouver, BC: Metropolis British Columbia, 2005), http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2005/WP05–18.pdf (accessed 03 April 2013).
27. Ibid., 17.
28. Ibid., 7–8.
29. Debra Pressé and Jessie Thomson, "The Resettlement Challenge: Integration of Refugees from Protracted Refugee Situations," *Refuge* 25, no. 1 (2008): 94–9.
30. Ibid.
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33. Pressé and Thomson, "Resettlement Challenge," 96.
34. For example, see Yu, Ouellet, and Warmington, "Refugee Integration in Canada"; Hiebert and Sherrell, "Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers"; and Kathy Sherrell and Immigrant Services Society of BC, *At Home in Surrey? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Surrey, b.c. (Final Report)* (Vancouver: Immigrant Services Society of BC, 2009), http://www.surrey.ca/files/HousingExperiencesofRefugeesJune2009.pdf.
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40. Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 186.
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42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., 180.
44. Ibid.
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51. Since we employed a *Bahasa* Indonesia interpreter for the interviews and the first language of the respondents is Acehnese, here it is necessary to problematize research based on interpretation and note the dangers of (mis)translations. In addition, the association between "being Canadian" and "whiteness" points to a larger discussion of race and the understanding of Canadian identity; see Brunner, Hyndman, and Friesen, "Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver," 15–16.
52. Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration," 178.
53. Graf, Schroter, and Wieringa, *Aceh: History, Politics and Culture*, 160.
54. UNHCR, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/405189284.html.
55. Personal communication, 20 October 2010.
56. Another consideration is the provision of aid in finding financial assistance in order to comply with sharia law; see Ijara Canada, http://www.ijaracanada.com/.
57. Graf, Schroter, and Wieringa, *Aceh: History, Culture and Politics*, 162–3. Although note that the authors suggest that men are frequently living far away from wives and children to work in Aceh, so separation is common.
58. Brunner, Hyndman, and Friesen, *Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver*.
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64. At press time, Indonesian residents submitted their spousal applications to Singapore. According to CIC, it took thirty months to process 80 per cent of all cases submitted to Singapore between 1 January and 31 December 2013. See "Processing Times: Family Sponsorhip," CIC, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm-fc.asp.
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Adult Refugee Learners with Limited Literacy: Needs and Effective Responses

John Benseman

Abstract

Adult refugees with limited education are a distinctive learner group with substantial and distinctive educational, social, and psychological needs. Working with these learners is a highly specialized activity, requiring high levels of educational skill and commitment. With a paucity of original research available about this group of learners, this study provides a systematic documentation of their distinctive needs as well as effective educational strategies for use with these learners. The study involved interviews with 36 adult refugees, two program co-ordinators, five course teachers, and six bilingual tutors from a community-based program in New Zealand. The challenge of working with these learners arises due not only to their experiences as refugees, but also as learners with minimal or no educational experience. Their progress depends on a skilful development of "learning to learn," acquiring basic literacy skills, personal confidence and transfer of these skills to everyday life outside the classroom.

Résumé

Les réfugiés adultes peu scolarisés forment un groupe distinct d'apprenants ayant des besoins éducatifs, sociaux et psychologiques importants et particuliers. Travailler avec ces apprenants est une activité hautement spécialisée, qui exige des niveaux élevés de compétences éducatives et d'engagement. Étant donné le peu de travaux de recherche originaux disponibles sur ce groupe d'apprenants, cette étude fournit une documentation systématique de leurs besoins particuliers et présente des stratégies d'enseignement efficaces pour ces apprenants. L'étude a porté sur des entretiens avec 36 réfugiés adultes, deux coordonnateurs de programme, cinq enseignants et six tuteurs bilingues d'un programme communautaire en Nouvelle-Zélande. Travailler avec ces apprenants pose un défi non seulement en raison de leur expérience en tant que réfugiés, mais aussi en tant qu'apprenants n'ayant que peu ou pas d'expérience éducative. Leur succès dépend de leur habileté à « apprendre à apprendre », de l'acquisition de compétences de base d'alphabétisation, de la confiance en soi et du transfert de ces compétences à la vie quotidienne en dehors de la salle de classe.

Introduction

New Zealand accepts up to 750 refugees each year from around the world. Typically, these people are "the casualties of crises such as brutal regimes, civil war, anarchy and famine. Often, they are at risk because of their ethnicity, political beliefs or religion. They may have endured persecution, torture, rape or abduction, or have witnessed killings. Many arrive after perilous journeys and detention in refugee camps, having lost loved ones, homes, possessions and jobs."[1]

Once they arrive in New Zealand, the refugees who have spent time in transit camps are initially inducted over a six-week period into local life and introduced to refugee-focused NGOs and other settlement agencies at a refugee centre in Auckland. From here the new arrivals are dispersed around the country to centres usually chosen because there are already compatriots settled there. On reaching their new destination, a range of services (both government and voluntary) come into operation to help in the settlement.

Each new arrival is entitled to up to 100 hours of teaching with a government-funded provider. Typically, those with more education study at more formal institutions, while

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those with low-level skills attend courses run by community-based organizations.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document and analyze the learning needs and issues of adult refugees with low language and literacy skills by looking at how their prior experiences and current contexts affect their educational participation and learning. In addition, the study has sought to identify preferred educational strategies for teaching these learners. The specific focus of the study was adult refugee learners with low-level language and literacy skills (in English, but often also in their first or mother language (L1) currently enrolled in educational programs with a major community-based provider.

Related Research

The quest to identify effective teaching methods has a long history in education but is much shorter in adult education. Historically, some adult educators have looked to philosophical models such as Paulo Freire and Malcolm Knowles, but most have relied on established traditions and variations of practitioner wisdom. More recently, however, there has been a move to emulate other professions and the schooling sector to base teaching practices on research findings.[2] While there is a wealth of relevant research to draw on in schooling contexts,[3] adult education has been less endowed, although this situation is steadily changing.

The intention with research-informed teaching is for practitioners to shape their practices in keeping with the best available research evidence, which maximizes the potential for learner impact, in contrast to operating on the basis of old habits and hearsay. Although the ideals of research-informed research inevitably give priority to "gold standard" large-scale, sophisticated quantitative studies to ensure generalizability of findings, smaller-scale qualitative studies are also recognized as having an important contribution to this approach, especially in opening up new areas, complementing quantitative studies, and offering valuable insights through their "thick descriptions" of subjects, contexts, and specific learner groups. It is in this regard that the present study is presented as a means of understanding effective teaching practices for adult refugee learners by exploring what a group of refugees in New Zealand and their teachers report as valuable and beneficial for them. While there is considerable general literature about refugees and their children, there is very little original research on adult refugees as learners or teaching them, especially in New Zealand.

The Importance of English and Literacy Skills

Some research evidence[4] shows that becoming literate in the host country's language is essential for making friends outside refugees' own community, finding and sustaining employment, gaining secure income, as well as maintaining social and psychological well-being. The New Zealand Immigration Service[5] reported that only 12–53 per cent of refugees were working two years after arrival, usually part-time and still supplementing their income with government benefits. Refugees of all ages are therefore often identified as a high-need target group for educational interventions.

For those adults with minimal or no schooling experience, the need is primarily centred on their lack of literacy skills (including oral English), especially for those not literate in their first languages. Not being literate in one's first language has considerable implications for learning literacy skills in a second language. Researchers[6] have shown that learning to read in a second language will invariably be difficult and slower: "Besides learning specific processing skills, a literate person learns to process information in ways qualitatively different from those of a non-literate person. Formal schooling provides particular skills, possibly used primarily in formal school settings, and the combination of thinking and performance skills is a reciprocal relationship that permits learning in a formal classroom setting."

In other words, the more education one has, the easier it is to learn all aspects of a new language. Learners who are reading for the first time in any language need to learn a range of reading-related skills such as interpreting figures, text organization, even oral discrimination, left-to-right orientation, associating symbols with objects, and picture interpretation. Once students have learned these sorts of skills, they can then be transferred to new languages, even if they vary significantly from the original one in which reading was taught.

Educational Provision for Refugees

A number of studies[7] have detailed the overall shortfalls and inadequacies of educational provision for adult refugees in New Zealand. Their criticisms include not just the inadequacies of course availability, but also the irrelevance of the teaching content of many courses, with the potential to "create an *underclass of refugees* who subsequently experience significant direct and indirect discrimination."[8] Some writers[9] have also identified specific barriers that prevent or restrict refugees' enrolment and attendance at classes such as lack of child care, caring for family members, health issues, financial barriers, attending paid employment, transport difficulties, gender barriers, living in isolated areas, and understanding how "systems" work in order to access information and resources.

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Learning Issues

A government report on New Zealand English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)[10] acknowledged that "learning progress for pre-literate learners is extremely slow. Traditional assumptions about stair-casing to higher level programmes need to be challenged in the case of pre-literate learners." The report recognizes that these learners' needs are complex and require specialist resources and teaching approaches.

Invariably, most studies report the importance of understanding the psychological trauma that many refugee learners have endured prior to arrival in their new countries. Trauma can include physical and psychological torture, living in primitive conditions in transit camps for long periods, sustained separation from family and friends, and cultural alienation in their new host societies. One study[11] identified three distinct types of stress that refugees face (migration, acculturative, and traumatic) that occur when the burden on people from external events or internal pressures on their lives exceeds their resources to cope.

An in-depth study of eight refugees and ten educators[12] concluded that while it is important not to pathologize the effects that war and other catastrophes may have on learners, these factors should also not be underestimated as they come to grips with living in their new society. Even for less traumatized learners, "despite their supportive learning environment the students are suffering from loneliness, depression and lack of appropriate expert counselling, lack of legal and language rights and information and have few opportunities to speak English outside the class and to integrate with members of the host community."[13]

Magro therefore argues that resettlement issues cannot be separated from language development, and teachers should work from a broad definition of literacy that includes not only numeracy, problem solving, and the ability to read, write, and speak English, but also emotional and social literacies such as motivation, interpersonal effectiveness, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

Some writers[14] have pointed out that particular groups of refugees have greater or distinctive needs relative to others. These groups include older people, asylum seekers, those with physical disabilities, women, and youth (potentially a lost generation who feel they don't fit into either their original or their new country).

Teaching Strategies

There are few studies available on the teaching of adult refugees. In a study of Sudanese refugees in Australia, researchers[15] found that speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy, and learning skills simultaneously may be too great a learning burden for these learners. They argue that there needs to be greater flexibility in course content and outcomes, so that learners can concentrate initially on oral English-language skills. They also conclude that the teaching of Sudanese refugees would work better with teachers with relevant background information on Sudanese students, classes reduced to 10 students, and Sudanese learners being taught separately from other learners.

With regard to this last point, an English report[16] identified a successful program for traumatized refugees in Sweden who would normally have dropped out of mainstream ESOL provision. The course integrated educational needs with the learners' physical and psychological needs. The course evaluation concluded that traumatized refugees need to be identified early and be given special support, as those who have failed in other courses have little chance of successfully learning Swedish.

A New Zealand evaluation[17] of the impact on ESOL learners has also demonstrated better results for those who were taught using bilingual tutors, compared with those taught by English-speaking tutors. Results were also better for those with greater educational experience and who had longer periods of teaching. An evaluation[18] of five refugee programs also reported the value of "ethno-specific learning" and having bilingual support. These programs achieved very high rates of student retention (up to 100 per cent) and learner motivation, with the greatest impediments being child care and transportation difficulties.

There has also been criticism[19] of the teaching skills of some ESOL teachers working with low-skill refugees with limited English skills. These writers have recommended greater professionalism, increased professional development (especially about working with low-level learners), and greater access to cross-cultural training and information and translated materials. A New Zealand survey of immigrant learners[20] reported that many were dissatisfied with the lack of translators, the high course costs, and the lack of opportunities to practise their English.

Finally, in terms of the teaching content for refugee programs, McDermott[21] reported that most refugees aspire to independence in their daily lives, such as daily tasks of shopping and visiting their doctor. An English study of seven asylum-seekers[22] found that this group of students wanted some key things in their courses: greater independence and control in contrast to their past lives, integration into family networks, and communities and emotional support.

Methodology

This study was undertaken in co-operation with a large community-based ESOL provider. Two sites were chosen for the study because of their reasonable accessibility and the ready availability of suitable interviewees. From a potential

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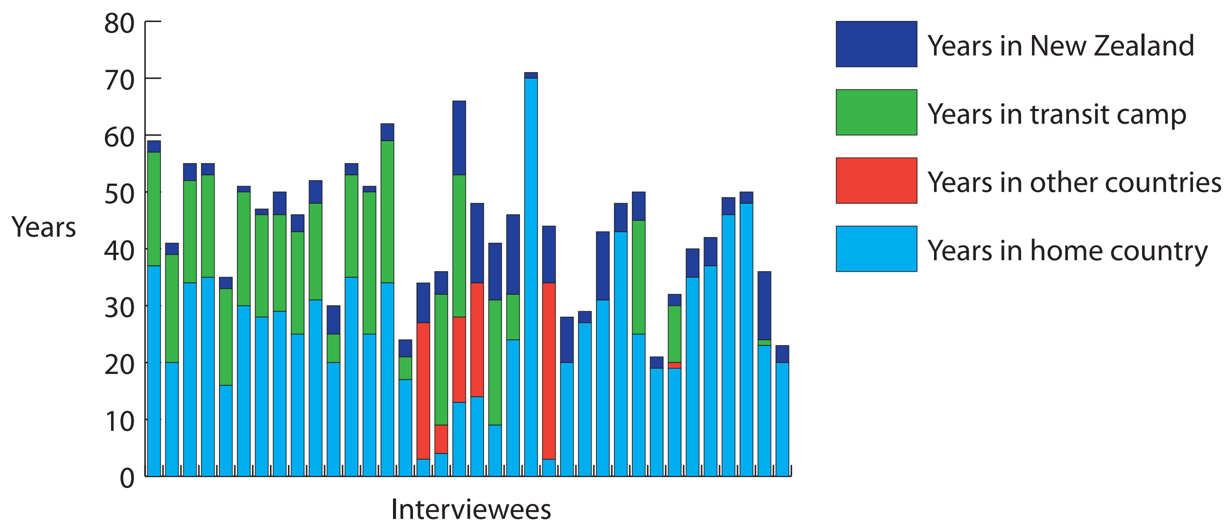
Figure 1. Living locations of interviewees (n = 36)



Source: Interviews of respondents

total of approximately 140 refugees in the two areas, a sample of 36 were chosen who had completed enough tuition and were knowledgeable and confident enough to provide feedback, could be accessed during site visits, and had first languages in common to make interpretation in groups possible. The learners were originally from Bhutan, Burma, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Pakistan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Palestine. Interviews were held with program co-ordinators (two), course teachers five) and bilingual tutors (six).

Of the 36 learners interviewed, 29 were women and 7 were men. Their average age was 44.2 years, ranging from 71 years to 21 years. The great majority were married, with four widowed (all in their home countries), one was divorced, and four were single. All had at least some family in New Zealand, including grandparents, siblings, and grandchildren. Of those who had children, the average number of children per interviewee was just over two. Five said that they had sons or daughters still either in their home country or in North America.

Figure 1 indicates where the interviewees had spent their lives. It shows the low number of years spent in New Zealand (4.9 years), but also how variable their experiences are in relation to transit camps. Overall, they had spent an average of 15.3 years in camps. A third had not been in camps at all, although they may have spent some time in other countries before coming to New Zealand.

The learners were interviewed in focus groups (of three to five) to provide a supportive environment among compatriots. Teachers and bilingual tutors (BLTs) were interviewed individually. In addition to the responses to a series of set questions asked of all interviewees, extensive notes were taken during the interviews by the interviewer, especially in relation to the open questions and additional information offered in the course of answering set questions. The set question responses were analyzed in terms of simple frequencies, while the interview notes were examined and analyzed for additional information and themes. Each interviewee had a consent form explained orally via interpreters, and all signed it prior to the interviews.

Course Description

The 36 learners were spread over six classes held at five different venues. The classes had 20–26 learners, with new learners still joining as the courses progressed; in one course, six new learners had joined in the past week. All classes had a tutor and a bilingual tutor who worked alongside the course teacher. Most learners attended a total of 10 hours each week (usually over four sessions).

The teaching content of the courses was broadly set by a curriculum constructed by the provider organization but also incorporated suggestions from the learners themselves and from current issues and needs. In most cases, learners were recruited through social workers or contacts in their own communities. There were consistent comments that course attendance was unfailingly high as a result of high levels of motivation.

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Findings

Learners' Perspectives

The 36 learners came from 10 different countries, speaking a number of second and third languages in addition to English. Their diversity extended to a range of religious backgrounds, castes, and settlement journeys en route to New Zealand. The great majority had not attended any schooling in their home country, which means that most were not literate in any language, including L1. A few had attended school for up to three years and a smaller number had attended up to eight years. This latter group could read and write to a low level in their L1.

Their journeys from their homeland to New Zealand varied considerably. Some had spent many years in transit camps, while others had come directly to New Zealand as part of a family reunification process. The trauma[23] they had experienced also varied considerably; in one group, most of the men had been imprisoned and in some cases, tortured. Some of the women in this group had been raped. Those who had been in transit camps had faced many years of uncertainty about their future, social dislocation from family and friends, resentment from local people, and prolonged periods of inactivity and uncertainty while they awaited decisions about their future settlement. The effects of this internment often had long-term effect on these refugees: poor health (chronic conditions that recur periodically, as well as long-term disabilities from severely broken bones, for example), neurological dysfunction (demonstrated by high levels of anxiety in unfamiliar settings such as the classroom), and feelings of alienation in their new setting. One BLT commented that one of the most enduring negative effects of living in transit camps is a deep-seated feeling of dependency, because they were unable to work or provide their daily necessities of living, as these were provided by those running the camps.

English and Literacy Skills

Only a few had any English prior to arriving in New Zealand. Some had picked up some English during their time in transit camps, but this occurred largely on an informal basis. Teachers commented that those starting the course with some English tend to have very little comprehension and operate on a "word-by-word translation" model of speaking.

About a third of the group had been attending a literacy course for six months or less, another third for approximately 6–18 months, and a third for two years or more. Several others said that they had dropped out of classes in the past and had attended other classes before enrolling in the current one. They had dropped out mainly because they found the classes too difficult or because of domestic issues. Several had had their attendance interrupted because they had moved around within New Zealand.

Asked what they wanted to achieve by attending their class, all expressed slight variations on learning enough English to be able to carry out daily tasks, whether it be shopping, speaking to their neighbours, or making enough progress to enrol in a higher-level course. Underpinning all their replies was a strong desire to achieve personal independence so that they did not have to rely on their children, spouse, or a third party in order to do things such as talk to their doctor or their children's teachers. This desire was expressed by both men and women and especially by the older interviewees. About half said that they wanted to get a job, although most realized that this was a long-term goal, given their current level of English. Several older men said that while health issues precluded being able to hold down a full-time job, they would like to volunteer their time in the community. Other aims included having enough English to help support their children to finish school and to help them achieve what they want to do, to understand what their children were saying to their friends, to read street names, to identify food items when shopping, to get a driver's licence (mainly women), and to solve problems for their family.

Feedback on Courses

The interviewees were asked their opinions of the current course they were attending. The responses were unanimously positive, with specific mentions of their teachers, the BLTs, the program, the location, the timing of the class, being able to practise their English, various aspects of the teaching (such as repeating words until memorized), achieving particular skills (for example, being able to write their name and address, using a bus, talking on the phone, using an ATM, using the Internet), and the personal support they had received since arriving in New Zealand. Many mentioned the positive value of having a BLT involved in their class.

Asked if there were any aspects of the course they did not like or would like changed, only a few identified any issues. These criticisms included the inclusion of children in some classes because of the noise, not taking a break in the middle of their lesson, the crowded conditions in the classroom and transport difficulties.

They were also asked if the course had helped them achieve their personal goals. Most responses to this question were positive, giving examples of tasks they were now able to do because of the skills that they have learned on the course—as one learner said, "It's helped a lot. I knew nothing before coming to class. Now I can go shopping on my own and pay my bills. I can take my wife to the hospital for

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her appointments without an interpreter." Another said, "I can recognize my street name now when I see it and I greet people on the way to class." Most of these achievements were of an immediate nature, helping them function on a daily basis more easily, while longer-term achievements like getting a job they saw as aspirational and dependent on achieving greater fluency and confidence in English and literacy skills.

The interviewees were all asked what they found their greatest challenges as learners. Many were unable to articulate specific challenges or said that they had no problems. Most of the challenges mentioned related to learning processes: not being able to hear sounds, speaking, retaining new learning, spelling English words, and not understanding word meanings. Other challenges related to wider issues: lack of time to practise amid a busy family life, feeling tired, homesickness, depression, lack of access to the teacher because there were large numbers in the class, constant new arrivals, sight problems, and coping with family members' health issues.

Teachers

All five course teachers also taught non-refugee classes but had been chosen for the current course specifically for their expertise in teaching low-level literacy to refugees. One manager commented that they had to carefully proceed when selecting and introducing new teachers. Even some of their experienced ESOL teachers had not lasted in the refugee classes, as they were unused to the slow progress. In some cases, using inappropriate teachers had meant losing both the teacher and learners.

All teachers were female and had formal teaching qualifications, some of which was at postgraduate level. They had an average of over 13 years ESOL teaching experience, ranging from 4 to 25 years. Most had also done some ESOL home tutoring, and several had extensive experience teaching in schools, including one person with more than 40 years' experience. All had been involved in teaching refugees for more than 2 years, with some having up to ten years' experience.

Asked what they wanted to achieve with their current class, all tutors said that they aimed for some fluency in basic conversational English language skills for everyday living, especially to help them solve their learners' problems and challenges and thereby achieve greater independence. While all mentioned oral skills as their prime aim, some also specified literacy aims such as writing and reading. Several pointed out that this aim was quite basic in most cases, because the learners also had limited literacy skills in their first language. In some cases, it involved discerning initial word sounds, learning motor skills for forming letters, learning a new alphabet, recalling previous learning, understanding the direction of text, understanding new word orders and learning to listen, analyze, and reflect, using questions. As one teacher said, "It takes awhile for some of them to understand the difference between a question and an answer, let alone getting them to start asking questions or responding to them."

Alongside this aim, all mentioned wanting to provide an introduction to successfully living in the New Zealand environment. Other aims mentioned included gaining general confidence, achieving a sense of accomplishment, and feeling welcome and supported.

They were then asked what they felt constitutes success in the light of these aims. Here, several teachers talked about the importance of seeing changes in how their learners perceived themselves: "If they are happy, engaged in their learning, and realizing that they can have success, they can do more than before." Another teacher looked for changes in specific patterns of interaction: replying when asked a question, remembering from previous lessons, being able to discern all the words in a sentence, understanding the correspondence between words and sounds, using written prompts for speaking, and transferring learning into new words. One teacher looked for changes in how learners participated in their community and especially in family life where there were often parents with no English and where there was a strong reliance on children whose language skills had developed more strongly than the adults'. Gaining confidence in English in these cases helped restore the confidence and feelings of self-worth of the learners as parents within their family.

Teaching Challenges

As all of the teachers had experience teaching ESOL with non-refugees, they were asked what differences they noticed in teaching refugees compared with other ESOL classes. Several mentioned the effects of psychological trauma on their ability to learn (usually in terms of poor attention spans and "nervous energy"), dealing with dislocated families where some family members were still in dangerous situations, and general homesickness, but the most frequent comment related to their low levels of literacy skill, which meant that they had to "learn to learn," picking up many basic skills (for example, establishing routines, setting goals, interpreting symbolic representations such as maps and diagrams, dealing with abstractions, sitting at a table, appropriate rules of behaviour, following instructions, using glue) that teachers take for granted in other ESOL classes. As one teacher said, "You have to start learning from the absolute beginning. You can't take anything for granted." Other differences included very low levels of ambition "because they don't know yet what they can do."

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With such low levels of basic learning skills, teachers found that learners were not able to work on tasks independently (either at home or in the classroom) as they were reluctant to ask for help, or if they did, found it hard to specify their difficulty. They also felt that refugees took longer to retain new learning. One very experienced teacher said she estimated that her refugee learners took four to five times longer to consolidate their new skills than other ESOL learners.

Other challenges were probably not unique to refugee learners, but were present nonetheless. For example, because of traditional perceptions of teachers and their high initial dependency, most learners tended to see their teachers as experts to be revered, the sole source of learning, and particularly one who imparts knowledge. This "teacher as expert" perception made it difficult to initiate learner-centred activities where learners were encouraged to function as part of small groups, where they provided mutual help and support, or where individual learners were set independent tasks. Several teachers commented that learners found it difficult to work in this learner-centred way initially, but gradually became comfortable with it over a period of months. New learners then joining the class often joined in more readily, because current class members helped socialize them into these new activities.

Teachers reported no difficulties with recruitment or attendance. The only difficulties with attendance were due to what teachers saw as valid reasons such as religious celebrations, bad weather (having to walk long distances to class), and coping with family crises and illness.

Learning Gains and Wider Impact

All the teachers agreed that most of the learners' gains were small and incremental. One very experienced teacher explained, "Progress is slow and variable. It varies according to things like age and their previous education. Young learners with some schooling make much faster progress than older ones who have never been to school. Some take four to give years to get to a point where they are confident and comfortable with 'survival English' and can leave the class, but there's always pressure to get into jobs."

In terms of impact outside the classroom, the teachers had varied viewpoints. One of the younger teachers was cautious about their progress: "It's hard to say. They say that they are more relaxed and competent, but it's slow progress." Others were more confident that their learners were making progress, mainly because the course content was strongly influenced by the learners generating their own topics of current interest or need. One commented, "They are more confident. It broadens their outlook and makes New Zealand a little more familiar and comfortable." Another who worked mainly with women was more adamant: "There's been a visible improvement. They can make themselves understood, they have better access to health services because they can communicate with doctors and so on with increased confidence and higher self-esteem."

Use of BLTs

As the use of BLTs was an integral part of teaching these courses, the teachers were asked for their assessments of this strategy. Their responses were universally positive. They valued their BLTs for a range of reasons: acting as a role model, helping identify and resolve issues in learners' wider lives, providing instant clarification of language-related difficulties, providing help in small-group work, acting as an intermediary generally between the tutor and learners, picking up subtle cultural signals from learners, motivating and affirming individual learners, and helping organize class events and outings. BLTs were also key to coping with large classes.

There were also a number of difficulties or limitations with the use of BLTs in some cases: restrictions when the BLT did not speak some of the learners' languages, limitations when a few BLTs themselves had limited English skills, and a danger that some learners become dependent on the BLT translating when they should be working harder to understand things themselves.

Finally, the tutors were asked for any general reflections about what they had learned as a result of teaching their refugee course. One tutor said that working with such low-level learners had "made me think a lot more deeply about my teaching and had broadened my teaching skills." Several tutors commented that working with refugees had made them more sensitive to cultural issues, giving them greater understanding of cultural barriers, both inside and outside the classroom (especially the discrimination they face): "It's taught me how to meld different cultures together and about tragedy and dislocation." Another commented, "You can never assume they see things the same way as you do," and that "even if their progress can be slow, everyone will learn, even the elderly."

Bilingual Tutors

Six bilingual tutors were interviewed; they originally came from Bhutan, Afghanistan (two), Ethiopia, and Iran (two). Most spoke at least three languages and had learned at least some English in their home country, usually at school. Several had also attended English-language classes in transit camps. Most were reasonably fluent in English to a level where they freely conversed in their interviews. Two were a little hesitant and struggled to express themselves at times. Formal qualifications ranged from none to a PhD. All had

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completed a two-day bilingual certificate course and had variable experience as teachers, either in schools or with adults.

The Role of the BLT

Asked how they saw their role as BLTs, all mentioned supporting and assisting the class tutor in a collaborative way. They identified a range of ways they do so: interpreting and explaining for the learners, facilitating communication generally, explaining cultural customs to the tutor, and working with individual learners on tasks set by the tutor. All the BLTs were clear that the teaching agenda was set by the class tutor and that it was the role of the BLT to help achieve the tasks specified by the tutor: "She explains what she wants and I translate, work with the students, making sure they know what to do."

As one recently recruited BLT explained, "It's important to make the students feel safe—they know there will be someone who can explain." Another said, "[It's about] filling the gap, working like a bridge, explaining when they don't understand either in English or [L1]." This BLT said that it was important that the BLT shared the background of the learners with the tutor in order to explain why they did or didn't do things, as most of the learners had never been to school and didn't always understand what was expected of them.

Asked to reflect on their experiences as BLTs, all were unanimous about it being a positive experience. Several said that the role could be frustrating at times, mainly as a result of the learners' difficulties in achieving their goals.

The BLTs named two key outcomes for the learners: improving their language skills in order to become independent, and overcoming cultural barriers in order to integrate into New Zealand society and achieve healthy lifestyles in their new environment: "[It's great] every time a learner achieves their own small goal, maybe writing their name, go shopping, or whatever."

Challenges for BLTs

The BLTs named particular challenges they found working with low-level refugee learners: coping with constant influxes of new learners, working with large classes, often in confined spaces, multi-level classes, identifying what learners need help with, clarifying instructions, giving due attention to single learners whose L1 is different from others' in the class, coping with the different ethnic groups in the class where these groups had very different values, achieving progress with older learners, and difficulties in completing tasks outside the classroom. There were also mentions of factors outside the classroom such as transport, financial difficulties, looking after relatives with serious or o-going illness, lack of child care, and issues involving their children.

The BLTs consistently mentioned the importance of gaining confidence, not only in English language and literacy skills, but also the confidence to try these new skills outside the classroom. The most valued act of independence for both men and women to be able to visit health practitioners without having to have someone (especially one of their children) accompanying them to interpret.

Effective Practices

All those interviewed for this study were asked to identify factors or strategies they believed helped refugee learners learn English and literacy skills in their context. Each group offered different assessments, but they also shared many of the following list in common:

Teaching Strategies and Skills

- Constant revision of previous learning to ensure consolidation
- Varying teaching strategies according to the needs and skills of the learners
- Ready access to support in L1 with BLTs, especially for very low-level learners
- Importance of everyone experiencing success by matching teaching to learners
- Being responsive, looking for opportunities to maximize learning with individuals
- Approaching tasks from different ways to ensure relevance; rephrasing and re-presenting if not successful
- A cycle of modelling/acting/role-play/re-cycle/reflection/practise in pairs
- Ensuring that learners with a common language can work together

Teacher Qualities

- Patience
- Understanding that learners' previous trauma can be played out in the classroom
- "Being human" and demystifying the "teacher as expert"

Teaching Content

- Ensure that learners have all the requisite "learning blocks" to build higher levels of learning
- Ensure relevance of teaching content by using realia of everyday life tasks and issues
- Importance of teaching all four literacy skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking)
- Importance of basic sight words taught every day
- Phonics, especially for low-level learners

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- Rote practice of oral skills, especially with very low-level learners, to ensure a solid foundation of key foundation skills

Teacher Development
- The need for ongoing professional development, including BLTs

Learning Environment
- Creating and sustaining a welcoming, supportive environment
- Carefully grouping of learners within the classroom to ensure cultural values are respected

Interpersonal Relationships
- Importance of believing they can succeed (self-efficacy) through praising achievement
- Showing respect for learners in relation to their age (especially older men), religion and culture
- Understanding that learners' previous trauma can be played out in the classroom in the form of constant headaches, difficulties in concentrating on tasks, and ongoing health issues

Outside the Classroom
- Practising new skills outside the classroom
- Field trips to significant New Zealand sites
- Pastoral care for issues outside the classroom

Discussion

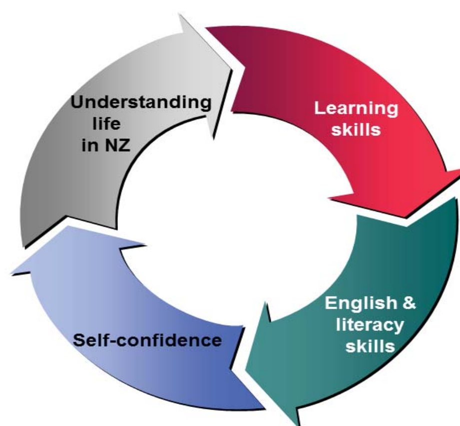
The challenges teachers face in achieving impact with their adult refugee learners come primarily from two main sources: the social and pedagogical background of the learners and the nature of the content being taught. In both these respects, ESOL literacy courses for refugees present considerable challenges for the tutors involved.

While they do have diverse backgrounds and experiences, many refugee learners also have much in common that constitutes a considerable challenge for their teachers, especially in order to achieve the impact they might normally expect in their classrooms. As this study and the review of the related research literature has shown, many refugees have encountered different types of trauma as a result of being exiled from their home country, undertaking a long and complicated transit through refugee camps and intermediary countries, before starting the gradual adaptation to their new environment. It is difficult to definitively assess the impact these experiences have on refugees generally and in relation to learning in particular, but it is clear that these learners bring much to the classroom that is not always immediately discernible that can impede and delay their rate of progress, compared with other learners.

Added to these psychological constraints, the great majority have had at best minimal schooling experience and in most cases, none at all. As adult learners they therefore lack the "learning blocks" that most learners acquire as schoolchildren and teachers take for granted. Knowing how to behave appropriately in a classroom is not inherent behaviour, so for refugees "learning" starts with fundamental skills as basic as holding a pen, discerning between questions and answers, and learning to work co-operatively on set tasks with their fellow pupils. In addition, they need to comprehend the intrinsic nature of literacy itself—that written symbols represent sounds, words, and meaning. In order to do this, they may need to learn a new alphabet and different directional conventions about how English writing is presented on the page.

Even with these basic learning skills underway, most refugee learners begin acquiring their English and other literacy skills at the lowest level, as they have no, or minimal, previous English and they often lack reading and writing skills in their first language. With all of these factors in play, progress is usually slow and painstaking, requiring the teacher to carefully scaffold skills, building on the small steps previously achieved, and constantly revising in order to consolidate these initial gains. Making progress in language and literacy skills is developed through a balance of contextual learning to ensure personal relevance and motivation, but also the teaching of structural aspects of language to ensure correct guidelines for English usage.

Figure 2. Wheel of progress



As the learners develop their learning skills and fundamental literacy skills, they also develop a set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge about their new environment, enabling them to undertake daily tasks in their community

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with increasing confidence. These gradual developments in turn build self-confidence, which in turn helps develop the motivation to further develop their language and literacy skills. The self-confidence that comes from achieving learning milestones is also augmented by affective elements resulting from a supportive learning environment. All these components combine to provide a positive momentum, which gathers force as the different factors mutually reinforce each other. This wheel of progress (see figure 2) is extremely difficult to turn initially, but can gain momentum with skilful exertion on the four components.

There are inevitably impediments to achieving this momentum. Psychological factors resulting from the refugee experience provide resistance that are unseen but unquestionably present in the learners' abilities to take on new skills in an unfamiliar environment. External factors relating to managing families' crises, coping with scant resources, and a lack of knowledge and familiarity about support mechanisms and services can also impede what happens in the classroom. At worst, open discrimination exacerbates a feeling of anomie in surroundings that are vastly different from what they left behind. Within the classroom, crying babies, crowded conditions, and high and increasing roll numbers also counter what the teaching staff can achieve.

It is difficult to know the extent and specific impact of these strategies on refugees' learning outcomes without substantial studies involving classroom observation and pre- and post-assessment of their skills. Nonetheless, they constitute a valuable pointer to what refugees value in the classroom and what teachers and their bilingual assistants rate as effective.

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