

***Invisibilized* providers: The role of racialized diasporas in refugee sponsorship**

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Abstract

For more than 40 years, civil society groups have volunteered their personal time, energy, and finances to resettle more than 370,000 refugees through Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. Much of this sponsorship is done and supported by former refugees themselves, who are defined in this research as racialized diaspora sponsors. The PSR program is a public-private partnership between the federal government and Canadian residents, who have joined together to provide protection to refugees in need. Private sponsorships are commonly arranged by local communities, faith-based organizations, or private citizens who have entered into agreements with the federal government. The existing literature underrepresents the crucial role and work of sponsors who are part of racialized diasporas engaged in refugee sponsorship.

This dissertation probes the invisibilized sponsorship role of racialized diasporas made up of former refugees and asylum seekers to Canada. Based on testimony from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with sponsors and key informants triangulated with 'born digital' material, the research analyzes the motivations, activities, and contributions of Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Oromo diasporas in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. A 'study up' technique is used to examine the complexities of power at multiple sites and scales. It engages with feminist geopolitics/politics of security to develop analyses of refugee protection that go beyond state-centric perspectives. Sponsorship is reframed as a community initiative driven by individuals affected by displacement.

The findings reveal that racialized sponsors who were themselves resettled to Canada undertake most of the heavy lifting in sponsorship circles, but their work is largely invisible. The findings also indicate that key issues, such as naming and monitoring, have implications for the equitable distribution of refugee protection spaces across more racialized geographies in sub-Saharan Africa. Empirically, this dissertation fills an important knowledge gap that passively references the participation of racialized diaspora sponsors. As Canada's refugee protection efforts continue to garner global attention, this research has important implications for policy transfer and programming as it relates to sustainability, scalability, and diversification over the *longue durée*. Such findings are vital to Canadian public policy goals and practices of social inclusion and cohesion, and more specifically, to the global implications of Canadian policies and practices concerning refugee protection.

Keywords: Refugee protection; Private sponsorship; Refugee resettlement;
Racialized diasporas; Refugee sponsors; Named sponsorship

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List of Acronyms

AB	Alberta
BC	British Columbia
BVOR	Blended Visa-Office Referred (Program)
BVORs	Blended Visa-Office Referred Refugees
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CG	Constituency Group
CS	Community Sponsor
G5	Group of Five
GAR	Government Assisted Refugees (Program)
GARs	Government Assisted Refugees
GRSI	Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ON	Ontario
PIF	Program Integrity Framework
PSR	Private Sponsorship of Refugees (Program)
PSRs	Privately Sponsored Refugees
PM	Prime Minister
RSAT	Resettlement Services Assurance Team
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
RSTP	Refugee Sponsorship Training Program
SAH	Sponsorship Agreement Holder
STCA	Safe Third Country Agreement
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation aims to fill a gap in existing scholarship on Canada's refugee protection project, understood as a constellation of laws, policies, and practices that are not always internally coherent, but with a focal point on refugee resettlement.

Resettlement in Canada is facilitated through three distinct categories of protection authorized by the federal government: Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), and Blended Visa-Office Referred Refugees (BVORs) as illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.¹

Resettlement Program	Program Providers
Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) Program	Canadian government
Blended Visa-Office Referred (BVOR) Program	Canadian government and private sponsors
Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program	Private sponsors

Figure 1.1 Three categories of resettlement

While a considerable body of literature exists on GARs, much less is known about PSRs and BVORs. There has been a notable upsurge of interest in PSR-related research, which is attributable in part to the federal government's 2015 Operation Syrian Refugees² initiative, but most studies on refugee resettlement involve non-diaspora

¹ See here for details on the distinction between these three refugee resettlement programs (GAR, PSR, BVOR): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada.html>

² See here for information on this initiative (Operation Syrian Refugees): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees.html>

private sponsorship – meaning those who do not have a refugee history. New insights are gained from a study focused on racialized diaspora sponsors – particularly those who have been resettled to Canada through one of two pathways to refugee protection (*asylum* or *resettlement*³) – including distinct motivations and the sponsorship processes linked to their unique positionality, often as former refugees and as private sponsors. Those who themselves have been sponsored as refugees to Canada could arguably be the most well-placed and effective sponsors of fellow exiles, and yet this phenomenon is hardly represented in existing scholarship.

My research documents how the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, which is a state-authorized, civil society-driven initiative that offers protection spaces to refugees, is mobilized by diasporas who are concerned for family members and “ethnonational kin” (Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023, p. 52) left behind unprotected and often in dangerous situations. Yousuf and Hyndman (2023) describe ethnonational kinship as a transnational bond that diasporas maintain with people who remain in their home countries and other sites of violent political conflict, even if they are not immediate family members. Other scholarship uses the term ‘fictive kin’ to analyze forms of family which are chosen, voluntary, or otherwise intentional (Nelson, 2013; Weston, 1991). People in Canada who are compelled to sponsor may not even share a common language, culture, or nation with the refugees they support, but may develop kinship bonds through a shared political point of view based on human rights.

Those who come to Canada as refugees and want to settle those who are refugees still at risk often partner with other sponsors in Canada who are seasoned in

³ See here for details on the distinction between these two pathways for refugee protection (asylum, resettlement): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/canada-role.html>

the PSR program. Their motives are influenced by the needs of refugees left behind in precarious conditions who may, or may not be, family members but need protection (Hyndman et al., 2021). Despite its success, political and public support for Canada's PSR program has not always been unanimous. An analysis of how Canada has responded historically to immigrants illustrates the fraught, contested, and challenging ecosystem of refugee resettlement for a multiplicity of actors involved.

As a case in point, Canada has a long history of enacting discriminatory and exclusionary policies against non-European racialized immigrants (Canadian Council for Refugees [CCR], n.d.; Kazimi, 2012; Mongia, 1999). One example of Canada's racialized immigration practices enacted through policies, dates to the late 19th century when the federal government imposed a 'head tax' to restrict Chinese migration to the nation (Dirks, 2006; Matas, 1996). In the early 20th century, the head tax continued, and then the question of how to exclude people arriving from the Indian subcontinent arose. Since Indians, like Canadians, were all British subjects, there were no legal grounds to exclude everyone aboard the SS Komagata Maru which arrived in Vancouver with 376 passengers in 1914 (Dirks, 2006; Kazimi, 2012; Matas, 1996). Instead, sneaky regulations like the 'single continuous provision journey' effectively prevented South Asian migrants from entering Canada, along with the requirement of cash to gain entry (Mongia, 1999). After the Komagata Maru incident, the South Asian diaspora in Canada put up a fierce decades-long challenge against Canada's discriminatory and exclusive policies, eventually leading to the abolishment of anti-South Asian resettlement policies to the nation (Johnston, 2006; Kazimi, 2012).

Prohibitions against non-European racialized immigrants were enshrined in law until mid-20th century (Matas, 1996; Taylor, 1991), but the racialized practices of discriminatory exclusion did not necessarily abate after this time. Balibar (2007) engages

with the concept “neo-racism” (p. 83) to theorize prejudices that are based on race but without naming it, also known as “differential racism” (p. 86). Mongia (1999) draws on theories of nation, race, and state to argue that the modern passport system was established through a history of unnamed racist strategies. A salient consideration concerns the role of the passport as a technology of power used to restrict and exclude racialized people, rather than an instrument that permits freedom of movement. Mongia’s (1999) asserts that nationality signifies how states justify race and implement/codify racist policies to give them control over mobility and territory. Mongia’s (1999) essay advances an understanding of how states have a history of effecting racial exclusion but without naming race. Although explicitly racist language was expunged from Canadian written laws in the 1960s (Taylor, 1991), this research builds on previous works (Hyndman, 2019) to show that racialized preferences defined by geography continued without naming race (Mongia, 1999; see also Balibar & Wallerstein, 1993).

Notwithstanding these dark moments in Canadian history, the introduction of the points-based system in 1967 was an approach to immigration policy that shifted away from using ethnic and racial backgrounds as determinants of admissibility. Instead, immigrants were selected based on ‘universal’ criteria, which included educational credentials, English/French language competency, and labour market potential (Triadafilopoulos, 2013). Arguably, these criteria still perpetuate a colonial ideology of nation-building (Thobani, 2007) because they excluded access to immigration for people from some of the most racialized geographies, only to provide an avenue for the economically ‘elite.’ A recent report by Hiebert (2019) explains how shifts to the Express Entry⁴ pathway for selecting economic migrants is quietly dismantling the points-based

⁴ Read here for information on this (Express Entry): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/express-entry-system-immigrants.html>

system because it was introduced without changes to policy or law. This criticism underscores how immigration officials can alter selection criteria without considering public input on decisions about permanent immigration to Canada – what Hyndman (2022a, 2022b) has theorized as stealth governance in the context of refugee resettlement. The points-based system itself was introduced to limit the discretion of immigration officials, as a means to remove the final vestiges of racial discrimination. Subtle changes that elude the scrutiny of law and policy is a theme I revisit in this research.

By early 1970, Canada began to rework the race issue in its immigration policy toward refugees specifically. Protection was provided to the first wave of non-European refugees in 1971-1972 when a small group of 228 Tibetan refugees from northern India were permanently resettled (CCR, n.d.; Dirks, 1977; Raska, 2016). In this instance, Canada was galvanized by a political necessity to enact their humanitarian obligation regarding the plight of refugees. Raska (2016) describes Canada's decision to support Tibetans as an experimental resettlement scheme that laid the groundwork for the 1972-1973 resettlement of 6,000 Asian Ugandans fleeing expulsion under Idi Amin's presidency (CCR, n.d.; Dirks, 1977; see also Hawkins, 1973), the 1973-1974 resettlement of 7,000 Chileans seeking refuge elsewhere after the socialist-communist President Salvador Allende was violently overthrown (CCR, n.d.; Dirks, 1977; see also Diab, 2015), and the subsequent resettlement of non-European refugees. Elaborated more fully in Chapter Two, contemporary Canadian immigration policies that have developed since these protection efforts are ostensibly more tolerant of ethnic and racial diversity. The following section situates immigration policy within the field of geography, emphasizing the themes of refugee protection, securitization, and racialization.

Feminist geopolitics and racialization: Decentring state centrality in refugee protection and securitization discourses

Except for few a pieces in the literature (Hyndman, 2019; Hyndman et al., 2017; Kyriakides et al., 2019), the current scholarship on private sponsorship in Canada by and large does not analyze the racialized underbelly refugee resettlement. Scholars working in migration and refugee studies increasingly recognize that persons seeking protection must navigate multiple and contested subjectivities, in which their identities as asylum seekers and refugees are constructed and governed by laws and policy practices (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009; Ehrkamp, 2017, 2019; Kumsa, 2006; Lacroix, 2004; Mensah, 2010; Thobani, 2000) and media representations (Godin & Doná, 2016) – what Kyriakides et al. (2019) refer to as the “media-policy migration nexus” (p. 4). These operate as discursive mechanisms that I contend perpetuates racializing the identities of refugees. Echoing a call made in a special issue of *Refuge*⁵, which stimulates a productive understanding of the relationship between racialization and refuge, it is imperative to continue drawing deeper connections between scholarship in critical race theory and migration and refugee studies. My doctoral research answers this call by empirically probing the racialization of refugee protection that includes diaspora agency and voice to decentre the focus on state security.

The knowledge produced through an analysis of underrepresented racialized diaspora groups provides a critique of the dark underbelly of securitization discourses and strategies that are employed to target, surveil, and justify the externalization of refugee protection (Ehrkamp, 2017; Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014). Racialization and

⁵ Kyriakides, C., Taha, D., Charles, C. H., & Torres, R. D. (2019). Racialized Refuge [Special Issue]. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 35(1), 3-7.

securitization are closely intertwined in the construction of diasporic refugee identity. As Massaro and Williams (2013) articulate, “securitization refers broadly to the processes whereby issues, spaces, and subjectivities become targets of regulation and surveillance by state and non-state actors in the name of ensuring ‘security’ at multiple scales, most often the national” (p. 572). Their conceptualization of securitization is taken up in this research to unpack the question of ‘how’ diasporas become racialized and the implications this has for their involvement in Canada’s PSR program. For Razack (2008), race thinking is the “structure of thought that divides the world between the deserving and the undeserving,” based on the racialization of the ‘Other’ (p. 8). When examining the issue of security from a race perspective, it is evident that the securitization of racialized minorities began as a process soon after the end of the Cold War, which provided the impetus to deepen the fear of diasporas after 9/11.

In the West, asylum seekers and refugees from the global South must prove that they do not represent a threat to the state and that they are ‘deserving’ of ‘rescue,’ what Hyndman and Giles (2017) insightfully describe and critique as the “rescue narrative” (p. 97). Upon accomplishing this performance through the process of resettlement, diasporas with refugee histories must circumnavigate security discourses voiced by politicians, media, and other commentators that connect racialized minority groups to criminalization and scrutiny (Ibrahim, 2005; Sheffer, 1994). The racialization of asylum seekers, refugees, and diasporas proceeds through various avenues that often takes the form of racism diffused across multiple spaces, places, and scales (Ehrkamp, 2017, 2019). Diasporas made up of former refugees are racialized through securitization discourses and practices that depict them as a threat to the security of the state, and thereby a danger to the well-being of citizens. However, such understandings are state-

centric, and to focus solely on them undermines the perspectives and roles of non-state actors in facilitating refugee protection – in particular, racialized diaspora sponsors.

Feminist geographers have developed analyses beyond national/state boundaries, to understand the interconnections between macro-processes and situated lives in global North and global South countries (Nagar et al., 2002; Pratt, 2004). They have re-invented critical geopolitics to develop a feminist politics of security that includes the civilian body and decentres a focus on state security (Hyndman, 2004; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). The concept of ontological security offers a productive avenue for making visible refugees' own sense of safety and self-rescue (Giddens, 1991; Hyndman & Giles, 2017); it is also a way of claiming back security and protection discourses from state-centric perspectives.

Drawing on these theoretical and conceptual frameworks, policies, and practices, my research problematizes the concepts of 'protection' and 'security' as it relates to refugee resettlement to foreground an orienting lens that aims to prioritize 'agency' as the gateway to self-authorized protection (known in UN circles as 'durable solutions'). A diaspora-refugee centred approach is particularly germane to interventions that seek to challenge hegemonic ontologies and epistemologies of protection related to protracted displacement. Few studies have examined how diasporas engage institutional mechanisms, such as the PSR program, to address protracted refugee displacement (Hyndman et al., 2021; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). To reclaim the state-centric and hawkish ways that racialized asylum seekers, refugees, and diasporas have been imagined and governed, my research centres migrant voices and realities.

The emphasis in this research is to scale understandings of protection to that of the person or community affected by displacement, as advanced through feminist

geopolitics, to claim back protection discourses from state-centric perspectives (Koopman, 2011; Massaro & Williams, 2013). By doing so, my research aims to unsettle narratives that securitize – or cast aspersions on all racialized diasporas to Canada. Such findings are vital to Canadian public policy goals and practices of social inclusion and cohesion, and more specifically, to the global implications of Canadian policies and practices concerning refugee protection.

Objectives of the research

My research probes private refugee sponsorship by exploring and documenting how racialized diasporas – particularly those made up of former refugees to Canada – engage the PSR program to assist fellow exiles. I focus specifically on the avid and ongoing efforts of private sponsors from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas in Canada, but my research also speaks to the broader gap in the sparse literature on private refugee sponsorship that passively references the participation of racialized diaspora sponsors who are largely invisible in this existing literature. Given that diasporas in Canada have long played a role in assisting refugees (Cameron, 2020; Macklin et al., 2018; Molloy, 2020) – both before and after public and private resettlement were enabled in regulations – it is surprising that their contributions remain only briefly addressed in the literature. As Hyndman et al. (2017) contend, private sponsorship in Canada would improve if more emphasis were placed on how refugees, and ‘diasporas’ as my research asserts, shape their own and others resettlement.

To accomplish this aim, I draw on feminist geopolitics (Hyndman, 2001; Koopman, 2011; Massaro & Williams, 2013) to deconstruct normative frameworks and foreground alternative perspectives that are attentive to invisibilized knowledges. Scholars have engaged Spivak’s (1988) concept of “epistemic violence” (p. 280) to

analyze practices that have silenced the voices of marginalized communities (Dotson, 2011). Beyond the silencing of voices, academia has not always been a space that has valued knowledge that stems from marginalized individuals or communities. The term *invisibilized knowledge* is used in this dissertation to underscore the tension between authorizing and reproducing dominant knowledges while invisibilizing the lesser-known and disseminated ‘minor key’ knowledges produced by, for example, racialized former refugees, now permanent residents in Canada.

Building on an existing argument that resettlement is not simply a ‘solution’ but a *strategy* affording protection selected by refugees themselves as the best option at the time (Hyndman, 2019; Hyndman & Giles, 2017), my research asks how racialized diasporas engage the PSR program as a pathway to refugee protection in Canada and traces their contributions, actions, efforts, and outcomes in relation to sponsorship. Specifically, this research surveys the motivations, activities, and contributions of racialized diaspora groups in three Canadian provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario) who have assisted refugees with resettlement to Canada through the PSR program. By eliciting diaspora-refugee agency and perspectives, my research aims are to underscore interventions and protection strategies from the positionality of racialized (former) refugees. Together, these objectives are meant to address gaps in the literature and equitably produce knowledge and understanding of the PSR program from the perspectives of racialized, non-state actors.

Roadmap to the dissertation

The chapters to come will guide readers through an in-depth and nuanced exploration of Canada’s PSR program and they foreground the previously invisibilized perspectives and experiences of racialized sponsors with refugee histories. Chapter

Two, entitled: *Placing refugee protection in global and local contexts*, situates this research within the framework of refugee protection at multiple scales. As I explore the global trends of people displaced by conflict, violence, and persecution, the scarcity of protection spaces for most refugees around the world is underscored. Following that, the chapter contextualizes Canada's refugee protection project and examines the implications of policy and law – and the politics they underlie – for managing migration across international borders. Lastly, I analyze both the actors involved in resettlement and the sparse sponsorship literature to provide a historical and contemporary perspective on Canada's PSR program.

In Chapter Three, entitled *Navigating pandemic and geopolitical quandaries: Feminist approaches to researching refugee sponsorship*, I provide a comprehensive account of my research approach and design. The chapter begins with an introduction to the exploratory, emergent, feminist, and 'study up' methodologies that served as a framework for my empirical research and analysis of power asymmetries. Following this, the strategies implemented to collect data at multiple sites, scales, and spaces are outlined. Based on data generated from interviews and 'born digital' materials, I discuss my approach to in-depth qualitative data analysis *in* and *alongside* NVivo. The last section reflects on continuous notetaking as a reflexive practice that helped shape the write up of my findings.

Chapter Four, entitled *Invisibility, exclusion, and the fuel of private refugee sponsorship* probes the invisibilized sponsorship role of racialized diaspora sponsors. The chapter begins with an overview of how refugee sponsorship operates in Canada and the activities sponsors are required to undertake to fulfill their sponsorship obligations. This review examines the sponsorship configurations (SAH, G5, and CS) and arrangements (CG and co-sponsor) that shape the PSR program. How sponsorship

is understood to be carried out and by whom is analyzed in the context of these provisions, with attention to the question of recognition. Building on the critical and important question of ‘who’ gets recognition as sponsors, the chapter then delves deeper into the seemingly banal reforms to PSR governance and management. This final section explores the implications of state-authorized regulatory and procedural amendments, and probes their impact on sponsorship and protection.

In Chapter Five, entitled *Naming as a lifeline for equitable geographic refugee ‘protection’*, I trace the longstanding debate on ‘naming’ in relation to refugee selection. The first section presents an analysis of literature, highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of naming. It also considers the questions of vulnerability, equity and fairness, and family-linked sponsorship as well as their implications for access to protection spaces. The section that follows introduces a feminist politics of security framework, which I apply to analyze naming on a granular, empirical scale. Selection priorities, sponsors’ motivations, and protection strategies are three themes I foreground in the final sections based on original data. These are considered in the context of governance practices that can either open doors or curtail possibilities for refugee protection.

Finally, Chapter Six, entitled *Government monitoring and the dual burden of sponsors being ‘taxed’*, explores the effects of new federal regulations designed and implemented to proactively monitor sponsors’ activities. The first section maps the theoretical terrain of neoliberalism, privatization, and community, which serve as frameworks for my empirical analysis. Following this, I introduce the Program Integrity Framework (PIF), a new federal regulation, and document the contexts and rationales through which it was developed. In the chapter’s final sections, PIF’s implications are analyzed in the context of neoliberal principles are empirically examined through my

original data. Transparency, bureaucracy, and finance are three overarching themes explored, and with consideration to equity and sustainability in refugee sponsorship.

The dissertation closes with three dedicated sections: a customary conclusion that summarizes the key findings and research contributions; a reflection on the research challenges and constraints, coupled with suggestions for future research directions; and, a set of policy recommendations aimed at community (sponsorship) and governmental (IRCC) actors engaged in refugee protection, resettlement, and sponsorship efforts.

Chapter 2. Placing refugee protection in global and local contexts

Governments must contend with ongoing humanitarian crises that currently have displaced more than 100 million people from their homes, lands, and communities (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022a). In 2021, the UNHCR Global Trends reported that 27.1 million people became refugees primarily due to conflict, violence, and human rights abuses (UNHCR, 2022b). Some 57,500 people were resettled in 2021 accounting for a dismal 2% of the total people living as refugees (UNHCR, 2022b). UNHCR estimated that 1.44 million would be in ‘need’⁶ of resettlement (UNHCR, 2020a), but just 4% were given new homes in 2021 (UNHCR, 2022b). The projected global resettlement needs for 2022 slightly increased to 1.47 million (UNHCR, 2021), but for 2023, UNHCR anticipates a drastic 36% surge for a total of 2 million refugees estimated to need resettlement (UNHCR, 2022c). UNHCR cites the humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan and Ukraine as two events that will drive up the need for resettlement (UNHCR, 2022c). These numbers point to the growing demand for resettlement and the scarcity of protection spaces for most of the world’s refugees.

Migration scholars argue that states in the global North routinely adopt policies and practices that deflect and prevent access to refugee protection (Aleinikoff & Zamore, 2019; Chimni, 1998; Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Mongia, 1999). Such politics have created a fundamental imbalance, whereby low-income countries host the majority of refugees whose futures remain compromised because most do not have access to protection pathways (Hyndman & Giles, 2017). According to UNHCR (2022b), 83% of people

⁶ A reference to refugees that are designated by UNHCR as priority for resettlement.

fleeing conflict and persecution in 2021 were hosted by low- and middle-income countries, while the most economically disadvantaged countries hosted 27% of all people displaced worldwide. Despite the reality that most refugees are hosted in the global South, the global refugee 'crisis' is framed as primarily impacting countries in the global North. Although some countries in the global North, such as European Union (EU) countries, the United States (US), Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK), have adopted the resettlement pathway as a 'solution' to protracted refugee displacement, the number of refugees accommodated is few. Governments prefer resettlement to asylum because it allows states greater control over their borders, which is seen as a quintessential exercise of sovereignty.

Canada's refugee resettlement efforts have garnered increasing attention in recent years. In 2021, Canada was the top resettlement country after more than 20,400 refugees, or 35%, of the global total resettled, were welcomed across the country (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2022a; UNHCR, 2022b). Some 47% (9,541) of refugees that settled in Canada that year arrived through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. The remaining 53% received support from either the Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) program (10,811) or the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program (76) – whereby refugees are supported equally by government and private sponsors (IRCC, 2022a). Each of these official resettlement categories provide crucial and distinct pathways to refugee protection, which Hyndman (2022a) conceptualizes as “geo-scripts” to denote how they uniquely shape immigration through spatialized governance and settlement patterns (p. 5). Of the three, the PSR program has gained the most traction over the last decade.

According to the ‘Annual Report(s) to Parliament on Immigration,’⁷ the total number of refugees that have entered Canada through the PSR program exceed those supported by the GAR program consecutively between 2017 and 2020 (IRCC, 2018, 2019a, 2020, 2021a). The PSR program became the most common category of resettlement to Canada during this time. However, this was not always the case, not until Prime Minister (PM) Justin Trudeau’s government increased the Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSRs) targets dramatically while the Government Assisted Refugee (GARs) spots were increased modestly (Hyndman et al., 2021). Until 2015, Canada received about 7,500 GARs annually since the early 1990s. The PSR numbers waxed and waned, but they rarely exceeded 4,000 people per year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2016; IRCC, 2018, 2019a, 2020, 2021a). The governments’ reliance on PSR is most notable from 2017 to 2019 as observed in Table 2.1 below, during which 44-52% of refugees came to Canada as PSRs (IRCC, 2018, 2019a, 2020, 2021a), while the numbers reduced significantly in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2.1 Number of refugees resettled by GAR and PSR, 2017- 2021

YEAR	GAR	PSR
2017	8,823	16,873
2018	8,156	18,763
2019	9,951	19,143
2020	3,871	5,313
2021	10,811	9,541

* Note: The table was prepared by the author on June 1, 2023, using data adapted from the Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration published in 2018 to 2022.

⁷ “The Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration is a requirement of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, and it provides the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship with the opportunity to inform Parliament and Canadians of key highlights and related information on immigration to Canada”: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-reports-parliament-immigration.html>.

The PSR program was intended to be complementary pathway to government resettlement programs, in providing permanent protection to refugees. As described by IRCC (2016a),

refugees in the PSR program are intended to be resettled in addition to those arriving under the GAR program, as the PSR program allows Canadians to get involved in refugee resettlement and offer protection space over and above what is provided directly by the government (i.e., principle of additionality).

The “principle of additionality” is the idea that PSRs are above government resettlement (Hyndman et al. 2017; Labman, 2016, 2019). With the PSR programs’ significant increase in comparison to GARs beginning in 2017, questions are raised about whether the state has honoured additionality or off-loaded its responsibility onto private citizens. CCR (2016a) argues that this shift “represents a privatization of the commitment to refugees” (para. 6). While I emphasize that the government is obligated to fulfill its share of resettlement responsibility, I also recognize that the observation is compelling because despite being a state-authorized initiative, the PSRs sustainability relies on civil society mobilization. This, in turn, has far-reaching implications, underscoring the uneven power structures within and across refugee communities, a theme which I foreground in Chapter Six. The growing success of refugee resettlement in Canada, including the global recognition the PSR program has received (IRCC, n.d.), is largely a result of local volunteer efforts and funds (Hyndman et al., 2021). Canada’s refugee protection project, and how it has performed in recent years compared with US resettlement, highlights how securitization measures impact migration. According to recent reports from CCR (2023a, 2023b), IRCC continues to grapple with inequity in processing times. IRCC is actively working to improve its response to sub-Saharan Africa by better aligning processing times in the region with those in other regions (CCR, 2023a, 2023b).

Contextualizing Canada's refugee protection project

Canada has long been a destination for persecuted refugees from around the globe and has a record of responding compassionately to both *asylum seekers* who land at its borders and *resettled refugees* selected abroad who come to Canada. A recent study undertaken by UNHCR reports that Canada offered refugee protection to 1,088,015 refugees between 1980 and 2017, a number which includes both asylum seekers who were granted refugee status in Canada and refugees selected overseas for resettlement to Canada (UNHCR, 2020b). Since 1979, Canada has resettled more than 770,000 refugees (Van Haren, 2021), and of this total, more than 327,000 were welcome by private sponsors (UNHCR, n.d.a). Over the same period, the US admitted more than three million refugees, which makes Canada's commitment considerably higher per capita than the US. Historically, however, the US led the world in refugee resettlement numbers overall since adopting *The Refugee Act* of 1980⁸ (Fee & Arar, 2019; Radford, & Connor, 2019), resettling an average 80,000 annually (Monin et al., 2021). By the end of 2018 Canada surpassed the US, with a population 11 times greater, in this protection measure by resettling the largest number of refugees in the world (28,100) (Radford, & Connor, 2019; UNHCR, 2019). Canada continued to outpace the US into 2019 and took the global lead once again in 2021 (UNHCR, 2020c), but only because the US clawed back its resettlement numbers while simultaneously increasing the securitization of immigration.

Refugee resettlement in the US declined sharply during 2018 due largely to the decision taken by President Donald Trump's administration to reduce the admission cap from 110,000 as pledged by former President Barack Obama in 2016 (Fee & Arar, 2019;

⁸ The Refugee Act of 1980: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/refugee-act>

Romero, 2018). Subsequently, 22,900 refugees were resettled to the US in 2018, a mere 20% of the previous administration stated projection (Fee & Arar, 2019; UNHCR, 2019). With a stroke of a pen, former President Trump's January 2017 *Executive Order*⁹ on border security, immigration enforcement, and refugee admissions effectively upended the lives of people fleeing violence and persecution, and drastically shifted how the US responded to asylum seekers arriving at the border and immigrants living within the country. The *Order* suspended entry of people from seven Muslim-majority countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, and indefinitely barred Syrian refugees from entering the US (Fee & Arar, 2019). Scholars contend that by adding these seven countries, and with the subsequent restriction and exclusion of nationals from other Middle Eastern and African countries, former President Trump's political rhetoric was hateful, and it (re)energized racist, xenophobic, and populist anti-immigrant sentiments in the US and Canada (Perry et al., 2017). The securitization of immigration in the US under President Trump's administration underscores an important point in time in terms of how right-wing populist agendas spread, and how these impressions are lasting. His successor President Joe Biden has since struggled with the asylum seeker profile at the southern border and there is little political appetite for restoring resettlement numbers in the US (Chishti & Bush-Joseph, 2023; Klobucista et al., 2023).

When the travel ban was put into effect in the US by President Trump, PM Trudeau's rejoinder was in the form of a tweet that read "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada" (Trudeau, 2017). PM Trudeau cultivated a narrative in support of humanitarian immigration since his early days in office, delivering on (and

⁹ 2017 Donald Trump Executive Orders: <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/donald-trump/2017>

exceeding) his 2015 federal election promise to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees. Canada's federal leadership had not always provided a safe and welcoming haven for refugees, most notably, Canada's refugee protection project was overhauled under PM Stephen Harper's tenure at a time when refugee protection was more urgent than ever. As scholars have pointed out, during the period of the Harper government (2006-2015), Canada's political landscape was characterized by a departure from human rights, intensified anti-immigrant rhetoric, heightened restrictions on immigrants and refugees, and a decline in public support for refugee resettlement (Hyndman et al., 2021; Perry et al., 2017; Reynolds & Hyndman, 2021). The "rights-restrictive"¹⁰ approach to refugee policy taken by this government made it more challenging for migrants to seek out and obtain refugee protection from Canada (Anderson & Soennecken, 2018, p. 290).

Changes to the governance and policies of the PSR program drew great concern when admission caps were imposed by the Harper government to limit the number of refugees Canadians could sponsor privately. The geographies of exclusion resulting from these restrictive measures are revealed through a feminist geopolitical analysis (Hyndman, 2019). Without referencing race, Hyndman's (2019) work explains how the Harper government added and used 'caps' and 'limits' to discriminate against *regions* and *people* with sub-Saharan African nationalities. The government's geographical preferences were racialized, and only 15% of the refugee spaces at 'capped' locations were for such nationalities, while more than double the proportion of refugees worldwide were from sub-Saharan African countries. Specifically, by capping the number of refugees who could be selected for resettlement from some visa posts, but not all, the

¹⁰ "This approach was centred on the premise that the Canadian regime was too generous and encouraged those who did not require protection to claim asylum in hopes of obtaining undeserved economic, political, and/or social benefits in Canada or even to threaten its national security" (Anderson & Soennecken, 2018, p. 292).

Harper government created a system of racialized preferences inherited by the subsequent government led by PM Trudeau. Consequently, the wait times for African applicants was exacerbated, further protracting their displacement. In December 2016, the caps were lifted (Hyndman, 2022a).

Feminist political geographers (notably, Hyndman, 2004, 2012; Massaro & Williams, 2013) demonstrate how global power operates through geopolitical frameworks to shape the uneven processes of managing migrant bodies. Only a few works in this literature critically engage 'racialization' to analyze forces of geopolitical power that create and reproduce the global refugee regime (Hyndman, 2019). Betts (2015) explains that the global refugee regime refers to the rules, norms, principles, and decision-making procedures that govern how states respond to refugees. However, Hyndman (2000) contends that it is incorrect to refer to the geopolitics of refuge as a global refugee regime, while Kyriakides et al. (2019) offer a counter-designation – “the racialized refugee regime” (p. 5) – to signify the centrality of racialization as an entrenched system of oppression in the West.

Defending the integrity of the state's territorial space and national security, the politics of protection can manifest in ways that render asylum seekers, refugees, and diasporas as threats. The potential consequences of such politics and processes are far-reaching, beginning with its capacity to target, condemn, and racialize individuals as well as protract displacement and securitize migration. Additionally, the political rhetoric used by heads of state to demonize migrants in the name of protecting state sovereignty can perpetuate a culture of fear and hate, exclusion, and marginalization. In Canada, diasporas have been viewed with suspicion as security threats (Monahan et al., 2014; Sheffer, 1994) and understood as forces that protract homeland conflicts (Anderson, 1992; Demmers, 2002). Although Canada began to rework the race issue by focussing

on skill and not country of origin as described above in Chapter One, it has always preferred to pick its immigrants, including refugees. This generally means that economic immigrants are more popular than refugees, and resettled refugees are preferred to asylum seekers. This is only possible because Canada's borders are largely protected by three cold oceans and the US. In addition to the physical protections afforded by oceans and borders, Canada is also protected by the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA)¹¹, which I examine below.

Pathways to refugee protection in Canada

Canada at present provides two main mechanisms for refugee protection: *asylum* for individuals making refugee claims from within Canada or at a Canadian port of entry, and *resettlement* for individuals selected from overseas locations. Asylum is ensconced in international and Canadian law, and offers one pathway of protection for refugees when they present themselves at a Canadian port of entry or inland at a government office (IRCC, 2019b). The STCA between Canada and the US is a legal provision that requires asylum seekers to seek refugee protection in the first 'safe' country they arrive in, either Canada or the US ("*Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement*," n.d.). Under this agreement, asylum seekers are prevented from passing through the US overland to reach Canada for refugee protection, and vice versa. Many have argued that the agreement is unconstitutional as the US is often unsafe for asylum seekers (Arbel & Macklin, 2022; Young et al., 2022).

On April 15, the Canadian Federal Court of Appeal struck down a challenge against the STCA after it recognized the potential dangers that asylum seekers face if

¹¹ See here for details on this agreement (STCA): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/policies-operational-instructions-agreements/agreements/safe-third-country-agreement.html>

returned to the US (*Canadian Council for Refugees v. Canada – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship*, 2020).¹² Canada-US appealed this decision, and on October 6, 2022, the Supreme Court of Canada heard the case brought forth by this pact (CCR, 2022). Supreme court judges questioned whether there was enough evidence to support the claim of widespread and systemic mistreatment of migrants in the US. This outcome will determine whether STCA will continue to push asylum seekers towards risky, unofficial border crossings or if border crossings will once again become regularized through official points of entry. Recently, the Government of Canada (n.d.a) reported: “On March 24, 2023, Canada and the US announced the expansion of the STCA across the entire land border, including internal waterways” (para. 2). In June 2023, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that STCA continues to be in effect (*Canadian Council for Refugees v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2023), bringing to fruition concerns raised Arbel and Macklin (2022) among other advocates.

The asylum pathway is for persons who leave their countries of origin and formally apply for asylum in another country (i.e., ‘asylum seekers’); until their applications are approved (or not), they are asylum seekers or refugee claimants (UNHCR, 2018a, 2022d). Thus, asylum seekers are individuals whose needs for sanctuary have not yet been acknowledged. Asylum seekers must successfully proceed through Canada’s refugee determination system – appearing specifically in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) – to apply for and possibly obtain refugee status and permanent residence in Canada (IRCC, 2019b).

While every refugee is initially a person who seeks asylum, only ‘designated refugees’ are permitted to access Canada’s three resettlement categories: GARs, PSRs,

¹² Read decision here: <https://decisions.fca-caf.gc.ca/fca-caf/decisions/en/item/495606/index.do>

and BVORs. Under these official resettlement categories, persons must first be recognized as ‘refugees’ by an official entity such as the UNHCR or the Canadian government (UNHCR, 2018a). Both GARs and BVORs are typically selected, screened, and referred to Canadian visa offices overseas by UNHCR (Hyndman, 2022a). UNHCR uses a ‘vulnerability’ screening tool to identify and select refugees for resettlement based on heightened risk to safety and thereby having a greater need for protection (UNHCR, n.d.c, n.d.d). PSRs can either be selected from this same list of UNHCR referrals to Canadian visa offices or they can be named by sponsors in Canada (elaborated in detail below in Chapter Five). BVORs are a part of the private sponsorship category, but unlike the PSR program, BVOR sponsors are not allowed to name specific persons for resettlement to Canada. Resettled refugees are granted permanent residence upon arrival to Canada (UNHCR, 2018a).

In contrast to asylum, resettlement for individuals from overseas is optional for the Canadian government, and yet many have argued that it prefers resettled refugees to asylum (Reynolds & Hyndman, 2021). Hiebert (2016) explains that refugee resettlement is seen as preferable to spontaneous asylum from a government perspective because it is orderly, planned, and managed. State control over borders has several political purposes, such as maintaining the appearance of control over borders, preserving internal security, or *domopolitics* (Walters, 2004), and managing who is granted legal status and the privileges and perks that accompany them. Despite the government’s predilection for order and control, it is worth noting that “resettlement is always a discretionary, optional program, a humanitarian obligation that Canada has long honoured. In contrast, asylum and the right to seek it is ensconced in international law to which Canada is signatory” (Hyndman et al., 2017, p. 11). In other words,

resettlement is optional and falls within the purview of local immigration policy, while asylum is an international legal requirement to which Canada is a signatory.

When considering the distinction between policy and law in the context of refugee resettlement, three legal frameworks are important. One is the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951), which Canada did not sign until 1969 (CCR, n.d.; Labman, 2019). The Canadian government had been reluctant to broaden the parameters of Canadian citizenship, evidenced by its long-standing policy of only welcoming immigrants who would benefit the country. Members of the Canadian cabinet also had been concerned that signing the *Convention* would impede their right to deport individuals who were considered a threat to national security (CCR, n.d.), and wanted to retain complete jurisdiction over who could become a Canadian citizen. The *Convention* remains the primary international treaty that defines who may claim refugee status and specifies how refugees are to be treated legally: the social rights and supports that they are entitled to from host countries; and host countries' obligations to them (UNHCR, n.d.b). As a key legal document, it defines a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (*Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951, p. 2). The *Convention* applies principally to asylum seekers making a refugee claim in Canada.

The second legal framework of relevance is the *Immigration Act* of 1976, which was the first to recognize refugees as a designated class of immigrants and mandated the federal government to plan for the future of Canadian immigration (*Immigration Act*, 1976). The objectives were also aimed at using immigration as a tool for advancing the country's social, economic, and cultural development. This *Act* marked a significant

liberalization of Canadian immigration and refugee policies, which had historically been racist, classist, and exploitive. As elaborated previously, earlier legal provisions favoured some groups of migrants over others and particularly discriminated against non-European immigrants and racialized refugees (CCR, n.d.; Taylor, 1991). Earlier immigration policies were classist because preference was given to people with fluency in English/French and had existing skills to offer the Canadian labour market (Green & Green, 2004). They were exploitive for their reliance on ‘cheap,’ precarious, and racialized labour to fulfill the nations agenda of economic expansion (Thobani, 2007). As a result of these biases, refugees who were most in need were ignored. However, anti-racist and feminist scholars (Abu-Laban, 1998; Arat-Koc, 1999; Thobani, 2000) argued that the *Act* was neither ‘non-discriminatory’ in principle nor in practice as it continued to racialize and gender women’s access to immigration from global South countries. The emphasis on official language ability and skills was eventually removed in 2001 with the introduction of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* [IRPA] discussed below.

Third, IRPA replaced the 1976 *Immigration Act*, and came into effect in 2002 (IRPA, 2001). This *Act* confers refugee protection on a person as set out in Section 96 – which defines a *Convention* refugee – and Section 97 – which defines a person in need of protection (IRPA, 2001). Troper (2013) explains that IRPA was implemented to tighten Canada’s immigration policy as a direct aftermath of 9/11 by focusing on human smuggling and security, notably making immigration to the nation harder including for refugees. However, this view does not capture the years of work that made the refugee definition more protection-oriented and less labour market-oriented in IRPA. It was a miracle that this was accomplished a month after the wake of 9/11. These three legal frameworks coalesce to govern the admittance, protection, and resettlement of refugees.

Beyond the role of the state and refugee law, a cadre of diverse actors play vital roles in implementing and sustaining Canada's refugee protection project.

Cadre of diverse actors in refugee protection: Theorizing the invisibilized provider

Before laws and policies were instituted to define, govern, and select refugees, individual citizens organized to support their family and fellow exiles who were seeking asylum and refuge in Canada during the aftermath of World War II (Cameron, 2020). While this was the original ad hoc mechanism of refugee resettlement, by the late 1970s, Canada's federal government legislated both public and private resettlement into permanent institutional existence (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010). This new legal architecture paved the way for large-scale refugee resettlement initiatives (e.g., the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian exodus and the Syrian refugee movement), which have transcended familial ties, ethnicity, religion, and nationality between volunteers and refugees (Molloy, 2017).

The federal government and civil society are two broad groups of actors who have long been involved in providing refugee protection, but they have participated in different ways. Canada's federal government administers both the asylum pathway to refugee protection and the GAR program. Asylum cases are heard by the arms-length tribunal, the IRB, while GARs are selected from UNHCR referrals. The BVOR program relies on support equally by the government and civil society, and also draws refugees from the UNHCR referred list. In contrast, the PSR program is solely carried out by groups of private citizens who are part of civil society, and often work through faith or community-based organizations. Although the PSR program relies on the federal government for eligibility determination, security, and health screenings, the government does not get directly involved in the quotidian, nitty-gritty domain of private sponsorship

as a resettlement process. Refugee resettlement has always relied on the personal and financial support of private citizens and civil society groups (Macklin et al., 2018; Molloy, 2020), which makes the PSR program a particularly remarkable pathway to refugee protection.

Following the introduction of the *Immigration Act* of 1976, which introduced provisions for private refugee sponsorship specifically (*Immigration Act*, 1976; Labman, 2016), Canadian citizens were legally permitted to privately sponsor refugees when the *Act* came into force in 1978 (Cameron, 2020; CCR, n.d.). For 44 years, the private sponsorship of refugees has operated, and become a core component of immigration policy in Canada. The sustainability of this program was made possible through the efforts and commitments of private citizens, faith groups, and local communities who have entered into agreements with Canada's federal government to facilitate the private sponsorship of refugees (Hyndman et al., 2017). In particular, the Canadian government allows Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor *particular* refugees living abroad through the PSR program (IRCC, 2019c; UNHCR, 2018a). Even though the PSR program allows sponsors to name the people it may want to sponsor, sponsors may also draw from the UNHCR referrals mentioned above if they do not have specific refugees at risk in mind. Though it has been argued that in the years before the Syrian initiative, as many as 95% of PSRs were joining family (Denton 2003a), and the collapse of the BVOR program post the Syrian initiative (Labman & Hyndman, 2019; McNally, 2020) supports this argument.

Residents provide opportunities for refugee protection by coming together in groups of five or more persons to fund and provide social support for refugee newcomers for up to one year. As members of organizations, associations, and community groups, these private actors sponsor refugees from overseas in one of three

ways: 1) as a Constituency Group (CG) which is part of a Sponsorship Agreement Holder¹³ (SAH) umbrella organization; 2) a Group of Five (G5), or 3) a Community Sponsor (CS) through the PSR program (IRCC, 2019c). While each PSR configuration must meet different sets of eligibility requirements (as described in Chapter Four), none relies on government support beyond the usual and universal provisions of free primary and secondary education, health care, and basic social services. Instead, these forms of sponsorship tap the energy and resources of volunteers, including extended family members of formerly sponsored and resettled refugees, faith communities, and other civil society organizations (Dirks, 2017; Hyndman et al., 2017; Macklin et al., 2018). These groups typically raise funds or use personal income and resources to provide for and support the individuals or families they sponsor.

Since private refugee sponsorship was implemented on a large scale in 1979, private citizens and civil society groups – with a large focus on the work of faith-based organizations (Chapman, 2014; Good Gingrich & Enns 2019; Macklin et al., 2018; McKinlay, 2008) – have facilitated refugee resettlement by utilizing Canada’s unique PSR program. A lesser-known set of stories in the history of refugee protection, are the contributions and efforts undertaken by racialized diaspora communities in Canada. For example, Molloy (2020) explains how student advocacy – led by a group of Vietnamese pupils on student status from Montreal who appeared on Parliament Hill in large numbers to protest their worries about their relatives ‘back home’ – was the event that got Canada’s federal government interested in legalizing their support for resettling refugees. Similarly, as Voegeli (2014) explains,

in 1981 the newly appointed Minister of Employment and Immigration Lloyd Axworthy responded to an appeal from the Baha’i Community of Canada

¹³ The term Sponsorship Agreement holder (SAH) came into effect in 1997: https://sahassociation.com/sah_public_view_about

to assist in resettling the targeted Baha'i refugee populations in Iran. Because of the success of the Indo-Chinese refugee movement there existed a viable mechanism for private sponsorship to be utilized in this case. In 1981 an appendix was added to the Department of Employment and Immigration's immigration manual which allowed visa officers to implement special directions when considering refugee applications from Iranian Baha'i refugees. In addition, those who possessed sufficient resources were permitted to move through the newly established private sponsorship system with the Canadian Baha'i community managing the resettlement. As a result of these programs approximately 2,300 Iranian Baha'i refugees were resettled in 220 communities across Canada by 1989. The success of this resettlement can in part be attributed to the Canadian Baha'i community's concern with ensuring a positive local integration experience for newly settled refugees. (p. 23)

What these examples show is that racialized diaspora groups have long played a significant role in mobilizing governments to participate in humanitarian protection, and yet there is a gap in the scholarly literature about the role played by these communities. These stories and the roles of racialized diasporas in initiating and executing refugee sponsorships is the focus of this dissertation.

As I present my analysis of the existing research on refugee resettlement in Canada below, the roles and responsibilities of sponsorship is thoughtfully examined. However, there is very little mention of or research with racialized diaspora sponsors in the Canadian context, thus, many questions remain concerning their sponsorship involvement, for which answers might not be the same as for non-diaspora sponsors. Critical race theory offers important contributions to how I conceptualize the invisibilized stories of racialized diaspora sponsors. The scholarship emerging from critical race scholars is apt and generative in two notable ways. First, it provides an analytical framework for understanding racism from the perspective of power dynamics (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000; Lipsitz, 2011). The sustainment of uneven power distributions across differentially privileged social groups feeds and reproduces "structural violence" (Galtung, 1969) while preserving asymmetries and inequalities (Gilmore, 2002; see also Cacho, 2021). Drawing from these understandings, invisibilization is argued be an

outcome and/or a process that results from a pernicious absence, and erasure of a people and their importance and as new Canadians. Power and structural violence thus underlie invisibility even if unintentional or passive.

The second important contribution lies in the scholarship's ability to articulate how encounters with structural violence do not placate mobilization and resistance. Black theoretical and philosophical discourses critique domination while simultaneously affirming agency (Collins, 2022; Gilmore, 2002, McKittrick, 2006). In doing so, racialized, and often marginalized, groups are recognized to have agency and self-authority (see for example, Cacho, 2012; Kyriakides et al., 2018) and viewed beyond the frame of suffering subjects (Horst, 2019). Building on my primary argument, invisibilization is not understood as an outcome or process that curtail all possibilities for racialized peoples and communities made up of former refugees to Canada. Encouraged by these theoretical frameworks, I contend that the question of racialization must feature prominently as a point of entry into discussions of refugee resettlement, particularly given the absence of sponsors with refugee histories from the prevailing literature.

Three ripples of scholarship on private refugee sponsorship in Canada

Private refugee sponsorship in Canada is a remarkable enterprise for refugee protection, which until recently remained understudied in academic scholarship. A ripple of literature emerged after the first large-scale sponsorship and resettlement of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees to Canada in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see special issue of *Refuge*¹⁴ for more information, plus Reynolds & Clark-

¹⁴ See here for more detailed information: The Indochinese refugee movement and the launch of Canada's private sponsorship program. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 32(2); see also

Kazak, 2019). Some studies evaluated the Canadian responses to the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian exodus (Adelman, 1982; Lanphier, 1983; see also Molloy et al. 2017), while few others wrote about the sponsorship and resettlement experiences at local levels (Chan & Indra, 1987; Neuwirth & Clark, 1981).

By the early 2000s, a second ripple of scholarly publications emerged which focused more broadly on *i*) practitioners' reflections on private refugee sponsorship (Denton, 2003a; Treviranus & Casasola, 2003); *ii*) resettlement outcomes of sponsored refugees (Beiser, 2003) and the sponsor experience (Derwing & Mulder, 2003); and, *iii*) the partnership and relationship dynamics amongst various actors involved in private refugee sponsorship (Lanphier, 2003; Simich, 2003). Although these studies, unlike the first ripple of scholarship, are characterized by a higher level of granularity, a systematic review of Canada's PSR program was absent from the record. According to Reynolds and Clark-Kazak (2019), a special issue of *Refuge*¹⁵ was summoned in 2016 to partially address this gap, which was accomplished by a series of publications that served to establish the historical backdrop of private refugee sponsorship in Canada. Subsequently, a brief article and a book were published that recounted the experiences of Canadian government officials who set up and implemented those early private sponsorship efforts (Alboim, 2016; Molloy et al., 2017).

The third, most recent ripple of scholarship on private sponsorship was inspired by the large-scale resettlement of Syrian refugees to Canada beginning in the fall of 2015, with the election of a new federal government led by PM Trudeau and his pledge

Labman, S. & Cameron, G. (Eds.). (2020). *Strangers to neighbours: Refugee sponsorship in context*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

¹⁵ Molloy, M. J., & Simeon, J. C. (2016). The Indochinese refugee movement and the launch of Canada's private sponsorship program [Special Issue]. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 32(2).

to bring 25,000 to Canada in three months (Government of Canada, n.d.b). In 2016-2017, SSHRC-IRCC Rapid Response Grants were initiated to support the study of Syrian resettlement and resulted in the support of several academic projects.¹⁶ New research has emerged which focuses on different government resettlement schemes (Labman & Pearlman, 2018; McNally, 2020), political and public discourses (Hutchinson, 2018), and placed-based variations of refugee resettlement (Agrawal, 2019; Kaida et al., 2020; Walton-Roberts et al., 2020). This ripple of research has established significant findings of private sponsorship as a resettlement strategy, but it tends to focus on state-centred analyses that speak to the legal and bureaucratic processes of refugee resettlement or to meso-level factors.

Another body of knowledge within the third ripple turns its attention to the human-centred relations that shape the core of private refugee sponsorship. These scholars have focused on social networks, support, and capital of refugee newcomers (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Hanley et al., 2018), integration and inclusion processes and outcomes (Haugen, 2019; Hynie et al., 2019; see also Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019 and Lenard, 2019 for a non-Syrian example of these topics), and the experiences of private sponsors (Macklin et al., 2018) and a cadre of public and private actors involved in resettlement (Reynolds & Clark-Kazak, 2019). An edited volume by Labman and Cameron (2020) includes several case studies that explore Syrian refugee resettlement *i*) as a national project (Hamilton et al., 2020); and, *ii*) in the context of social media (Coffin-Karlin, 2020) – but some of these volumes also include threads of examples related to other displacement contexts. Despite these impressive efforts, existing studies primarily focus

¹⁶ See here for more detailed information about the this funding initiative: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/syrian_refugee-refugie_syrien-eng.aspx and see here for a complete list of recipients: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/recipients-recipientaires/2016/syrian_refugee-refugie_syrien-eng.aspx

on non-diaspora private sponsorship, and in so doing, they have not captured the insights that could be gained from probing how and why previously sponsored refugees participate in the PSR program.

Chapter 3. Navigating pandemic and geopolitical quandaries: Feminist approaches to researching refugee sponsorship

Introduction

Gaps in the scholarly literature on refugee resettlement became obvious to me in 2018 during my first year of a research assistance position with Hyndman's (2017-2023)¹⁷ project on Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada (Hyndman et al., 2021). My responsibilities as a research assistant for this project primarily involved data collection, data management, and data analysis. Through these engagements, I became oriented to the sponsor profiles that saturated the sparse literature on private refugee sponsorship. Of particular concern in these readings was the overrepresentation of sponsors who were predominantly white, Canadian-born, semi-retired, women, with post-secondary education and relatively high income, and/or affiliated through faith to sponsorship (Macklin et al., 2018; see also Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019; Haugen et al., 2020; Kyriakides et al. 2018; Lenard, 2019). While some sponsors with these background characteristics are new to sponsorship (Macklin et al., 2018), many are seasoned in PSR (Hyndman et al., 2021) and have exerted great efforts to keep the program sustained over the years. Yet, they are only part of the sponsorship story.

Reading the literature, I understood that a significant part of the sponsorship story was invisibilized. The underrepresentation in the literature of sponsors from diverse demographics gives a false ontic impression that those who are involved in sponsorship constitute a homogenous group of non-diaspora sponsors. What about the sponsorship

¹⁷ For more information on this project, see here: <https://jhyndman.info.yorku.ca/exploring-private-refugee-sponsorship/>

role of racialized diaspora sponsors defined in this research as former refugees or asylum seekers? I grew up in a conscious household and racialized diaspora community in Canada that was deeply affected by the impacts of forced migration, and thereby, a sense of obligation to sponsor family members and what Yousuf and Hyndman (2023) conceptualize as ethnonational kin who remained displaced and at risk. Research finds that the affective dimensions of family separation across distant geographical borders are taxing for resettled former refugees (Krause, 2020; Morris et al., 2020; Yousuf & Berry, 2021) and is cited as the impetus for their participation in private sponsorship (Hyndman et al., 2021). Extending protection to fellow exiles is an integral part of the lived experience of racialized diaspora communities in Canada, yet these stories remain underexplored and undertheorized.

The absences of these voices from the literature is particularly striking given the “echo effect” phenomenon (Chapman, 2014, p. 9), which is “the idea that [the] sponsorship of one group leads directly to subsequent sponsorships of additional family members or ethnonational kin” (Hyndman et al., 2021, p. 7). The echo effect is directly linked to the practice of naming whereby sponsors have the autonomy to submit referrals for the refugees they wish to resettle. Research finds that family-linked sponsorship is a core feature of the naming practice, occurring when former refugees ask their sponsors to support the sponsorship of subsequent family members (Hyndman et al. 2021; Krause, 2020; Macklin et al., 2018). Labman and Pearlman (2018) argue that the principle of ‘naming’ is the foundation of private sponsorship, and with rationale from participants, my research intends to affirm whether the ‘naming’/‘family-linked’ element of PSR makes it a particularly unique and preferred pathway for sustaining refugee protection in Canada (which is the focus of Chapter Five). Hyndman et al. (2021) hypothesize that refugee diaspora communities may well be the engine for

sustainability of sponsorship, providing much needed momentum and drive when volunteers feel ‘burnt out.’

Drawing inspiration from Hyndman’s project (2017-2023), which cast a light on a diversity of actors in refugee sponsorship, including diaspora community sponsorship (Hyndman et al., 2021), my dissertation renders visible the, hitherto invisibilized or unheard, stories of racialized diasporas in refugee resettlement. To this end, three questions guided my research:

- 1) How do racialized Eritrean, Ethiopia, and Oromo diasporas in Canada conceptualize and navigate private refugee resettlement?
- 2) What are the concrete actions, activities, and contributions of these diasporas to private refugee resettlement?
- 3) How do they challenge and disrupt the established norms and practices of refugee resettlement?

Embracing fluidity: Exploratory and emergent methodologies

This research is exploratory, grounded, and open-ended. Exploratory research designs are used to investigate social phenomena that are under-researched (see Stebbins, 2001). The purpose of using this approach in my research was to gain grounded insight and understanding about the topic of refugee sponsorship from the position of racialized diasporas. The primary focus was on clarifying the questions that guided the research and remaining open to change direction if new insights emerged throughout the process. Built into the exploratory framework was a specified set of research guidelines that included decisions about the sampling strategy (research subjects and sites), data collection (methods), and qualitative data analysis (processing, organizing, and interpreting data). These guidelines provided a way to systematically

examine and address the gap in the literature while remaining grounded, open, and adaptable to change.

My empirical interest for this dissertation lies in racialized diaspora subjects who came to Canada as refugees, and how they become sponsors of fellow exiles who have fled war zones and human rights atrocities and live in conditions of extended displacement (Hyndman & Giles, 2017). The initial focus of my research was on Eritreans and Oromo nationals forced to flee Ethiopia. I planned to solicit participation from sponsors who identified as Eritrean or Oromo given the high proportion of former refugees among these groups, including those who came to Canada as Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), or asylum seekers. Before fieldwork commenced, the research scope was broadened to include all nationals from Ethiopia as this enabled me to scale the analysis of refugee resettlement from the local/regional to the national/global. As ethnonational solidarities between Canada and sites of violence in Ethiopia and Eritrea allow for support and protection of some refugees in Canada, tracing and analyzing these transnational links and supports was of central importance to the research. During my fieldwork, it became obvious that there was a specific group of sponsors who self-identified as Oromo rather than Ethiopian, which I discuss in more detail below. Consequently, I incorporated Oromos as a subset within my empirical focus.

Racialized diaspora sponsors that had supported or were assisting refugees with resettlement at the time of their participation in this research were the intended target of focus groups, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and solicited diaries. Focus groups and interviews are appropriate methods for the target participant group because oral tradition is a key feature of Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo cultures. Focus groups discussions provide a supportive atmosphere for participants and has the potential to

shift the balance of power from the researcher toward to the group of participants (Bosco & Herman, 2010). This approach permits the emergence of reflexive dialogue that is grounded in a collaborative and interpersonal co-production of knowledge. In-depth, semi-structured interviews offer the opportunity to probe salient themes explored in the focus group discussions (Bosco & Herman, 2010), and to otherwise ask participants a similar set of questions for establishing divergent patterns and perspectives. By centring stories and narrative, interviews enable more personal interactions with participants to foster greater empathy and minimize power differentials (McDowell, 2010).

While focus groups and interviews are standard methods of qualitative research in geography and forced migration research, solicited diaries are less common. Inspired by Hyndman's (2016) "ethnographic diaries" (p. 5) method and Meth's (2003) study, which examined the use of personal solicited diaries to document women's experiences of violence, my plan was to ask some participants to actively record their activities, reflections, and insights on the processes, protocols, and politics of sponsorship in a personal diary.

In addition to standard face-to-face methods (i.e., focus groups and interviews) and analog methods (i.e., solicited diaries), my proposed design included 'born digital' material (i.e., content that already existed in digital or electronic form). The objective here was to synthesis data already generated and archived on the internet, for example, the use of data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada on resettled refugees to identify patterns and trends at the intersection of geography and demographics. Specifically, I endeavoured to employ a content analysis of government documents and publicly available statistics as an unobtrusive method to generate a different kind of data as an approach for locating power in broader state processes. Born digital materials complements standard generative methods of data collection to

generate new data and/or can be used as a method of fieldwork in and of itself (Lupton, 2020). As form of fieldwork, I planned to solicit material from private sponsorship organizations, and on a more granular level, to notate quotes from the dataset for Hyndman's (2017-2023) and compare them to the data generated for this research. Altogether, the data from these four methods (focus groups, in-depth semi-structured interviews, solicited diaries, born digital materials) would have become the basis for constructing an original qualitative database for my research.

Renegotiations: From research design to research practice

Qualitative research does not always translate directly from research design to research practice. The everyday realities that are encountered during the research process can never be fully anticipated in the initial plan for research. A confluence of environments that researchers must traverse when they enter the field and begin data collection, including global health, academic institutions, research ethics, local and national economies, and the politics they underlie, will invariably shape the possibilities and outcomes of a research project. Methodologists assert that a defining characteristic of qualitative research is its ability to embrace unanticipated information that can emerge at any stage of the research process (see DeLyser et al., 2009). Responsiveness to shifts in research requires an emergent framework (Pailthorpe, 2017), one that can accommodate adjustments to research questions, theoretical frameworks, methods, data collection, and/or analysis.

Like all qualitative inquiries, although to varying degrees, the design framework for my dissertation was emergent. Even though I was expressly committed to an emergent approach upon embarking this research, I could not have foreseen the host of challenges that required navigation during fieldwork. There were many

incommensurable forces at play that pulled apart some of the confirmed research plans described above, beginning with the restrictive conditions of doing research in a global pandemic, the geopolitics of forced migration research, and my researcher positionality.

Research in a global pandemic

My original idea was to engage in multi-sited, in-person research, and I planned to use multiple research methods to build upon existing research and data that document and analyze refugee sponsorship in Canada. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to move forward with my travel plans for in-person data collection, conduct focus groups, or request solicited diaries from participants. The COVID travel measures that were put in place by the Government of Canada in response to public health guidance meant that the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) and the Office of Research Ethics (ORE) at York University restricted in-person research for a period of time. Graduate travel for research was eventually permitted on a case-by-case basis but only after undergoing a rigorous review process.

Non-essential travel restrictions and isolation measures to control the spread of COVID meant that I had to shift my original idea to travel for in-person data collection and instead rely on digital technology to curate data. The prospective participant group also faced their own struggles with adjusting to the shifting prevention and risk measures implemented in their locales. Pandemic governance exposed and exacerbated pre-existing issues affecting communities living in vulnerable conditions, including a lack of access to health care and mental health support, inadequate and unhealthy housing, and unreliable access to technology and connectivity. Being mindful of the “affective atmospheres” (Lupton, 2020, p.19) deepened under the conditions of COVID, I did not want to overtax participants by asking them to partake in focus groups, interviews, and keep diaries of their experiences/activities in refugee sponsorship. And yet, it might have

been beneficial to have a space to share experiences. Focus groups on *Zoom* would have presented an additional layer of technical and ethical challenges. To this end, the research commenced with virtual interviews as the only standard method for generating new data as elaborated on below.

Although travel restrictions during COVID were understandable, they further impeded the recruitment and rapport building process with participants. Virtual research methods are not the most suitable for establishing trust with people from vulnerable communities. Trust is a crucial consideration in research that requires the participation of former refugees (Clark-Kazak, 2017), given the fragile political contexts they come from, the ongoing violence linked to their places of origin, and the impact this has on their lives in countries of resettlement. Building rapport in-person is an integral part of this. Rapport is developed through connections between researchers and participants in a way that creates a climate of mutual trust, respect, and understanding. Researchers have exercised strategies to establish rapport and trust online with participants living in vulnerable circumstances (Horst, 2006), but it was an arduous feat in my research.

Geopolitics of forced migration research

Recruitment issues under COVID were exacerbated by the geopolitical backdrop of this research. Inviting Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas to participate revealed how ongoing instability in one's country of origin affects research in Canada. Diasporas from both Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Oromo are primarily made up of refugees who have come to Canada from linked war zones and who remain impacted by violence that circulates transnationally. Research on refugee transnationalism shows how refugees and the places they call 'home' are politically linked (Al-Ali et al., 2001), and that their daily lives in Canada are shaped by the relationships they maintain with these homes and family members abroad (Yousuf, 2018; Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023). Human

rights organizations have documented the long history of repressive measures taken by the Eritrean (Amnesty, 2022; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2009) and Ethiopian (Amnesty, 2014; HRW, 2022) regimes to quash real or imagined dissent, which include systematic and widespread arrest of citizens; arbitrary arrest prolonged detention without charge; indefinite forced conscription; enforced disappearances; and murder.

In recent years, diasporas from both countries have organized to provide support to family members, ethnonational kin (Al Jazeera, 2016; Yousuf, 2018; Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023), and fellow exiles affected by violence and human rights atrocities. Collectively, they have grappled with transnational impacts of violent crackdowns on peaceful protests in the region (Human Rights Watch, 2016); socioeconomic and political instability resulting in an abrupt change to Ethiopia's head of state (Demissie & Soliman, 2020); regional destabilization from a tactical alliance between two controversial leaders (Gebreluel, 2021); national elections supplanted by the COVID pandemic, which subsequently led to a militarized conflict between former and current leaders (HRW, 2022); and abductions from refugee camps to enforce the return of Eritrean refugees to an unsafe nation-state (HRW, 2021). A transnational analysis of violence, displacement, and 'family' explains the context-specific conditions that researchers must consider when soliciting participation of vulnerable communities in refugee resettlement research.

As COVID coincided with many of the recent violent political conflicts in the region, sponsors from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diaspora were inevitably overwhelmed with pending applications and incoming requests for refugee protection. Prior and ongoing violence would have already stretched these diasporas thin in their capacities to extend protection to refugees in need. When I did not receive sufficient

responses to my invitation emails or to my carefully crafted follow-up messages, the participant group was expanded and diversified through the inclusion of key informants.

Key informants were a group of participants that included community leaders, settlement workers, Sponsorship Agreement Holders [SAH] representatives, and government officials, many of whom had refugee histories themselves. The questions asked to these participants focused on the details of their sponsorship experience with the target racialized diaspora sponsors. While this participant group were easier to recruit and provided insight into the topic from another angle, the actual voices of racialized diaspora sponsors were comparatively limited. To address this issue, the pool of participants was expanded a second time to include all sponsors from racialized diasporas. The inclusion of racialized sponsors from outside of the Eritreans, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas would bring their voices to the fore and would allow the research to stay within its intended mission. In the end, I was not successful in my efforts to recruit participants from racialized diasporas that were not Eritrean, Ethiopian, or Oromo.

Geopolitics of positionality

Researchers lived and learned realities invariably shape their political, social, and academic orientations, which are reflected in research through their positionalities. England (2006) identifies three elements of positionality. First, positionality concerns people's worldviews from different embodied social locations. Second, "positionality also refers to how we are positioned (by ourselves, by others, by particular discourses) in relation to multiple, relational social processes of difference (gender, class, 'race'/ethnicity, age, sexuality and so on), which also means we are differently positioned in hierarchies of power and privilege" (England, 2006, p. 289). Third, positionality extends to considerations of how others react to us as researchers.

One goal of this research was to situate knowledge through a reflexive consideration of my role as a researcher. I entered the study with a multitude of prior experiences and insights into the research context that could have inhibited or enabled certain observations. My own positionality as a person from a forcibly resettled family influenced my choice of research topic, my viewpoints on the issue of racialized diasporas in refugee resettlement, and my selection of the target participant groups. Given that I have grown up primarily in contemporary Western societies and have had a contemporary Western education, I accept that my own learned realities informed my conceptualization and operationalization of this research (as present in more detail below). By acknowledging my positionality from the outset, I remained aware of the personal, political, and academic vantage points I brought to the study. This allowed me to consider the influence of my positionality on the research process.

A researcher's positionality can provide both advantages and challenges that may have far reaching implications for the process of data gathering, processing, and interpretation. My intersecting identities and lived experiences as a former refugee, formally educated racialized/woman, and member of a racialized diaspora in Canada hold particular meanings not only which I have constructed for myself, but that participants formed of me. I had an insider-outsider position to the target participant groups, which opened doors and curtailed possibilities. According to Butz (2010), insider researchers are seen to be better positioned than outsider researchers to represent the "non-academic social worlds" that they are a part of and research participants (p. 149). When it came to recruitment, my lived familiarity with and a priori knowledge of the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas may not have positioned me in an advantageous position compared to an 'outsider.'

My diaspora membership has provided a level of trust and openness with research participants in the past that would likely not have been present otherwise (Hyndman et al., 2021; Yousuf, 2018). I entered the field with a sense of optimism about cultivating relationships with the prospective participants for this research. Some difficulty establishing rapport was expected given the pandemic required adjustments to research. Because I had both explicit and tacit knowledge of the geopolitics in the region, challenges with soliciting participation were also anticipated. However, the surprisingly low response rates made me wonder if my proximity to the geopolitics of the research on forced migration and fixed aspects of my identity (such as my name and ethnonationality) could have triggered certain preconceptions about who I am and the politics I embrace, and thereby, further hindered the recruitment process.

The insider-outsider dialectic/divide occurs at all manners of scales. There are more than 90 distinct ethnonational groups within the Ethiopian nation-state (Minority Rights Group, 2019) which interrupt a unitary 'national' identity. Some might consider me 'Ethiopian' while others identify me as an 'Oromo.' Other refugees from Ethiopia who may not identify as Oromo may well consider me an outsider. All to say that the possibilities for how I am and could be positioned as an insider-outsider are many and embedded in fluid but contentious politics. Despite my 'insider' status with one ethnonational group, I could have been positioned as an outsider to others through the identity markers mentioned above. I was not even automatically positioned to conduct research with people from a shared region of origin. The geopolitics of positionality can be heightened in contexts of ongoing and new ears of violent political conflict.

My positionality also influenced my relationship and interactions with the participants I met. During the interviews, participants from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diaspora were open and entrusted me with sensitive information in response to

my questions. Overall they were receptive to my probes to generate further explanations. Our shared regional identity, as people originating from the Horn of Africa, also made it easier for me to understand and relate to participants' stories because they often echoed my learned understandings as well as the narratives that I grew up listening to. I doubt that a researcher with greater distance from the researcher phenomenon could have elicited similar levels of connectedness and "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973, p. 7) as I did with my positionality. These observations indicate positionality is never fixed; it is context dependent. Thus, I have a type of fluid identity as a researcher (see Bauman, 2000) that served to open doors and curtail possibilities.

Acknowledging my positionality in relation to the research allowed me to recognize my conceptual assumptions as a researcher. Although complete objectivity is not possible and is not a goal of qualitative research, keeping researcher biases (e.g., confirmation or leading questions biases) in check is imperative to the validity of the research process. One such check is reflexivity. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) explain, reflexivity involves the appreciation that knowledge is socially constructed. It is a tool that encourages researchers to explore the beliefs, perspectives, and assumptions that inform their knowledge base and guide their ethical research practices (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). To facilitate reflexivity, I kept a self-reflective journal, whereby I examined my personal assumptions, goals, feelings, and emotions throughout the research process. This practice also included making regular entries about methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflecting about the study progress in terms of my interests and values. For example, early on in my research, I reflected on why I asked and documented the ancestral backgrounds of sponsors but not key informants. In my reflexive journal, I wrote,

“what are the ‘political’ implications of not collecting KI demographic data?” This does not sit well with me. I should request demographic information from KI participants. The omission of this data will implicitly set up ‘whiteness’ or ‘European ancestry’ as an unmarked norm. All knowledge is situated and reflects our social identities and social locations. In the absence of this information, assumptions will be drawn that certainly will not capture the intricate and rich histories brought to this research by key informants. I think connecting to where we have come from has huge implications for unsettling prevailing migration narratives and for advancing social change.

To rectify this oversight, I reached out to all key informant participants long after my fieldwork concluded. I asked them: “Can you share with me the ethnic or cultural origins of your ancestors?” Participants responded to my request. Engaging in reflexive practices helped me clarify my belief systems and subjectivities that I brought to the research.

Research ethics and feminist ethics of care

Doing research with diasporas made up of former refugees necessitates an understanding of how their contextual realities intertwine with ethics in practice. My shared diasporic refugee identity gave me acute insights into the historical and present-day struggles that have gripped the diasporas I intended to work with. Refugees displaced from Eritrea and Ethiopia come from fragile political contexts and remain attached to their ancestral homes where conflict and war rages. The impacts this has on their lives in countries of resettlement was central to the ethical considerations in my research.

Although ethics are a fundamental aspect of any research, they are a priority for research involving human participants who are marginalized, newcomers without proficiency in English/French. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) identify two dimensions of ethics in research studies: 1) “procedural ethics” – which include the processes involved in gaining the approval of bodies that govern ethics, and 2) “ethics in practice” – which

entail the day-to-day ethical considerations that researchers address throughout their research (pp. 263-265). Formal approval for this research was granted in accordance with York University's policies and procedures as detailed in the *Senate Policy on Research Involving Human Participants* (York University, 2013; see also TCPS2, 2022). Although formal ethics approval is oriented to the question of potential harm, as well as consent and transparency, I considered the question of ethics more broadly as it relates research practices that are appropriate for vulnerable populations.

Feminist ethics of care was the philosophical principle that guided my research decisions. A feminist ethics of care builds on a very long tradition of 'do no harm' and involves the ethical belief that participants' well-being is paramount in research (Bell, 2014; see also Anderson, 1999). I exercised an ethics of care by remaining mindful of the political landscapes underlying the relations between people/communities and geopolitics of forced migration research. This included careful appraisal of the affective impact of my research on participants. Exercising patience, understanding, empathy, and flexibility, allowed me to prioritize the affective and practical needs of participants before the goals of the research.

Several precautions were taken to access and recruit participants, including working with community intermediaries, contextualizing the research, and extending accommodations. Given that I had conducted related research for myself during two prior pilot projects, I worked with a member of the Eritrean diaspora and the Oromo diaspora with whom rapport had already been established. This approach served to mitigate some concerns about building trust and nonmaleficence. Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas were invited to participate through recruitment emails that acknowledged their transnational struggle for peace and justice, as well as their contributions to refugee protection. Interviews were booked to accommodate

participants' busy schedules, and last-minute requests to reschedule interviews were honoured.

All participants solicited to participate in the research were adults who fit the sample criteria as defined below. Informed consent requires participants to be informed of the purpose, scope, and specific details of the research, as well as what will be requested of them before and during participation (Palys & Atchison, 2014; TCPS2, 2022). The research information outlined how participants would contribute, any risks involved in the research, and explanations of promises and safeguards that I would honour. The purpose of this was to ensure that participants were aware of my identity as a researcher and the overall research objectives.

I provided each interview participant a brief introduction about the study and had them read the information sheet prior to obtaining consent and beginning the interview. Reading the study information sheet and details about confidentiality to each participant ensured that consent was informed and that a mutual expectation of confidentiality existed (see Palys, 2003; Palys & Lowman, 2014). Being mindful of the fragile political contexts in their places of origin and concerns about monitoring activities related to the PSR program, consent was obtained orally to ease anxieties and ensure that no paper trail would identify participants (Palys & Atchison, 2014). Participants were provided the option to keep their videos turned off and to use pseudonyms on *Zoom* to ensure greater confidentiality. A modest honorarium of \$30 was offered to compensate for their time, as would be appropriate to dignify the labour of socially and economically vulnerable participants.

The methods that I utilized are unobtrusive and pose minimal risk. The primary risk to the participants in this research is that their identities could be revealed, but the

questions I set out to ask were not intended to be very sensitive, so risk was low. To further ensure that risk to participants was kept low, I maintained strict confidentiality and anonymity. Participants' real names were not included in the final write-up of the research. To safeguard their identities, I assigned them pseudonyms that reflected their gender, ethnicities, and held meanings that were emblematic of perceived personal characteristics. The reason for assigning pseudonyms was to avert them from selecting one that could potentially lead to their reidentification, e.g., a nick name. After I transcribed the interviews, data were safely stored on a USB drive with 256-bit AES hardware encryption. Additionally, in the transcribing stage of my research, all information that could potentially reveal participants' identities was removed.

If I anticipate any legal ramifications due to the collection of sensitive and/or personal data, I will invoke my researcher-participant confidentiality privilege (Palys & Atchison, 2014; Palys & Lowman, 2014). This reflects my obligation to honour the research guidelines set by York University and feminist ethics of care to protect vulnerable groups (Bell, 2014). Further, and of equal importance, I have a duty to my participants. I feel doubly responsible for upholding ethical standards for my participants because they entrusted me with intimate details of their lives as refugees, and I am mindful that I will be representing a population with whom I identify. These ethical measures helped me create a trusting environment in which participants could share their stories, thoughts, and feelings openly and honestly without fear of negative repercussions. Such an attentive approach is also important because it requires me to be accountable to academic institutions, readers, and the general public.

‘Studying-up’: Mobilizing concepts grounded in empirical data

Despite the barriers that refugees and diasporas have encountered historically and presently, their participation in refugee sponsorship indicates that they continue to persist in their attempts to shape their own security situations, e.g., self-authorizing forms of refugee protection. Following the anthropological (Nader, 1972) and geographical (Hyndman, 2000; see also Pred & Watts, 1992) appeals to ‘study up,’ my research set out to interrogate the use of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program as a pathway for refugee protection itself, but through the perspectives and activities of racialized diaspora sponsors. With the inclusion of key informants, studying up evolved into “studying through,” which Bowman (2009) describes as a “call to focus on connections between individuals and groups” (p. 8). As a methodological imperative, ‘studying up’ requires a research design that is equipped to examine the complexities of power at multiple sites, such as the interactions between racialized diasporas and non-diaspora sponsors.

Additionally, studying up is a research strategy that encourages researchers to map the connections of power ‘up’ to institutions and major power brokers more broadly, as well as ‘down’ to communities and individuals. This research centres on former and current ‘refugees’ as knowing, embodied subjects who are autonomous experts in the decisions that have brought them to Canada. By exploring the nexus of power as it concerns broader tensions between states/borders/immigration and diasporas/networks/ongoing migration – but based on the embodied experiences of diaspora-refugees – my research unsettles accepted notions of resettlement as a ‘solution’ (Hyndman & Giles, 2017) that offers permanent protection.

The global refugee regime, in its current form, promotes the three ‘durable solutions’ for refugee protection – local integration, third country resettlement, and voluntary repatriation. These so-called ‘solutions’ have been critiqued by scholars and practitioners alike for being deeply inadequate in meeting the needs of the vast majority of refugees and for failing to address the drivers and trends of forced displacement (Crawley, 2017; Hyndman, 2019; Zamore, 2018). My research set out to critique the salient discourse of ‘solutions’ (Hyndman, 2019) as a way to demonstrate how diasporas negotiate power relations and self-authorize the security and protection of other refugees. By foregrounding an orienting lens that aims to prioritize diaspora-refugee agency and voice as a gateway to durable solutions, my research sought to challenge hegemonic ontologies and epistemologies of refugee protection.

Gathering, contextualizing, and foregrounding data on racialized sponsors

Data collection for this research was a process that included a series of strategies implemented to aid sampling, recruitment, and fieldwork. In this section I discuss the sampling methods and criteria used to define a target participant group for inclusion into the research. Specific recruitment techniques were employed to solicit participation from a pool of prospective participants. Following this I share some insights into how the interviews transpired, I provide an overview of the participant sample characteristics. Fieldwork also included born digital material, which I gathered from the web and directly through participants. The discussion on data collection concludes with my views of this part of the process.

Sampling and recruitment at multiple sites and scales

My research set out to explore the sponsorship role of racialized diasporas in Canada's PSR program. Sampling was obtained by using a non-probabilistic sampling technique known as criterion purposeful sampling. The objective of this technique is to draw a sample from a target participant group to achieve specific analytical, methodological, and theoretical purposes (Palys, 2008; Palys & Atchison, 2014). Racialized diaspora sponsors are defined in this research as former refugees or asylum seekers who are a part of a racialized diaspora in Canada. Key informants are broadly defined as Canadian residents who have expert knowledge of private refugee sponsorship and experience with racialized diaspora sponsors. Both participant groups were required to be 18 and over.

Canada was the obvious site for this research because up until January 2023¹⁸, the PSR was the only category of resettlement in the world "where sponsors, communities, and former refugees themselves can name specific persons for sponsorship" (Hyndman et al., 2021, p. 8). Since the exact population and location of racialized diaspora sponsors in Canada is unknown, Alberta (AB), British Columbia (BC), and Ontario (ON) were selected because they are known to have some of the densest immigrant populations in Canada (see Appendix A for an overview of the Eritrean, Ethiopia, and Oromo populations in these provinces, featuring a breakdown of selected themes/variables obtained from the 2021 Census). I conducted 28 interviews with participants residing in AB, BC, and ON, who were recruited through formal and informal

¹⁸ On January 19, 2023, President Joe Biden's administration launched the "Welcome Corps – Private Sponsorship of Refugees" program. Beginning in mid-2023, the Welcome Corps intends to allow sponsors to 'identify' refugees in need of protection with whom they want to sponsor. See here for more details on the program: <https://welcomecorps.org/>

networks. These criteria allowed me to employ a multi-sited, geographical analysis of private refugee sponsorship through a racialized lens.

Nuance and shifting ‘datascapescapes’: Sponsor recruitment through formal networks

Through formal networks, I began my recruitment process by looking at the national list of SAHs that is published on the Government of Canada’s website.¹⁹ Each province has numerous officially registered SAHs. Since the focus of my research is on racialized diaspora sponsors in AB, BC, and ON, I needed to develop a strategy to filter the national list of SAHs based on this criterion. Two steps were taken to identify SAHs that were administered by racialized diasporas in the three research sites. Step one involved filtering the list of SAHs by the three research sites: AB, BC, and ON. This allowed me to view the total number of SAHs in each of these provinces. For step two, I reviewed the narrowed down provincial list to determine if the SAHs name had an ethnonational identifier (e.g., Eritrean, Ethiopian, Oromo). From this, I created a list of SAHs administered by racialized diasporas as defined in this research. This method was imperfect as I am personally aware of at least one SAH that is led by a racialized diaspora but does not reference their country specific group in the organizations name.

Even though my strategy for identifying racialized diasporas from among the national and provincial list of SAHs is imprecise, it does provide a defensible approximation. Table 3.1 below shows the list of SAHs that fit my criteria for inclusion: racialized sponsors from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, or Oromo diasporas who are based out of AB, BC, or ON. The list of SAHs connected to Ethiopian nation-state are separated into two, Ethiopian and Oromo. Oromo people are the largest ethnonational group in

¹⁹ See here for the national list of SAHs in Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html>

Ethiopia. SAHs administered by and to the Oromo racialized diaspora specified their distinct focus on ‘Oromo’ nationals that have fled Ethiopia, both in their official name and organizational mandate. I developed three separate lists to honour the ways in which the SAHs self-identified as either Eritrean, Ethiopian, or Oromo. However, this does not mean that these SAHs exclusively sponsor refugees from the countries or ethnonational groups that they identify with and prioritize for refugee protection.

Table 3.1 Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo SAHs in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario (June 2023)

Province	Total # of SAHs	Eritrean-based SAHs	Ethiopian-based SAHs	Oromo-based SAHs
Alberta	30	6	5	3
British Columbia	19	3	1	1
Ontario	59	0	4	0
Total	108	9	10	4

* Source: Author's compilation.

The distribution of SAHs from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo racialized diasporas reveals some interesting insights. Of the 23 SAHs, 10 are Ethiopian-based, nine are Eritrean-based, and four are Oromo-based. AB is the province with the highest number of SAHs (14) from these three racialized diasporas followed by BC (5) and then ON (4). Economic, educational, and employment opportunities are some of the reasons that former refugees resettle in AB (see Krahn et al., 2005), so I was not surprised to find that most of the SAHs were based in this province. AB is also home to several established racialized diasporas and has more affordable housing compared to BC and ON. Both the Eritrean and Oromo diasporas do not have any SAHs registered in ON, which was surprising given the provinces dense immigrant population.

The number of SAHs on the national list are not static. SAHs sometimes suspend their sponsorship operations while at other times the government approves new

organizations to join the sponsorship roster. Early in 2023, the Toronto Star reported that “some groups are quitting Canada’s popular refugee sponsorship program” (Keung, 2023) due to new federal rules that are posing irreparable challenges, which is the focus of Chapter Six. With these shifts and recent discussions noting a “rising interest in refugee sponsorship from newcomer communities” (Lehr, 2021, 1:09:57), I decided to undertake the process of identifying all racialized (including those that are not Eritrean, Ethiopian, or Oromo specific) SAHs at two-time frames, about five months apart. The first was on March 21, 2022, and the second was on June 5, 2023. In March, there were 130 SAHs throughout Canada (excluding Quebec) and 38 which I identified as being administered by racialized diasporas (see Table 3.2 below). By August, I identified 45 diaspora-based SAHs of the total 137 SAHs on the national list (see Table 3.3 below).

Table 3.2 All racialized diaspora SAHs across Canada (March 2022)

Province	# Of SAHs	# Racialized SAHs	% Of Racialized SAHs
Alberta	26	17	65%
British Columbia	18	5	28%
Manitoba	11	2	18%
New Brunswick	3	0	0%
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	0	0%
Nova Scotia	5	1	20%
Ontario	58	11	19%
Prince Edward Island	1	0	0%
Saskatchewan	7	2	29%
Total	130	38	29%

* Source: Author’s compilation.

Table 3.3 All racialized diaspora SAHs across Canada (August 2023)

Province	# Of SAHs	# Racialized SAHs	% Of Racialized SAHs
Alberta	30	19	63%
British Columbia	19	6	32%
Manitoba	11	2	18%
New Brunswick	3	0	0%
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	0	0%

Province	# Of SAHs	# Racialized SAHs	% Of Racialized SAHs
Nova Scotia	5	1	20%
Ontario	60	14	23%
Saskatchewan	8	3	38%
Total	137	45	33%

* Source: Author's compilation.

Since the initial estimation in March 2022, some interesting changes are observed, including that there is no evidence in a decrease in SAHs. The classification of SAHs administered by racialized diasporas increased overall with the addition of seven new SAHs, specifically in AB, BC, ON, and Saskatchewan. In March, racialized diasporas accounted for 29% of SAHs and then 33% in August, suggesting growth in the area of racialized diaspora-specific SAHs. Three of the seven new SAHs, two in AB and one in BC, were administered the Eritrean diaspora. These findings corroborate what sponsorship practitioners have noted about newcomer communities making up “a significant portion of the new” SAHs applying for that status (Lehr, 2021, 1:10:05), which is likely a consequence of the increase in violence affecting their countries of origin during this period. As it concerns the distribution of Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo based SAHs in AB, BC, and ON, 23 of the 137 (or 17%) were administered by these racialized diasporas, and they accounted for 51% of all racialized diaspora SAHs (or 23 of the 45) based on the August figures.

As noted above, the process of identifying racialized diasporas by nuancing the data from the national list of SAHs is imperfect. The limitation of this process is compounded by the shifting landscapes of the data, which I refer to as ‘datascares.’ The idea here refers to the dynamic and evolving characteristics of data landscapes over time. It underscores the notion that data ecosystems are not fixed, such as the national list of SAHs, they undergo changes, adaptations, and shifts over time. Further, the

process is inconclusive because racialized diaspora sponsors hold positions within SAHs that were initiated by non-diaspora community members or faith-based organizations. In my research I encountered at least one instance where racialized diaspora members sat on a board of a SAH they did not administer. In another instance, a SAH administered by an Oromo diaspora, employed non-diaspora individuals. These dynamics are far more complex than what is presented in Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 above, but they do offer a general understanding of the involvement of racialized diasporas within the SAH space. (To interpret the qualitative elements of the national list of SAHs, see Appendix B for their names).

Initially I sent out research invitations to the 23 SAHs administered by the three racialized diasporas that fit my research criteria: Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo. When I extended my sample to include non-diaspora led SAHs and then eventually all SAHs administered by racialized diasporas, it was helpful that I had already undergone the exercise of identifying SAHs as presented in above Tables 3.2 and 3.3. In total I reached out through email to 92 SAHs in AB, BC, and ON. Of these, 51 SAHs did not respond to my emails, despite two follow up emails that I sent to each of them. Four SAHs responded to say they would participate but I was never able to re-establish contact with them to move forward with interviews, despite multiple attempts to follow up. Some 11 SAHs responded to say that they were not available to participate at that time. In these instances, SAHs cited that they did not have the capacity to participate because of the increasing demands of the PSR program. A total of 12 SAHs responded and participated in virtual interviews as an outcome of recruitment through formal networks.

Beyond the obvious 'datascaes': Sponsor recruitment through informal networks

SAHs are not the only type of sponsorship group that racialized diasporas form to sponsor refugees. I relied on informal networks to recruit racialized sponsors from ad hoc groups. Ad hoc groups²⁰ are broadly defined as sponsorship that is undertaken through nebulous arrangements where members of racialized diasporas partner with SAHs to undertake sponsorship (e.g., as a Constituent Group or Co-Sponsor), and by forming groups who come together to sponsor on a case-by-case basis (e.g., as Groups of Five or Community Sponsor). Sponsorship under these arrangements have received scant attention in the sparse literature on private refugee sponsorship to date and is the focus of Chapter Four. Scholarship has largely focused on sponsorship that occurs formally through SAHs, or it does not sufficiently nuance data and interpretations by sponsorship group. To address this gap, and because I anticipated that many racialized sponsors engage sponsorship through ad hoc arrangements, groups, and contributions, I intentionally sought to include the voices of racialized sponsors who were not formally part of a SAH, or what I refer to as the most obvious or accessible datascaes as shifting and mutable as they are.

I tapped into existing personal contacts and community intermediaries from my master's research and work on Hyndman's (2017-2023) project on Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada to recruit additional sponsors. This recruitment strategy occurred alongside the recruitment of SAHs. In fact, some of the first participants that were interviewed for this research were through these informal networks. Recruitment began

²⁰ Another group of 'ad hoc' sponsors are members of racialized diasporas who provide background support to the sponsorship process. Pre-sponsorship, these sponsors provide general guidance, application support, and tips. Post-resettlement, they provide in-kind supports and assist with carrying out expectations in the settlement plan. What this signifies is another invisibilized contribution to private refugee sponsorship by racialized diasporas.

with me reaching out to individual sponsors whom I either knew directly or had knowledge of. Some racialized sponsors were recommended to me by community intermediaries. A participant-driven, otherwise referred to as snowball, sampling technique was utilized for this aspect of recruitment.

I leveraged informal networks to strengthen the analytical and theoretical insights that emerged from the data being gathered, as necessary for purposive sampling. For example, as certain insights arose about issues of equity for racialized sponsors as raised by one participant, I actively sought out individuals who were recommended because of specific roles they played in advocating for anti-oppressive practices in private refugee sponsorship. My sample also includes voices from key informants who were beholden to the government. The inclusions of these perspectives provided deeper insights to key issues and tested the boundaries of emergent findings. Palys (2008) refers to this methodological approach as “disconfirming or negative case analysis sampling,” which is when researchers extend their analysis by looking for cases that either confirm or disconfirm the evidence. In total, 16 participants were recruited through informal networks, and they participated in virtual interviews.

Conducting qualitative interviews in both virtual and physical space

With all my sustained efforts to identify and recruit participants, beginning in May 2021 and through to February 2023, I ultimately interviewed 28 participants (n=28). Interviews ranged from about 45 minutes to 90 minutes, but the majority lasted for 75 minutes. Of the 28 interviews, two were conducted in-person and 26 were conducted virtually on *Zoom*. In one case, two participants were interviewed together at their request. Interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient time chosen by each participant, but primarily accommodated their schedules. A *Zoom* meeting link was sent

out to participants ahead of the interviews and no major technical issues were encountered. For the two in-person interviews, I met with participants at their respective homes. Upon receiving oral consent, all interviews were recorded on an external digital voice recorder and safely stored in accordance with ethical guidelines.

One semi-structured interview guide was developed initially to enable a guided discussion about the research phenomenon, and to ensure that I recalled the topics of interest. With the expansion of the sample to include broader participant groups, a second interview guide was created to adapt to the evolving landscape of the research. Both interview guides were tweaked several times to address discoveries that emerged about shared characteristics among participants. For example, some participants were interviewed as key informants but also had refugee histories, while others were key informants and sponsors. It made sense to ask these participants to reflect on perspectives from the vantage point of their hybrid identities and unique positionalities. The questions in the interview guides were amended accordingly.

The face-to-face technique allowed me to communicate directly with individual sponsors and key informants in accordance with the prepared interview questions and uncover their perspectives. Except for two interviews, participants opted to keep their *Zoom* videos on. Having their videos on afforded the capture of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, which indicated enthusiasm or hesitancy with the topics being discussed. There were a few instances on *Zoom* when participants appeared visibly fatigued; they repeatedly yawned, slouched, and would stretch their arms. Their body language non-verbally communicated signs of fatigue. This occurred specifically during interviews with racialized sponsors. Engaging in fieldwork heightened my awareness of the challenges faced by sponsors, as explored in Keung's (2023) article, coupled with the fact that sponsorship is undertaken through voluntary efforts.

Many participants worked day-time jobs and were only available to meet mid-evenings. When participants appeared visibly exhausted, I proposed to pause the interviews and resume them at a more suitable time. Participants agreed to reschedule, and we were able to conduct the second part of the interview shortly thereafter.

Demographic characteristics of interview participants

Table 3.4 below provides a demographic overview of who participated in this research. The sample includes an almost equal number of sponsors and key informants (13 and 15 respectively) as well as women and men (15 and 13 respectively). Likewise, the inclusion of participants from AB, BC, and ON was roughly equal (8, 11, 9 respectively). Five Eritreans, one Ethiopian, and 11 Oromos were either sponsors or key informants, making a total of 17 participants from those racialized diasporas. Four of these participants were a part of a racialized SAH, two were part of a non-diaspora SAH²¹, and the other 11 were sponsors through ad hoc arrangements. I was not able to solicit participation formally from SAHs administered by the Ethiopian diaspora. The other 11 participants in the sample were interviewed as non-diaspora key informants. Seven of these participants were part of a non-diaspora administered SAH and the other four were staff members at organizations that worked closely with racialized diaspora sponsors. At least 8 key informants had personally sponsored refugees.

Table 3.4 Participant demographics

	Pseudonym	Residence	Gender	Background	Sub-group	Sector/Group
1	Abdii (hope)	Alberta	Man	GAR	Sponsor	▪ SAH

²¹ This indicates that members of racialized diasporas are also staff members and serve on the executives of non-diaspora led SAHs.

2	Ermias (uplift)	Ontario	Man	PSR	Sponsor	▪ Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, BVOR, supports
3	Ogummaa (wisdom)	Ontario	Man	PSR	Sponsor	▪ Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, supports
4	Birissa (astuteness)	Alberta	Man	Spousal sponsorship	Key informant	▪ SAH
5	Eeggatuu (care)	Ontario	Woman	Asylum seeker	Sponsor	▪ Ad hoc: G5
6	Birikti (kindness)	Ontario	Woman	Canadian born	Sponsor	▪ SAH ▪ Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, supports
7	Goitom (lead)	Ontario	Man	Asylum seeker	Key informant	▪ Service provider ▪ Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, supports
8	Reza (content)	British Columbia	Man		Key informant	▪ SAH
9	Fessehayee (joy)	Alberta	Man	GAR	SP	▪ SAH
10	Hawi (hope)	Ontario	Woman	Canadian born	Key informant	▪ Service provider ▪ Ad hoc: BVOR, supports
11	Lola (independence)	British Columbia	Woman	Economic immigrant	Key informant	▪ SAH
12	Christina (composure)	Alberta	Woman	Economic immigrant	Key informant	▪ SAH
13	Grace (compassion)	British Columbia	Woman	Canadian born	Key informant	▪ Service provider
14	Maria (devotion)	Ontario	Woman	Canadian born	Key informant	▪ Service provider
15	Maram (aspiration)	Ontario	Woman	Immigrated	Key informant	▪ Service provider ▪ Ad hoc: co-sponsor
16	Jonathan (aptness)	Alberta	Man	Canadian born	Key informant	▪ SAH
17	Mikail (humanity)	British Columbia	Man	PSR	Sponsor	▪ SAH ▪ Ad hoc: G5
18	Luke (light)	British Columbia	Man	Immigrant	Key informant	▪ SAH
19	Willa (safeguard)	Western Canada	Woman	Canadian born	Key informant	▪ SAH
20	Semere (promise)	Alberta	Man	PSR	Sponsor	▪ SAH
21	Cimma (strength)	Alberta	Man	GAR	Sponsor	▪ SAH

22	Fayyistuu (well-being)	Alberta	Woman	GAR	Sponsor	- SAH - Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, supports
23	Obsituu (patience)	British Columbia	Woman	PSR	Key informant	n/a
24	Ogeessa (sage)	British Columbia	Man	PSR	Sponsor	Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor, supports
25	Irene (peace)	British Columbia	Woman	Canadian born	Key informant	SAH
26	Maya (courage)	British Columbia	Woman	American born	Key informant	SAH
27	Dansitu (comfort)	British Columbia	Woman	GAR	Sponsor	Ad hoc: G5, co-sponsor
28	Kumii (abundance)	British Columbia	Woman	GAR	Sponsor	Ad hoc: co-sponsor

* Note: GAR = Government Assisted Refugee; PSR = Privately Sponsored Refugee; BVOR = Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugee; SAH = Sponsorship Agreement Holder; and, G5: Group of Five.

Racialized sponsors self-identified as either Eritrean, Ethiopian, or Oromo. Most had come to Canada under the GAR or PSR resettlement category. One was previously an asylum seeker, and another participant was born to refugee parents after their arrival to Canada. The participants shared similar lived experiences as people who had fled violent conflict and war and spent time living in extended exile. Even the one Canadian-born expressed similar concerns about the impacts of forced migration on her family and diasporic community.

The key informants were more diverse with respect to their demographics and backgrounds. Several were of European descent (7) and did not have the lived experience of being a forced migrant or with resettlement, while others (4) were from racialized groups distinct from racialized diasporas. Several key informants were from the target racialized diasporas (4) and had personally sponsored, but they were interviewed primarily in relation to their occupations and expertise of the PSR program. This subset of participants was solicited because of their experiences with racialized diaspora sponsors.

Racialized diaspora sponsors and key informants without refugee histories (or non-diaspora sponsors) are connected by a shared ongoing commitment to refugee affairs. Lived experience, whether personal or community, has kept racialized diasporas sustained in private refugee sponsorship, while non-diaspora sponsors have devoted their profession or volunteer efforts to ameliorating the plight of refugees. Another interesting linkage between the two groups is the different positions they hold in the PSR program. Almost all participants worked in several sponsorship capacities, as administrators, SAH representatives, volunteers, and across different sponsor groups both formally and informally. Their insights were rich because they stemmed from multifaceted vantage points.

Born digital material: Forming an original library of ‘grey’ literature

In addition to the data generated from my interview sample, my qualitative database was complemented with a dataset of born digital material. Here I refer to material I generated for the dataset that already existed in digital or electronic form. The basis of this dataset relied on ‘grey’ literature, which refers to material that is not identifiable through academic indexes or databases and for which commercial publishing is not a goal (Rothstein & Hopewell, 2009). A key point being that grey literature spans material that is produced at all levels and is hard to retrieve. In Byrne’s (2022) definition, grey literature includes secondary sources that contribute to a literature review or ‘raw’ primary sources used as the basis for empirical findings. The grey literature I gathered for the dataset also contributed to the research process itself.

There are two flows of data that made up this subset of the sample. One was grey literature that I personally gathered from the internet, which included material from governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental organizations as outlined in Table

3.5 below. This included informal communiques, government documents, reports, and unpublished research papers. Some of the material was suggested to me by participants during the data collection process, particularly when they felt information existed out there that could substantiate an issue being discussed and probed. At other times, I searched for the material because of my own interpretation of the gaps and omissions in the academic literature and prevailing narratives on private refugee sponsorship.

Table 3.5 Born digital material: Governmental, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental organizations

Governmental organizations	Quasi-governmental organization	Non-governmental organizations
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	MITACS	Canadian Council for Refugees
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	Refugee Sponsorship Training Program	Centre for Refugee Studies
	Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association	IPSOS
		Environics Institute
		Refugee Hub

The other flow of data was from hard-to-reach information provided to me directly by participants, which they offered without my solicitation. This unsolicited material was particularly instructive because it provided ‘on the ground’ insights related to key issues and activities in private refugee sponsorship. The material I gathered included deliberations on the legal mechanism of naming refugees for resettlement, SAH allocation figures for select years, data on the demographic makeup of sponsors across Canada, and documents on an initiative to improve equity and inclusion in the practice of sponsorship. Given that these are internal sources, I would not have had access to pertinent information it if not for the participants incisivness and generosity.

The dataset I generated from this born digital material was used as the basis for conducting an original analysis. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I present the major empirical findings that I was able to draw out from that process. I used these data sources to determine if my findings were echoed at lower non-institutional and higher institutional levels. The analytical insights that emerged are otherwise triangulated with the data generated from participant interviews. Triangulation is a technique, which Golafshani (2003) describes as “a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” (p. 603). That is, combining two or more methods of data collection, using two or more sources of data from within the same method, having multiple researchers investigate the data, or employing different theoretical perspectives (Denzin, 1978). The utilization of qualitative interviews and grey literature as a triangulation strategy added rigor, breadth, and depth to the research findings.

Qualitative data analysis of interview transcripts

Qualitative data analysis involves approaches that are taken to process, organize, and interpret unstructured, nonnumerical data. The main goal of undertaking data analysis is to identify patterns and draw out key themes/insights from the data that can clarify research questions. Researchers employ different methods, techniques, and tools to analyze data. In this section I begin with a discussion of how I processed the interview data to prepare for data analysis. This included converting audio recorded interviews into written interview transcripts and how the transcripts were organized by way of coding. Coding is a systematic way in which to condense data into smaller analyzable units through the creation of codes (parent and child), categories, and themes, either applied to the data (deductive coding), derived from the data (inductive coding), or a combination of the two. I describe the approach I took to code the data and the tool I used to enable the process (NVivo). This section concludes with a discussion

of the methodological practices I employed to deepen my interpretation of the data. What I emphasize is that despite the various stages to data analysis, analysis and interpretation were ongoing. This was possible through continuous notetaking (e.g., brainstorming notes, fieldnotes, analytical memos) because it encouraged a reflexive data analysis practice.

Transcription and the politics of language in automation

All 28 interviews were conducted in English and were transcribed verbatim. The transcription process entailed two steps. First, I used *NVivo Transcription* to transcribe the audio recorded interviews. *NVivo Transcription* is an automated, cloud-based service that is available for purchase as an add-on with each licence. There are different ways to use NVivo's transcription tool. For example, one method is to send media files (e.g., audio or video) for transcription by uploading them directly into NVivo desktop and have the media file embedded with the transcript. One advantage of this option is that transcripts are synchronized with their corresponding media file, meaning that each written word in the transcript is linked to the spoken word in the media file. This was not an option that I used because my preference was to keep audio recorded interviews outside of NVivo. Even though NVivo projects are only stored locally and not on a remote cloud, I felt that keeping the audio files outside of NVivo would ensure greater securitization of the data.

My approach instead was to use *NVivo Transcription* through a secure website to auto transcribe the interview recordings. This option did not require me to upload the audio files into NVivo. Instead, at the conclusion of each interview, I logged into *myNVivo* account and add the audio file onto NVivo's *Transcription Website*. Once the file was added, I was able to select the auto-transcribe feature and the set the language

to that spoken in the audio file (i.e., English). The audio file would first take a few moments to upload onto the website and then the transcription process would ensue. It usually took about half the time of the audio recording for the transcript to generate in NVivo. For example, a one-hour interview took about 30 minutes to auto transcribe. I would then download the transcript onto my encrypted hard drive and immediately delete it from *myNVivo* account. This ensured that that the audio recorded interviews were neither saved on the web or the desktop version of NVivo.

Automating the transcription of my audio recorded interviews was intended to complement the research process by enhancing accuracy and reliability, formatting, and preliminary analysis. The production of relatively accurate verbatim transcripts that were formatted intelligibly by speakers and included timestamps to use for real-time data analysis were compelling reasons for using the service. However, automation technology is not without limitations. Bias was the most obvious issue I encountered with NVivo's automation-based transcription service. As it concerns the participant demographics in my research, the automated speech recognition privileged English-speakers with 'local' Canadian accents (i.e., 7 participants of European decent and 4 racialized participants who spoke English without an accent) and discriminated against English that was spoken with an accent (i.e., 17 participants).

This meant that the transcripts generated for the 'preferred' speakers were approximately 85% to 90% accurate, while the transcripts of the 'subordinated' speakers contained numerous inaccuracies, misinterpretations, and misrepresentations throughout. Despite the presence of errors in the latter set of transcripts, it did not hinder my understanding or analysis of their text. Scholars have found that automated language processing tools exhibit substantial racial disparities and argue that these tools are not inclusive (Koenecke et al., 2020). As a practical issue, this technological shortcoming

meant that I had to spend an exorbitant amount of time remediating the transcripts from racialized participants who spoke English with an accent. The initial appeal of using NVivo's transcription service was short lived but I persisted with the approach given the monetary investment for the add-on and for consistency.

Given that no automated transcript is produced with 100% accuracy, I undertook a verification and review process to ensure that each transcript was a verbatim account of its corresponding audio file. This was the second step of my transcription process. I began by listening to the audio recordings of the interviews while reading through the NVivo generated transcript. Following advice outlined in Palys and Atchison (2012), an audio software program called *Express Scribe* was employed to reduce the actual recorded speed of the interview dialogue. My preferred technique was to use Express Scribe to listen to slowed down audio files whilst proofreading the transcript for grammar, omissions, punctuations, and spelling. Some of the time, I was able to listen to the audio recordings continuously rather than pausing and unpausing as I made corrections to transcripts (i.e., transcripts without accents). The speed was reduced more substantially for transcripts with greater inaccuracies (i.e., transcripts with accents).

The transcripts ranged from 11 pages to 43 pages but averaged around 25 pages. Each 60 minutes of audio took me between 3 to 4 hours to verify in the case of transcripts that were more polished, and almost double the time for transcripts that were comparatively un-polished. The verified transcripts were reviewed a second time before importing them into NVivo for coding and in-depth analysis. In hindsight, the time it took to verify and review the transcripts likely exceeded the time it would have taken to transcribe manually from the outset.

The process of transcript verification and review was generative, nonetheless. Multiple levels of meaning were revealed because I was able to re-experience the interviews on multiple occasions and thereby deepened my analytical understanding of the research phenomenon. Listening to the audio recordings made me realize that I take a dialogical approach to interviews (Harvey, 2015). For example, when key issues were discussed, I often summarized what the participants said and would emphasize key aspects of what they shared. This approach gave participants an opportunity to validate my interpretations, a method known as 'member checking' first coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) but also seen as a tool that enhances trustworthiness (Birt et al., 2016). These approaches became the basis for the co-creation of meaningful insights.

According to Morse et al. (2002), "verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain" (p. 9), and attending to this practice has important ramifications for methodological rigour. The mechanism I used to ensure the accuracy of the recorded data was to review each transcript while listening to its corresponding audio file and then re-reading the verified transcripts. By this point, I had engaged with the data a total of three times: when the interviews were originally conducted; during the transcript verification stage; and while reviewing the transcripts before importing them into NVivo. Implementing verification processes facilitated coding and analysis.

Coding with NVivo: A hybrid and iterative approach

Upon developing verbatim transcripts, they were uploaded into NVivo. I used NVivo as a tool to aid the management, organization, and examination of the data. A hybrid approach was taken to develop a codebook in NVivo. Given that I had worked on related research, I arrived at the coding process with pre-existing knowledge about

private refugee sponsorship. I relied on my previously acquired knowledge to initiate the basis of a coding framework that was reflective of common issues (e.g., naming, sponsorship groups, sponsors motivations). This is known as a top down or ‘a priori’ technique because I developed some codes before the examination of data. During the fieldwork process, I started to observe patterns regarding specific issues that would come up in discussion with interview participants. Participants often talked about the challenges they were experiencing in sponsorship, and in particular, the changes that were underway with the PSR program due to new federal rules (Keung, 2023; see also Government of Canada, 2021a for a report on what precipitated changes to the program). The insights that emerged during the fieldwork process were developed into codes and added to the preliminary coding framework as part of my deductive approach to coding.

A ground up, or ‘posteriori,’ technique complemented the approaches taken to deduce preliminary codes. I employed an emergent coding technique, which differs from ‘a priori’ coding in that it allowed concepts, ideas, and meanings to evolve directly while the data were examined. These codes were created inductively during the transcript verification/review and coding processes. Codes that were created as an outcome of data processing and inductive coding largely accounted for how the coding framework was developed (see Appendix C for a copy of the codebook).

The overall coding process was guided by an open coding technique, which is achieved when data are segmented into meaningful expressions and described in a single word or a short sequence of words. Alongside the reading of transcripts, I segmented interesting and significant passages based on observed patterns into codes. In this first cycle of coding, the aim was to summarize the data into broad topics which is known as descriptive coding. I intentionally sorted the data based on specific

thematic issues, which essentially corresponded to the central research questions (e.g., motivational factors, selection criteria, sponsor ‘groups’). When doing this level of coding I did not concentrate on comparing datum with datum, but rather moved quickly through the data to reduce it from the transcripts and organize it to form the top-level codes (i.e., tags at the top level of the hierarchy or ‘parent codes’).

Following the first round of coding, all the data were coded and analyzed intentionally within and across each of the respective thematic issues. In other words, I moved from general topics at the top and developed refined codes nested below (i.e., sub-tags at the second level of the hierarchy or ‘child codes’). During this second cycle of coding, I was concerned with identifying, naming, defining, and sub-tagging emergent patterns and relationships across the data by further reducing the data from within the tagged thematic issues. I achieved this by conducting a detailed line-by-line analysis to identify the similarities and dissimilarities to the point of saturation, which were then grouped together to establish lower-level codes pertinent to these patterns. For an example, see Figure 3.1 below of a hierarchical code structure where ‘motivational factors’ is the parent code and represents the broadest tag. Underneath it, there are seven child codes, which represent more specific aspects of motivational factors. These structures help to organize data by capturing various levels of abstraction and specificity in the coding process. They are a means of constructing concepts and building a deeper understanding of the data.

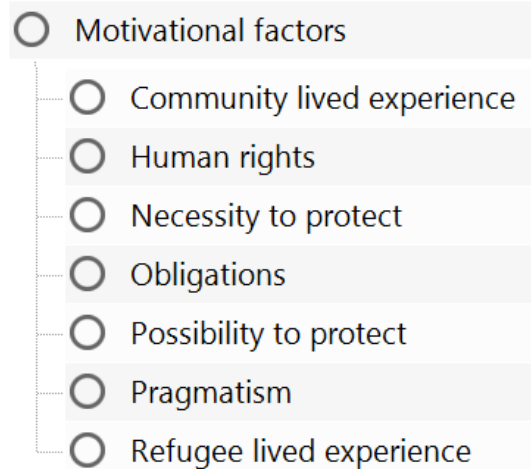


Figure 3.1 Hierarchical structure of the ‘motivational factors’ code in NVivo

The third cycle of coding included a process of establishing core categories and relating other codes (parent/child) to these (see Table 3.6 below for an example of how two core categories were established). These categories are higher in level and more abstract than the codes and child codes nested within them by continuing the compare and contrast method. Categories were identified to integrate, refine, and validate the emerging narrative.

Table 3.6 Establishing core categories

Excerpts	Interview transcript	Codes (parent + child codes/concepts)	Categories
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Excerpt 1	Yes, I was able to sponsor my brother. He is currently in Canada. I facilitated that, but I also am involved in sponsoring others who are completely not related to me; people I came to know after I came to Canada. Since we are in the same community, I got to know people, making friends and getting involved in the community, which means by extension, their friends or family, per say, is by extension are my own family. We will keep doing that in the future, too.	Selection criteria → Diaspora-diaspora sponsorship	Prioritizing connections
Excerpt 2	Many of my family members were in Ethiopia. And of course, there was also a lot of push from family members and extended family members, who always call and message and beg for sponsorship. So that's also another push.	Motivational factors → Obligations	
Excerpt 3	The needs, as you know, many thousands of Oromo people fled their homes and are languishing in neighbouring countries. And if there is any way out from that problem with this private sponsorship, that is what motivated us to start.	Motivational factors → Necessity to protect	Political necessity to act

Excerpt 4	If the government cannot sponsor them, then private sponsorship gives us the opportunity, with all its problems with all its challenges, it still has given us the possibility [to protect African refugees] of which other countries are not offering.	Politics of sponsorship → Political will	
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The fourth and final cycle involved determining and defining themes, which where the highest level of abstraction. Here I reviewed the codes, concepts, and categories that fit one major issue and placed them under an umbrella term or phrase (e.g., a ‘theme’ as illustrated in Table 3.7 below). Decisions had to be made about which core themes made the most meaningful contributions to understanding what was going on with the data in responses to my research questions. As an outcome of this process, four core themes were drawn from the data, which became the basis for my finding’s chapters and conclusion.

Table 3.7 Determining themes by placing categories under one umbrella phrase

Theme: Naming as a lifeline for equitable refugee ‘protection’ • Prioritizing connections - Diaspora-diaspora sponsorship - Obligations • Political necessity to act - Necessity to protect - Political will
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The coding process involved an iterative approach, where new inductive codes were consistently incorporated into the coding structure. This necessitated revisiting previous coded transcripts to identify and code relevant segments to the new codes. Additionally, the open coding technique meant I had to revise the code definitions as the meanings evolved throughout the coding process. In completing the four cycles of coding, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the thematic patterns in the data. This knowledge was refined by using advance applications in NVivo to support a deeper interpretation of the findings.

Deepening interpretation: Feminist methods of analysis and NVivo

Feminist analysis needs to account for the impact of unequal power distribution across populations and the power differentials between people/social groups. I engaged feminist methods of analysis (Moss et al., 2002) by being attentive to the power relations in private refugee sponsorship and the dynamics through which understandings are constructed. The voices of people who have different stakes in sponsorship were analyzed in subgroups (i.e., 'cases' in NVivo) as a way to uncover the racialized constructions of sponsorship. For example, I compared the insights of racialized diaspora sponsors to those of key informants. This approach enabled an analysis of how sponsors' sentiments relate to power differentials that operate in the centralized (i.e., SAH, G5, CS) and decentralized (i.e., co-sponsors, CG) sponsorship structures. Using a feminist analysis, I traced the complexities of power at the intersection of group dynamics and institutional structures using a range of tools and functionalities in NVivo as described below, including: Coding Framework, Cases and Queries, as well as Matrix Coding Query and Crosstab Query.

The *Coding Framework* was instrumental in my ability to discern and analyze power dynamics inherent in the data. Through an inductive approach, I created specific codes that captured power-related themes derived from the data, effectively notating instances where power inequalities were discussed. Appendix D provides a selection of codes that exemplify these themes, including 'equity and inclusion,' 'missing voices,' and 'racialization of refugee sponsorship.' Subsequently, I used NVivo to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of power relations, leveraging its capabilities (e.g., cases, queries, visualizations) to establish meaningful connections and relationships among various elements of data.

Cases and *Queries* were the main applications I relied on to enable a deeper interpretation of racialized power differentials. Cases represent 'units of observation' within the data, which might include people, organizations, or institutions. I created cases for interview participants and recorded demographic characteristics that would support comparisons that I wanted to make. By setting up cases, I was able to have NVivo queries (e.g., coding query and crosstab query) disaggregate the data based on specific attributes that were assigned to each participant. These attributes encompassed various characteristics such as ethnic/cultural origin, gender, location, and sponsorship group. I mapped the demographic attributes onto the power-related themes to explore and analyze how power dynamics manifested within different subgroups of participants. This approach enabled a more nuanced examination of the data, providing an understanding of the interplay between power dynamics and participant characteristics.

One illustrative example of my approach to in-depth data analysis involved the examination of structural inequities arising from the new federal rules as presented in Chapter Six. I employed a comparative analysis of cases that encompassed sponsorships with high organizational capacity (large SAHs) and those with less

organizational capacity (small SAHs). By considering perspectives from both types of organizational structures, I was able to draw out valuable insights into issues of inequity and understand how they were perceived and experienced across different SAHs. This approach provided a multifaceted understanding of the impact of the federal rules, shedding light on the differential effects and perspectives of various actors involved.

NVivo's *Matrix Coding Query* and *Crosstab Query* were used in conjunction with cases to identify associations and diagrammatically map out subsets of the data. A matrix coding query is used to find the coding intersections between core themes and attributes. For example, I used these applications to compare the sentiments held by different subgroups about the role of racialized diasporas in the PSR program (e.g., sponsors vs key informants). A crosstab query checked how coding was distributed across cases and their demographic characteristics. Compared to a matrix coding query, this application supports a more refined analysis because codes can be analyzed against two attributes simultaneously. For example, a crosstab compared how sponsorship groups in different locations view racialized diaspora sponsors. Both queries were used to explore the patterning of core themes (e.g., power-related) that emerged from the coding process by key attributes of participants.

Without cases and demographic characteristics, I would not have been able to structure the queries and interpret the findings around nuanced patterns in the data. These applications are a way to analyze the associations between subsets of the data in a way that would not be readily apparent by looking at the data in a coding framework. A coding framework (as presented in Appendix C and Appendix D) provides an understanding of the thematic patterns in the data, but it does not easily reveal how themes are broken down according to subgroups.

Much attention has been drawn to the importance of data disaggregation as a method to uncover hidden patterns and trends in big data, and thereby enable a more comprehensive understanding of how specific groups experience a phenomenon (Government of Canada, 2021b; Mensah et al., 2021). Even in smaller datasets, it is possible to employ layers of analysis and deconstruct data to uncover nuanced meanings (see Dockweiler et al., 2015), or what feminist and anti-racist scholars have described as 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988), 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989), and 'data feminism' (see D'ignazio & Klein, 2020). *Cases and queries* provided ways to disaggregate or layer data by demographic characteristics onto the coding framework to facilitate comparisons that became the basis for identifying power dynamics in private refugee sponsorship. This approach enabled me to interpret the findings with a greater degree of complexity and draw conclusions that clarified the research questions.

While NVivo offers a wide array of tools and functionalities that assist data analysis, it is important to be aware of the limitations with using software for this purpose. NVivo does not possess the capability to autonomously analyze data on behalf of researchers. In this regard, NVivo has some (but limited) capacity to autocode data and generate machine-based queries and visualizations (such as word clouds, word frequency, hierarchy charts). Machine-based functionalities of the software can aid qualitative data analysis, but it can never replace or substitute human efforts. The interpretation of power relations necessitates nuanced and contextual knowledge that NVivo alone is unable to ascertain, quantify, or qualify from the data. Data analysis in NVivo is limited to the quality of the data and the researcher's expertise. Although the software provided me with the tools to conduct a feminist analysis of power differentials,

it still necessitated critical thinking, the utilization of theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and a deep understanding of the contextual factors that shape my research.

Continuous notetaking: Building a reflexive data analysis practice

Analysis and interpretation were ongoing through all stages of the research, which was made possible through the practice of continuous notetaking. 'Brainstorming notes' was the first practice of notetaking that I intentionally engaged. Before data collection commenced, I had already started to brainstorm ideas that arose while I read the literature, observed talks, and participated in workshops on the topic of private refugee sponsorship. These ideas were initially recorded on paper or Microsoft Word, but as I started to pinpoint prevalent issues, I wanted to organize my ideas in a more fluid way. Sticky notes were a befitting solution as they provided a way to document my ideas in a more flexible format (i.e., wall, desk surface), and while using visual cues (i.e., colours and shapes) to group information and form associated concepts.

During data collection, handwritten fieldnotes were used as another practice of notetaking. I took "on-the-fly-notes," which were written quickly (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 216), while other notes were made with rich "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 7). During the interviews with participants, handwritten fieldnotes were taken to record descriptive information. The notes recorded factual information about the interviews (e.g., day, time) and participant (e.g., name, location), behaviours and expression, key words and phrases, and additional follow-up questions. Immediately after conducting each interview, I went over my shorthand descriptive fieldnotes, reflected on the interviews, and populated any missing information. These notes were then developed into comprehensive reflections of my thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns related to

the observations. These notes were written and stored as individual participant memos in NVivo.

My notetaking practice continued after the data collection process. I wrote analytical memos during the transcription verification. These memos were used to document key issues that stood out in each interview and how they substantiated or challenged issues that came up in other interviews. I approached this notetaking exercises systematically by using a 55/5 method: for every 55 minutes of transcript verification, I stepped back and spent five minutes handwriting analytical memos. This approach was taken to all 28 transcripts and the memos are saved in my research binder. Likewise, during the coding process, I used the 55/5 method to move between coding and memoing in iteration. These standalone memos were written in NVivo and accompanied by annotations, which are a distinct form of notetaking because they are used to mark specific sections of segments with notes. I also wrote extensive analytical memos on Microsoft Word documents and my mobile phone throughout the entire research process. These were detailed records of my methodological strategies (i.e., “notes on methodology”) and theoretical notes (i.e., “rants and musings”).

These combined methods of notetaking produced a lot of information that existed in different forms and lived in different spaces: wall, desk surface, NVivo, binder, computer folders, and a mobile phone. The aggregation of this material felt daunting until I concluded that my notes did not need to be amalgamated into one space or converted into one format; they could simply continue to exist as they were. There was meaning behind how and when the notes were curated and why they ‘lived’ in certain spaces.

My engagement with the notes I produced was ongoing. The practice of notetaking in the early stages of research was important because preliminary analysis

encourages self-reflection, and in-turn, self-reflection promotes deeper understanding. Brainstorming notes created a record of when preliminary analysis started and how my ideas evolved over time. Observations made during fieldwork are generally forgotten overtime. Fieldnotes were an exercise to remember context-specific details, and they were also a way to develop a reflexive understanding of my place in the research and the implications of this on the research conclusions I draw. The various forms of analytical memos were written as interpretive comments related primarily to methodology and theory. These combined practices of continuous notetaking were a critical contribution to the data analysis process and were used in the write up of the finding's chapters.

Conclusion

Research on racialized sponsors with refugee histories represents an underexplored and undertheorized area of inquiry. Given this knowledge gap, an exploratory and emergent methodology was appropriate for probing this phenomenon. This is because it enabled a semi-structured research design that adapted to the process's ebbs and flows. Numerous pandemic-related challenges arose which I had to carefully navigate, including changes to my target participant group, methods for data collection, and several revisions to my ethical protocols. Furthermore, the geopolitical implications of forced migration issues were another external force that impacted and impressed my research. By remaining grounded in my researcher positionality and embracing feminist ethics of care, I leveraged my flexible methodological framework to resolve unanticipated challenges and revise plans accordingly. I did this while remaining focused on the stated objectives of the research.

Feminist research methodologies underscore the importance of grounding theoretical insights in individual's lived and everyday realities and are attuned to power differentials. In this regard, my initial proposal to adopt a 'study up' method was instrumental in attending to the asymmetry in knowledge production of refugee sponsorship in Canada. This approach was implemented ontically in my research through a commitment to prioritize empirical data that centres the conceptualizations, experiences, and perspectives of the invisibilized sponsorship role of racialized diaspora sponsors, a role that has been rendered invisible. Epistemologically, it required a nuanced examination of existing data on sponsors while also 'searching' and 'asking' beyond the commonly acknowledged datascapes. As a result, hidden insights or lesser-known sources of empirical information pertaining to racialized sponsors were foregrounded as an outcome of this process.

After gathering and processing the data, I conducted a more focused analysis and interpretation using NVivo. NVivo's flexibility is a notable strength of the software, as it is malleable to different research designs. In this regard, NVivo is a methodologically agnostic tool that accommodates a wide range of data and qualitative methodologies. My approach to using NVivo for in-depth qualitative data analysis was guided by feminist commitments to flatten power hierarchies, re-distribute power, and enable a more counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge creation. I applied feminist methodologies to my use of NVivo by identifying and engaging the tools and functionalities that could assist with tracing the intricate dynamics of power across multiple contexts and scales, in particular between racialized diasporas and non-diaspora sponsors. This approach invites us to consider the interaction between epistemology, methodology, and technology as integral components of an intentional, dynamic, and embodied data analysis process. Through the use of NVivo in this original way combined with my

continuous note-taking practices across time and space, I deepened my interpretations and substantiated the conclusions I drew in this dissertation.

Chapter 4. Invisibility, exclusion, and the fuel of private refugee sponsorship

Introduction

I'd say that, and you'd know that I've said this before... [racialized diasporas] are the drivers of the program... there's no doubt about it. I mean, they're still debating, are they making up 90% or 92% or 89% of the whole sponsorship program? Nobody really knows because no quantitative study has ever been carried out on this. But just from... taking together, all the anecdotal evidence that we have from the people that are involved, if you ask anyone in Canada that is running a program like the one I'm running, they will probably tell you a figure somewhere between 85-95%, right? So, I think saying that that 90% of the program is driven by these communities is probably a fairly accurate estimation. – Lola (Key Informant)

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program is understood as a civil society-led social movement, but it is also a public-private partnership between the federal government and residents (Hyndman, 2022a) and a humanitarian and charitable act enacted at local and global scales (Hyndman et al., 2021). The benevolence of the Canadian state, which operates not as a unified or singular entity but a constellation of governing bodies at personal/household, municipal, provincial, and federal/national scales, is also touted internationally and globally for how it has approached and maintained refugee resettlement and protection. Centred on institutional actors, the predominant narrative of resettlement tends to emphasize Canada's humanitarian policies and programs. Though the PSR program is mandated by the state, it is realized only through the grassroots mobilization efforts of civil society and their important innovations in practice. Some attention has been drawn to the important role of sponsors and responses to the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugee movement that began more than four decades ago (Molloy et al., 2017) and the more recent resettlement of Syrian refugees (Macklin et al., 2018; Reynolds & Clark-Kazak, 2019).

Yet the sponsors themselves who have sustained the program in between – and during – these movements have garnered much less attention.

Racialized sponsors with refugee histories are the most invisible actors in the PSR program. Despite making up as much as “90%” of who “drives” the program as Lola (Key Informant) notes, their avid and ongoing sponsorship role has not featured prominently in the literature or the national narrative about the program. Racialized diaspora sponsors might not always play a prominent role in facilitating the large-scale refugee resettlement initiatives, which happen around specific world events and movements, but they steadily fuel the PSR program as Hyndman et al. (2021) find in their study. This observation presents a quandary that has persisted in my research, that is: ‘how’ and ‘why’ have the voices, efforts, and contributions of some 90% of sponsors been largely invisibilized in Canada’s overarching refugee sponsorship story? I address this question in this chapter through an analysis of how some sponsors are rendered invisible and excluded in two ways: governance (e.g., in the institutional systems and structures of the PSR program) and practice (e.g., in the documentation and record-keeping practices of sponsorship organizations).

The PSR program’s national framework offers a way to analyze how governance by the state and practices in the community coalesce to render the work of sponsorship invisible at multiple sites and scales. Formal sponsorship configurations, including Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), Groups of Five (G5), and Community Sponsor (CS), and the less formal arrangements through Constituent Group (CG) and co-sponsors, delineate ‘how refugee sponsorship operates’ and ‘who gets in’ and thereby, ‘who sponsors get to resettle and protect’ is my focus in this chapter. I argue that the most ad hoc sponsorship configuration (i.e., G5) and the least formal sponsorship arrangement (i.e., co-sponsors) are loosely regulated as well as the most invisible,

excluded, and unresearched groups of sponsors. Yet, as this chapter and dissertation shows, these kinds of sponsorships drive Canada's PSR program and are largely undertaken by racialized diasporas who support named/kin-based cases. Conversely, unnamed or non-kin-linked cases, which occur less frequently and typically involve private sponsors without refugee histories, are the most formalized and visible sponsorships. The configurations and arrangements of sponsorship thus have implications for how sponsorship is understood to be carried out and by whom. By analyzing the different kinds of sponsorship, I foreground an understanding about the invisibilized sponsorship role of racialized diasporas in Canada's PSR program.

Chapter roadmap

In the following section, I briefly discuss why the process of categorization is fraught, and in particular, as it concerns refugee policies. My analysis considers how a strict focus on the most formal policy/bureaucratic/government configurations can cast narrow/singularizing views of sponsors, and thereby obscure the multifarious practices of sponsorship on the ground. The section that follows outlines the national framework for the PSR program and the specificities of how sponsorship is meant to operate. The program's structure defines who can become a sponsor and what their participation must entail; the capacity and level of expertise that is required to undertake sponsorship; and, how resettlement is implemented and evaluated. Throughout the sections I examine the work that sponsors do, and how their work is distributed across the formal and less formal spaces of sponsorship, but with a focus on racialized diasporas. The practical aspects of how the program is operationalized highlights differences between sponsors who are known to those sponsored ('kin') versus those who are not ('strangers'). Kin-based sponsorship occurs when former refugees ask their sponsors to support the sponsorship of subsequent family members (Hyndman et al. 2021; Krause,

2020; Macklin et al., 2018), or when former refugees themselves become sponsors for this purpose. Stranger-based sponsorship happens when refugees and sponsors are not known to each other (Krause, 2020; Molloy et al., 2017). In the concluding section, I discuss approaches that render the key roles and work racialized diaspora sponsors do, and the sponsors themselves, visible.

The perils of categorizing private refugee sponsorship

Within the field of refugee studies and forced migration research, categorization and labelling are recognized as significant exercises of power (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Reynolds & Hyndman, 2021; Zetter, 1991). This literature also demonstrates how dominant categories used to classify migrants and refugees inadequately capture their meanings over time and space. Kumsa's (2006) work questions 'the refugee' as an essentialized category that displaced people themselves may refuse once in Canada. Kumsa's own identity as a professor at a Canadian university has too often been reduced to her refugee background, even after decades in Canada with citizenship:

I am a refugee! Others look at me and see a refugee. I look at my Self through Others' eyes and become a refugee. The notorious cycle of Self is complete. The fact that I have been a Canadian citizen for over ten years matters little. Persecution and flight, asylum and resettlement, racialization and alienation, all woven into essentialist discourses of nationhood construct me as a refugee. (Kumsa, 2006, p. 30)

Her research uses the concept of 'Othering' by examining how 'the refugee' is instrumental in the construction of 'the nation-state,' positioned deliberately outside its sphere of belonging. The narrative underscores the impact of being perceived as a refugee, illustrating the dynamics of 'Othering' where one's identity is shaped not by personal agency but by external perceptions and societal categorizations. Kumsa (2006) argues that the experiences of resettled refugees "do not fit into" neat categories because they "are messier and richer and require a more innovative conceptual

framework to theorize them” (p. 235). Bakewell (2008) has argued for forced migration research the pushes for analyses that go beyond policy relevant categories. He notes that efforts placed on policy irrelevant research, which does not privilege the worldview of policymakers, renders visible the groups, casual relations, and situations otherwise obscured when research is framed around policy categories (Bakewell, 2008). Bakewell’s (2021) more recent work reasons that humanizing refugee research requires nuanced analyses, which do not simplify or reduce the human experience to policy-related categories. For example, refugees without status or security may hold tight to the refugee moniker, while those who have found legal status and permanent residence may want to shed ‘the refugee’ identity altogether.

In the context of refugee resettlement, policy categories are fundamental to the resettlement process in Canada. Hyndman’s (2022) work illustrates how each category of refugee resettlement, such as Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), and Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees (BVORs), uniquely shape resettled refugees’ experience on arrival to Canada and thereafter. This is said to include home-making prospects, access to services, job and training opportunities, and social experiences. The significant point made by Hyndman (2022) is that the seemingly bureaucratic categories of refugee resettlement, which she conceptualizes as “geo-scripts,” “effectively govern the spatial settlement patterns of refugees and, in turn, shape the opportunities and outcomes of the resettlement process” (p. 1). The categories or geo-scripts as pathways of resettlement thus have significant implications for the lives and livelihoods of newcomers, as well as the communities they land or subsequently move to.

Categorization in private sponsorship and resettlement functions as an exercise of refugee policy. The government classifies the PSR program around specific

configurations and arrangements, which delineate the parameters of ‘who can be a sponsor’ and ‘who gets to be sponsored.’ Policy categories entail explicit regulatory scripts, as I call them in this chapter, which are a predetermined sets of rules, guidelines, or procedures that specify who can participate in private refugee sponsorship and what sponsors’ involvement must entail, as well as the requirements for who may qualify to be sponsored (Government of Canada, n.d.c). While these regulatory scripts are distinct for each configuration of sponsorship: SAH, G5, and CS as discussed in detail below, they all entail instructions for privately sponsoring and resettling refugees to Canada. As Bakewell (2008) notes, policy categories “are used to define those groups of people who are assumed to share particular qualities” (p. 436). Likewise, regulatory scripts represent targeted approaches and strategies that are specific to groups of sponsors. In these ways, policy categories render sponsorship legible and helps the government to plan, standardize, and centralize the PSR program. The government and bureaucrats are thus able to manage refugee sponsorship with greater efficacy and subject sponsors to the same conditions and outcomes that govern each distinct configuration of sponsorship.

While useful for standardizing and simplifying details about sponsors and their relations with each other and to refugees, regulatory scripts do not render visible the important nuances, actors, and their unique characteristics in the context of refugee sponsorship. Conversely, analytical categories foreground observable and contextual differences between groups of people (Bakewell, 2008) in ways that policy, bureaucratic, or government categories cannot. Basu and Fiedler’s (2017) research on Scarborough highlights the importance of considering contextual specificities that shape and differentiate how displaced people understand and experience resettlement. Arguing against the generalizations of sponsors and refugee sponsorship, my research strives to capture the situated narratives/stories that are not represented on the record. In my own

original ways, I challenge, refine, and add to the existing record of sponsorship configurations and arrangements. The goal here is to illuminate the contextual intricacies and the explanatory power of analytical categories when overlayed on top of prevailing categories in refugee policy.

Refugee sponsorship is defined and influenced by various categories, configurations, and arrangements, which shape both the approach and the responsible parties involved in the process. Who are sponsors understood to be? Are sponsors only the organizations, communities, groups, and individuals who are rendered most visible in existing scholarship and official records of refugee sponsorship, for example, SAHs who have signed formal agreements with the government? What about co-sponsors who participate in sponsorship through less formal arrangements that fall beyond the purview of formal government schemas or regulatory scripts, are they not sponsors too? Why is there a lack of understanding regarding co-sponsors who predominantly carry out most sponsorship and settlement tasks in collaboration with and within the formal structures of refugee sponsorship?

The seemingly banal exercise of regulatory scripts not only shapes how sponsorship is understood to be carried out and by whom, but it also has the potential to limit and exclude certain kinds of sponsorship. In particular, this chapter demonstrates how recent changes by the federal government, such as raising the regulatory bar on G5 sponsors (Government of Canada, 2011, 2012), has a disproportionate effect on kin-based sponsorship and the PSR resettlement category. Hyndman's (2019, 2022a) research showcases how government interventions have been marked by racialized, geographical preferences that were also exclusionary. I examine the configurations of sponsorship and how the government tries to limit certain ones because they allow for civil society-driven, named sponsorships. Regulatory scripts are thus not benign

because they set out who *can* and *cannot* access sponsorship, which have direct implications on the most racialized sponsor groups and communities in Canada as this chapter finds.

How refugee sponsorship operates in Canada: Analyzing regulatory scripts

Canada's national framework for the PSR program permits three types of sponsorship configurations: SAH, G5, and CS as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below. These types of sponsorship fall under the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], but each have different bureaucratic requirements and sponsor responsibilities – or regulatory scripts.

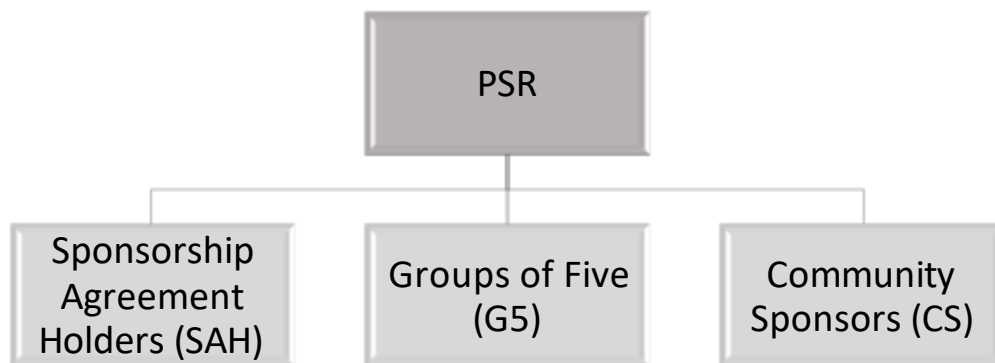


Figure 4.1 PSR program configuration

The PSR programs' national framework also permits two decentralized sponsorship arrangements or partnerships that are associated with the SAH, G5, and CS configurations but in different ways: CG and co-sponsors (Government of Canada, 2022a). The Government of Canada (2022a) notes "a SAH, a CG or a CS has the option of formalizing a partnership with an outside party to share in the delivery of settlement assistance and support" (para. 15). Although many different compilations of sponsorship

exist, Figure 4.2 below illustrates the most common arrangements whereby CGs and co-sponsors partner with SAHs.

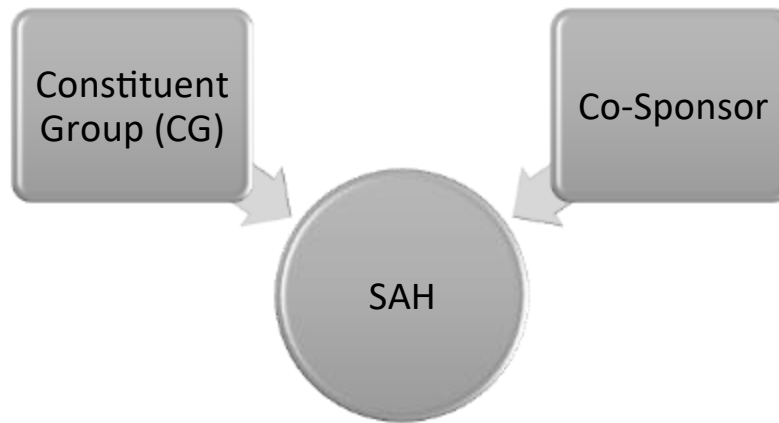


Figure 4.2 Most common sponsorship arrangements

In this section, I outline how Canada's PSR program operates and the activities that sponsors must undertake to fulfill their sponsorship obligations, focusing on the non-government sponsors through the SAH, G5, and CS configurations as well as the CG and co-sponsor arrangements. An analysis of how the federal government administers sponsorship through formalized processes is juxtaposed with realities on the ground. This juxtaposition lends understanding to how racialized diasporas are rendered invisible in the institution of refugee sponsorship, specifically, as it concerns how they contribute to the PSR program in less formal and ad hoc ways.

Querying formal and less formal spaces of refugee sponsorship: Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and co-sponsors

A SAH is a Canadian-incorporated organization that has signed a formal multi-year agreement with the Minister of IRCC to sponsor refugees on an ongoing basis. SAHs can sponsor a specific number of refugees through their agreements, based on allocations that the federal government assigns to them each year (Government of Canada, 2023b). The federal government uses several factors to calculate allocation

figures, including the number of spaces requested by all SAHs each year and the number of spots used from the SAHs previous year's allocation²², as well as the overall number of spaces available under the global cap for SAHs as set out in Canada's annual Immigration Levels Plan²³. Ultimately, application limits for SAHs are set based on protection spaces available locally, nationally, and globally, as well as level of expertise and past performance with sponsoring and settling refugees (Government of Canada, 2018; Refugee Sponsorship Training Program [RSTP]²⁴, 2018a; Van Haren, 2021). When an organization commits to becoming a SAH, its broader responsibilities²⁵ include providing financial and settlement support to refugees during the general 12-month sponsorship period (Lenard, 2019).

Sponsorship under the SAH program has historically supported the greatest number of refugees annually compared to G5 or CS configurations, which are discussed below. SAHs generally submit hundreds of sponsorships each year. Table 4.1 below shows the number of all privately sponsored refugees, how many were admitted to Canada by SAHs, and what percentage of SAH admissions result in private sponsorship overall between 2010 and 2019. What stands out is the steady increase of SAHs'

²² As Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) explains for 2023, "The number of spaces a SAH received depended on several factors, including: the number of spaces requested by each SAH; prior years' space usage by each individual SAH, including both regular PSR spaces and Operation Afghan Safety (OAS) spaces; Sponsorship Agreement status changes, such as suspension or probation; and the number of spaces available under the 2023 SAH global cap. See here: <https://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Allocations-FAQ-Final.pdf>

²³ "The levels plan is a projection of how many permanent residents will be admitted to Canada in a given year and sets targets for overall admissions per immigration category." See here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>

²⁴ RSTP is an organization funded by RSTP to train, support, and provide resources for private sponsorship groups. CGs and cosponsors are able to obtain the information and materials RTSP provides to sponsors through their SAH. See here for more information about RSTP: <https://www.rstp.ca/en/>

²⁵ See here for a full list of general responsibilities for all sponsors and those that are specific to SAHs: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/assessments/responsibilities.html>

contribution to the PSR program until 2017 when admissions fell to 85% and then 70% in both 2018 and 2019. While these PSR admissions are categorized under the SAH program, they also include less formal sponsorship arrangements undertaken by individuals, groups, and organizations authorized by SAHs to sponsor refugees under their sponsorship agreement.

Table 4.1 Admissions of privately sponsored refugees to Canada by SAH

Sponsorship year	All privately sponsored refugees	Sponsorship agreement holders	% Of overall privately sponsored refugees
2010	4,820	2,610	54%
2011	5,600	3,290	59%
2012	4,375	2,960	68%
2013	6,460	4,440	68%
2014	4,590	3,620	79%
2015	9,340	8,250	88%
2016	18,360	16,445	90%
2017	16,700	14,275	85%
2018	18,570	12,955	70%
2019	19,145	13,330	70%

* Note: The table was prepared by the author on November 27, 2022, using data adapted from Van Haren (2021, p. 6). Data were provided to Van Haren (2021) by IRCC.

SAHs often work in collaboration with a CG or co-sponsor, for whom they are responsible. A SAH may be made up of several to dozens of CGs or co-sponsorships (Government of Canada, 2023a). Ermias (Sponsor) explains that “CGs work with Sponsorship Agreement Holders very closely because often times they are authorized and somehow linked to [organizations] on a continuous basis.” For example, a CG might be a local branch office of a national SAH organization or a local congregation of a national church, such as the Anglican, Catholic, or United Churches. SAHs can also join forces with individuals, groups, or organizations through co-sponsorship arrangements, allowing co-sponsors to help facilitate sponsorship in specialized ways. Ermias (Sponsor) clarifies that co-sponsors are distinct from CGs because “they are one-time

sponsors that [might be] related to the [refugee].” For example, a co-sponsor can be a family member of a refugee who partners with a SAH and agrees to provide settlement supports (Government of Canada, 2022a), which can include financial, emotional, moral, and/or mentorship supports.

When SAHs partner with a CG or co-sponsor, they are responsible for establishing the criteria for collaboration, and relationship dynamics, and are legally mandated to oversee the performance and sponsorship activities of their partners (2023a). SAHs thus assume overall responsibility for overseeing the sponsorships that fall under their contracts. SAHs effectively are intermediary organizations that take on a range of functions to support sponsorship on the ground. Yet IRCC neither records the number of refugees admitted to the PSR program under CG or co-sponsorship arrangements, nor who these partners are, possibly because the SAHs’ contract is with IRCC for reporting purposes. The way IRCC classifies SAHs results in a fixed and decontextualized portrayal of sponsors, which in turn hides the unique and specific details of sponsorship within this configuration.

Hidden in plain sight: Sponsors and sponsorship in less formal spaces

Beyond the fact that several participants in this research had themselves been co-sponsors (9), concrete public data on the demographics of CGs or co-sponsors does not exist. This could be for privacy reasons. However, these sponsors are understood to encompass a wide range of people, but normally ‘kin’ are key actors. As Maria (Key Informant) stated:

There is also this mixed demographic where we’ve got the family-linked cases where the lead sponsor is specifically related to the newcomer they’re bringing, and it’s either that they form... so in the SAH world, it’s either that they become a constituent group of the SAH or they sign up as a co-sponsor with the SAH, or it can also be that the constituent group or the co-sponsor is not someone who is related to the refugee. It could be

that they're a church representative, and that's the name that's on the undertaking, and that's the key legal representative of the sponsorship group, but in practice, who actually does the settlement are the ethnocultural community members that are linked to that newcomer.

Maria's comment underscores two key dynamics of CGs and co-sponsorship arrangements: one led by sponsors who have a direct relationship with refugees and another where sponsorship is facilitated by individuals not directly connected to the refugees they sponsor. In the latter case, Maria explains that the actual settlement process is carried out by "ethnocultural community members" even if they are not the "legal representatives" of the group. This finding indicates that sponsors with personal links to the refugees they support, such as racialized diasporas, play major roles as CGs and co-sponsors whether they are officially named in the paperwork or not. The hard reality is that only those with some disposable income can be sponsors, which means that recently arrived former refugees may not be in a position to sponsor but urgently want to assist those left behind.

Official data are not available at present to identify co-sponsors who partner with SAHs across the country, but research with a range of sponsors shows that many people beyond the contracted organizations and groups help with translation, housing new arrivals, and helping newcomers find work (Hyndman et al., 2021; Hynie et al., 2019; Macklin et al., 2018). In 2019 a study was commissioned by the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association [SAH Association²⁶] to explore the ecosystem of kin-based sponsorship, which included CGs and co-sponsors (Krause, 2020). Maria's (Key Informant) observation about the role of 'kin' echoes Krause's (2020) finding that based on data from 23 SAHs, family members often are part of CGs and co-sponsorship arrangements. Likewise, Krause (2020) finds that SAHs do not

²⁶ See here for more information about the SAH Association: <https://sahassociation.com/>

maintain a systematic record of who they partner with to carry out family-linked sponsorship. Maria (Key Informant) reflected on Krause's (2020) study during our interview, she emphasized the following:

They're essentially the invisible sponsors in Canada because there is a lack of intentional tracking that SAHs have not previously done. And there is this dynamic where they're often not officially named in any of the official paperwork but do play a key role in the settlement space. And so, the research kind of unpacks those dynamics and basically outlines a preliminary finding that they think this particular demographic are a critical component of this, but really are the invisible sponsors in Canada.

Maria's notion of 'invisible sponsors' underscores the implications of 'doing the work' but 'not being named in the paperwork,' which is not to be taken lightly. I ask: whose labour is made visible in sponsorship? Who gets credited in the official paperwork and government databases? And what does this mean for the narratives that are told about who sponsors are and refugee sponsorship altogether?

Because CGs and co-sponsors fall under the rubric of SAHs, they do not hold formal agreements with the government. This means sponsorship that is undertaken through these arrangements, which include racialized 'kin,' are invisibilized *by* and *within* the formalized processes of the program – SAHs being the most formal and visible of the three PSR configurations. On the question of visibility, one participant noted:

I know we speak a lot about the SAH organizations, but what's really big is the co-sponsor. I mean, in fact, in terms of numbers, you have a significant number of co-sponsors who are involved across all SAHs. They are across all SAHs, that's really significant, which doesn't show. (Goitom, Key Informant)

Goitom raises concern over the breadth and scope of work that co-sponsors do, "which doesn't show" while SAH organizations are formalized, and their work amplified in comparison. The less formal co-sponsorship, which is kin-based, is relatively invisible because it is unrecorded, unseen for the most part, and receives scant attention. In

short, it is undocumented in governance though exists, if invisibly, in community practice. Conversely, “sponsors with no familial connection to the newcomer remain the most “known” sponsors, presenting primarily as well-educated, upper-middle class, retired women” (Krause, 2020, p. 1). I argue that this partiality is part of a larger erasure of ‘former refugees-turned sponsor,’ or racialized diaspora sponsors, from Canada’s national narrative about the PSR program.

There was a presentation done, you know about the global project, the [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative] GRSI... I did one presentation for outsiders; the participants were Europeans. It was an event... organized by the European League, so there is now more talk about family-linked cases, but, when we were talking about it even with the global partners, about refugee sponsorship, it was mainly presented in terms of ‘sponsor the stranger.’ But again, because we are also doing more from the perspective of responding to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] UNHCR referred cases [non-family-linked cases], I was more responding... it was happening mostly because UNHCR was part of that initiative. (Goitom, Key Informant)

In this passage, Goitom describes his participation in a global forum about Canada’s GRSI program, which is conflated with the PSR program. GRSI promotes BVOR refugees, those who are UNHCR-referred and normally never family-linked (Hyndman, 2022). He reflected that the broader discussion and GRSI specifically were framed around the ‘sponsor the stranger’ rather than ‘family-linked’ sponsorship, which can only happen through the naming of private sponsorship. When the co-sponsors are underrepresented in contexts such as these, the success of PSR is not attributed to the motivation, drive, and achievement of the PSR program compared to GRSI, which has performed very modestly. The PSR program is the engine of sponsorship in Canada and yet the fuel is largely under erasure, this work being done by racialized diaspora sponsors who may not ever get credit or be written down as an official sponsor.

Situated data points: Moving beyond simplified sponsorship classifications

Beyond the less formal CG and co-sponsorship arrangements, my research further explicates how racialized sponsors are invisible in government classifications. IRCC's national list of SAHs²⁷ (Government of Canada, 2022b), as discussed in Chapter Three, classifies these organizations based on provinces. Common in the sponsorship parlance is the categorization of SAHs as either 'faith-based' or 'ethnically' based. Building on my earlier tabulation method used to identify racialized SAHs by region (see Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 above), I used these categories to reanalyze the national SAH list and created another table (see Table 4.2 below). At the end of 2022, there were 137 SAHs throughout Canada excluding Quebec²⁸ (Government of Canada, 2022b). On November 21, 2022, I analyzed this list to identify SAHs that were registered with either faith/religious or ethno-specific identifiers. I used these identifiers to subcategorize SAHs as either 'faith-based' or 'racialized.' When these identifiers were not present as part of SAHs registered named, the SAH was subclassified as 'other.' As a verification method, I looked up each SAH on Google to read and confirm its mission and purpose where possible. This approach allowed me to confirm whether I had correctly placed SAHs in the respective subcategories that I developed.

Table 4.2 National list of SAHs classified by group type across eight provinces

Province	# Of SAHs	Faith-based SAHs	Racialized SAHs	Other SAHs
Alberta	30	10	17	3
British Columbia	19	8	5	6
Manitoba	11	8	2	1
New Brunswick	3	2	0	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	0	0	1

²⁷ See here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html>

²⁸ Quebec administers a distinct model of refugee resettlement. See Garnier (2018) and Hanley (2017) to better understand how refugee resettlement operates in Quebec.

Province	# Of SAHs	Faith-based SAHs	Racialized SAHs	Other SAHs
Nova Scotia	5	3	1	1
Ontario	60	37	14	9
Saskatchewan	8	5	2	1
Total	137	73	41	23

* Note: The table was prepared by the author on November 21, 2022, using the national list of SAHs²⁹ and presents an estimation. The author used faith/religious and ethno-specific identifiers from the SAHs registered name to determine classification as 'faith-based' or 'racialized.' When these identifiers were not present, the SAH was classified as 'other.' As a verification method, the author looked up each SAH on Google to confirm its mission and purpose where possible.

As presented in Table 4.2 above, I classified 73 (53%) of SAHs as faith-based, 41 (30%) as racialized, and 23 (17%) as 'other.' Faith-based SAHs are defined as those who primarily organize around a common faith/religion, while racialized SAHs are diaspora communities that come together based on shared ethnonational identities. The 'other' category is a list of SAHs who are either settlement, community, or humanitarian organizations. Employing Bakewell's (2008, 2021) interventions, these finer analytical categories are meant to account for some of the intricacies that are not readily apparent when looking at how IRCC classifies SAHs based on provinces.

My subcategorization of SAHs into the three groups (faith-based, racialized, and other) is imperfect and misses key nuances, but it is intended to show the hybridity of SAHs and that they defy any easy or simplified categorization. As one participant notes, "when people (including other researchers) refer to faith-based SAHs they tend to think they are referring to predominantly white Christian-based SAHs, but in reality, a number of the faith-based SAHs also (in addition to other types of SAHs) represent diaspora communities" (Grace, Key Informant). Grace's observation affirms the overlapping identities and affiliations of sponsorship groups, which make it impossible to neatly categorize sponsors into a single group. Applied to the context of racialized diaspora

²⁹ See here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html>

sponsors, the data show that sponsors are represented in all three categories of SAHs and not only the 41 which they administer outright (i.e., racialized SAHs). It also means they work with, through, and alongside faith-based and 'other' SAHs as CGs and co-sponsors. Racialized SAHs are also organizations that mobilize around faith, settlement, and/or ethnocultural initiatives in addition to their ethnonational/ethnocultural identities.

Querying ad hoc sponsorship: Group of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors (CS)

A G5 comprises five or more Canadian citizens/permanent residents who arrange to collectively sponsor refugees. Members of a G5 must be at least 18 years of age and are expected to reside in the same community where the sponsored refugee is expected to settle (Government of Canada, 2023c). The G5 program was designed for people who wanted to sponsor one or a few refugees in their lifetime. Since there is no ongoing formal agreement between a G5 and the Minister of IRCC, these groups must apply to sponsor refugees on a case-by-case basis by submitting a Sponsorship Undertaking. The federal government does not impose direct limits on the number of refugees that G5s can sponsor. Instead, it assesses applications to determine a group's resources and settlement capacity to undertake sponsorship (Government of Canada, 2023d). Ultimately, a G5's financial capital will determine how many refugees they can sponsor; their financial capacity is indexed to the number of refugees included in each application. When a G5 application is approved, group members agree to provide financial, emotional, and settlement assistance for the sponsorship period of one year.

There is no specified method for how G5s are formed; many are spontaneous initiatives in the absence of a SAH or other sponsorship configuration. These private groups can partner formally with an individual and/or an organization to sponsor refugees. Some G5s come together to sponsor refugees identified by a visa office

abroad, i.e., through the BVOR sponsorship category, as was the case for two participants in this research discussed in Chapter Five. As the RSTP (n.d.a) explains in their guidebook for G5 sponsors, “most of the time, [G5s] consist of individuals who are friends, family members and/or individuals with a common interest” (para. 1). An ‘individual’ could thus be a family member of a refugee who lives in Canada while a partner ‘organization’ could be an existing SAH or CS (as described below). G5 sponsors must find people in their community, from among family, friends, and colleagues to participate in group sponsorship. Although a G5 can include as many members as desired, “only five group members sign the required application forms” and others “can join the group to provide settlement support” (RSTP, n.d.b, para. 3). At least three of the five core group members must contribute financial resources during the sponsorship period approximately equal to the social assistance rate in their community, while the other two (or more) group members can provide moral and logistical support related to settlement responsibilities.

A CS is either an organization, association, or corporation that sets out to sponsor refugees (Government of Canada, 2023e) but does not have a formal agreement with the Minister of IRCC like G5s. Unlike SAHs, a CS is not required to be incorporated under provincial or federal law but must be recognized as a legal entity. The CS program was designed for community groups that want to sponsor once or twice, but do not require an ongoing agreement. Community groups who want to sponsor must submit a Sponsorship Undertaking form to the government to express their interest in sponsorship (Government of Canada, 2023f). Once a community group is approved to be a CS, like G5, they must apply to sponsor refugees on a case-by-case basis. The government does not impose limits on the number of applications that a CS can submit each year; however, community sponsoring groups must demonstrate

financial and settlement capacity for the applications they submit. Ultimately, a CS must have enough financial capital to fulfill sponsorship obligations and prove their ability to provide the necessary emotional/social support to the refugees they sponsor. A CS must also be based in the community where refugees are expected to settle and commit to supporting sponsored refugees generally for a 12-month period.

Sponsorship through community groups enables the involvement of a broad range of contributors from the private sector, which theoretically can include for-profit organizations. A CS can leverage members of its community to donate private funds, process sponsorship, and assist with the settlement of newcomers. Like G5, CSs can partner formally with relatives of the refugee who resides in Canada or with an organization to help with fundraising and carrying out the necessary settlement duties. These types of collaborations fall under the less formal co-sponsorship arrangement discussed above. RSTP (2014) explains in one of their handbooks for CS, “[a] community sponsorship can include multiple cosponsors as part of the sponsoring group, but the primary sponsoring organization is referred to as the Community Sponsor” (para. 8). When a CS partners with co-sponsors, they remain liable for sponsorships that are undertaken through those arrangements. A CS with a large volunteer base beyond its core community demonstrates its ability to facilitate successful sponsorships.

Unspecified data points

Unlike the national list of SAHs, there are no public data on the number of G5s or CS despite being centrally regulated by IRCC. Both these PSR streams were designed to provide an option for sponsors to come together on an occasional basis. G5s and CSs are effectively ad hoc sponsorship groups, which likely explains the absence of data and information about them in the public sphere. For example, G5s are a nebulous collection of sponsors because they are not part of ongoing sponsorship within a structured

organization like a SAH. Their unstructured formation has many implications for how G5 sponsorship is undertaken. While CS are officially recognized by the government as community-based groups and are less provisional than G5, but they do not have formal institutional structures as do SAHs. Compared to SAHs and G5s, even less is known and discussed when it comes CS, likely because the fewest number of sponsorships are processed through this PSR stream (Van Haren, 2021).

Since government data on G5s and CSs are not available, it is not possible to contextualize their demographic characteristics. A careful review of the grey literature about sponsorship revealed some insights on the number of refugees sponsored to Canada by G5 sponsors. As presented in Table 4.3 below, approximately 30% to 40% of all refugees resettled to Canada were supported by G5 between 2010 and 2013. In 2014, this number dropped to 17% followed by 9% in 2015. A downward trend continued until 2017 before the applications increased in 2018-2019 to approximately 25% and 27% respectively.

Table 4.3 Admissions of privately sponsored refugees to Canada by G5

Sponsorship year	All privately sponsored refugees	Group of five	% Of overall privately sponsored refugees
2010	4,820	2,005	42%
2011	5,600	2,085	37%
2012	4,375	1,300	30%
2013	6,460	1,825	28%
2014	4,590	770	17%
2015	9,340	885	9%
2016	18,360	1,690	9%
2017	16,700	2,155	13%
2018	18,570	4,675	25%
2019	19,145	5,285	27%

* Note: The table was prepared by the author on November 27, 2022, using data adapted from Van Haren's (2021, p. 6) report. Data were provided to Van Haren (2021) by IRCC.

Drawing on the same grey literature presented in above Table 4.3, Table 4.4 below illustrates how many refugees were admitted to the PSR program by the CS program from 2010 to 2019. There was a steady decline in admissions from about 2015 to 2017 before the trend picked up in 2018. This occurred around the same period that G5 admissions decreased.

Table 4.4 Admissions of privately sponsored refugees to Canada by CS

Sponsorship year	All privately sponsored refugees	Community sponsors	% Of overall privately sponsored refugees
2010	4,820	195	5%
2011	5,600	225	4%
2012	4,375	95	2%
2013	6,460	135	2%
2014	4,590	180	4%
2015	9,340	170	2%
2016	18,360	200	1%
2017	16,700	245	1%
2018	18,570	925	5%
2019	19,145	525	3%

* Note: The table was prepared by the author on November 27, 2022, using data adapted from Van Haren's (2021, p. 6) report. Data were provided to Van Haren (2021) by IRCC.

One obvious conclusion to be drawn from this data is that private sponsoring groups take on a sizable responsibility in the PSR program, despite the provisional structure of G5 sponsorships. In the words of one seasoned sponsor:

One of the things we know, because that's information the government gives us every so often, is that **over half of the applications that are in [the] process right now are G5 applications** [emphasis added]. We're not talking about sort of, you know, the little sibling of the SAH program here. You know, we're talking about kind of equal proportions, you know, between these streams. So, this is a significant demographic that's sponsoring. (Lola, Key Informant)

As Lola indicates, sponsorship by G5 is not a small undertaking of the PSR program.

The same cannot be said about the refugees submitted by CSs, which are comparatively

fewer. Participants in my research rarely discussed CS. What is less obvious, concerning both configurations of ad hoc sponsorship, are the reasons for the relative decline in admissions between 2014-2017. Next, I examine these explanations in the context of top-down, process changes implemented by the federal government that made sponsorship more restrictive across the three PSR streams, and their consequences for racialized sponsors and refugees.

The geopolitics of governance and exclusion: Refugees and sponsors

The significant reforms to the PSR program implemented by the former Minister of IRCC, Jason Kenney during then Prime Minister Stephen Harper's tenure, curtailed sponsorship by implementing administrative measures, such as procedural and regulatory changes, to limit access to sponsorship and its effects were racialized. Prior to 2010, the PSR program was managed and monitored at distance, but this changed when "the national framework for [SAHs] was formed" (Hyndman, 2022, p. 6) by Minister Kenny. Upon implementation of the framework, a national-level membership was established in 2010 for SAHs in Canada, which intended to bring the voices of SAHs into the folds of IRCC operation of the PSR program (SAH Association, 2023). This process involved the creation of a SAH Secretariat, which was later replaced in 2021 by the SAH Navigation Unit, formed to support the SAH Council, and it also included the establishment of the SAH association in 2011 (SAH Association, 2023). While these changes to the PSR program were seemingly benign as Hyndman (2022a) explains, her previous work illustrates how they provided a rubric for new forms of governance that were at once subtle, racialized, and exclusionary (Hyndman, 2019).

Starting in 2011, Minister Kenney introduced limits to the number of applications SAHs could submit to sponsor refugees they named or nominated from the Nairobi mission (Canadian Council for Refugees [CCR], 2013a). Until 2016, the application cap for SAHs was not applied equally across the globe, with Canadian visa posts/missions abroad serving sub-Saharan African refugees most likely to be capped (Hyndman, 2019). The ‘mission-specific caps’ meant that SAHs had to consider origin regions when selecting refugees to sponsor, and thereby, refugees did not have equal opportunities for resettlement compared to ‘non-capped’ Canadian visa posts for private sponsorship. Not only did caps place restrictions on access to refugee protection, but they also prevented sponsors from selecting those displaced “from more racialized countries, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Hyndman, 2019, p. 22). Hyndman’s (2022a) incisive analysis finds that the structural changes to PSR by way of ‘caps’ and ‘limits’ to SAH applications can be understood as proxy measures invented by the federal government to manage and monitor migration out of the public eye. Since December 2016, the caps were lifted, and SAHs can submit to any mission provided the overall ‘global cap’ is not exceeded.

In a similar move that has been coined ‘stealth governance’ (Hyndman, 2022a, 2022b; see also Ellermann, 2021), subtle changes in Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and government programming restricted sponsorship under the G5 and CS programs. On December 10, 2011, CIC published a *Notice of Intent* in the Canada Gazette, inviting comments on a proposed regulatory amendment that would impact the PSR program (Government of Canada, 2011). Following this proposal, on October 18, 2012, Minister Kenney moved to impose further limits to sponsorship eligibility through the regulation of G5 and CS applications (Government of Canada, 2012). Since G5s and CSs do not hold ongoing and multi-year agreements with the Minister of IRCC unlike

SAHs, as described in above, the federal government could not set caps to limit the number of applications referred and submitted through these PSR streams.

Instead of caps on resettlement, the federal government instituted a higher bar for refugee adjudication overseas for any PSR applicants, namely Refugee Status Determination (RSD)³⁰ as a requirement for G5 and CS programs. RSD is a scarce, expensive, and individualized process to assess eligibility as a Convention Refugee as outlined in the 1951 Convention (and 1967 Protocol); G5 nominees for sponsorship require this specific determination to access sponsorship. Sponsorship applications submitted by G5s and CSs are required to include documented proof from either the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or a foreign state officially recognizing applicants as refugees (Government of Canada, 2012).

Members of the refugee sponsorship community (CCR, 2013a; RSTP, 2018a; Van Haren, 2021) note that the rationale for these process changes – by way of caps on the number of PSRs SAHs can sponsor as well as the additional requirements and a higher bar for G5s and CSs – were driven by the federal government’s stated desire to address backlogs, particularly long wait times in some missions, and growing concerns about the quality of applications that were entering the system. The federal government stated that,

Citizenship and Immigration Canada anticipates a significant reduction in the number of G5 and CS applications submitted each year as a result of the regulatory change. It is expected that the majority of the reduction will occur in those applications that would be ineligible under IRPA and its Regulations. The extent of this reduction will depend on world events and the sponsorship community’s response to refugee situations. CIC anticipates that reduced volumes of ineligible cases will lead to improvements in operational efficiency and processing times, and a

³⁰ See here for more specific details about the RSD requirement: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/refugee-status-determination>

reduction in the PSR application backlog. (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 22)

The government's own words unmistakably reveal an intent to decrease the number of applications submitted to G5 and CS programs. Furthermore, the RSD requirement was also intended to limit access to sponsorship through the prioritization of those deemed to be 'most in need'; as CIC noted, "limiting access to the G5 and CS refugee sponsorship streams is intended to resettle refugees who are most in need of Canada's protection" (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 9). Except for a few pauses in response to select 'refugee situations,' the restrictive RSD regulatory measure remains in place today.

'Who gets in' shapes 'who gets to sponsor'

Some refugees in need of protection were bound to be precluded from resettlement to Canada simply because there are so few resettlement spots overall, but in relation to the PSR and the higher RSD governance requirement for CS and G5 groups, the intended reduction was even greater. This patchwork approach is exacerbated by the reality that access to RSD documents depends on where refugees reside. For example, Van Haren (2021) explains how one of his research participants, a sponsor who "who regularly sponsored Eritrean refugees through the Group of Five program... could not sponsor Eritreans residing in Israel because they could not obtain proof of refugee status from the Israeli government or UNHCR" (p. 6). According to CCR (2012), some of the most vulnerable and marginalized refugees are unable to access RSD. Their earliest assertions were that "in some regions/countries, refugees cannot ordinarily receive recognition as refugees, for a range of political, logistical and security reasons" and how "this does not mean that the refugees are not in need of protection and a durable solution" (CCR, 2012, p. 2). In 2013, CCR (2013b) adopted a resolution arguing that,

the requirement of host country or UNHCR recognition as refugees in order to be considered as eligible for sponsorship by a Group of 5 or by a Community Sponsor is a de facto limit on the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program that discriminates against refugees who do not have timely or any access to status determination.

CCR continues to oppose the RSD requirement and has remained in discussion with the federal government about concerns over its discrimination and potential solutions (CCR, 2021).

I argue that the RSD requirement adds an additional, restrictive and costly layer of eligibility determination that discriminates against refugees who are sponsored in G5 sponsorship formations. In 2021, CCR reported that “Africa [was] the region with the largest number of private sponsorship applications to be processed (over 25,000 applications)” (CCR, 2021, p. 3). Although CCR’s report does not disaggregate the number of sponsorship applications by region, it notes that 51% of the total applications on the continent (70,000) were G5 sponsorship groups (CCR, 2021). According to more recent figures, “in November 2022, Group of Five and Community Sponsorships represented 60% of the total private sponsorship inventory – 40,500 people out of 67,500 total inventory” (CCR, 2023d, para. 2).

It follows then that applicants from the sub-Saharan African region constituted a sizeable portion of the G5 applications (IRCC, 2019d). This observation is in line with the 2019 PSR Annual Data Summary, which reports that 5,332 of the 9,465 G5 applications received by IRCC were from the African region, followed by 2,745 from the Middle East, 784 from Asia, 599 from Europe-Maghreb, and 5 from the Americas (IRCC, 2019d). Although the number of applications from specific regions shift from year to year, racialized diasporas in Canada with family or ‘ethnonational kin’ connections to particular regions and refugee groups routinely organize G5s to undertake sponsorship.

Family links from Canada to refugee camps and settlements are central to how refugee sponsorship is undertaken (Hyndman et al. 2021; Krause, 2020; Macklin et al., 2018; Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023) of which racialized diasporas are largely invisible. Yet, I contend based on my research findings, that they are the primary drivers of the G5 sponsorship program. For example, Lola (Key Informant), who has more than 10 years of experience in refugee resettlement, said “I assume that the vast majority, again there’s no statistics, not that I’m aware of, but I assume the vast majority are racialized diasporas that are sponsoring G5.” Ermias (Sponsor), who has organized many G5 sponsorships, similarly stated “and if we think about it, many of the ‘quote on quote,’ family-linked sponsorships are groups of five and community sponsors.” Here Ermias uses the term ‘family-linked sponsorships’ synonymously with ‘racialized diasporas’ from refugee backgrounds.

Taken more broadly, Goitom (racialized Key Informant) who has more than 16 years of experience in sponsorship, pointed to the PSR annual data summary illustrated in Figure 4.3 below (IRCC, 2019d). He said,

but what I want to show, if you really look, this is interesting in terms of the 10 source countries it shows you from where we are bringing refugees from, and to some extent it implies also how engaged are those communities in sponsorship. Look at this one and compare it to SAH list, you can see parallels “like why we have this number, let’s say, the Ethiopian, the Eritrean, the Afghans because we have Afghan SAHs, we have Ethiopian SAHs that were active, and Eritrean SAHs. That’s really kind of the pattern... it’s important.

Goitom explained that the top 10 source countries for PSRs to Canada from 2017 to 2019, consistently included Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan in the top five. By his observation this pattern of refugee admission by country “parallels” the work that is being done on the ground by these very same ethnonational SAHs to mobilize sponsorship. The suggestion here is that the high numbers of refugees resettled to Canada from

certain regions links directly to the work being done by diaspora communities in Canada to facilitate their protection. In their own ways, Lola, Ermias, and Goitom's statements further the argument that racialized diasporas are key drivers of the PSR program (Hyndman et al., 2021) more broadly and within the G5 program more specifically. Adding the RSD requirement is thus a governance mechanism, technically a regulation, that quietly produces inequity among sponsors who wish to select refugees for G5 support, and the PSR program as a whole without changes to the law or policy. Hyndman (2022a, 2022b) has theorized these changes as a form of stealth governance.

Top 10 Source Countries for Privately Sponsored Refugees 2017			Top 10 Source Countries for Privately Sponsored Refugees 2018			Top 10 Source Countries for Privately Sponsored Refugees 2019		
Rank	Country of Citizenship	Admissions	Rank	Country of Citizenship	Admissions	Rank	Country of Citizenship	Admissions
1	Syria	6,613	1	Syria	7,003	1	Eritrea	4,889
2	Eritrea	3,278	2	Eritrea	3,783	2	Syria	4,822
3	Iraq	2,628	3	Iraq	3,057	3	Iraq	2,512
4	Afghanistan	1,713	4	Afghanistan	1,753	4	Afghanistan	2,250
5	Ethiopia	681	5	Ethiopia	842	5	Ethiopia	1,139
6	Somali Republic	640	6	Somali Republic	715	6	Somali Republic	1,010
7	Stateless	232	7	Pakistan	267	7	Pakistan	879
8	Pakistan	202	8	Stateless	204	8	Congo, Democratic Republic of	317
9	Congo, Democratic Republic of	179	9	Congo, Democratic Republic of	176	9	Stateless	204
10	Burundi	106	10	Burundi	133	10	Burundi	197
Total Top 10		16,272	Total Top 10		17,933	Total Top 10		18,219
Other Countries		451	Other Countries		637	Other Countries		931
Total Admissions		16,723	Total Admissions		18,570	Total Admissions		19,150

Figure 4.3 Top 10 PSR source countries, 2017 – 2019

Credit: IRCC's Annual Dashboard for 2019

Apart from being unavailable to many refugees living in protracted exile, the imposition of RSD is also discriminatory because it is a more onerous process and a higher bar than *prima facie* recognition of refugee status whereby members of a particular group are recognized as refugees rather than individual-based refugee determination (Durieux, 2008). At various times, the Canadian state has reduced the

burden of proof by waiving the RSD requirement for select refugee groups. For example, from 2015-2017, the RSD requirement was temporarily waived for Syrian and Iraqi refugees but has since been reinstated (Government of Canada, n.d.d; Van Haren, 2021). More recently, IRCC instituted a special program for Afghan refugees: “starting October 17, 2022, groups of five and community sponsors in Canada were able to sponsor Afghan refugees without having to submit a refugee status determination (RSD) document” (Government of Canada, n.d.e). However, many Syrians and Iraqis, among other refugee groups, remain unable to obtain an RSD (CCR, 2016b; Van Haren, 2021).

Temporal governance

Effectively, the shift from ‘group’ to ‘individual’ status determination is a form of ‘temporal governance’ that shapes ‘who gets in’ and creates discrimination between members *within* an ethnonational refugee group, and also *between* ethnonational refugee groups. Within a given group, refugees who miss the opportunity to apply for sponsorship when RSD is waived for their specific ethnonational group will have to make subsequent attempts to secure their safety through other protection measures. This was the case when the ‘special program to sponsor Afghans refugees without refugee status’³¹ was quietly shuttered, promoting public outcry from members of the Afghan diaspora in Canada (Garcha, 2022; PEN Canada, 2021). IRCC restricts RSD waivers either to a certain time period or to application limits, whichever one comes first (Government of Canada, n.d.d, n.d.e).

When analyzing the implications of the waivers between refugee groups, it becomes evident that initiatives aimed at facilitating sponsorship by G5 and CS do not equally prioritize all nationalities. While it is understandable that critical world events

³¹ See here for more details about this program: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/special-measures/sponsor-without-rsd.html>

necessitate individualized responses, what about the plight of refugee groups who suffer from the ‘slow violence’ (Nixon, 2011) or ‘slow harm’ (de Leeuw, 2016; Hodzic, 2016; Hyndman, 2019) brought about from protracted *waiting*? Next I begin to explore these questions.

Protracted and nested waiting

Expanding on Hyndman’s (2019) feminist geopolitical analysis of “extended waiting” (p. 7) and the power relations that coalesce to shape these realities for African SAH sponsorship applicants, I extend this concept into the context of African G5 applicants. CCR has routinely attested that “refugees, notably those from Africa, have waited four or five years before they are finally able to travel to Canada” while “some Syrian refugees arrived after only a month” (CCR, 2016b, p. 2). This incisive observation references the long processing delays that have plagued the PSR program overall but also unevenly impacts refugees based on their nationalities. Recently CCR (2021) reported that,

developments in East Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan) are of concern. This question came up at the recent SAH Conference: IRCC said that despite recent events, these populations are not being prioritized. Is more advocacy needed? (Note CCR has been advocating for more attention to situations in Africa, which seem to be neglected. IRCC has an Anti-Racism Task Force that could investigate whether or not cases in Africa are processed as quickly as in other regions.)

Here CCR raises the question of neglect to foreground the lack of individualized responses to critical developments that would prioritize refugees from African regions. Instead, when IRCC agrees to waive RSD requirements it results in further delays of applications from other nationalities:

More recently, when CCR asked IRCC to waive the RSD requirement for Afghans, IRCC agreed that the requirement is a barrier, but said that if it is waived there will be many more applications and that will impact other nationalities. (CCR, 2021, p. 2).

Africa being the region with the largest number of PSR applications implies that refugees with African nationalities in the G5 sponsorship program suffer unintended consequences of the expedited refugee protection initiatives devoted to non-African refugee groups. To this end, not only are refugees from sub-Saharan Africa made to endure long processing times, but they are also not prioritized for 'special' initiatives while suffering what I refer to as 'nested waiting,' a reference to the compounding or layered effects, when resources are diverted to facilitate the expeditious resettlement and protection of fellow exiles. In these ways, I contend that RSD is temporal governance across time and space as it underscores the uneven and discriminatory management and regulation of refugee protection that span different temporal scales and geographical locations, while furthering protracted and nested waiting.

The individual focus of the regulatory change by way of an RSD requirement is also a cause for concern because it interferes with the government's own commitment to keeping refugee sponsorship diverse. Treviranus and Casasola (2003) assert that such diversity is inherent to the PSR program and the international objective to diversify resettlement. They state that "by not being limited to any particular country, private sponsorship is a potential route for any refugees in need of protection and a durable solution regardless of their country of asylum" (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 180). The slow, visceral, and harmful violence that a lack of equitable caretaking in refugee sponsorship perpetuates for transnational and most racialized communities affected by protracted waiting and neglect is a cause for concern.

The combined effects of the procedural changes and regulatory amendments shape 'who gets in' and thereby, 'who gets to sponsor.' Specific caps on and regulations of named sponsorships have had negative implications for racialized sponsors who have solidaristic interests in naming refugees from specific geographical regions or conflict-

affected groups. Based on the data above, it appears that refugees from African regions are discriminated against, even though there are sponsors who wish to support them. Many of these sponsors themselves are racialized, former refugees. To this end, former Minister Kenney's closure and reduction of G5s (by stipulating RSD and prohibiting naming) curtailed racialized diaspora sponsors and sponsorship.

Discussion and conclusion: Rendering racialized diasporas visible and included

In this chapter I contend that refugee sponsorship is largely framed around formal government categories and classifications – which in turn become labels, alongside the issues and concerns that accompany them. The government designates formal sponsorship configurations (i.e., SAH, G5, and CS) as part of its official framework for the PSR program. These categories are broad, and they institutionalize the knowledges and practices of sponsorship but do not account for sponsorship in less formal spaces (i.e., CGs and co-sponsors). The findings highlight that sponsorship is more fluid in practice.

Sponsorship configurations and arrangements raise important questions about which sponsors are visible and which have been rendered invisible. From a bureaucratic perspective, the categorization of sponsorship into different 'regulatory scripts' distinguishes between different levels of commitment, including financial and personal. While useful for simplifying details about sponsors and their relations to refugees, formal government classifications render invisible the important nuances, actors, and their unique characteristics in the context of sponsorship. Specifically, co-sponsors who collaborate with formal SAH organizations are not recognized in research or in the public

record and media (at least not often). The different kinds of sponsorship thus have implications for who sponsors are understood to be and how they practice sponsorship.

Canada's national framework for the PSR program identifies sponsors and the organizations of which they are part as constituents, private citizens, and community groups who resettle refugees from abroad. Sponsors are also individuals who partner with a SAH, a G5, or a CSs to co-sponsor known refugees. Partnerships between sponsors with formal agreements and sponsors who have operated from the 'invisible' spaces of sponsorship translates into the mobilization of diverse communities and the welcoming of thousands of Canadians. The invisible work of co-sponsors – the community leaders, family, kin, and same language speakers – involves significant contributions without being named or seen. Their invisible status is stunning given that data analyzed in this chapter from experienced key informants state they contribute up 90% to 95% of private sponsorship today. Racialized diaspora sponsors are doing the heavy lifting in sponsorship circles, but their work is largely invisible. They are largely absent from the sponsorship record – in governance and in practice.

My analysis of how racialized diasporas shape refugee sponsorship within and beyond existing regulatory scripts brings to light their hidden contributions. Prevailing government categories and classifications of sponsorship are not analytically useful and do not have explanatory power. By asserting 'racialized diaspora sponsors' as an analytical category that overlays existing categories, the invisibilized role of racialized diasporas – who are accounted by participants as significant contributors, is better understood. A strict focus on existing classifications schemes largely obscure nuances that challenge prevailing assumptions about who sponsors are and how they participate in refugee sponsorship.

The seemingly banal regulatory scripts not only influence the perception of who sponsors are, but it constrains and excludes specific types of sponsorship. Specifically, this chapter illustrates the impact of recent governmental changes, such as the heightened regulatory requirements for G5 sponsors, which disproportionately affect sponsorship based on specific relationships that are at once racialized, kin, and family based. Consequently, regulatory scripts prove to be more than innocuous guidelines, as they delineate who can access sponsorship and who cannot, resulting in direct repercussions for the most racialized sponsor groups, communities, and would-be resettled refugees, as demonstrated in this chapter's findings.

As noted in the introduction, the government retains the power to decide how sponsorship is organized. However, private sponsorship in Canada is a much more nuanced and inclusive enterprise when viewed through the full diversity of sponsorship configurations and arrangements that offer support to newcomers. How racialized diaspora sponsors uniquely approach refugee sponsorship beyond and within prevailing categories represents a key contribution to the literature and a focus of this chapter. Equity, inclusion, and understanding are improved when refugee sponsorship is analyzed through lenses that account for the multifarious practices of different sponsor groups.

Chapter 5. Naming as a lifeline for equitable geographic refugee ‘protection’

Introduction

If the government cannot sponsor them, then private sponsorship gives us the opportunity, with all its problems with all its challenges, it still has given us the possibility [to protect African refugees] of which other countries are not offering. – Semere (Sponsor)

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program has weathered intense debates about who should select refugees and what criteria should guide the selection process. ‘Naming’ is the mechanism that gives Canadian citizens and permanent residents an opportunity to sponsor and support specific refugees in need of protection. This practice allows the sponsorship community to have some influence over selection criteria (Lehr & Dyck, 2020). However, every individual named for resettlement must first meet Canada’s refugee definition outlined in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA, 2001). The act of naming a refugee who meets the definition does not guarantee resettlement. Naming merely initiates a nomination process in which the government has the final say over who is granted protection spaces. Since sponsors have a say in whom they name, they can prioritize refugees most in need based on their specific circumstances. The selection criteria vary among the sponsoring groups but are often based on shared membership in a specified affinity group (e.g., ethnonationality and/or faith) or based on distinct government categories. Naming thus sits at the nexus of a ‘public-private partnership’ (Hyndman, 2022a) between governments who oversee allocations/admissibility and private citizens who affect identification/nomination of refugees. Despite the long-standing and shared responsibility for how refugees are selected, naming is a contested practice.

A growing body of literature explores the intricacies of naming/refugee selection in historical (Cameron, 2020), legal (Labman, 2019), ethical (Lenard, 2020), comparative (Lehr & Dyck, 2020), and political (Bradley & Duin, 2020) contexts. Serious contestations are raised in the literature and in practice about the implications of naming for refugee protection. Concern over whether the naming provision erodes the government's humanitarian intent for the PSR program emerges as one salient issue, while questions about the inclusion of safeguards to ensure the integrity of selection processes quietly fans the debates. For example, when examining resettlement trade-offs and challenges, migration experts Beirens and Fratzke (2017) propose that governments must strike a balance between prioritizing humanitarian goals "while maintaining the integrity of the resettlement system" (p. 20). These are but two interlocking considerations that underscore the question of 'who to resettle,' and the implications of this for competing motivations based on the government's strategic resettlement objectives and the specific actors involved in its implementation. In this chapter I argue that naming is a viable and necessary means of offering protection to refugees with community, even family ties to refugee diaspora members now living in Canada.

Few analyses of resettlement are accountable to the politics of refugee protection at scales beyond the nation-state (see Hyndman et al., 2021 and Morris et al., 2020 as exceptions). This chapter centres the voices of racialized sponsors to fill this gap and advance conversations about naming and refugee selection. Instead of a focus on the state's priorities, my findings emphasize the lived experience and subjectivities of people who are part of civil society, specifically Canadian residents and citizens once displaced. My case for decentring the normative and dominant epistemologies of refugee selection stems from the recognition that refugee protection has racial implications. As a feminist politics of security suggests (Hyndman, 2004; Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Koopman, 2011;

Massaro & Williams, 2013), scaling understandings of protection to persons and communities affected by displacement is a productive avenue for making visible refugees' own sense of safety and security (Giddens, 1991). I build upon this existing body of work by explicitly examining the intersections of racialization and geography as significant markers of inequalities and asymmetries in terms of refugee protection. By focusing on the interplay between racialization and geographical factors, my research aims to shed light on how these intersecting dynamics shape experiences of (in)security and access to protection. Centring the embodied experience as the primary scale of analysis is also a way of claiming back protection discourses from state-centric perspectives.

Chapter roadmap

Below I begin by analyzing debates on naming as they concern refugee selection. Central to the discussion are two questions: 1) what criteria apply to the refugee selection process? And 2) who names or nominates refugees for resettlement? Applicants for sponsorship must meet the Canadian Government's refugee definition, but with millions of refugees in the world, who should be prioritized for resettlement? There are far more people to be sponsored than sponsorship is available. Sponsors put their own money and time into supporting refugee newcomers through this pathway. For more than four decades they have had a say in who they nominate and resettle.

My review of the literature highlights the contestations and briefly notes the opportunities naming offers. Concerns about whether naming and its role in family-linked refugee sponsorship affirms the PSR programs commitment to humanitarian protection is a salient issue. Following my analysis, I apply and expand upon feminist politics of security (Hyndman, 2004; Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Koopman, 2011; Massaro &

Williams, 2013) to recentre the locus of naming to more granular, empirical scales. Specifically, the selection priorities (who), motivations (why), and strategies (how) that shape refugee selection among racialized sponsors are examined. When naming is analyzed at the scale of persons and diaspora communities with lived experiences of displacement, new insights are revealed as I illustrate in this chapter.

The final section concludes with a discussion of these insights as they relate to naming and its racialized implications. Refugee selection is problematized in relation to the racialized and geographic underbelly of governance practices. Naming arises as a distinct but concrete option for equitable geographic protection that is at once community authorized and a lifeline out of protracted refugee situations.

Naming as a contested practice

Refugee selection has long been a contested practice in Canada's resettlement initiatives to support displaced people. Cameron's (2020) historical analysis of Canada's PSR program reveals that immigration officials and sponsor groups have disagreed on questions related to selection, a tension that is traced from the genesis of faith-based refugee sponsorship in 1947 to the development of the 1976 *Immigration Act*. Officials held early reservations about the PSR program over concerns that it afforded sponsors and *not* the state autonomy over who to sponsor, and thereby influence the criteria for immigration to Canada (Cameron, 2020). With the post-World War II economic boom, the government focused on leveraging immigration as a source of labour (Cameron, 2020; Green & Green, 2004; Thobani, 2007) and intended to advance Canada's colonial nation-building project (Thobani, 2000). Conversely, sponsors wanted to extend humanitarian protection to people in need (Cameron, 2020). The mobilization of religious groups was instrumental in ensuring that refugee policies allowed civil society to have a

role in selecting refugees to resettle, whether or not their motives aligned with the government's stated objectives (Cameron, 2020). Even though sponsors were granted the legal possibility to nominate refugees for resettlement pursuant to the 1976 *Immigration Act* (Lehr & Dyck, 2020), selecting refugees for private sponsorship remains a contested practice.

Refugee selection debates in contemporary immigration discourses are diverse but also fraught. Central to the debates on refugee sponsorship is the principle of naming, which is a mechanism that allows private citizens and permanent residents to participate directly in refugee selection. Named sponsorship, sometimes called sponsor-referred (Lehr & Dyck, 2020), is largely characteristic of how refugees in the PSR pathway are selected and resettled at present with some estimates placing it as high as 95% (Krause, 2020). Meanwhile, the resettlement of visa office-referred, or unnamed refugees who are supported by sponsors who are 'strangers' have their files sent to Canada by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The visa office-referred/unnamed sponsorships have comparatively dwindled over the lifespan of the PSR program (Krause, 2020; Lanphier, 2003; Treviranus & Casasola, 2003), but it is the main source of sponsorship through the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) program.

The increase in named sponsorship relative to unnamed sponsorship has routinely drawn concern from policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and/or advocates as examined below (Cameron, 2020; Lehr & Dyck, 2020; Lennard, 2020). Yet when extended refugee families are separated during resettlement there is empirical evidence that formerly resettled refugees who are family members in Canada wish to reunite with those left behind, and sponsors are regularly approached to assist (Hyndman et al., 2021; Labman & Hyndman, 2019; Macklin et al. 2018). In what follows, I analyze the

fiercely debated dilemmas that intersect with naming, specifically the question of whether family-linked refugee sponsorship coincides with the humanitarian intent of the PSR program.

The politics of prioritizing ‘vulnerabilities’

Scholars have expressed concern over the extent to which naming ensures protection of the ‘most vulnerable’ refugees. Defining who is the ‘most vulnerable’ is a somewhat impossible task with more than 29 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2023), but UNHCR has specific criteria which Canada adopts for its GAR selection. For Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), critics have argued that naming tilts access to protection away from those who are most vulnerable and towards refugees with connections to Canada (Lenard, 2020), and thereby undermines the Canadian state’s commitment to prioritize the resettlement of refugees with heightened vulnerabilities (Lehr & Dyck, 2020). Inherent to this line of criticism is the notion that named refugees are not equally in need of protection relative to unnamed refugees, raising important questions about what constitutes ‘vulnerability’ and ‘who gets to decide’ in the context of refugee resettlement.

Echoing Lennard’s (2020) normative considerations about sponsors role in refugee selection, Vogl et al. (2020) assert: “a program that allows named refugees is more likely to become a de facto family reunion program and is unlikely to prioritize vulnerable entrants” (p. 278). However, they also acknowledge that “the ability to name refugees may also allow for sponsorship of vulnerable refugees who may not have access to resettlement, such as Rohingya currently in Bangladesh” (p. 278). The question of vulnerability is one that is inherently political as it involves competing interests, perspectives, and interpretations across scales.

As Bradley and Duin (2020) explain at a more global matter, “UNHCR urges the prioritization for resettlement of refugees with legal and [/or] physical protection needs” (p. 80), but also includes more specifically: survivors of violence and/or torture, medical needs, women and girls at risk, family reunification, children and adolescents at risk, and lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions (UNHCR, n.d.c; UNHCR, n.d.d). UNHCR’s (n.d.f) guidance on who is at heightened risk generally includes:

girls and boys, including unaccompanied and separated children; persons with serious health conditions; persons with special legal or physical protection needs; single women; women-headed households; older persons; persons with disabilities; and persons of diverse sex, sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTI individuals).

Variations of family separation are not always listed as priorities, but they are in the Agenda for Protection (UNHCR, 2003) and other governing documents.

In the Canadian context, the federal government has administered the GAR program to resettle refugees selected for their protection needs since IRPA (2001) and in alignment with UNHCR’s Agenda for Protection (Lehr & Dyck, 2020). As Lehr and Dyck (2020) assert:

GARs since IRPA have been selected for their protection needs and tend, on average, to be more vulnerable than PSRs named by family members or friends, for whom ability to establish may be a criterion applied by those doing the naming. (p. 53)

Likewise, Canada’s Blended Visa Office-Referred [BVOR] program is understood as another resettlement initiative that promotes UNHCR’s priorities to protect vulnerable refugees (Bradley & Duin, 2020). While the BVOR program effectively responds to some of the naming contestations, McNally’s (2020) work draws attention to the sustainability of the model. Contrarily, this selection mode and subsequent separation generate new demand for the PSR program. In my empirical findings below, I examine whether the key

protection considerations embedded in these programmatic frameworks reflect ground realities of sponsorship among racialized diasporas.

Distributing protection spaces: Equitable? Fair?

Embedded in debates about naming are concerns about equity and fairness.

Lehr and Dyck (2020) assert that,

resettlement through named sponsorship is available only to those with connections to Canada where sponsors or family members have the necessary funds. As a result, the economic capacity of sponsors/family members becomes the primary selection factor rather than factors pertaining to the refugees themselves. (p. 52)

Their viewpoint about resettlement by named sponsorship only being available to refugees with connections to sponsors who have the necessary financial means, suggests that economic privilege or networks with friends and family in Canada determines which refugees are protected. However, this perspective does not consider the socioeconomic status and livelihood of sponsors who themselves resettled to Canada as refugees and often take on sponsorship roles – for family members or not – out of obligation to help those still living in precarious situations as refugees. Unlike sponsors with economic, social, and other privilege (Macklin et al., 2018), racialized sponsors who have entered Canada as newcomers must confront a new labour market in which they may not have fluency in English or French, and experience deskilling and downward mobility (Ritchie, 2018; Yousuf & Berry, 2021). As one participant shared:

Most of the [sponsorship] groups I organize are non-racialized people. I mean, at least not Habesha people, right. And part of it is because [Habesha people] work long hours. It's using the privilege [of non-racialized people], right? Using their status and making the application process easier. And so, using them, they're working, they have a good income, so I don't have to worry and explain how the funds were gathered and whatnot. We can just show their income, their proof of income, their notice of assessment, and the application would easily get accepted... And so, I could get four Eritrean, low-income people and mobilize them, and they are

doing it, they are doing it in their own way. Like many people, I know, like there's no one I know who is not part of some kind of sponsorship. And so, part of it is because the community is exhausted and is already doing sponsorship, and the other part of it is using the privilege of the people with higher income and good job and just the application gets through with no headaches, no back and forth, no returning application. So, yeah, so most of my groups are, um, I say non-racialized. But in the groups, there are people with minority experiences, right? Yeah, but at least not people with refugee experience. (Ermias, Sponsor)

Ermias's quote points to the differences between sponsors with refugee histories and those without. He notes that income, time, and capacity are unequal between the groups. In recognition of these differences, Ermias strategically mobilizes members of more privileged groups to undertake sponsorship because their higher socioeconomic status enables successful applications. The rising inequality perpetuated by neoliberalism "renders economic survival impossible without labour market participation" (Elcioglu & Shams, 2023, p. 6), and I contend that the implications of one's income on financing sponsorship should not be overlooked (see also Elcioglu, 2021 for an understanding of refugee sponsorship through a neoliberal lens).

Matters of fairness around refugee selection are also foregrounded by Lenard (2020) who questions whether it is ethical for some refugees to have greater access to resettlement spots given that they are a highly scarce resource. Only a tiny fraction of refugees globally benefit from resettlement as a durable 'solution' to displacement as described in Chapter Two, concerning how securitization discourses and measures have lead to resettlement decline and out stress on the system and people waiting. Since resettlement targets and quotas distributed to the different PSR streams are not within the sponsors' purview, concerns about the scarcity of refugee protection are better directed to governments with jurisdictional authority over intake target numbers. Moreover, scholars have insightfully critiqued the so-called durable 'solutions' for refugee protection, finding they are deeply inadequate in meeting the needs of most

refugees and fail to address the drivers and trends of forced displacement (Crawley, 2017; Hyndman, 2019; Zamore, 2018). Hyndman and Giles (2017) argue that resettlement is not simply a solution, but a strategy selected by refugees to afford themselves protection. To this end, naming is a gateway to self-authorized refugee protection when government-led solutions limit and negate the possibilities for resettlement.

Family-linked sponsorship: Clarifying lexicon and noting trends

Canadians and permanent residents have used the naming principle to sponsor family members of resettled refugees for more than four decades. A persistent viewpoint (Krause, 2020; Lehr & Dyck, 2020; Treviranus & Casasola, 2003) is that the PSR program has evolved into an ad hoc mechanism for ‘family reunification.’ The term family reunification is a misnomer in the context of refugee resettlement since all applicants for sponsorship must meet Canada’s refugee definition first and foremost. This selection process is unlike the family class immigration stream in Canada where any immigrant or citizen with sufficient means can sponsor a dependent, partner, or parents (Government of Canada, n.d.f). Meeting the refugee definition narrows the pool of possible refugees-to-sponsor dramatically. Refugee status is an admissibility criterion for the PSR program, but not for the family class (Macklin et al., 2020). On this basis, the misnomer family reunification should be avoided in the resettlement context as it conflates the two programs and obscures the key humanitarian principle that determines who can get refugee protection in Canada.

Denton (2003a) uses the term “family-linked sponsorship” to underscore how local sponsors affect the PSR program by extending refugee protection to named relatives/friends who are refugees abroad (p. 258). The term family-linked sponsorship is

a clearer way to conceptualize this relational dynamic in naming, but it too excludes certain people at risk known to former refugees now living in Canada. For example, Hyndman et al. (2021) define sponsorship as a “community practice” (p. 4) that is sustained by the collective efforts of local sponsors and transnational networks, of which former refugees are included through their commitments and requests for subsequent sponsorship. Likewise, key informants and sponsors in my research emphasized the community dynamics of sponsorship. As Maria (Key Informant) put it:

I think the umbrella is [that] this is community sponsorship, and it’s about the dynamic of how do we bring community together to do this? It’s not just about the blood relation or the relational ties, it’s just about mobilizing diverse communities.

The notion of “mobilizing diverse communities” was also central to Ermias’s (Sponsor) approach to sponsorship. He noted that “the Jewish community in Toronto was highly interested in sponsoring refugees from Israel, so [he] was able to mobilize many groups to sponsor refugees.” Ermias is a former refugee of Eritrean background but that did not stop him from working with less racialized and privileged communities to identify, sponsor, and support known and unknown refugees who continue to live in precarious conditions. While the notion of family-linked sponsorship captures one relational dynamic of sponsorship, approaches that are organized around community mobilization is yet another salient mode for how naming is operationalized.

Family-linked sponsorship since 1990

Since the PSR program began, efforts have been made to assess the prevalence of family-linked sponsorships (Denton, 2003a; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2016a; Krause, 2020; Wiebe & Bissett, 1995, as cited in Lehr & Dyck, 2020), but a nationwide study of the different kinds/formations of sponsorship has yet to be undertaken. Labman and Pearlman (2018) note that in the 1990s earlier tensions

(Cameron, 2020) resurfaced over the federal government's concern that naming was shifting the PSR program away from humanitarian protection and into a tool for family-linked sponsorship, without noting that the two are not mutually exclusive. A 1995 Government of Canada report examined the process of matching refugees to sponsors and determined that 90% of all PSRs were named (Wiebe & Bissett, 1995, as cited in Lehr & Dyck, 2020). The report emphasized that separated family members in Canada were the primary impetus for initiating named sponsorships, a finding confirmed in a more recent study of sponsorship (Hyndman et al., 2021). Furthermore, the 1995 report concluded that the naming practice should remain in place to ensure sponsors' sustained participation. Not all named sponsorships are associated with family-links.

By 2003, Denton (2003a) estimated that 95% of all refugees resettled through the PSR program were named based on personal relations with family or close friends in Canada. An IRCC evaluation of resettlement programs in 2016 reported that 66% of PSRs surveyed were sponsored by family members (IRCC, 2016a). A more recent 2019 study found that around 95% of PSRs reflect this dynamic, based on data from 11 Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) (Krause, 2020). Even though these estimates are inconclusive, they suggest that the relational ties between sponsors and refugees awaiting sponsorship factors into who gets prioritized for resettlement in long-standing practice. G5 configurations and other sponsorship formations typically involve a mix of sponsors from diaspora and non-diaspora backgrounds who work together to support relational sponsorship.

'Kin' vs 'stranger': Challenging the bifurcated portrait of sponsors

This research questions the binary of sponsorship as being either 'stranger' driven or 'family' based. The categorization of sponsorship as either 'stranger' or 'family'-linked is common in sponsorship parlance. In an overly simplified binary, Krause's

(2020) research identifies two sponsor profiles: 'Type A' are strangers to refugees, and they sponsor both family-linked and non-family-linked cases; 'Type B' are related to refugees, and they primarily sponsor family-linked cases. The family-linked case demonstrates the relational ties between the refugee and the sponsor. Refugees and sponsors in non-family-linked cases are unrelated or 'strangers.' The typification of refugees as 'strangers' dates to the first large-scale refugee resettlement in the late 1970s when sponsorship was primarily undertaken to support refugees not known to sponsors (Molloy et al., 2017). Christian origins and biblical teachings on welcoming strangers form some of the theological foundations and ethos that inspire faith-based sponsors (Enns et al., 2020). Despite this framing, a relational understanding of the sponsor-refugee dynamic acknowledges that both sponsors and refugees are 'strangers' to each other.

As Labman and Cameron's (2020) book title *Strangers to Neighbours* implies, the relationship dynamic between sponsors and refugees has become entwined; 'strangers' become neighbours. My research highlights another aspect of this dynamic, which Krause (2020) views as Type B, where 'neighbours' have gone on to sponsor subsequent refugees. Research finds that the PSR program has evolved into an "echo effect" (Chapman, 2014, p. 9) of sponsorship between sponsored and awaiting refugees, a phenomenon known as family-linked (Krause, 2020; Macklin et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2020). Formerly sponsored refugees are identified as the primary drivers of sponsorship that involve family-linked cases (Hyndman et al., 2021). This occurs either through strategic collaborations with sponsors they know, or, as evidenced by my research, newcomers create such opportunities by taking on the role of lead sponsors.

Krause's (2020) 'stranger' and 'family-linked' sponsorship typology provides a simplistic analytical distinction between key sponsoring groups because it does not

unpack nuances within these classifications, and potentially excludes a broad range of sponsors that do not fit the binary description. Hyndman et al.'s (2021) research illustrates a range of sponsors, and in particular, sponsorships that become a partnership formed through friendship or personal networks of family members in Canada, what Krause (2020) cites as the “grey area” classification of sponsors (p. 5). Krause's (2020) binary description also fails to capture the “echo effect” (Chapman, 2014, p. 9) of sponsorship created by sponsors' ethnonational kinship networks, on which this research is focused.

Family-linked sponsorship is often used synonymously with resettled refugee groups, of which racialized diasporas are part of. While it may be the case that majority of racialized diaspora sponsors engaged in family-based sponsorship, this research finds that they also sponsor ‘strangers’ from other ethnonational communities and for humanitarian reasons. Some even aspire to sponsor refugees through the BVOR program. What I present is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather a more nuanced portrait of sponsors across the country. The landscape of sponsorship varies among expansive urban centers and intimate communities, encompassing both religious and non-religious entities, along with diverse diasporas, cultures, and organizations. A binary perspective of sponsorship conceals the interconnections and linkages across these diverse continuums.

“Echo effect” of family-linked sponsorship

Naming is a catalyst of the “echo effect” (Chapman, 2014, p. 9) because it creates networks for sponsorships. It is also a mechanism that allows sponsors to address the echo effect of family-linked sponsorship, whereby resettled refugees ask their sponsors to support loved ones (Hyndman et al., 2021). Research finds that the GAR, BVOR, and PSR programs create demand for family-linked cases (Hyndman et

al., 2021; Macklin et al., 2018). This indicates that both the named and unnamed office-referred refugees drive the echo effect phenomenon (Chapman, 2014) by extending protection to those still living in exile. Taking note of the evidence that BVORs generate new sponsorship for the PSR program is particularly striking because, as Labman and Pearlman (2018) note, the BVOR program was designed “to diminish the family focus of named sponsorship” (p. 446). Both the GAR and BVOR programs only allow sponsorship of nuclear families, so extended families members in exile are often separated from those who come to Canada. This selection mode and subsequent separation generate *new demand* for the PSR program. Drawing on data from a survey with sponsors of Syrians who came to Canada since 2015, Labman and Hyndman (2019) show that requests for subsequent support for *new* sponsorships from sponsors are the norm, not the exception, and the desire to restore family unity among resettled refugees is very strong and cannot be easily brushed away.

Whether resettled refugees are directly sponsoring extended family members or responding to other diaspora people’s ‘asks’ generated by the echo effect (Chapman, 2014), family-linked sponsorship is at times questioned as potentially undermining humanitarian protection or the integrity of the PSR program. However, the Canadian government also has a domestic obligation to “support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada” (IRPA, 2001, section 3.2(f)). Since the elimination of the Assisted Relative Class (Labman, 2019), naming refugees through the PSR program is the only possible avenue for family reunification.

Even at a global scale, “international policies affirm the importance of protecting refugees’ family unity” (Morris et al., 2020, p. 3). Family unity is protected by various internationally recognized rights (see Jastram & Newland, 2003 and Morris et al., 2020

for a more detailed explanation of the instruments that affirms this). Yet it is not guaranteed; most recently arrived refugee families, who are unlikely to have high incomes in Canada, are required to apply for a family-class application available to all Canadian immigrants, and thus have only the sponsorship pathway as an avenue (Government of Canada, n.d.f). Transnational refugee families are routinely separated across distant geographical borders for undetermined periods of time (Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023). Research has shown that the uncertainty caused by family separation can exacerbate resettled refugees' ability to settle and integrate into their new communities (Jastram & Newland, 2003; Morris et al., 2020; Nakache et al., 2022; Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023). In the absence of formal mechanisms that allow refugees to reunify with family or keep them intact, to begin with, naming becomes an obvious and concrete option for refugee protection and ensures that other relevant humanitarian considerations are upheld. I argue that the subtle but consistent delegitimization of naming, as Hyndman (personal communication, March 27, 2023) notes, is racialized and cannot be ignored.

Opportunities afforded through named sponsorship

Existing literature insightfully recognizes the opportunities naming affords when refugees have some form of connection to their sponsors in Canada (Krause, 2020; Labman, 2019; Lehr & Dyck, 2020; Treviranus & Casasola, 2003; Voegeli, 2014). Research finds that when refugees are sponsored by family members already established in host societies, settlement and integration are expedited due to pre-existing social networks, material resources, and social support (Alboim, 2016; Denton, 2003a; Hynie & SyRIA.lth, 2023). In addition to its social and economic functions, a family can buffer newcomers against emotional, mental, and physical vulnerabilities (Morris et al., 2021; Nakache et al., 2022) caused by involuntary and protracted

separation. More so than linking families across distant geographical places, Hyndman et al. (2021) find that naming is about “community-building in situ” (p. 10). They refer to the ways in which newcomers from refugee backgrounds become part of larger communities in Canada that in turn are attuned to the needs and desires of their newest members. Communities, not just family members who want to support sponsorship for humanitarian reasons but also for the improved well-being of its own members. What these motives point to is the bidirectionality of integration as advanced by Hyndman and Hynie (2016), who note that integration involves how refugees and host societies adapt to each other. Naming thus shapes the integration potential of resettled refugees and the communities that welcome them.

Other research explores the transnational phenomenon of sending remittances and finds that family reunification mitigates the high psychological and material costs of sending money to kin who remain displaced (Elcioglu & Shams, 2023). When sponsorship through naming reunites families, it increases resettled refugees’ financial security. As Semere (Sponsor) explained:

The other reason [for sponsoring] is because financially they are dependent. If my cousin is there, he or she is financially dependent on me. They can’t find a job and so to survive there, I have to send them money. All in all, it is the kind of life that they live over there and also their families. They depend on me, and if I don’t sponsor them, they will depend on me forever. So that’s one of the main reasons.

Semere’s statement about sending remittances “forever” understandably conveys his concerns about the sustainability of such a responsibility, and thereby, what it would mean for his own prosperity. According to Morris et al.’s (2020) research, “all sponsors interviewed worried that sending money home would undermine the ability of resettled refugees to gain financial security” (p. 10). Naming thus relieves formerly resettled refugees and those turned sponsors from the economic and psychological burden of

having to sending remittances abroad and instead allows them to focus on their own growth and contributions to their new communities. Naming also enables Canadians, including former refugees, to have a voice on refugee policies and practices (Labman & Pearlman, 2018) and improves the diversity of resettled populations “by allowing the private sector to select refugees based on different priorities than those applied to government-assisted refugees” (Lehr & Dyck, 2020, p. 53). As Fratzke (2017) explains,

for advocates and community groups, additionality is often the main selling point of refugee sponsorship because it enables them to assist more people in need of protection than would otherwise be resettled. Some sponsorship proponents also see the ability to name specific candidates for resettlement as key to sponsorship efforts; particularly for organizations rooted in diaspora communities, the possibility of reuniting refugees who would otherwise be stranded in dangerous situations with family is a compelling reason to serve as a sponsor. (p. 5)

In all these ways, naming functions as a strong protective factor that contributes to the overall success of the PSR program while honouring global provisions that underscore complementary forms of resettlement and protection.

Understanding naming at empirical scales

Prevailing literature on the challenges and opportunities of naming does not fully capture the perspectives of sponsors who themselves came to Canada as resettled refugees. This section expands the debate about naming by foregrounding the largely invisible perspectives of racialized sponsors. In what follows, and based on original empirical data I collected, I address three intersecting questions posed to participants: what factors do sponsors consider when deciding who to prioritize for resettlement? What motivates sponsors to extend protection to refugees in need? What strategies do sponsors use to identify and select refugees to sponsor? My empirical findings discuss three overarching themes in the context of naming, which are elaborated on below. The first theme reveals that participants prioritize the resettlement needs of refugees with

shared and disparate backgrounds, whether they know them or not. Theme two highlights that beyond altruism, participants authorize themselves and their communities to protect fellow exiles out of necessity and obligation. The third theme illustrates the importance of networks at local and transnational scales as strategies in identifying selection and protection priorities.

Prioritizing connections to shared *and* disparate geographies of violence and displacement

With 29.4 million refugees³², 114,300 resettled globally (double the previous year) and 47,600 to Canada³³, as noted in the latest 2022 UNHCR Global Trends report (UNHCR, 2023), the scarcity of global protection spaces and demand for refugee resettlement put sponsors in a difficult position when deciding who to sponsor. When former refugees have mobilized in earnest to extend refugee protection to fellow exiles in need, they have “been accused of nepotism and criticized for having exclusive selection criteria” as was the case with Operation Ezra³⁴ (Pearlman, 2020, p. 115). Pearlman (2020) explains that tensions emerged in Operation Ezra over family-linked sponsorships, which were seen to trump protection goals as a primary criterion. Sponsors with refugee histories are implied to narrowly prioritize sponsorship of families or other exiles connected to those currently resettled in Canada. My research finds that

³² A reference to refugees under UNHCR’s mandate.

³³ “In line with previous years, Canada received the largest number of resettlement arrivals, with arrivals increasing by 133 per cent from 2021 to 47,600 during 2022. Afghans account for 45 per cent of all resettlement arrivals to Canada (21,300), followed by Syrians (7,600), Eritreans (6,100) and Iraqis (2,600)” (UNHCR, 2023, p. 39).

³⁴ Operation Ezra began as a grassroots initiative to rescue and resettle Yazidi refugees. See here for more information about this initiative: <https://www.jewishwinnipeg.org/community-relations/operation-ezra>

refugee selection among racialized sponsors is broad and inclusive in three distinct ways.

Racialized sponsors from diaspora backgrounds are often compelled to try and protect high-needs refugees who may not have family or other personal links to Canada. Several research participants in my study expressed that their SAH or ad hoc sponsoring group was committed to sponsoring “high profile cases” as Abdii (Sponsor) Fayyistuu (Sponsor), and Ermias (Sponsor) stated in their separate interviews. High profile cases are a reference to ‘human rights defenders’ that ‘stand up and stand out’ for the rights of others. Abdii shared that high profile cases were the impetus for sponsorship at both SAHs he was connected to: “So we were able to sponsor people, especially high-profile cases, and that gave us encouragement to do more. We continued the same project with [the second SAH].” High profile refugees may be identified for protection because of they are at risk or have faced prolonged detention, human rights abuses, or torture. One racialized key informant, Goitom, explained how he referred two high-profile (not family-linked) PSR cases to a local SAH:

I'll give you an example, we have one case, and they are very unique cases, these are a couple of Eritreans right now they are in Egypt in detention, and one person was detained for 9 years and the other person for 7 years... they were in the media, but they haven't arrived... Nobody knows them, I mean, they just happened to be from the same background, but they were in the news, and we need to help them.

It is the case that refugees selected based on these criteria typically share a country of origin or ethnonational identity with their sponsors and have faced displacement from the same geography of violent political conflicts, but they are not refugees with pre-established personal links or named to unite families. They are refugees prioritized for their high protection needs.

Pushing back against narratives that imply former refugee newcomers only have a vested interest in “single population” sponsorship as referred to by several participants (Grace, Lola, and Maria), my research finds that racialized sponsors also prioritize the protection needs of refugees connected to disparate geographies of violence and displacement, even when they are named but not known to the sponsoring group. For example, both Ermias’ (Sponsor) and Hawi’s (racialized Key Informant) were involved in ad hoc groups that were compelled to sponsor a refugee from the UNHCR referred list. Ermias shared how the Group of Five [G5] he led used the BVOR initiative as an opportunity to sponsor “three people [who were] total strangers.” After completing the first BVOR sponsorship, Hawi expressed interest in gathering people to do a second because the first refugee her G5 helped to resettle did not require much support:

So we haven’t reconvened to do it again but I’ve talked to one person, no two people, about it and they seem interested in doing it again, but probably a bit differently in terms of the profile we select to support because I think we could have done a bit more. Our first individual is very, very high functioning and didn’t need much help so we’re just in the background.

Two SAHs similarly expressed their interest in BVOR sponsorship but had concerns about their capacity. For Abdii (Sponsor), the issue was raising financial capital for sponsorship that was not co-sponsored with community members: “currently we are not capable of doing [BVORs]. We are just growing. We are working towards that...

Because there is an opportunity there, there is a possibility of doing that. We have to have some capital to involve in that.” Conversely, Fayyistuu (Sponsor) shared “There is also a list of UNHCR refugees, registered under UNHCR, we haven’t gone this far yet because we haven’t even finished addressing the referrals from the community and host people who are here.” It was surprising to learn that racialized sponsors had participated or expressed a desire to participate in unnamed BVOR sponsorship given the programs’

struggle to mobilize sponsorship for altruistic reasons (McNally, 2020) and the protection needs of refugees from shared persecution groups.

Another dynamic of indirect links to refugee sponsorship and resettlement emerges when a SAH that is administered by a specific racialized diaspora (e.g., Eritrean) shares its allocations with an unaffiliated diaspora group (e.g., Syrian). A staff member of one SAH explained how their organization's mandate was inclusive of all refugees, despite their stated focus on an ethnonational group from Ethiopia. In the participant's own words, he said:

We are acting like the other organizations, like Catholic Social Services or Mennonite Central Committee helping different people... Currently this year we sponsored five Yemeni individuals. They are not connected with [us], they are Yemenis. One of their relatives is here. We know what is happening in Yemen, and so we sponsored. That is what in the future we want to just demonstrate in our work. (Abdii, Sponsor)

Naming in this context pertains to refugees who are not directly known to SAHs but linked to other racialized diasporas in Canada. Another participant, Cimme (Sponsor), works for a SAH that sponsored individuals from "Somali, Yemeni, Syrian, and Eritrean backgrounds," even though the organization is primarily focused on supporting an Ethiopian-based ethnonational group in diaspora. These examples show that racialized sponsors are galvanized to extend refugee protection to other exiles *without* a shared country of origin or ethnonational identity. They do so even when resources are scarce, and when they struggle to meet the needs of their own diasporic communities.

Following other observations in the literature concerning family-linked sponsorship (Denton, 2003a; Hyndman et al., 2021; Krause, 2020; Lehr & Dyck, 2020), named sponsorship through familial connections is a prevalent practice among racialized diasporas. However, even participants who represent SAHs that are not rooted in racialized diaspora communities predominantly facilitated family-linked sponsorships.

Christina (Key Informant) explained that of late, her SAH was supporting “family sponsorship” from countries including “Syrians, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Congolese and others.” She further noted: “we are not only confined to a certain population, but recently, mostly from South Africa because I think there’s a lot of people who are in need of resettlement, and a lot of them also have relatives in [Alberta].” Willa (Key Informant) stated:

A lot of the ones we’re doing now are ones that started with a BVOR and now they’re wanting to help family members come. Most of them are family connections now and a lot of times the churches originally did a lot of the fundraising, but now they help the families to bring families.

The BVORs’ subsequent requests as to rejoin family members from whom they had been separated align with findings from other research (Hyndman et al., 2021; Hyndman & Labman, 2019; Macklin et al. 2018; McNally, 2020). Jonathan (Key Informant) likewise acknowledged that “probably 90%” of the co-sponsors who partner with his SAH are “family members or friends of refugees.” These findings suggest that family (and friendship) connections play a central role in sponsorships by non-diaspora SAHs.

Building on these conclusions, my research finds that PSR sponsorships are not limited to family-linked cases or relatives (by marriage or by blood), but also include ethnonational ‘kin’ in need of safety and protection. Yousuf and Hyndman (2023) define ethnonational kinship as a transnational bond that refugee diasporas maintain with people who remain displaced, unprotected, and often in dangerous situations, even if they are not immediate family members. Ogeessa (Sponsor) described his desire to protect family and ethnonational kin:

I was able to sponsor my brother. He is currently in Canada. I facilitated that, but I also am involved in sponsoring others who are completely not related to me; people I came to know after I came to Canada. Since we are in the same community, I got to know people, making friends and getting involved in the community, which means by extension, their friends or

family, per say, is by extension... my own family. We will keep doing that [kind of sponsorship] in the future too.

Like Ogeessa, other racialized sponsors are expressly focused on mobilizing grassroots/ad hoc sponsoring groups or using some of their allocations to protect a broader group of kin displaced by the same source of violence they experienced. The naming principle was leveraged in these cases to identify and resettle known or unknown refugees in need of protection.

The prioritization of resettlement needs among racialized sponsors transcends singularized connections to origin countries, identities, and violent geographies. Sponsors exercise the naming principle to protect refugees with heightened resettlement needs whom they do not know but may share a background to country of origin or ethnonationality. Naming has also given sponsors some autonomy to extend refugee protection to fellow diaspora exiles fleeing unassociated violence, persecution, and displacement, as well as specific and broad groups of kin.

Community-authorized refugee protection of fellow exiles

The PSR program relies on highly motivated private citizens and civil society groups to volunteer and sustain sponsorship in Canada. When interest in refugee sponsorship waxed and waned in the 1980s, it was “former refugees who formed links with SAH constituents” (Lanphier, 2003, p. 241) that resulted in a revival of the PSR program, further corroborating my claim and participant narratives that racialized sponsors are the drivers of the PSR program. As Denton (2016) and Lehr and Dyck (2020) have stated, refugee sponsorship has shifted from the altruistic ‘sponsor the stranger’ dynamic to the more relational ‘sponsor the family’ dynamic. The growth of relational sponsorship is largely attributed to newcomer communities made up of previously resettled refugees. Based on input from participants, my research set out to

trace whether the naming and potential family-linked elements are motivating factors in pursuing refugee sponsorship. The findings reveal that resettlement priorities are linked to the motivations and meanings that sponsors attach to refugee protection. Three distinct sub-themes related to the notion of self- and community- authorized refugee protection of fellow exiles emerged from the findings.

Racialized sponsors are deeply concerned about the suffering of people they know or know of who are displaced by violence and remain in precarious spaces of refuge and asylum. These sentiments are amplified by participants' own lived understanding of what it means to be a refugee in search of protection.

The main push is to pretty much save people from the situation they live in. Of course [that was the] desire when I came here. If not me, who would know what it means to be in their situation? [They don't] need to explain how terrible their situation is to me, how much they suffer, we just know. I know what it means to be there and if there is a chance, I should be the first person to respond to their call. (Ermias, Sponsor)

Ermias draws upon what he lived through as a refugee to empathize with other refugees who remain at risk. He does not just view the refugees' suffering as a call to action, but uses the PSR program to address it.

My motivation came from my own experience. Since I was a refugee myself and I got the opportunity to get sponsored to Canada, it's obvious, like every refugee I believe wants to give back. I want[ed] to help others as I got the opportunity. I want to give the same opportunity to those who suffer and are in need. That's why I started helping them before I even got to sponsoring refugees myself. So that's the main motivation. (Ogeessa, Sponsor)

Building on what Ermias said, Ogeessa emphasized that becoming a sponsor was an "obvious" choice for himself and other former refugees.

That's one of the things that motivate me because if I can sponsor as much as I can, with my financial, family, and every responsibility that I have, I have to do what I have to do. At least sponsoring one person at a time could save someone. The main reason is I know what they are experiencing

because I have experienced the same, I have passed through the same experience. One of the main reasons is that I don't want them to suffer. (Semere, Sponsor)

Likewise, Semere's experience of being a refugee motivated him to get involved and do everything in his capacity to protect as many people as possible. The experiences and being displaced migrants galvanized Ermias, Ogeessa, and Semere as sponsors to mobilize resources and support as part of a grassroots, norm of reciprocity to alleviate the suffering of fellow exiles.

Another distinct but tangential source of motivation stems from participants' recognition that refugee protection in Canada is inequitable. For example, several participants expressed concern about the lack of priority given to resettle refugees from sub-Saharan Africa who have been waiting years (as analyzed in Chapter Four), and sometimes more than a decade in exile, for a so-called durable 'solution.' As one racialized key informant diplomatically stated:

Refugees that have been in sustained refugee situations and for prolonged periods of time, who are often from countries that have people that look like you and me, I'm not too sure if [refugee sponsorship] is serving all populations and Canadians in a way that really connects to the full potential of the program. If that makes sense? Trying to be diplomatic. (Hawi, Key Informant)

Racialized sponsors who were interviewed shared the same view as Hawi, noting that refugees displaced by conflicts in Africa are routinely neglected and deprioritized. As Semere (Sponsor) put it:

They were talking about Ukraine, they were talking about Afghanistan, but at the same time our people were kidnapped from Ethiopia and taken back to Eritrea. A friend of mine was taken from Ethiopia, and he was taken back to Eritrea, and no one cares about him. If you write and email, they say "we are not working on non-Ukrainians or non-Afghans." What about this person being kidnapped? What about the other people who we don't know where they are right now because there's no communication. My brother-in-law's stepbrother is in Tigray right now. They haven't spoken for seven months or maybe more than that. They couldn't call him... But also, the

other concern that I have is, how do I ask IRCC to prioritize emergencies? Now, and it has been like two years, I think, Afghans and Ukrainians are the emergency ones. What about the Ethiopian situation? In Tigray, refugees there were kidnapped, they were killed, and they were tortured, detained and all these things have happened, and the world knows. What are the criteria to say, “OK, this is an emergency?” That’s one of the questions we asked, but no one answered, I don’t know, for some reason it wasn’t answered. I don’t know if that falls within your research.

Semere along with other participants in separate interviews were dismayed by what they perceived to be a lack of intentional effort by the Canadian state to prioritize the safety of refugees fleeing the 2020-2022 military conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, as described briefly in Chapter Four.

Fayyistuu (Sponsor) takes this analysis further by pinpointing the inequitably of wait times for “East African refugees”:

When you think about it generally, and compare say East African refugees to other people, there is a lot of differences... Look, interestingly enough, I was so lucky to spread out from the sponsorship line that we normally work in and see other groups, people from Asia, people from Afghanistan, people from Ukraine. Even before, the application, I mean, this is something that can be checked online, it will say usually on the IRCC website, it will note the country and how long the process will take. That is something that can be verified. If you take African countries compared to others, you would be surprised... I can definitely see how there is a lot of strain on the African side of doing sponsorship. A lot of limitations, caps, and rules around it.

Fayyistuu has been involved with several SAHs, and she explains that her direct experience working with different refugee groups coupled with her observations of IRCC processing times, reveals a decisive prejudice against African countries. Her analysis further corroborates Hyndman’s (2019) finding that based on searches conducted on IRCC’s own website, an uneven and racialized map of “who gets in” is revealed (Hyndman et al., 2016, p. 7).

My research finds that racialized sponsors are thus driven by a ‘political’ necessity to act when they observe that government-led solutions limit the possibilities

for refugees from more racialized countries. In the words of one participant, “If the government cannot sponsor them, then private sponsorship gives us the opportunity, with all its problems with all its challenges, it still has given us the possibility [to protect African refugees] of which other countries are not offering” (Semere, Sponsor). Similarly, Abdii (Sponsor) stated:

The needs, as you know, many thousands of Oromo people fled their homes and are languishing in neighbouring countries. And if there is any way out from that problem with this private sponsorship, that is what motivated us to start.

Regarding Oromos, Cimma (Sponsor) said: “we need a lot of private Sponsorship Agreement Holder agencies to be established in Canada because we still could not fulfill the need of our refugees.” Reza (Key Informant) echoed the same sentiments while not singling out a specific community:

When I was mentioning that some of the SAHs started focusing on specific communities because these communities felt that they're not being taken care of. You see, they're not getting any attention or there is no preference and there is a high need within their community population.

When needs are not being fulfilled, racialized diaspora sponsors have stepped in to fill an important gap.

In a prescient fashion, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) understood from its advocacy work that the naming principle “responds to situations around the world and to refugees who have been forgotten or who do not fit the priorities of governments or the UN” (CCR, 2016b, p. 2). Research from the Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC] substantiates this concern, noting that in 2022, “the world’s most neglected [displacement] crises [were] all in Africa [and how this] points to the chronic failure of decision makers, donors and the media to address conflict and human

suffering on this continent” (Egeland, n.d., as cited in NRC, 2022, para. 3). These sentiments were clearly shared by participants as underscored above.

Participants’ motivation to sponsor are driven by a political necessity to self-authorize ‘collective actions,’ in the absence of other responses to people in precarious, protracted displacement. So many sub-Saharan African refugees face long wait times and processing delays as participants have observed and reported. By asserting ownership over their own responsibilities to act, former refugees enable themselves as conduits of protection. In this view, Kihato and Landau’s (2016) concept of “stealth humanitarianism” (pp. 418-419) extends beyond refugees’ own volition and encompasses the authorization of former refugees as well. This expanded understanding acknowledges the unique perspectives and experiences that former refugees bring, allowing them to empathize *with* and advocate *for* the safety and security of neglected/deprioritized refugees. Self-authorization becomes a collective expression of agency and responsibility within the refugee community, in other words, community authorized refugee protection of fellow exiles in need.

Family separation was the third motivating factor that galvanized racialized sponsors to take action. Several participants expressed anguish over their own and their community members’ lived experience of family separation as resettled refugees. The negative affects they experienced compelled them to sponsor as a way to mitigate separation and vulnerability (Nakache et al., 2022; Yousuf & Hyndman, 2023). As Fayyistuu (Sponsor) reflected on her own resettlement experience:

When you come to this country, especially anybody who came by themselves, it is really real how you feel. It can get to a mental, physical, and emotional dilemma. Because of that thing about connecting to the family, it is a theme of sponsorship.

Fayyistuu speaks to the hardship of resettling to Canada on her own and how this provokes “dilemmas” that are at once psychological and physical. Though Morris et al. (2020) do not highlight the physical ramifications, when participants were asked about resettlement challenges “the emotional and mental health implications of separation mentioned included deep sadness, helplessness, loneliness, worry, and at times depression” (, pp. 7-8). Yousuf and Berry’s (2020) research on the resettlement experiences of Oromo women who entered Canada as refugees, finds that the daunting reality of family separation has some participants consider voluntarily returning to sites of political conflict and violence just to be reunited with loved ones. One participant noted that had she known it would have been so difficult to be whole without her family, she would not have resettled to Canada and actively contemplated her return. Similarly, several participants described the enormous pressure their families mounted on them to broker their protection: “Many of my family members were in Ethiopia. And of course, there was also a lot of push from family members and extended family members, who always call and message and beg for sponsorship” (Ermias, Sponsor). Semere (Sponsor) also stated:

It is very hard for them to just sit and say, “oh, I can’t do it.” There is always a call from your cousin, from your sister, from your brother, from your family. Sometimes from your parents that say, “why didn’t you sponsor your cousin?”... your cousin or your sister or brother, or whoever it is. That stress as well makes you send the application. If it goes through, good, if not, I tried. That’s where we go, that’s where we get to that point. Instead of getting calls that my cousin thinks that I’m not trying to sponsor them, I would just send it and tell them that I have already submitted it and then say, “let’s see what the what comes through.”

Family separation is stressful in itself, but the added pressure and anguish of being seen not to do anything for one’s family members and making enough money to afford to sponsor them is very invisible and yet embodied ‘weathering’ (see Geronimus, 2021) of these layers of stress. While the pressure motivates sponsors, both those who are

formerly resettled refugees, but also the communities and friendship networks to which they belong (Labman & Hyndman, 2019), use refugee sponsorship to ‘make families whole again.’

While family-linked sponsorship is cited in research (Denton, 2003a; Hyndman et al., 2021; Krause, 2020), this kind of sponsorship has produced its own set of insecurities for racialized sponsors who themselves came to Canada as newcomers. Former refugees must navigate deskilling and downward social and economic mobility as newcomers to Canada, processes that are at once racialized (Ritchie, 2018) and gendered (Yousuf & Berry, 2020). Though this may limit racialized sponsors’ economic capacity to sponsor, it does not necessarily stop them from doing so. When I asked Semere (Sponsor) if he had “experienced any hiccups along the way,” he shared:

Yes, there was because as I said, I was new, I was just here for one year after. There was a catch because I had to put money in a trust fund as a trust, right, for the sponsorship. So, that’s one of the main problems that everyone faces, even though you get the chance to sponsor then you don’t have the money raised. I was new, as I said, and didn’t have any credit history or nothing, but I went to my bank, and I opened a line of credit to. And then that’s how I sponsored him, and then I have to pay back the credit. It was a hassle, but worth doing it because, as I said, I know what they go through. And it’s easier for me to do that than the life they are going to spend. They are going to live in a refugee camp.

Semere’s experience and viewpoint is substantiated by another racialized participant’s (Obsituu, Key Informant) reflection on the struggles and hardships around raising necessary funds:

Well, it’s not easy, right. People struggle all the time for the money. If you don’t have that money, you can’t sponsor anybody. All right. You have to make that money. You have to struggle and just save that money to bring somebody, right? If sometimes they have a big family here, like maybe brothers, sisters or like, a big group in the family, they help each other. They pitch money together and they help each other, and they are able to buy a sponsor for them. If it’s one family, then it’s not easy, but sometimes they do struggle to pay. But that’s how it works.

Obsituu also lamented her inability to fund the sponsorship of family members left behind in spaces of precarious refuge due to having a large family and a low-paying job:

It's kind of hard. It's kind of difficult. I do want to participate. I do want to sponsor my family, you know, but it's just very hard. It's very difficult to sponsor people, especially when you have many kids, and you have low income. It's just not easy to sponsor people from back home, or from anywhere, not just from back, it's difficult to sponsor from anywhere.

Unlike Obsituu, Eeggatuu (Sponsor) was able to organize a G5 to sponsor family members in need of protection, but not without fears about the financial risk it posed to her and her sponsoring group who were her clients: Canadian-born and white. To reassure the members of her group, Eeggatuu shared:

I told them "look, I put some money in the bank too, just to secure the group who signed with me." I told them "look... if worse comes to worse, I will sell my house [which was also her business]. That's what I said, yeah, because you have too. Oh yes, because the persons did you a favour because they know me, so I will go behind them because that is a big trust for me... And top of that to bring desperate people here, you have to sacrifice all of this. The sponsor is there for these people.

These quotes show that financing sponsorship is incredibly onerous for those who have resettled to Canada as refugees, and that the obligation to support family drives them to desperate measures to secure funds, including bank loans, working multiple menial jobs, or risking the prospects of selling one's home that is also a place of business.

While family-linked sponsorship is a necessary and compassionate act to support loved ones, it is essential to avoid idealized or romanticized views of these relationships. According to Ogummaa (Sponsor), one of the main challenges with sponsoring family concerns "much higher expectations," which can create added pressure on sponsors. When sponsors are unable to meet the expectations of their family members, it can lead to strained relationships. Eeggatuu (Sponsor) spoke of a breakdown that happened with relatives she sponsored when their expectations were not met. She said, "hell can be in

your house too.” These examples highlight how unmet expectations can create tensions, although disagreements in a family are neither unique to sponsorship nor uncommon.

Naming gives sponsors – even when pushed into economic hardship – the power to community-authorize refugee selection and protection that can affect fellow exiles’ safety and security. It is a concrete mechanism that enables sponsors to address the human suffering and family separation that many of them experienced as sub-Saharan African refugees. By doing so, naming foregrounds the lived experiences and subjectivities of sponsors with intimate displacement experiences. Having been refugees themselves, sponsors feel a sense of duty to facilitate refugee protection for humanitarian reasons. They know at a visceral level what it means to be a refugee, so they are motivated by altruistic and relational understandings of refugee protection.

Mobilizing protection through media and social networks at local and transnational scales

The strategies sponsors use to identify and select protection priorities to resettle refugees has not been a focus of previous research. In my research, I explored an original analysis of these strategies by asking racialized diaspora sponsors about how they select refugees for resettlement. These questions were meant to probe the approaches taken by SAHs to allocate protection spaces and how ad hoc sponsoring groups come together and decide who to sponsor. The findings elaborated below show that both SAHs and ad hoc sponsors mobilize local and transnational protection networks to identify and resettle refugees.

For example, transnational media channels and social media sites play important roles in informing diasporic communities about refugees with urgent needs for protection. This applies particularly to high profile cases as discussed above. Goitom

(racialized Key Informant) noted that he saw two human rights defenders in the media and he helped facilitate their resettlement to Canada. Likewise, sponsors Abdii and Ermias also discussed how social media is leveraged to identify refugees with heightened risks. Ermias (Sponsor) explained how he used his social media networks to solicit information about refugees at risk who needed support during the 2020-2022 military conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia:

There was also another case through social media with everything that was happening, I reached out to people I know on social media and asked them if they [knew] of a most vulnerable case that needed assistance more than everybody. Everybody needed assistance at that point, but they told me about her story, so we took that case.

The woman that Ermias (Sponsor) refers to is a widow whose “husband was killed at a refugee camp in Tigray and she’s now in Addis Ababa, and she has three young children.” Ermias (Sponsor) describes himself as an advocate for refugees who routinely uses Twitter to raise awareness. In this way, social and other forms of media platforms are used to tap into transnational refugee support networks as a strategy to identify and secure the protection needs of refugees at risk.

Another approach that was more common for SAHs in my findings consisted of referrals from local sources and abroad. Fayyistuu (Sponsor) explained how the SAH where she volunteers allocates their protection spaces across both referral pathways:

The selection process, we approach this in different ways. One for people who have been here and are suffering from separation from family members, for this we get the family members to come and apply, those who are interested. Other ways are from the abroad communities that they know more closely people who are actually struggling. We get referrals from different communities back home... people who are well known to each other... see the struggle and send a referral, we connect with the refugees that way.... If the 50% come that way, without the family members, then we are fully responsible to provide them care. But if they do have a co-sponsor that is landed already here, then the family member [provides] support.

In the first example, Fayyistuu speaks to the co-sponsorship arrangements at a local scale. These transpire when formerly resettled refugees are forcibly separated from their family members and work with SAHs to co-authorize their resettlement. The second example underscores a transnational referral system that is initiated by communities abroad. Prior to implementing this bifurcated approach to distributing their allocations, the SAH used a lottery system for the first couple of years.

We did a lottery, but that didn't work much for us because people are at different levels in this country, we kind of felt like we missed out on the people who needed it the most. For us, it is more of focusing on the need and the priorities, like who needs it the most right now and then we will do the others next year. We are hoping to sponsor every year as much as we can. So that is why we went back to the needs-based selection process.
(Fayyistuu, Sponsor)

In this excerpt, Fayyistuu describes how the SAH self-corrected its selection strategy after realizing that it did not meet their vision of equitable distribution of refugee protection. Conversely, the organization where Semere (Sponsor) is a SAH representative “always do[es] a draw, a lottery” to allocate protection spaces. To enter the lottery, one must first be a member of the organization which the SAH is registered to. This means that Semere’s SAH receives sponsorship requests “from other communities too” because anyone can be a member of the organization. Unlike Fayyistuu, Semere did not report concerns about equity in using a lottery system to distribute allocations. In short, there are far more people to be sponsored than sponsorships available.

Other racialized sponsors leveraged both local and transnational protection networks to identify and support refugees who are “strangers” and not sought out directly:

Three people are total strangers that were referred to me through either organizations [abroad] that I have been volunteering or working. There is a

women's centre that I worked as a Board member for a very long time, so they have been referring me to cases that I think were really difficult and they needed support. So two cases were random strangers, families that were referred to me. (Ermias, Sponsor)

What this shows is that on a local level, sponsors with a refugee background respond to requests from people already in Canada or abroad. One sponsor explained the process undertaken at the SAH where he is an executive this way:

They can either write to us or call us or come in person to our office. Then our response depends on how many people are lined up for the sponsorship and whether the person who asks us does qualify to sponsor someone. Like if you are involved in some sort of crime, you cannot sponsor your relative. If you are not working and you cannot afford to help [the] resettlement of the person you sponsor, so we consider all these and finally, once we have the spot for you, we ask you to deposit some trust fund in our account, that are restricted accounts that are prepared for this purpose. They deposit that money, and I will give [them] a sponsor. (Abdii, Sponsor)

The process that Abdii (Sponsor) describes here is common. Identification and selection are driven by community members who are often themselves former refugees and who then partner with SAHs to co-sponsor fellow exiles. This is described as the echo effect phenomenon (Chapman, 2014; Macklin et al., 2018).

Sponsors use local and transnational networks to identify and select protection priorities to mobilize the resettlement needs of refugees. These networks include indirect information sources such as the media and social media. In addition, they include networked communities that organize around shared political beliefs and experience of human rights. Naming allows sponsors to establish criteria to achieve multi-pronged protection objectives, and to do so with diverse community networks.

Discussion and conclusion: Recentring the subjects of displacement

The prevailing debates on naming are replete with concerns that the approach does not reach the most vulnerable refugees. Naming affords opportunities that are comparatively underacknowledged, including how it diversifies the PSR program and improves the ontological (Giddens, 1991) and physical security of resettled refugees separated from kin groups – some of whom have themselves become sponsors. The testimony above underscores why named sponsorships are so crucial to the PSR program but also under scrutiny. Discussions on naming tend to revolve around normative questions about equity and fairness in selection for protection spaces. In addition, there is a persistent focus on dominant epistemologies about the integrity of selection processes. The subtle, yet consistent, delegitimization of naming threatens to amplify discriminatory governance practices evidenced by the uneven and racialized map of ‘who gets in’ and ‘who waits.’

This chapter shows how naming becomes a lifeline for equitable geographic refugee protection. Racialized sponsors select and protect refugees at risk, including fellow exiles from disparate geographies of violence and displacement. Family-linked sponsorship and sponsoring ethnonational kin, including human rights defenders in or from one’s country of origin, are also priority groups of refugees. Beyond obligation, racialized sponsors are altruistically motivated to protect family, ethnonational kin, and fellow diaspora exiles as my findings illustrate. This is because they share the lived experiences of violence, displacement, and suffering and have a sense of duty to act. Bearing witness to the barriers African refugees face in accessing protection, naming has galvanized racialized sponsors to enable the resettlement of kin who face protracted displacement. Likewise, sponsors have organized to reunite families separated across

geographically distant borders. In the absence of formal mechanisms that allow refugees to reunite with family or keep them intact, to begin with, naming becomes the only viable and necessary ‘solution’ for refugee protection. The strategies that inform how racialized sponsors identify and select refugees emerge at the intersection of local and transnational protection networks. Media and social networks provide rich sources of information about refugees in precarious conditions and shape selection criteria and referrals in multifaceted ways.

Naming enables more equitable refugee protection by allowing private citizens to resettle and support refugees approved by the Canadian government, who do not fit the specific vulnerability priorities of UNHCR or priority criteria of local governments. Naming thus broadens the geographic scope of refugee protection because it enables sponsorship from diverse community groups. In a similar vein, naming also broadens the geographic reach of sponsorship.

Refugee management is the government’s exercise of power, but I argue that naming is a safety net that ensures community oversight (or watchful care) over the administration and management of who can be selected for refugee protection. The subtle, yet consistent, delegitimization of naming must be addressed for these reasons. My research shows that naming fellow exiles for sponsorship is a lifeline for refugees left behind in protracted displacement when government-led solutions limit possibilities for resettlement, and that refugee protection is more equitable when private citizens and civil society have a say in who gets sponsored.

This relatively unique pathway, mentioned even in UNHCR’s (2018b) Global Compact on Refugees, keeps families together in the ways that Canada’s own *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* stipulates (IRPA, 2001). What better way to

integrate newcomer refugees than have them join an existing network and community (Labman, 2019). Where governments have failed to prioritize refugees from African regions and family reunification, racialized sponsors have exercised their opportunity to use the naming principle to community-authorize the safety and security of fellow exiles and disparate refugee diasporas in intentional ways. This selection mode and subsequent separation generate new demand for the PSR program.

There are far more people to be sponsored than sponsorship is available, but naming is a tried-and-true pathway to refugee protection with over 40 years of work. My research foregrounds the voices and experiences of racialized sponsors to decentre the state and recentre the subjects of displacement into the discussion of naming and refugee selection. Naming actual people who remain in precarious conditions and meet Canada's refugee definition is a way that racialized diaspora sponsors, often from refugee backgrounds themselves, provide broad and inclusive refugee selection and legal protection in partnership with the Canadian state. Naming thus honours the public-private partnership of refugee sponsorship, and places civil society in active instead of passive positions to help resolve some of the most pressing problems.

While naming will remain a contested practice depending on its usage, future sponsorship priorities must include the grounded perspectives of sponsors and communities who are directly affected by displacement. The evolution of the PSR program may not have been possible without the naming principle and grassroots engagement of racialized diasporas made up of refugees who have come to Canada and championed relational sponsorship, as this chapter demonstrates. Violence and displacement from war zones circulates transnationally, and the question remains why would former refugees here in Canada not want to sponsor fellow exiles they know who remain in harm's way?

Chapter 6. Government monitoring and the dual burden of sponsors being ‘taxed’

From the IRCC there is a kind of new policy that is being developed, the [program] integrity framework. This integrity framework is, I think, one step towards the government’s supervision of SAHs... I know most of [the SAHs] are very responsible... this integrity framework is very contentious [though]... It’s not bad if the government, to a certain extent, checks what SAHs are doing, whether they are up to the agreement they signed, and a lot of directives and procedures put on the government website... [but] SAHs have different ways of doing sponsorship. So, the [government] wants to bring these SAHs closer [together], to work in similar ways... they are tracking the finance, the money they give to the refugees, the newcomers... [but] it is very hard when some SAHs work from the basement, they don’t have [an] organization like others. Some SAHs work with three or two people. – Abdii (Sponsor)

Introduction

Recent changes to the bureaucratic structure and oversight of Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, such as the new federal regulations to proactively monitor sponsors’ activities (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2021b, 2022b), provoke many questions about the long-standing public-private partnership that has been a defining feature of the program. The PSR program is well known for its collaboration and responsibility-sharing agreement between government and Canadian residents (Labman, 2016, 2020), although this was not always the case. Cameron (2020) explains that “the relationship between bureaucrats and refugee groups had been a reluctant one” to start (p. 34), in part stemming from tensions regarding the distribution of financial responsibilities for settlement costs and liabilities. While some balance was eventually struck between public and private actors, which saw sponsors contributing their personal time, energy, and funds to resettle more than 327,000 refugees since 1979 (UNHCR, n.d.a), tensions over the scope of the state’s responsibility have intensified in recent years with the announcement and implementation of a new set of federal regulations. Specifically, the recently developed

Program Integrity Framework (PIF)³⁵, which entails several interrelated activities meant to ensure program adherence but with particular emphasis on pre-arrival monitoring to ensure that post-arrival supports are in place, is the latest example that questions whether responsibility-sharing between public and private actors in refugee sponsorship is proportional.

With the rise of non-government ‘private’ resettlement, private citizens and permanent residents are increasingly taking on the responsibility to maintain refugee resettlement and protection through voluntary means, which is meant to complement the government’s humanitarian obligation and not necessarily supersede it. Following earlier trends, Canada’s Immigration Levels Plan for 2023-2025 (IRCC, 2022c) indicates that the government aims to continue resettling higher numbers of Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) compared to Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) as presented in Table 6.1 below. Hyndman et al. (2017) have called this increase of private sector responsibility for resettlement without a corresponding increase in government-assisted refugees, an “aberration of *additionality*” (p. 3), which is the idea that refugees sponsored through the PSR program are carried out above and beyond government-led resettlement (Labman, 2016, 2019). The uptick in GARs in 2023 and 2024 is a result of the Afghans special program and not necessarily an indicator of the governments commitment to sponsors higher numbers of GARs on a consistent basis.

Table 6.1 Canada’s 2023-2025 Immigration Levels Plan for PSRs and GARs

YEAR	GAR	PSR
2023	23,550	27,505
2024	21,115	27,750
2025	15,250	28,250

³⁵ See here for more information about the government’s rationale for PIF: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/assessments/why.html>

* Source: Supplementary Information for the 2023-2025 Immigration Levels Plan.

Alongside this rising expectation of resettlement through the PSR program, sponsors are increasingly confronted with bureaucratic requirements. Denton (2023b) and Lange (2020) argue that government-led changes to sponsorship procedures overtime have made the process more arduous for sponsors. This chapter examines the development and implications of the PIF, and asserts that it is an over-bureaucratized structure (Weaver, 2023), which has intensified the administrative burdens (e.g., paperwork, financial, and settlement) placed onto the sponsorship community and potentially threatens the sustainability of Canada's PSR program.

The shift of resettlement responsibilities from public to private domains is intricately linked to the ethos and implications of neoliberalism. An emerging literature has analyzed the relationship between refugee sponsorship and neoliberalism (Elcioglu, 2021; Elcioglu & Shams 2023; Ritchie, 2018; Silvius, 2016), emphasizing the different ways neoliberal processes devolve authority, roles, and responsibilities onto individuals and communities. Another body of literature is concerned with privatization in refugee resettlement (Hyndman, 2022; Ilcan & Connoy, 2021; Labman, 2016, 2019; Lippert, 1998), arguing that it is a process that expands the neoliberal project at multiple sites and scales (Ritchie, 2018). A complementary literature questions the extent to which privatization is problematic (Krivenko, 2012), and whether the underlying arguments sufficiently consider the level of government engagement in refugee resettlement (Labman, 2016, 2020). Though this literature thoughtfully analyzes the implications of neoliberal processes for refugee sponsorship, the issues raised do not differentiate between sponsor groups. Given that sponsors are differentiated by economic, social, and other privileges, as previous chapters in this dissertation have demonstrated, the devolution and privatization of government responsibilities cannot be assumed to be

equal across the different sponsorship group members. With important exceptions (Ritchie, 2018; Silvius, 2016), the literature referenced pays little attention to the disproportionate effects of government off-loading, particularly as it concerns sponsorship groups that are already overstretched, under-resourced, and understaffed or under-staffed. I aim to extend and contribute to this work by analyzing the classed and racialized effects of the PIF, which I contend is a new form of privatization, albeit at finer scales.

Chapter roadmap

Below I map the theoretical terrain upon which an analysis of neoliberalism and privatization are analyzed. My review examines key theories, studies, and findings that situate the wider economic, political, and power dynamics of how the PSRs program is governed, managed, and administrated. I draw on this literature to trace and expand the narrative of privatization prominent in refugee resettlement. An analysis of complementary literature examines the impact of neoliberal policies on community-driven initiatives, which I extend to the context of refugee sponsorship. The following section provides an overview of the PIF, which includes a non-linear chronology of events that precipitated its development. Opinions differ on the contextual factors that led to its establishment, but the narratives converge around the idea that the PSR program has gradually become a more bureaucratically monitored system. The third section draws upon my empirical research and applies the ideas associated with neoliberalism and privatization to the PIF but with a focus on its classed and racialized implications. I argue, as my findings show, that the PIF is a new form of *privatization onto the sponsorship community*, which has off-loaded administrative audits and burdens onto sponsors at multiple scales while the government absconds important responsibilities. My findings underscore the disproportionate impacts the PIF has on

racialized diaspora sponsors. I conclude the final section with a discussion about the generative potential of responsibility sharing, specifically among the sponsorship community, but also caution against the threats it poses to inequality and sustainability.

Mapping the theoretical terrain: Neoliberalism, privatization, and community

Scholars have argued that the PSR program demonstrates neoliberalism in action, whereby private citizens increasingly bear the state's responsibility to resettle and protect refugees (Ilcan & Connoy, 2021; Lippert, 1998). The extent to which refugee sponsorship is considered a state endeavour (Labman, 2019) is intertwined with broader ideas about the provisions of care/services and the role played by the state.

Neoliberalism, in this context, describes a framework of economic and political relations in which the state's obligations for social welfare provisions are diminished and replaced by private operations. Scholars contend that individuals from the private sector, including sponsors and NGOs, address the void created by the welfare state's 'rollback' (Elcioglu, 2021; Lippert, 1998; Silvius, 2016) and thereby, advance/deepen the neoliberal project (Ritchie, 2018). Devolution of authority and privatization are frequently cited as core principles and policy approaches associated with neoliberalism (Herbert, 2005), and are also evident in refugee sponsorship (Benson, 2016; Silvius, 2016). Specifically, the transfer of responsibilities from the state through community engagements for the provisions of refugee care and services is consistent with these neoliberal rationalities.

A growing body of literature investigates how neoliberalism is (re)produced at the finer scales of refugee resettlement practice (Elcioglu, 2021; Elcioglu & Shams, 2023; Ritchie, 2018; Silvius, 2016). Elcioglu's (2021) study finds that "conditions of neoliberal austerity" (p. 2) such as lack of affordable housing, inadequate living wages, and

“stagnant social assistance levels” (p. 8) have caused “neoliberal fatigue” among sponsors (p. 2). For Elcioglu (2021), the devolution of core resettlement services means that sponsors work tirelessly to mitigate hardships resulting from social service gaps, leaving them little bandwidth to reflect on the structural causes underlying those challenges or with a desire to advocate for policy changes. Silvius’s (2016) study also examines access to housing as a critical service gap, and he argues that “refugee well-being is increasingly becoming ‘neo-liberalized’” and “that obligations to refugees are increasingly being met by ethno-cultural communities, religious groups, refugee kinship networks, and community-based organizations” (p. 27). Silvius (2016) suggests that immigration policies have become “marketized” and represent a significant “profound departure from a paradigm in which the social care of/for refugees is a collective, and, presumably, national social responsibility” (p. 32). Elcioglu and Sham’s (2023) research explores how neoliberalism empowers sponsors to broker refugees’ access to family reunification and remittance activities. They argue that through these brokering practices, the PSR program devolves the management of resettlement from state actors to ordinary citizens. Ritchie (2018) takes a more critical stance in her work and argues that “private resettlement must be understood as a class project that mobilises narratives of humanitarianism to advance neoliberal ideals of a lean state removed from social reproduction” (p. 672). She suggests that the PSR program “deploys a narrative of grassroots community action to conceal the ways in which Canada is a racially divided economy and society” (p. 664).

Another body of literature examines more specifically the question of neoliberal privatization and state responsibility. Seeing refugee resettlement primarily as a responsibility of the state, Hyndman et al. (2017) and Labman (2016, 2019) contend the government has privatized its obligations by increasing the number of PSRs while using

public finances to maintain GARs at comparatively lower levels. Scholars and activists have argued that government resettlement numbers should always be higher than the number of refugees resettled by civil society (CCR, 2016a; Hyndman et al. 2017; Labman & Pearlman, 2018). Sponsors themselves have agreed with this argument in Elcioglu's (2021) study, articulating that they "wanted to see private settlement levels increase relative to their government counterparts" (p. 13). Conversely, the government once noted that "the principle of additionality is not part of the PSR program theory" but also acknowledged in the same report that "private sponsors [feel] that the PSR program" contradicts this principle (IRCC, 2016a).

Finances are another aspect of privatization that has elicited concern in refugee resettlement. Lenard (2016) draws attention to the question of cost, stating "that public–private schemes are treated by the government as 'cost-saving' strategies rather than 'cost-sharing' strategies, that is, that the government may be failing to respect the 'additionality' dimension of the private sponsorship scheme (p. 306)." In other words, the state is able to save money while diverting its humanitarian responsibility to local citizens. Hyndman et al. (2017) note, "the emergence of the BVOR category raises questions of whether financial privatization of refugee sponsorship was an unstated government objective" (p. 7). The introduction of the BVOR category happened in the same year that PSRs surpassed GARs in decades (Hyndman et al., 2017). Referring to the data showcasing PSRs exceeding GARs beginning in 2013, Hyndman et al. (2017) assert this provides "some evidence that government resettlement costs are being privatized" (p. 7). The notion of additionality – that the state will always sponsor at least as many refugees as civil society (Labman, 2016, 2019) – reframes the PSR program as more of a social movement, which commands 'say' (Labman & Hyndman, 2019) but also provides funds and labour to make resettlement possible. Hyndman (2022) argues that

BVORs are the most privatized resettlement category because their numbers were initially taken from the GAR total, thereby offloading finances and responsibility from the federal government. Compared to PSR sponsors, Hyndman (2022) also contends that BVOR sponsors are less of a social movement defined by who will be sponsored, and more of a 'voluntary sector' upon whom government selected refugees are supported.

On a more granular level, Labman (2019) suggests that since sponsors are required to financially support refugees indexed to local social assistance rates, "the sponsor essentially takes on the state's responsibility for social welfare" (p. 82). Sponsored refugees are not "able to obtain income support through provincial or municipal social assistance programs or the Resettlement Assistance Program during the [12-month] sponsorship period" (Government of Canada, 2022a), which means sponsors foot this financial responsibility. These examples demonstrate that private refugee sponsorship is sustained with minimum financial commitment from the government and raise important questions about the public-private partnership to sponsor refugees.

Scholars have reflected on the increasing involvement of volunteers and civil society in refugee resettlement. Ilcan and Connoy's (2021) research calls attention to the relations of power "that underlie the processes and experiences of the privatisation of refugee resettlement" (p. 312). They suggest that "offloading the responsibilities of resettlement onto often unprepared and inexperienced non-state actors and individualising the experiences and outcomes of private sponsorship onto newcomers diminish states' accountability for refugee welfare and may disrupt the integrity of the framework of refugee protection" (p. 313). Despite these strong sentiments, Ilcan and Connoy (2021) clarify that their intention is not to condemn private actors involved in refugee resettlement but instead to raise caution about the implications of privatizing

refuge. Others question the extent to which privatization is problematic (Krivenko, 2012), and whether the underlying arguments sufficiently consider the level of government engagement in refugee resettlement (Labman, 2016, 2020).

Complementary literature on neoliberal policies implemented at community or local scales, questions whether a downsized welfare state diminishes the power and influence of the private sector due to reduced resources, or if new opportunities are provided for citizen involvement (Elwood, 2002; Fraser, 2018; Herbert, 2005). Fraser (2018) applies Foucault's governmentality theory to empirical research on community development and argues that neoliberalism can be framed as a "productive power" given its ability to "create new competencies" (p. 447). Drawing on the same theoretical frameworks as Fraser (2018), Lippert (1998) asserts that refugee resettlement "is consistent with a shift to advanced liberalism" (p. 380), which entails privatization, localization, and responsibility-sharing. He also argues that "the language of 'community' and the introduction of Master Agreements, provides a haven for" power beyond the state (p. 397). Elwood's (2002) research on a community revitalization project also finds that organizations reproduce neoliberal priorities and policies at localized scales, but this does not hinder their capacities to expand power and exert influence. Drawing from multiple datasets on a project that examined devolved authority, Herbert's (2005) research "demonstrate[s] that community is not a sturdy support for neoliberalism but rather is best analogized as a trapdoor" (p. 850). A community functions as a 'trapdoor' because "it often cannot fulfill the obligations the state seeks to off-load" (Herbert, 2005, p. 853). Relative to Elwood (2002), Fraser (2018), and Lippert (1998), Herbert's (2005) findings are less supportive of the generative potential of neoliberalism at the community scale.

Geographers have used the concept of the 'shadow state' to analyze how the private sector has taken up tasks formerly addressed by the public sector (see Wolch, 1990). Shadow state occurs when the states responsibilities are passed off to the private sector, even though the state remains in control indirectly. Herein is where the 'community' features prominently as a private sector entity that fills gaps but is not necessarily a cohesive or autonomous unit (Herbert, 2005). Many analyses of how community figures in neoliberal practice questions assumptions that they are inherently mutual. Employing a Foucauldian concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991), I capture how the project of neoliberal governance is constructed, rationalized, and implemented as a community project. Herein, I argue that the shadow state is characterized by an off-loading of government responsibilities onto SAHs, and then from SAHs onto sponsors, or what Benson (2022) refers to as first and second order devolution.

This literature carefully examines the principles of neoliberalism more broadly and the implications of neoliberal policies on refugee sponsorship at multiple scales and contexts (Benson, 2022), including sponsorship practices at a local scale, resettlement policies at a national scale, and humanitarian obligations at an international scale. The studies and findings demonstrate how the PSR program represents an example of neoliberal governance practice that comports well with the principles of devolution and privatization. Although this body of literature carefully examines the consequences of neoliberal processes on refugee sponsorship, the concerns raised do not differentiate between the various sponsoring groups. As demonstrated in previous chapters, sponsors are differentiated by economic, social, and other differences. Therefore, the effects of government off-loading cannot be assumed to be equal among sponsors. Except for Ritchie's (2018), studies on refugee sponsorship have not analyzed the

classed and racialized implications of neoliberal policies implemented as community practice.

In my empirical findings below, I address this gap through an examination of neoliberalism in the context of IRCC's PIF initiative. The neoliberalism framework is instrumental for understanding the impact of the PIF on the PSR program, with consideration to its differentiated effects on the communities who organize to sponsor. The section that follows first gives an overview of the PIF to contextualize my empirical findings.

Probing the context and evolution of the Program Integrity Framework (PIF)

It's been 12 years now that they've been on this bent. I would like to think that somebody somewhere would realize they're destroying a wonderful program. But I think they're bent on it. I think this is their agenda... their agenda is to rein us in and get control and to get rid of the people that are out there sponsoring the people they don't want. – Irene (Key Informant)

Originally referred to as “PSR Program Assurance” (RSTP, 2018b), the development of the Program Integrity Framework (PIF) is borne out of consultations between “IRCC and the Sponsorship Agreement Holder Council (SAH Council), the SAH Navigation Unit (NU) and the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)” (Jonathan, Key Informant). These actors are purported to have worked in collaboration to “create a Framework that serve[s] [their] shared objective of protecting refugees and ensuring they are adequately supported as they establish their new lives in Canada” (Jonathan, Key Informant). Frankling (2023) similarly notes that:

According to an email from IRCC spokesperson Stuart Isherwood, the federal department announced its new regulations, the Program Integrity Framework (PIF), after “extensive consultations with the SAH sponsorship community over the past few years.” The new rules, he said, included,

among other changes, increased requirements for SAHs to prove their financial capability before sponsoring refugees. (para. 5)

Frankling's (2023) comment implies a heightened requirement for Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) to "prove" their financial capacity before undertaking refugee sponsorship. This new development underscores one of the most significant changes imposed by the PIF, which Cortinovis and Fallone (2022) describe as being focused more broadly "on pre-arrival monitoring and aim[ed] at ensuring that relevant support structures are in place before refugees arrive in Canada" (p. 32). Ensuring sufficient support and a secure resettlement process for sponsored refugees is a shared objective among the main stakeholders involved in facilitating the PSR program, and my research did not encounter any points of disagreement on this matter.

The PIF categorizes SAHs based on three risk levels: Plan A—low risk, Plan B—moderate risk, and Plan C—elevated risk (IRCC, 2022d; Jonathan, Key Informant). A SAHs placement into these categories is directly correlated with their ability to complete a comprehensive audited financial statement and "prove" compliance with its requirements as specified by IRCC (Frankling, 2023). If these conditions are met, a SAH is placed in the lower-risk category and will be subject to less scrutiny and government oversight. SAHs that are unable to undergo a financial audit for any reason, will enter a higher risk category (Frankling, 2023). These categories require increased government monitoring and administrative tasks and can include a demonstration of full funds upfront, random checks of sponsored refugee cases, increased frequency of report submissions, and other procedures (Frankling, 2023; IRCC, 2022d; Jonathan, Key Informant). The assumption is that financial audited statements are a measure of assurance that sponsors have the required resources to meet the needs of sponsored refugees.

Over the years, both the government and bureaucrats have introduced various measures aimed at enhancing oversight of the PSR program. “In January 2019, the PSR Program, for the first time, conducted an assurance activity referred to as “proactive monitoring” (IRCC, 2021b). Participants recounted their experiences of these assurance activities and used terms such as “frightening” (Maya, Key Informant), “scared” (Semere, Sponsor), and “battle” (Christina, Key Informant) to express their sentiments of this process. The proactive monitoring activities were part of IRCC’s *Internal Audit of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program* in 2021 (IRCC, 2021b) from January 2019 to March 2021, and were intended to replace the historically “reactive” approach to monitoring sponsorship. According to IRCC (2021b), “the audit objective was to determine if a management framework [was] in place and operating effectively to enable the PSR Program to achieve its objectives and comply with program requirements.” The PIF emerged out of this process and was found to “be an important implementation tool towards building more rigour in the program and mitigating risks such as newcomers receiving inadequate support upon arrival” (IRCC, 2021b). What this indicates is that the efforts undertaken in recent years were focused on pre-arrival monitoring to ensure the effective delivery of post-arrival support for sponsored refugees.

Different perspectives emerge when analyzing the underlying contextual factors of the PIF. Concerns over gaps in monitoring activities, including the implementation of settlement plans, is a recurrent theme. These issues were initially identified during the evaluation of the PSR program by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in 2007 (CIC, 2007) and published in the *Summative Evaluation of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program* report. Advocates at the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) challenged this claim and suggested that under-reporting of program monitoring was a direct result of methodological issues with CIC’s questionnaire and not because

monitoring activities were lacking in practice (CCR, 2007). Yet this finding was reiterated in IRCC's 2016 *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*, despite also observing that refugees' essential needs were being met (IRCC, 2016a). The 2016 evaluation surmised that there was "a need to adopt a risk-based approach to monitoring to ensure PSRs are not left vulnerable in their first year" (IRCC, 2016a). Alongside this evaluation, IRCC conducted a more specific assessment³⁶ of "the early outcomes of the 2015-16 Syrian Refugee Initiative" (IRCC, 2016b, p. iv). The evaluation focused on the (re)settlement experiences of Syrians "as well as lessons learned and areas to monitor in the future" (IRCC, 2016b, p. iv). Some researchers assert that the outcomes of this initiative, particularly the disclosures about insufficient support (Clarke & Marlow, 2020; Cortinovis & Fallone, 2022), laid the groundwork for the PIF.

Similarly, Keung (2023) explains that because IRCC successively identified shortcomings of how the PSR program was monitored:

in late 2017, officials created the resettlement services assurance team to monitor whether resettled refugees were receiving the required financial and non-financial support from their sponsors, a task that was seen as having been carried out inconsistently by local offices. (para. 11)

The reference to "local offices" indicates IRCC's recognition of its own limitations. Specifically, the 2016 evaluation found that IRCC's own staff lacked clarity about their monitoring responsibilities and undertook such activities infrequently (IRCC, 2016b). This finding reinforces CCR's (2007) earlier assertion that the underreporting of monitoring activities highlights an implementation issue within IRCC. The Resettlement Services Assurance Team (RSAT) was given the centralized task of undertaking

³⁶ See here for more information on this assessment called the Rapid Impact Evaluation (RIE): <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.829617/publication.html>

monitoring/assurance activities on the PSR program (IRCC, 2021b; Jonathan, Key Informant).

Keung (2023) goes on to explain that since RSAT entered the scene in 2017, “a total of 821 sponsorships have been flagged for “case reviews” through external complaints and internal monitoring mechanism” (para. 12). However, in most cases, officials were able to resolve the issues with sponsors and “avoid a sponsorship breakdown and/or default” (Keung, 2023, p. 13). Between 2018 and 2022, Keung (2023) reports that “a total of 221 sponsorships broke down after sponsored refugees changed where they planned to live or a contention identified in the reviews could not be resolved. In 76 cases, the sponsors were found to be at fault” (para. 14). During the same timeframe, more than 52,760 refugees were privately sponsored and resettled to Canada (IRCC, 2019a, 2020, 2021a, 2022a) – not including the latest 2022 figures because they are not yet released. When assessing the number of PSRs resettled against the figures presented by Keung (2023), less than 0.419% of sponsorships resulted in ‘breakdowns³⁷.’ Given that PIF was scheduled to formally launch in June 2023 (Jonathan, Key Informant), its implementation cannot account for the relatively low number of sponsorships that dissolved between 2018 and 2021. Without knowing exactly how many ‘sponsorship breakdowns’ are reported year to year, this example indicates that they happen infrequently. A foolproof program is unrealistic given the intricacies of resettlement and the limitations posed by refugee protection scarcity at global, national, and local levels.

³⁷ “Sponsorship breakdown, according to the IRCC operational manual, is an official declaration that there is a failure to meet the sponsorship arrangement of care for the refugee applicants listed in the sponsorship undertaking, including situations where sponsorship terms are not being met for reasons beyond the sponsor’s control” (IRCC, 2016a).

Weaver (2023)³⁸ highlights another rationale for the PIF in the context of the Syrian refugee movement. According to her perspective, when Canada prepared to market the PSR program as a model to other states, this undertaking exposed areas that required improvement. Weaver (2023) is referring to the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative [GRSI], which is a joint multi-sectoral initiative that “works to encourage and support the adoption and expansion of community sponsorship programs around the world” (GRSI, n.d.; see also Smith, 2020), developed in response to growing interests in supporting refugees from Syria (Bradley & Duin, 2020). Although Weaver (2023) does not elaborate on the issues that were exposed, she contends that IRCC expanded its approach to monitoring following those discoveries alongside the launch of GRSI in 2016. Relatedly, one participant summarized it as an “increasing demand by the government for professionalization of the program” (Lola, Key Informant), while Grace (Key Informant) described it “as the federal government push[ing] more and more towards what they’re calling modernizing the program.” In each of the above views, an audit culture and evaluation initiatives have played key roles in shaping IRCC’s response to observed gaps in the PSR program.

In more conceptual terms, the intersecting issues of program scalability, accountability, trust, and control emerge as important considerations for the development of PIF. Casting a broader net of analysis, Weaver (2023) suggests that the single most contributing factor that has triggered the rise of the PIF has resulted from the unintentional scaling up of the PSR program. IRCC (2021b) reported that “historically, the PSR Program was a small, niche program... but “has recently quadrupled in size and now represents two-thirds of Canada’s resettlement program admissions.”

³⁸ Lynn Weaver was the senior program manager at the Canadian Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association until June 2023.

According to Weaver (2023), the trust-based ‘spirit’ of the program was feasible when it operated at a smaller scale but not at the current size with 141 SAHs³⁹. Herein, the unplanned evolution or the growth of the program as Keung (2023) reports, is used as a frame of reference to contextualize the government’s predilection to deepen its control over refugee sponsorship.

Weaver (2023) points to concerns about accountability as another contributing factor. IRCC (2021b) stated:

With this significant growth, the program has experienced an increase of observed integrity concerns, shortfalls in supports provided to refugees post-arrival (example, income support, adequate housing), fraud (example, use of falsified financial or identify documents) and cases of exploitation (example, sponsors requiring refugees to self-fund or pay to be sponsored).

Consequently, “in 2018 and 2019, the Department ramped up its monitoring of the PSR program” (IRCC, 2021b). Weaver (2023) argues that the government took a “lowest common denominator approach” instead of a “trusted partner approach” (Weaver, 2023) in response to observed issues. In other words, IRCC sets program-wide standards to guard against fraud or abuses of the program (Clarke & Marlow, 2020; Cortinovis & Fallone, 2022; The Editorial Board, 2023; Weaver, 2023) although they account for the exceptions rather than the norm.

Several participants in my research shared Weaver’s (2023) observation about IIRC’s blanket intent to safeguard against select cases of fraud or abuse. As Maria (Key Informant) stated, “the reality is that trust has been broken because of a few bad apples that have taken advantage and we are working with a vulnerable population.” Similarly, Luke (Key Informant) characterized it as the government having a “reaction” to

³⁹ At the end of 2022, there were 137 SAHs as referenced in Chapter 3. By July 18, 2023, four SAHs were added to the national list for a total of 141.

the “few bad apples in the group,” who did not “comply” with their settlement responsibilities or “did not have proper controls in place.” Luke explains further that this “ended up being a blight on the entire community.” In other words, it was these exceptions that boosted oversight of the PSR program in more recent years.

Other participants held more pronounced viewpoints regarding the implementation of PIF. In Willa’s (Key Informant) view, “the government works from a basis of distrust,” which is in direct contrast to how refugee sponsorship has been operationalized by grassroots communities on the ground. Willa stated, “I work with churches who I trust, and for the most part, they’ll go above and beyond what’s required.” A lack of trust, for Willa, is an issue that stems from the government more so than the sponsorship community. Another key informant, Irene, felt that the PIF had more to do with border controls: “[the government] is bent on controlling immigration on all aspects, and this is one little element of immigration they haven’t been able to control.” Reflecting on her more than 40 years of sponsorship experience, Irene further expressed: “every year it’s worse. Every year they invent something to make it so, so bad.” In Irene’s view, the government is concerned “that civil society has too much initiative and too much ability to do what ‘civil society wants to do,’ and they’re going to clamp down on that and make [civil society] answer who [the government] want[s] to sponsor.” From Irene’s perspective, the PIF is yet another proxy measure aimed at restricting sponsorship based on racialized and geographic lines without naming race (Hyndman, 2019; Mongia, 1999; see also Balibar & Wallerstein, 1993).

The above narratives suggest that the PIF has emerged out of i) a persistent culture of government audits and evaluations, which have resulted in proactive monitoring activities and commitments to strengthen oversight; ii) the popularity and unplanned growth of the PSR program, which is said to have necessitated greater

controls; *iii*) concerns over inadequate program deliverables and thereby, the desire to enhance accountability and trust; and, *iv*) growing commitments to safeguard against fraud and abuses; and *v*) the government's inherent distrust and unspoken resolve to manage racialized migration across its borders. Although these perspectives differ, they align in portraying the PSR program's progression as a gradual shift toward a highly bureaucratized top-down monitoring system (Denton, 2003b; Lange, 2020; Weaver, 2023) that neither honours the community-based, voluntary 'spirit' of the program nor the collaborative and responsibility sharing foundation it was built on (Cameron, 2020; Labman, 2016, 2020). Given the recency of the PIF, there have not been any studies to explore its practice and implications.

To address this gap, I draw upon my empirical research which discusses the PIF and applies the theories, ideas, and studies associated with neoliberalism and privatization. My analysis considers the classed and racialized implications of the PIF at the scale of community. Three themes and two sub-themes are discussed based on my empirical findings. The first theme underscores participants' sentiments of assurance and monitoring activities and the subsequent implementation of the PIF. In the second thematic section, I discuss the administrative burdens and the effects it has had on SAHs and sponsors. The final section demonstrates some of the ways in which the PIF threatens the equity and sustainability of refugee sponsorship. This analysis is instrumental for understanding the empirical implications of the PIF as drawn out from my research and contextualized in the literature.

Frustration, fear, and disempowerment: Lack of transparency over new federal regulations

The introduction of the PIF occurred while I was conducting my fieldwork. Given its significance to how the PSR program would be newly monitored, it was a topic many participants discussed without prompting. While participants zeroed in on a wide range of issues, most expressed frustration, fear, and disempowerment regarding its impending implementation. These sentiments were largely rooted in what they felt was an opaque, top-down, and exclusionary process and illustrate the struggle with being made to bear the weight of neoliberal governance at the community scale (Herbert, 2005). As one participant shared:

Moving forward, there are a lot of requirements now from IRCC. We are not yet sure what they want, [and] they say that they will be asking for more. Only in recent years, has IRCC been conducting monitoring, either randomly or actively... A lot of SAHs have been monitored recently. We are still waiting [to hear about] the Program Integrity Framework, there's nothing definitive. In preparation for that, we are trying our best to do what we can to ensure that our SAH is somehow protected, because when a SAH is suspended, because of the monitoring and IRCC is not satisfied, some SAHs have been suspended for... I don't know how long, but when a SAH is suspended, all of their [sponsorship] applications, whether they're approved, whether medicals are done, or whether they're coming, all of these are affected and might not come. (Christina, Key Informant)

Christina explained that despite being well into IRCC's monitoring process, SAHs were still unclear on what to expect from the PIF. She went on to say that the SAH community anticipated learning more from IRCC about the developments. Being kept in the dark compelled Christina's SAH to proactively 'self-protect' out of fear that they could be "suspended." The fear of not knowing how the PIF would translate into consequences drove some SAHs to consider extra precautions, which is a theme I return to below. Though consultations were held with key actors as noted in the introduction to this chapter (Frankling, 2023; Jonathan, Key Informant), the sponsorship community did not always feel abreast of the process.

Similarly, Semere (Sponsor) expressed frustration with IRCC's ambiguity, and shared the following reflection about the annual SAH conference he attended in November 2022 a month after a key aspect of the PIF was launched:

I was at the conference as well, the SAH conference that was held in Toronto last month. One of the big problems was that IRCC wasn't giving us the right answers to any questions that we asked. They were just going around beating the bush. They don't really want to answer our questions. And I just saw the power imbalance between the SAHs and IRCC. It looks like the SAHs have become this flock, let's say a flock of sheep, that just follow orders, and we don't really have any power now. That's what I noticed. IRCC has all the power. It looks like we are just obeying whatever they say, we are scared that they might take our license and our agreements, and we don't have any input. We just follow whatever they say, or we just do whatever they say. We don't have a say at the table. IRCC just does whatever it wants. I think that should be something that should be discussed.

Whenever you ask any question, they just don't answer the question, then they just go around and misguide you. For example, about the PIF, the Program Integrity Framework, we asked about the deadline, and the timeline, we asked about how it's going to affect the allocations, we asked about this and that, and we even asked how and who is going to assess those PIF applications and how they are going to be assessed – is someone just going to sit there, maybe someone who is going to be assigned one or two applications that they check and they just give you the results?

Like Christina, Semere shared his concerns about the opaqueness of the PIF process and how this made SAHs afraid and complacent. Semere not only felt that IRCC provided evasive responses to specific questions about the PIF, but he also explained how SAHs were completely without “any power” as a result. In other words, IRCC's top-down approach did not always consider the voices and needs of SAHs. This power imbalance is also an observation made by Weaver (2023), who suggests that “a stakeholder-driven approach would consider what the community thinks is a good job in carrying out sponsorship, [and] what integrity mean[s] for them?” In contrast to the findings in the literature (Elwood, 2003; Fraser, 2018; Lippert, 1998), these instances demonstrate that the policies of neoliberalism implemented at the community scale do

not lead to a perception of increased empowerment or a sense that communities can exert significant influence. Expanding on Weaver's (2023) suggestion, a more effective balance between accountability and oversight would strive to re-distribute power in a way that acknowledges sponsors as essential partners within the PSR program.

A new form of privatization at finer scales of community

An ongoing tension within the PSR program concerns IRCC's approach to expand assurance and monitoring measures. Many sponsors have reported their frustrations with the steep administrative burdens (e.g., paperwork, financial, and settlement) imposed by the PIF onto largely voluntary-driven efforts (Frankling, 2023; Keung, 2023; The Editorial Board, 2023), raising legitimate worries about the sustainability of the PSR program as disillusionment with the process intensifies. Based on testimony from my participants, the findings reveal the PIF has introduced significant bureaucratic hurdles and has financialized refugee protection in unprecedented ways.

Banal or not so banal bureaucracy?

Many participants in my research raised concerns about the ongoing and impending bureaucracy associated with the PIF. Leading up to the PIF, SAHs had to attend numerous information and training sessions (from May 2022 to February 2023) and undergo "organizational assessment as a foundation-setting exercise" (Jonathan, Key Informant). Every SAH, whether new or existing, was mandated to participate in the 'organizational assessment'⁴⁰ as a re/validation exercise. Semere (Sponsor) reached out

⁴⁰ IRCC defines the organizational assessment as follows: "Under the Program Integrity Framework (PIF) for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program, each Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) will go through an Organizational Assessment exercise. This exercise is completed at the beginning of each five-year Sponsorship Agreement cycle to ensure SAHs remain well positioned to meet the requirements to support their sponsored caseload." See here for more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees->

to me after our initial interview because he felt it was important to document his SAH's experience with the revalidation process, which commenced in September 2022. He shared that:

There have been a lot of roadblocks. This is due to the SAH, the Sponsorship Agreement Holders, not getting their allocations on time this year. It was pushed and pushed and pushed, and now that's created a lot of backlogs in our offices. We are just scrambling to send all the information in on time. But on top of that, we also had to try the PIF in which they have been asking more than twenty-six or twenty-five questions, and those questions have been just the same question repeated again and again.

But their main focus was on monitoring, again; do we really do the follow up necessary in the process? Arrival monitoring: you really follow up what you promised to do? Do you check their info? Do you check their SIN number? Do you check this and that.... It's basically trying to see if we are doing things the way we should. The main problem is that the questions could have been two to three, but I don't know what they wanted to get out of it, but it was just a bunch of questions repeated here and there. And that took a big chunk of my time or our time because we had to do both at the same time: we had to submit our applications and take care of this application because you can just write it and ignore it.

Semere was evidently frustrated with the lengthy process involved in preparing the assessment package and felt constrained to do so alongside the demands of routine sponsorship activities. While Semere worked at a larger SAH, Maya (Key Informant) shared "in terms of like as a smaller SAH working off the sides of our desk 'because none of us has a full-time job,' it was hugely time-consuming to do all of the things they asked for." This suggests that even if the size, capacity, and caseloads vary among SAHs, time poverty – as in a shortage of sponsors' time – is a shared challenge.

The issue of bureaucracy and time poverty were also understood to be consequential for Constituent Groups (CGs) and co-sponsors that formally partner with

[citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0166-sponsorship-holder-agreement.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0166-sponsorship-holder-agreement.html) and <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/assessments/organizational-assessment.html>

SAHs, and primarily undertake family-linked sponsorship. As Maria (Key Informant) explained:

Once IRCC introduced assurance activities in 2019, and in the way that they introduce them, which was this very heavy-handed approach of requiring proofs of support in ways that our community was not used to or had not previously tracked in the ways IRCC was requiring.

It was IRCC's "heavy-handed approach" leading up to and in preparation for the PIF (IRCC, 2021b) that caused some SAHs to change the way they managed their partnerships or collaborations. One participant shared the following about the changes enacted at her SAH:

It is always frightening that at any moment we can be phoned up and said, "you're being audited." And trying to get all the CGs to fill all their [paperwork]... we've developed tracking tables, like "when the groups' family arrives, make sure you write down who and where and when you went to the doctor because you're not going to remember" and they're going to give us an email saying, "in a week, prove that you gave this person supports in every way." Well, we did, but like, I don't remember, right? So, but so, imagine like these constituent groups who are, you know, doing everything they can to help these people settle also have to do some bookkeeping and record tracking and all of that stuff on top of it, just in case we are audited, and we need to prove it. And they don't give you any time barely to get that evidence together. (Maya, Key Informant)

Maya raises several issues about IRCC's (2021b) proactive monitoring activities. First, she expresses unease over the looming possibility of "being audited," which can be likened to the perception of a constant, panoptic surveillance machinery as depicted in Orwell's dystopian vision. Maya's testimony then spells out some of the measures her SAH took to develop a "tracking" system for their CGs to gather evidence, highlighting the extra work it created for them. This approach was meant to circumvent the consequences of a 'surprise' audit by ensuring they had adequately documented their settlement activities.

Like Maya, Christina's (Key Informant) SAH implemented several changes preemptively.

We are still in a quandary because of the PIF... we heard that with the PIF, they might ask [for] money at the beginning. Or maybe at medicals, IRCC might be asking [for] the full amount. If that happens... we have old cases that we didn't ask for those, and the capacity to update those forms [is] not in our favour. I remind [co-sponsors] that this might happen, but because we have to focus also on what we're doing now with all these follow-ups... so many things going on. If we can, we update the undertaking but sometimes we don't have the capacity to do that.

I'm not sure what will happen... so right now we are still thinking [about] what we should [do]; what we shall be doing apart from asking for the deposit. What about for the in-kind support? How do we prove that? Why are we subtracting the maximum amount when there is no proof? I think that is the battle right now.

Yesterday I spoke with the parish priest, and they are willing to get involved, meaning they volunteered for the in-kind support that they will really be providing. And I said "that's wonderful, I don't have to make a statement of declaration for the co-sponsors" because it's really very difficult lately to chase after once they arrive here. Sometimes you cannot get hold of them... We are still thinking about [documenting] the in-kind supports because we haven't really done that... Last year, if we look back, we subtracted in-kind support without any declaration, just the assumption that when they come here, the in-kind support will be given to them. For example, the furniture, which is the bulk of the amount, like 70% can be subtracted, and that's 1000 something. You have to maybe prove that you did give... if you are giving something... [do you] take a picture? Or are you giving the picture to us? So right now, moving forward... because we don't even know, we're just brainstorming.

Christina delves into more specific detail about the impact of IRCC's assurance and monitoring activities on the funds and in-kind support. Her SAH primarily co-sponsors with "relatives," who are now expected to "provide everything" except for "community and spiritual support." One significant issue that Christina raised concerned asking co-sponsors for the full deposit upfront, which is not characteristic of how her SAH previously operated. She said, "when [I] say, 'oh, this is the amount' and they say, 'oh, I never thought that is the amount because based on the understanding before it was just

like this and how come it's very big now.” These interactions prompt Christina to “look at the numbers” with her co-sponsors to achieve mutual understanding.

Semere (Sponsor) also observed that the PIF was “becoming a big problem now because most SAHs are now asking for the full amount of money.” Semere further explained, “let’s say if you’re sponsoring a family of five, you’ll need \$30,000 or \$32,000. So how could you afford that?” Both Christina and Semere were deeply concerned about their co-sponsors’ capacity to provide full funds upfront, and what this meant for who would be able to sponsor and thereby, which refugees could be resettled and protected. Only one participant shared that his SAH was already asking for funds upfront:

I mean, one practice that we’ve done for the last couple of years before I even started when we work with co-sponsors, we do take the funds beforehand. We do 25% before we submit the application, the next 25% once it’s approved within Canada, and the last 50% once they get the go-ahead overseas and they have their notice of travel. (Jonathan, Key Informant)

Given that upfront costs were built into the practice of Jonathan’s SAH, he did not have to contemplate the prospective impact of this new requirement.

With regard to in-kind support, Christina (Key Informant) expressed confusion over *what* and *how* to document these supports and noted this was ‘the’ “battle” they were facing. For Christina’s SAH and likely others whose co-sponsors are relatives or family members, it was uncommon for these partners to actively document in-kind support provided to loved ones. Concerns were based on how existing practices would translate into IRCC’s new assessment regime. Maria (Key Informant) also acknowledged that IRCC did not immediately clarify “who should be tracking what proofs of support and for what reason.” These findings further corroborate what participants reported about the opaqueness of the PIFs pre-implementation process, but also underscores that opacity was an ongoing issue as IRCC rolled out the monitoring framework.

The implementation of tracking systems, upfront deposits, and documenting in-kind support constrain time and create additional labour for SAHs and their formal partners. This downloads further work onto sponsors who are unpaid. Weaver (2023) uses the term “over-bureaucratization” to characterize the overarching concern with the PIF and to underscore the growth and intensification of administrative burdens it has downloaded onto sponsors. While the PIF applies only to SAHs and not to the other PSR configuration (Cortinovis & Fallone, 2022), bureaucratic interventions in refugee sponsorship have persisted over time. In his plenary speech two decades ago, Denton (2003b) flagged the issue of bureaucratization saying: “isn’t it interesting how bureaucracies - any bureaucracy - seem to have a perverse capacity to take something simple and make it increasingly complicated, surrounding it with layer upon layer of rules until the initial goals are subverted, frustrated” (Denton, 2003b, p. 5). Throughout his speech, Denton (2023b) reflected on the initial simplicity of the program and the growing emphasis to ‘professionalize’ it over two decades. More recently, Lange (2020) wrote about how the PSR program has become more formalized (legalized), making it unnecessarily complex and daunting for sponsors beyond pure volunteerism.

Though bureaucratization is not new to the PSR program, it had not previously experienced the scale of bureaucratic structuring brought on by the PIF. Arguably, the PIF could not have been introduced without the 2010 bureaucratic restructuring of SAHs under a “national framework” (Hyndman, 2022, p. 6), which IRCC governs through SAH Council. This indicates that what may seem like banal bureaucracy (Hyndman, 2019; Reynolds & Hyndman, 2021), including structural changes that appear benign at first glance, risks propagating disadvantages along lines of resource and income equality.

Governing by numbers: Finances, statements, and risk

Neoliberalism and privatization in action are also evident in the PIFs requirement for financial audited statements. These statements make up the second element of the SAH organizational assessment process and are referred to as “IRCC[’s] Operating Risk Analysis.”⁴¹ SAHs who meet the re/validation exercise requirement proceed to the three-tiered “scored [operating] risk analysis” discussed above (IRCC, 2022d; Jonathan, Key Informant). This analysis is based on broad criteria that consider a SAH’s organizational structure, financial and settlement capacity, and other metrics. In corroboration with what some SAHs have reported to the press (Franking, 2023; Keung, 2023), participants in my research were exasperated by the steep administrative costs associated with the audited statement and how it redirects/implicates finite resources in critical ways.

The financial audit cost us. What was it... \$12,000. Like that’s start-ups... we’ve brought two Eritreans to [BC], and that was enough just to get them started, get a place, rent it, and find them work and get them going, right? That’s two people who are not going to be coming, right? It’s [a] ridiculous, ridiculous waste of time and money. And when I wrote it up in my SAH report, I said, well, I can tell exactly how many hours that I couldn’t devote to supporting sponsorships in place, like settlement of people in place because of this, because of the PIF. Right. It’s just absolutely ridiculous. (Maya, Key Informant)

Maya poignantly reflected on how the funds her SAH was made to direct to their financial audit meant that two fewer refugees would be sponsored and resettled. She also explained that the time it took to administrate the processes detracted from the time she would have otherwise spent on settlement activities.

One participant shared how the requirement for a financial audited statement obstructed him from applying to become a SAH. First Mikail (Sponsor) shared some

⁴¹ See here for more detailed information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0166-sponsorship-holder-agreement.html>

background context for why he and members of his community were attempting to become a SAH. In 2018, Mikail along with others in the Oromo community, partnered with a major faith-based SAH in their locale after working in partnership with the SAH to sponsor and resettle Oromo refugees. The coordinator whom they worked with “advised [them] to become a SAH for [themselves] after she saw that all the applications were for Oromos and read [their] history from there, and [previously she] did not know what [their] background was.” Mikail explained that “Oromos were the largest refugee population back then, but the spots [they] were getting [allocated from the SAH] were very small [because they fell] under the ‘Ethiopian’ umbrella.” With the coordinator’s support, they were galvanized to start a SAH application in 2019 focused specifically on extending protection to Oromo refugees who were otherwise were not being supported in earnest.

Mikail (Sponsor) along with other members of their Oromo community organization were in the process of becoming a SAH, but they had to withdraw their application as he explains below:

And then just last year [in 2021], we were almost close to becoming a SAH. We did test[s] and all the certifications. We showed all of what we have in our bank and everything, but only because we didn’t have the audited financial report, we didn’t become SAH. And then we moved [the plan] for this year, and then we were in the process of getting all our documents together, but our auditor informed us that he needs at least \$25,000 to audit our community. And this community doesn’t have even ... we don’t have that much money in our bank. So now we are just... we are dropping to become a SAH. We cannot afford to pay [for] that auditing. We consulted the community. And then even after you pay that amount, you might not become a SAH. Even if you get the community to fundraise the \$25,000, you do the financial auditing... and IRCC doesn’t guarantee you to become a SAH. They have their own way of allowing you to become a SAH. We didn’t want to take a chance; we don’t have those funds. And so, we are dropping, [but] we’ll continue sponsoring through churches or groups of five also community sponsors.

Their Oromo community organization, as Mikail explains, did not have the funds required to pay for an audit, and even if they were able to fundraise, they were not prepared to

risk losing \$25,000 because there was no guarantee that they would be approved by IRCC to become a SAH. Mikail's (Sponsor) experience is also shared by Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee who reported that it would not be "feasible" for her church-based SAH to do a "full financial audit" due to the "sheer scale" of the work they do (as cited in Frankling, 2023, para. 8). As administrative costs are downloaded onto SAHs, it has raised their expenditure without them having a way to pay for it. Both the labour and finances required from SAHs under the new set of regulations have proved challenging for some in the sponsorship community.

In contrast, my findings reveal several instances where participants noted that their SAH could manage audited financial statements. Jonathan (Key Informant) said:

You know, I think we're set up pretty well for the PIF. We'll find out more when more information becomes available in the fall... **as a larger church** [emphasis added], we already do that. IRCC is being gracious enough to say, yes, even if you don't have to have an audited statement just for your refugee program because that is just a small piece of what our church does, they're OK with us just submitting their regular reports, so that's good.

Overall, Jonathan's SAH was not concerned about finances as a "stressor" associated with the PIF. Here is how another participant analyzed this:

The government is considering that all Sponsorship Agreement Holders have to have audited financial statements. We're talking about an external auditor, right? I mean, that costs a lot of money. An organization like mine, you know, we are being audited already, so it makes no difference for us. But we've heard even from some of the faith-based organizations that they are not having audited statements right now because they haven't had a need for that, right? And so, it's very interesting what's going on there, and so we'll see what impact that will have on those communities. I'm a little bit worried about it frankly. (Lola, Key Informant)

Although Lola explains that her SAH is not directly affected by the audit requirement, she is concerned about the "impact" it will have on communities that are not set up for it like hers and Jonathan's. Similarly, Semere (Sponsor) shared the following:

Fortunately, we had that already done last because of the change in the Board. The Board has to do usually an audit once they are leaving. We had that, but they were asking for 18 months. They were not asking just this year or six months or three months. They asked for 18 months. Within those 18 months if you have done the auditing, then you submit it. **But what I noticed is a lot of those small SAHs who can't afford to pay** [emphasis added]... it is crazy, sometimes it is \$7,000 up to \$10,000 and those small organizations that I met at the conference were struggling. A lot of them were asking for an extension because they couldn't do the auditing on time.

Semere highlights an important point about “small SAHs who can't afford to pay” for the audit, and their request to IRCC for an extension.

If SAHs are not even able to obtain an extension as Semere (Sponsor), explained, they have the option to not provide audited financial statements, but this comes with consequences. As IRCC stated, “SAHs that choose not to submit audited financial statements will have the alternate option to be managed under the “elevated” Risk Management Plan C” (IRCC, 2022d; Jonathan, Key Informant). Here is how Jonathan (Key Informant) analyzed the outcome of this alternative:

So they're doing assessments on every organization and there's a high-risk category, medium, and low-risk. And so they're kind of assuming that most of the SAHs will be in the low risk to medium risk, **but if you don't want to do an audited statement because some SAHs are really small, that's a large financial kind of cost to get that done, I think they would kind be in the high-risk category** [emphasis added] and they have to do a lot of like... IRCC will do a lot of checking in on them, like monthly for different applications, and they have to do a lot... It's a lot more work for them upfront.

Essentially, Jonathan explained that smaller SAHs who are not financially equipped to complete the costly audit have no choice but to opt-out and thereby be placed in the ‘elevated’ or highest risk category. Semere (Sponsor) also shared a few thoughts about the implications of this alternative:

My understanding is that the risk categories will of course affect allocations because, if say you are high risk, why should they give you 200 or 500 allocations [i.e., number of people]? They will just say, ‘OK, deal with it.’ And the other I think it's going to be heavily monitored, monitoring and

scrutinizing. I think they're going to say, 'OK, send me that, send me this proof of money deposit, send me the proof of the in-kind deductions that you asked for.' I think that's going to be the next step that they are going to implement if you are [at] higher risk. I mean, this is my understanding of the situation, but they didn't give any clear guidance about it. (Semere, Sponsor)

Compared to Jonathan (Key Informant), Semere (Sponsor) was quite distressed about what would happen to SAHs who are not able to foot the cost of a financial audited statement.⁴² He was particularly upset about the potential of curtailed allocations and what this could mean for sponsorship overall.

The themes above indicate that IRCC's monitoring framework is highly correlated with the ethos and implications of neoliberalism (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021; Labman, 2019; Lenard, 2016), whereby sponsors are made to take on the state's bureaucratic and financial responsibility for resettlement. Operating from the premise that the PIF is neoliberalism enacted at a finer community scale, I argue that it is a new form of privatization. While the PIF is driven by a desire to increase accountability, heightened government oversight has resulted in more stringent regulations that trickledown to the community scale in various ways. First, it has downloaded management and self-auditing responsibilities onto the private sector/sponsorship community, forcing sponsors to troubleshoot issues with limited guidance and support.

Second, the public-private 'partnership' between IRCC and SAHs is further off-loaded onto the relationship between SAHs and their CGs and co-sponsors. Given that SAHs are responsible for their formal partners as discussed in Chapter Four, the PIF has caused SAHs to become regulatory enforcers of their sponsors, whereas previously

⁴² IRCC (2022d) subsequently implemented a "one-time exemption for the initial 2022 Organizational Assessment." See here for more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0166-sponsorship-holder-agreement.html>

they operated based on trust and mutual allyship. In IRCC's own words, "SAH Oversight and Monitoring of Partners and Sponsored Cases" (IRCC, 2022d; Jonathan, Key Informant) constitute one criterion that determines which risk category in which they will be placed. Thus, the tracking and scrutinizing of formal partners are vital to ensuring that SAHs do not get penalized yet fail to account for the additional labour these activities download onto both parties.

Third, the PIF shifts the burden of risk from the government to sponsors, which is rooted in neoliberal market logic. Based on the findings, it is evident that the three-tiered risk categories, along with other proactive assurance activities, were meant to instill fear if SAHs fail to comply with the sponsorship standards set by IRCC. Thus, despite the state's devolution of authority, privatization of responsibilities, and off-loading of administrative burdens, it remains indirectly in control through a shadow state (Benson, 2022). Not only do the risk categories give the government a mechanism to cascade the surveillance of SAHs, but they also tacitly encourage community-based surveillance. In these ways, I contend that the PIF is privatization at finer scales.

PIFs (un)intended consequences: Threats to equity and sustainability in private refugee sponsorship

IRCC's 'professionalization' of the PSR program has had many (un)intended consequences both for pre-existing SAHs and SAHs who are in the making, and potentially for future SAHs. The findings above elucidate that the consequences of the PIF are differentiated between SAHs who are 'large', staffed, and well-resourced, compared to those who are 'small' (largely) voluntary-run, and under-resourced. According to Keung (2023), and Frankling (2023), evidence released by the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association [SAH Association] in a statement

to the press shows that among its nationwide membership, the new federal rules prove to be onerous for some 30% of SAHs who are 100% run by volunteers, and another 12% who have just one part-time staff member. Keung (2023) also notes that this 42% of SAHs collectively oversee the sponsorship and resettlement of several hundred refugees to Canada annually.

Importantly, as my research finds, many racialized diaspora SAHs are largely run by volunteers and struggle with organizational capacity, finances, and time constraints in distinct ways. Presumably, they will also struggle disproportionately from IRCC's increased scrutiny and administrative demands. Several participants echoed this very concern about the PIF:

But I think one of the concerns, in terms in terms of the issues we see emerging as the federal government pushes more and more towards what they're calling modernizing the program, is that there's a risk of the volunteer-run SAHs being left behind. Not exclusively, but often that is the, you know, to use your term, the racialized diaspora associations, you know, they're more loosely formed or maybe have formed just around sponsorship and not, you know, aren't part of a larger entity that's staffed, and all that. But given amongst... just using the churches as an example, maybe the SAH staff are volunteers, but then the church itself still has administrative staff and financial staff that can support it. You know, versus if it's more of a community-based grassroots thing, which is what the whole spirit that the program was founded on, yeah, then there's no capacity to keep up with all the administrative changes while also doing good support at the community level. Like, it's becoming something that requires staffing.
(Grace, Key Informant)

For Grace, the PSR program is "becoming something that requires staffing" due to the rising administrative requirements, and she worries "that there's a risk of the volunteer-run SAHs [i.e., racialized diaspora associations] being left behind" as a result. Other participants narrowed in specifically on the structural inequalities that underlie these challenges, such as those related to neoliberalism that Elcioglu (2021) discussed in her research.

And you know, I'm sure someone with fancy wording could do everything to prove that they're doing a good job, right? It's not going to improve. I don't believe it's going to protect people. You know, they say it's because there's abuse and people are not being supported when they come here. I don't believe that's going to meet that goal, it's just going to prevent people from doing that. So yeah, it's very, very frustrating. **And I think it's going to impact a lot of smaller groups, which is going to be a lot of these SAHs made up of former refugees because they're not going to have the funds to do that or the wherewithal** [emphasis added]. It was a ton of work, a ton of work. And you're working a full-time job and you have a more physically demanding job as a former refugee because you can't get, you know, easier office work, than it's like, when are you going to do that? (Maya, Key Informant)

Maya astutely recognized that "SAHs made up former refugees" would be impacted not only because of their organizational capacity like Grace (Key Informant) and others note, but also because of the more physically demanding full-time jobs they are likely to work. Maya further noted "country-specific groups made up of former refugees, they're doing this work off the side of their desk. So of course, they can't attend... [preparatory and advocacy-based] meetings because they're working, right?" Unlike sponsors with economic, social, and other privilege (Macklin et al., 2018), racialized sponsors who have entered Canada as newcomers must confront a new labour market in which they may not have fluency in English or French, and experience deskilling and downward mobility (Ritchie, 2018; Yousuf & Berry, 2021). Navigating the rising inequality perpetuated by neoliberalism (Elcioglu & Shams, 2023) adds additional strain onto racialized sponsors and potentially creates a cycle where those who are structurally disadvantaged will find it increasingly more difficult to support kin in need of protection.

What effect will the risk framework have on SAHs differentiated by economic, social, and other privileges, such as those made up of racialized diaspora sponsors? In effect, the PIF stratifies sponsorship into well-defined 'risk' groups based on SAHs' organizational capacity but fails to account for the structural challenges that impede their ability to meet the demands of the PSR program. Will this demographic of sponsors land

in the higher risk categories and be subjected to greater surveillance and scrutiny, while potentially having to do more work to manage the heightened bureaucratic requirements, despite being understaffed or understaffed, under-resourced, and overstretched to begin with? What does this mean for 'who gets to decide' which refugees are granted protection, and what implications, if any, will this have on 'who gets in' and 'who is left out.' Two participants speculated that the potential curtailment of sponsorship led by those who were former refugees would exacerbate family separation: As Cemma (Sponsor) put it: "we all are worried about it, that it can lead to further separation of families." Semere (Sponsor) echoed this concern, saying that "it will cause and extend family separation."

Alongside SAHs, the PIF also poses a threat to equity for co-sponsors in at least one way. As Chapters Four and Five find, co-sponsors who formally partner with SAHs are largely former refugees who support relational sponsorship. Thus, the requirement for upfront costs is bound to disproportionately impact this demographic of sponsors and family-linked cases. In Semere's view, the PIF will create a classist system whereby "anyone who has money, who is able to afford that amount of money, can come to Canada" (Semere, Sponsor). This concern was also shared by Christina (Key Informant):

Before when people say we don't have money, for example, they fall under family-link but... they don't have the money upfront and they really want help, so they go to us... Then lately because of the program integrity review, things have really changed. We have to ensure that the funds are in deposit. We have done that very recently, not more than two years, just recently. Before we do not ask for any single cent. We don't. It's based on the trust.

Christina explained that her SAH was no longer able to work with co-sponsors to support family-linked cases based on "trust" because the changes from the "program integrity review, [has meant they] have to ensure the funds are in deposit." As a result, only those

family members who can provide the funds upfront are able to co-sponsor with their SAH. Neoliberalism at the scale of the community can thus be seen to propagate and maintain power and privilege.

To this end, the PIF poses a threat to equity and potentially creates a classist system because it privileges SAHs and sponsors that are well-resourced while disenfranchising SAHs and sponsors with more limited resources. It does so because racialized diaspora sponsors are newcomers who, on average, have less income and may have less access to resources compared to non-diaspora sponsors. This bifurcation also assumes that greater economic resources equate to favourable sponsorship outcomes for resettled refugees. As Weaver (2023) says, having finances in order does not guarantee successful sponsorship. Building on what Lehr and Dyck (2020) argue in their book chapter, the PIF becomes a hierarchized system that gives primacy to the economic capacity of sponsors, family members, and/or privileged networks in Canada, with little regard given to the non-market activities beyond the scope of marketized neoliberal ethos. As Abdii (Sponsor) implored:

What about things beyond the material help that our SAHs are doing, like emotional and so many things attached to that? How can we measure the emotional aspect of the work some relatives [co-sponsors] do, like for the person she or he sponsors? So how can we evaluate it? How can we measure that?

For Abdii, the “tracking [of] the finance, the money they give to the refugees, the newcomers” only goes so far. He contends that more could be done to measure the non-materiality of sponsorship and views these contributions as a valuable metric for meeting the PIFs objective to ensure a secure resettlement process for sponsored refugees. Although exceptional cases of fraud and abuse are identified (IRCC, 2021b), PIF comes down hard on those quietly volunteering and funding refugees through sponsorship.

On a more global level, at least one participant recognized that monitoring activities sidelined other important conversations about equity: “So I think that was really poor timing because that monitoring and all of that started up and it became the focus of all of our meetings, is “how are we going to deal with this?” (Maya, Key Informant)

And I think another barrier is probably all that we’re dealing with right now in terms of attacks on the private sponsorship of refugees. So that has been the survival mode of SAHs. And so, when that happens, how much time, even though addressing that requires an equitable approach and addressing the issues of equity so that you can really make effective change? It’s not a priority anymore because right now you’re working on let’s address this threat to our existence, right? So, I think that was really poor timing because that monitoring and all of that started up and it became the focus of all of our meetings, is “how are we going to deal with this?” (Maya, Key Informant)

For Maya, the PIF and its associated activities silenced important discussions and initiatives aimed at making visible/meeting the needs of equity-denied sponsorship groups, such as racialized diasporas made up of former refugees.

The second threat that the PIF poses is to the sustainability of the overall program. Several participants speculated that the new monitoring measures introduced through the PIF would curtail sponsorship across the program (i.e., for both large and small SAHs). Taking a global perspective on the program, Luke (Key Informant) recounted the following:

IRCC, with this whole process that they’re trying to formalize, this framework so much is that they unknowingly have had a significant impact on the overall SAH community. Not only is it more difficult for a new community to become a SAH, but there are at least a dozen SAHs that are going to drop off and I don’t know how many others are going to fall into the same category as [our SAH].

By Luke’s estimate, at least 12 SAHs would “drop off” because of the PIF, while he was not sure how many would end up in a higher risk category (like his large SAH) for not being able to or willing to foot the cost of a financial audit. According to Keung (2023)

“the [Toronto] Star has learned that as many as 10 organizations have said they’re unable to continue their work, meaning fewer refugees would be sponsored down the road” (para. 6), “including the Anglican diocese in British Columbia” who has terminated their program (para. 6). Luke’s speculation was evidently precise.

Semere (Sponsor) reflected on the prospect of the PIF challenging the sustainability of sponsorship, noting his worry about the costs becoming so prohibitive that “most of the people from [his Eritrean] community would stop sponsoring because they cannot afford to sponsor.” Likewise, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee reported that her SAH would no longer be able to sponsor new refugees, while also struggling to “reckon” with the processing of the applications in queue (as cited in Frankling, 2023, para. 8). Irene (Key Informant) said “a lot of sponsors are quitting” and was personally aware of “two guys [that were] quitting.” Christina (Key Informant) explained that her SAH had to “stop accepting requests directly.” Her SAH used to require co-sponsors (who are predominantly family) to sponsor from public requests, but they removed this option since assurance and monitoring activities ramped up in 2019 to manage their workload. Similarly, with Luke’s (Key Informant) SAH “stepping back,” he has had to deal with “families up here who were saying... what other opportunities do we have?” Luke has tried to encourage these families to form a G5 but was concerned that they would not be able to meet the one requirement, the “UNHCR status document.” Luke felt it would be “particularly hard for the communities who are coming out of Sudan, Uganda... for the Ethiopians and Somalis, and anybody that’s fled into Southeast Asia.” He said, “the UN is not in many parts of Africa.” Effectively, he worries that G5s will not be able to sponsor because countries are not giving refugee status determination to refugees (as discussed in Chapter Four), and SAHs are forced to scale back their support for refugee protection in the new assurance and monitoring climate.

Adding to this observation, two participants felt that the PIF spelled the collapse of refugee sponsorship. In Maya's (Key Informant) own words, "definitely it's horrible, and I think it's a deliberate way to put an end to the private sponsorship." For Irene (Key Informant), the move toward monitoring is "wrecking a program that's quintessentially Canadian and destroying our compassion and turning us against each other." In several instances, Irene reiterated that the PIF was going to "totally destroy" the "spirit," "intent," and "whole program." The pressures by the state on sponsors are evident in the testimonies provided above and are undeniably questioning the sustainability of refugee sponsorship over the *longue durée* (Hyndman et al., 2021). This appears especially true for smaller SAHs that are run on purely volunteer labour.

Discussion and conclusion: From 'trust' to 'transaction' through a neoliberal lens

And so, there is a need to strengthen the integrity of our program and the frameworks and systems that provide that support... But then it comes down to what is a balanced approach that does not systemically oppress those who need this program most and also does not create significant barriers with this dynamic of... tie sponsorships. (Maria, Key Informant)

New efforts to formalize a risk management framework for the PSR program undermine the relationship between government and civil society once established on the principle of a public-private partnership. Based on the testimony above, the top-down approach was exclusionary and left little room for sponsors to shape or even resist the modality IRCC embraced to conduct assurance and monitoring activities. Instead, the sponsorship community functions as a "trapdoor" for neoliberalism (Herbert, 2005, pp. 852-854), where they are authorized to bear the burden for refugee protection and obligations off-loaded by the state, but without adequate consultations, support, or resources. These findings demonstrate, as Good and Enns (2019) note, that "while SAHs act as an extension of the federal government in carrying out the duties of

refugees' resettlement, yet government legal frameworks dictate relationship tensions between them" (p. 13). The public-private-partnership lexicon is a misnomer because it conceals a notable hierarchical and centralized power dynamic that mandates SAHs to undertake sponsorship activities according to government-prescribed rules and penalties. Commitments to integrity, as the safety and sustenance of newcomers and the need to address fraud if/where it happens, are prudent but detrimental when applied universally to the PSR program.

The recent development and implementation of IRCC's PIF can be recognized in alignment with the neoliberal state model enacted at a finer community scale (Elwood, 2002; Fraser, 2018; Herbert, 2005), and the ongoing debates of privatization in refugee sponsorship (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021 Labman, 2019; Lenard, 2016). From the data, it is evident that the assurance and monitoring framework has reconfigured both the *understanding* and the *practice* of sponsorship, from relations of 'trust' to 'transactions.' The framework has invoked a climate of fear and suspicion and driven SAHs to restructure their work toward more rigorous documents, tracking systems, evidence gathering, and deposit requirements. SAHs now operate based on neoliberal market logic operationalized around quantifiable, measurable, and managed relationships with their formal partners, including CGs and co-sponsors. Moreover, these responsibilities are further downloaded onto their partners, who are required to engage in bookkeeping and record tracking in the event a SAH is audited by IRCC. In these ways, the PIF is a new form of privatization that shifts and trickles down the burden of risk from the government to sponsorship communities to partners in a way that is rooted in neoliberal market logic. Yet, the government remains indirectly in control because it tacitly enforces community, risk-based surveillance via a shadow state (Benson, 2022), but in the absence of any real power at this scale.

Where the state is expected to assume the burden of risk management, it has off-loaded these responsibilities onto private citizens. As the findings show, many participants felt underprepared *for* and completely overwhelmed *by* the management of increased administrative burdens associated with the PIF, including paperwork, finances, settlement activities, and relationship management. Based on participants' own testimony, there is an unequal burden of responsibility placed onto SAHs and sponsors who are small, under-resourced, and voluntary-based. Given that many racialized diaspora SAHs who support family-linked sponsorship fit these criteria, they are bound to experience the effects of government off-loading disproportionately. The classed and racialized implications of the PIF on refugee resettlement at the scale of community cannot be overlooked.

While concerns about shifts of responsibility from the state onto sponsors in refugee resettlement are not new (Elcioglu, 2021; Hyndman, 2022; Ilcan, Connoy, 2021; Silvius, 2016; Ritchie, 2018), my findings demonstrate how over-bureaucratization threatens to make refugee protection inequitable, while also undermining the sustainability of the entire PSR program. The neoliberal logic of operational efficiency exacerbates income inequality, weakens social safety nets, and leads to the concentration of power into SAHs who have the necessary financial means and capacity to meet the monitoring requirements. Meanwhile, the objective of efficiency disregards other important values, which are not readily quantifiable, such as equity, social justice, and sustainability. PIF has transformed a social movement, which has also been a charitable, and public-private partnership of sorts – longstanding characteristics of Canada's PSR program – into an unpaid contractor, subject to financial audits.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Main findings and conclusions

The Private Sponsorship for Refugees (PSR) program is a model of refugee resettlement stands as one durable ‘solution’ to protracted refugee displacement, although the number of people accommodated is few. This research, aiming to challenge accepted notions of resettlement as a ‘solution,’ seeks to broaden existing perspectives that resettlement is a strategy affording protection selected by refugees themselves (Hyndman, 2019; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). Based on testimony from in-depth interviews with racialized sponsors from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas in Canada, this research highlights the interventions and protection strategies emanating from their dual social positions as former refugees and as private sponsors. Through an exploration of participants’ conceptualizations, motivations, and engagements, the findings affirm that sponsorship is mobilized as a resettlement strategy but in unique and vital ways. The following three sections organize these observations, culminating in concluding reflections about the research findings, with a fourth section reflecting the key concepts coined and takeaways.

Fueling private refugee sponsorship despite invisibility and exclusion

While existing literature has concentrated on sponsorship actors and communities mobilized to sponsor by faith/religion (Chapman, 2014; Good Gingrich & Enns 2019; Macklin et al., 2018; McKinlay, 2008), Chapter Four renders visible another essential aspect – private sponsorship facilitated by former refugees themselves. Through a nuanced and intersectional analysis of the configurations (SAH, G5, and CS) and arrangements (CG and co-sponsor) that constitute the PSR program, the findings illustrate distinctive and vital contributions of racialized diaspora sponsors. These

sponsors, often newcomers with deep motivations to assist those left behind and unprotected, engage sponsorships in more ad hoc (i.e., G5 configurations) and in less formal (i.e., co-sponsor arrangements) ways. As G5s and co-sponsors, the community leaders, family, kin, and same language speakers do a lot of the heavy lifting in sponsorship circles without being named or seen.

The contributions of racialized diaspora sponsors through these ad hoc configurations/group, vital to fueling the PSR program, but go unnoticed when analyses focus predominantly on SAHs and the more formalized dynamics of sponsorship. Most prevailing understandings about sponsors emphasize the sponsorship of strangers, that is, individuals with no familial links to the newcomers they support, through SAH sponsorships. The less formal co-sponsorships, which tend to be kin-based, are relatively invisible because they are undertheorized as well as unrecorded (Krause, 2020) in practice. In short, racialized diaspora sponsors, engaged in ad hoc or less formal processes, *become invisibilized* in refugee sponsorship due to institutional norms, analyses, and record-keeping practices that fail to account for their vital contributions. Their invisibilized status and essential roles in sponsorship are stunning given the powerful testimonies provided nothing that they steadily fuel the PSR program.

Adding to their invisibilized status, the geopolitics of governance and exclusion reveals that seemingly banal, bureaucratic requirements and sponsorship responsibilities not only shape perceptions of who sponsors are, but they also restrict and exclude specific types of sponsorship. Recent regulatory changes, exemplified by heightened requirements for G5 sponsorship groups (i.e., the requirement that the sponsored party must have gone through formal refugee status determination in the region of origin), are identified as disproportionately affecting sponsorships based on specific relationships that are led by diaspora sponsors supporting racialized kin and

family. The data highlight that racialized diaspora sponsors predominantly, though not exclusively, lead G5 sponsorships.

Program criteria, far from being innocuous guidelines, emerge as *selection criteria*, which determine sponsorship accessibility because they delineate who can access sponsorship and who cannot. This has direct consequences for the most racialized sponsor groups, communities, and would-be resettled refugees. Despite exclusionary measures and invisibilized status, racialized diasporas persistently work and strategize as G5s, co-sponsors, and more recently as SAHs, to extend refugee protection to fellow exiles in need of safety and security. Their commitment propels Canada's PSR program, injecting much needed momentum and resilience when sponsors, motivated solely by altruism, face 'burn out.'

Repurposing state-authorized mechanisms to achieve more equitable refugee protection

Chapter Five examines the contested practicing of 'naming,' a state-authorized mechanism that provides Canadian citizens and permanent residents an opportunity to sponsor and support specific refugees in need of protection (Labman, 2019). Through an analysis of sponsors and government policy, this chapter delves into the debates and contestations concerning practices that enable refugees to be identified/ selected/ nominated for resettlement and their implications for protection. The findings indicate that racialized diaspora sponsors are motivated to extend refugee protection to fellow diaspora exiles from unrelated geographies of conflict, as well as ethnonational kin and family who share a common history of persecution.

When government-led 'solutions' limit or negate possibilities for equitable geographic refugee protection, *naming emerges as a community-authorized protection measure and a lifeline out of protracted refugee situations*. The data illustrate how

diasporas' lived experiences of protracted displacement, extended waiting, and differential acceptance rates galvanize community-led sponsorship for equitable refugee protection. Sponsors expressed being motivated to self-authorize 'collective actions' (Kihato & Landau 2016) in the absence of other responses, particularly to protect refugees from sub-Saharan Africa (NRC, 2022). In these instances, naming is driven by *a political necessity to act*, representing a crucial *collective expression of agency* by Canadian citizens/residents and humanitarians.

Despite the increasing demands and pressing need for sponsorship within a specific diasporic community, several participants either sponsored or aspired to sponsor BVORs, an unexpected finding. This discovery, along with other instances where sponsors from racialized diasporas assist refugees identified through other diasporas, known as 'stranger' sponsorship, underscores the nuanced and strategic use of selection criteria and referrals. These diverse motivations and practices contribute to the federal government's own commitment to *maintaining diversity* in refugee sponsorship (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003), and ensuring that refugee sponsorship remains a community-centred, society-led social movement.

Government monitoring intensifies the burden of being doubly 'taxed'

The implementation of assurance and monitoring practices within the new integrity framework is the focus of Chapter Six. Through an analysis that traces the evolution and implications of the Program Integrity Framework (PIF), the findings illustrate that heightened oversight has imposed a dual burden on sponsors – both metaphorically and financially, as a 'tax.'

Recent federal regulations, aimed at expanding assurance and monitoring measures, have intensified the administrative burdens, *including paperwork, financial*

obligations, and settlement efforts, and imposed onto a largely voluntary-driven effort to support and protect refugees. The top-down approach has instilled frustration, fear, and disempowerment among sponsors who feel constrained by the new expectations and guidelines. These developments align with the neoliberal state model enacted at a finer community scale (Elwood, 2002; Fraser, 2018; Herbert, 2005) and ongoing debates about privatization in refugee sponsorship (Hyndman, 2022; Ilcan and Connoy, 2021; Labman, 2019; Lenard, 2016).

The data underscore how the assurance and monitoring framework has transformed both the understanding and the practice of sponsorship, shifting from relations of ‘trust’ to ‘transactions.’ The PIF has engendered a climate of distrust and suspicion, prompting SAHs to restructure their work with increased emphasis on rigorous documentation practices, tracking systems, evidence gathering, and deposit requirements. Consequently, only family members with readily disposable income can co-sponsor with SAHs who now require sponsorship funds upfront, unless they are able to partner with non-diaspora sponsors who may have previously sponsored. These new practices illustrate how neoliberalism is operating at the community level and upholds existing power dynamics and privileges, especially for larger SAHs that may have paid staff to assist with these requirements.

While concerns about the transfer of responsibilities from the state onto sponsors in refugee resettlement are not new (Elcioglu, 2021; Hyndman, 2022; Ilcan, Connoy, 2021; Silvius, 2016; Ritchie, 2018), the findings demonstrate how over-bureaucratization threatens to make *refugee protection inequitable*, while also *undermining the sustainability* of the entire PSR program. The neoliberal logic of operational efficiency exacerbates income inequality, weakens social safety nets, and consolidates power within SAHs who have the necessary financial means and capacity to meet monitoring

requirements. PIF has thus transformed a social movement, characterized by its charitable and public-private partnership, into an unpaid contractor, subject to financial audits.

Key concepts coined and takeaways

Through analysis of research findings in this dissertation, the following terms in Table 7.1 below have emerged to both describe and add analytical strength to discussions of the power relations that govern the PSR program.

Table 7.1 Key concepts coined and takeaways

Community-authorized refugee protection	Racialized diasporas self-authorize 'collective actions' to extend refugee protection, particularly in the absence of systemic responses to displaced people living in the most precarious and protracted refugee situations.
Datascape	The dynamic and evolving characteristics of data landscapes over time. It underscores the notion that data ecosystems are not fixed, such as the national list of Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), they undergo changes, adaptations, and shifts over time.
Invisibilized	A concept that relates to institutional, structural, or systemic processes, which have excluded, underrepresented, and overlooked racialized diasporas sponsors. This exclusion is based on social locations including their immigration status as newcomers, coupled with broader processes of racialization.
Invisibilized knowledge	Underscores the tension between authorizing and reproducing dominant knowledges while invisibilizing the lesser-known and disseminated 'minor key' knowledges produced by, for example, racialized former refugees, now permanent residents in Canada.

Nested waiting	A period of compounded waiting that occurs because of events that redirect resources and thereby trigger further delay, creating layers or levels of waiting. For example, nested waiting occurs when immigration measures in response to humanitarian emergencies (e.g., Afghanistan and Ukraine) redirect priorities away from refugees who are awaiting resettlement (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa) and further prolong their access to protection.
Racialized diaspora	Compromised of former refugees and asylum seekers who have fled violent conflicts and human rights atrocities, have lived in precarious conditions of exile for varying periods of time, and have subsequently accepted refuge in Canada as permanent residents.
Regulatory scripts	A predetermined regimen of rules, guidelines, or procedures that specify who can participate in private refugee sponsorship and what sponsors' involvement can (and cannot) entail, as well as the requirements for who may qualify to be sponsored.
Relational sponsorship	Relational aspects, such as interpersonal engagement, shared responsibility, and common humanity, are a core element of the sponsorship process and go beyond transactional-based supports.
Temporal governance	Governance across time and space as it underscores the uneven and discriminatory management and regulation of migration that spans different temporal scales and geographical locations.
Community-authorized refugee protection	Racialized diasporas self-authorize 'collective actions' to extend refugee protection, particularly in the absence of systemic responses to displaced people living in the most precarious and protracted refugee situations.
Datascares	The dynamic and evolving characteristics of data landscapes over time. It underscores the notion that data ecosystems are not fixed, such as the national list of Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), they undergo changes, adaptations, and shifts over time.
Racialized diaspora	Compromised of former refugees and asylum seekers who have fled violent conflicts and human rights atrocities, have lived in precarious conditions of exile for varying periods of time, and have subsequently accepted refuge in Canada as permanent residents.

While my research is not the first to analyze these phenomena, the terms are offered here as a way to think through sponsorship in more equitable and sustainable ways.

Limitations and future directions

The in-depth interviews generated rich and powerful testimonies, shedding crucial light on a facet of refugee resettlement previously overlooked and under-researched. As is inherent in qualitative studies, this research is context-bound and reflects the perspectives specifically related to sponsors within the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo diasporas in Canada. This dissertation does not capture, or aim to encompass, the entirety of experiences among all racialized diaspora sponsors engaged in mobilizing refugee protection to assist fellow exiles. While sponsors' testimonies are upheld by key informant perspectives, research involving other racialized diasporas may well challenge, augment, or corroborate the findings presented here. Despite efforts in this research to include participants from a broad spectrum of racialized diasporas, future studies would benefit from empirically probing diverse sponsorship groups. If the sample size permits, conducting comparisons among disparate groups of racialized diaspora sponsors could yield valuable insights and complement the depth of analysis.

Undertaking research amid a global pandemic, particularly on forced migration and the geopolitics of my positionality within this complex landscape, presented unforeseen challenges. While the flexible methodological framework allowed me to embrace and navigate unexpected hurdles with relative ease, certain aspects of the original research design prompt reflection. Notably, the absence of solicited diaries as a method to collect participant-driven data appears as a missed opportunity. Likewise, the inclusion of focus groups, which provide community- or group-driven data, offers participants autonomy to identify, discuss, and contemplate issues that hold particular

meanings for them. These approaches foster participant reflexivity through different interaction points in data collection processes and their overall involvement in research.

Research with communities who face vulnerabilities – such as diasporas from fragile political contexts – can be extractive or exploitive. Therefore, methods that prioritize collaboration and co-production of knowledge, such as diaries and focus groups, become an empowering alternative to standard methods of data collection. Unsolicited material and follow-up interviews, both initiated by participants themselves, were approaches that facilitated a collaborative and grounded production of knowledge. Future studies on refugee sponsorship would benefit ethically from adopting research designs that similarly strive to minimize power differentials, provide opportunities to respect participant agency, and to implement frameworks that view refugees beyond ‘the suffering subjects.’

Contributions and implications

This research fills an important gap by documenting insights about a lesser-known story of **sponsors** who have sustained Canada’s PSR program **in between** – and during – large-scale refugee movements. The existing scholarly work and policy assessments, and their implications for sponsorship practice, are in their infancy, despite the considerable attention given to responses supporting critical global developments. Canada’s PSR program has been previously studied but primarily in relation to large-scale resettlement initiatives (Adelman, 1982; Molloy et al., 2017), with the most recent being the 2015-2016 Syrian refugee movement (Labman & Cameron, 2020; Macklin et al., 2018; Walton-Roberts et al., 2020). The fulsome research attention given to these responses are crucial, and yet, they reflect refugee resettlement in moments, or *courte durée*, and not over the *longue durée*. Probing sponsorship beyond these particular

occurrences foregrounds crucial implications for refugee policy as it relates to questions of program sustainability.

While targeted initiatives have galvanized citizens and residents across a spectrum of non-diaspora communities, they are only part of the sponsorship story. Assessments of Canada's BVOR program (McNally, 2020) and the GRSI (Smith, 2020) find that refugee resettlement performs very modestly when it relies solely on the altruism of volunteers to mobilize refugee protection. Instead, this research illustrates that diaspora communities in third countries fuel the momentum and drive for refugee sponsorship in Canada. The role of diasporas beyond voluntaristic altruism suggests that the **sustainability** of refugee sponsorship programs necessitate pre-existing human connections that transcend national boundaries. Transnational kinship networks organized based on a shared experience of persecution is one example. These **solidaristic links** may well be one key factor for **scaling up** refugee resettlement both locally and globally.

Racialized diaspora sponsors, as established by this research, operate collaboratively and not in silos. The partnerships they forge with SAHs as co-sponsors signifies that sustainability and scale can flourish when seemingly disparate sponsorship groups collaborate to extend refugee protection. Refugee sponsorship emerges as a **community-led** enterprise (Hyndman et al., 2021), driven by newcomers affected by displacement and those they partner with – individuals, communities, or organizations who may or may not have a specified affinity with those they support. This implication calls for state-authorized initiatives that not only accommodate but also encourage diverse sponsorship practices on the ground, which may push at the state's conceptualization of sponsorship. **Named sponsorship**, as this research advances, serves as the pivotal mechanism that enables such **diversification**. Naming allows the

support and protection of refugees across various sponsorship contexts, priorities, and arrangements while also complying with program requirements. The potential of naming as a tool for sponsors to strategically organize and uphold **additionality** (Labman & Hyndman, 2019), offering a complementary durable ‘solution’ to more refugees who would not otherwise be assisted, should not be underestimated.

The research findings hold important and concrete implications for sponsorship practices. According to Lola (Key Informant), newcomers are argued to constitute approximately “90%” of the driving force behind the PSR program, and yet, this vital labour is largely under erasure. The work is being done by racialized diaspora sponsors who may not ever get credit or be written down as an official sponsor. Such an oversight and social exclusion raises concerns about their neglect in refugee policy analyses and their under-theorization within the framework of neoliberal governmentality (Benson, 2020). Racialized diaspora SAHs have not featured in the data used by scholars, hitherto invisibilized or unheard, and were thus largely overlooked in Canada’s refugee protection project. With few recent exceptions (Hyndman et al., 2021; Pearlman, 2020), little was known about their grounded realities and processes related to refugee sponsorship and its evolution. The findings in this research emphasize the need for more inclusive **equity** and **anti-oppression policy-making** that incorporates newcomer voices into the process in fulsome ways. Private sponsorship in Canada is a much more nuanced and inclusive enterprise when viewed through the full diversity of sponsorship configurations and arrangements that offer support to newcomers. Both scholarly and practical work are conduits for this process by ensuring that racialized diasporas sponsors, and their unique and vital contributions, are accounted for in sponsorship data, records, and analyses. Given the ever-growing need for refugee protection, the

dissertations contributions are both timely and necessary for scholarship, policy, and practice as it concerns the present and future of refugee resettlement.

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Appendix A.

2021 Census data on Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo populations in AB, BC, and ON

Tables A.1, A.2, and A.3 below are tabulations derived from census data on Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Oromo populations in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. Data in the tables are sourced from Statistics Canada (StatsCan) based on three census topics:

‘Ethnic or cultural origin’

As per the definition provide by Statistics Canada (2023),

‘Ethnic or cultural origin’ refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the person’s ancestors. Ancestors may have Indigenous origins, origins that refer to different countries or other origins that may not refer to different countries. The sum of the ethnic or cultural origins in this table is greater than the total population estimate because a person may report more than one ethnic or cultural origin in the census. The ethnic groups selected are the most frequently reported at the Canada level. For more information on ethnic or cultural origin variables, including information on their classifications, the questions from which they are derived, data quality and their comparability with other sources of data, please refer to the Ethnic or Cultural Origin Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.

Table A.1 Tabulation based on ‘ethnic or cultural origin’ (StatCan) in AB, BC, and ON

Ethnic or cultural origin	Total	Alberta	British Columbia	Ontario
Eritrean	36,290	11,010	2,245	17,165
Ethiopian	42,545	13,505	2,720	20,625
Oromo	8,255	3,745	575	3,015

* Source: Statistics Canada (2023). *Census profile, 2021 census of population. Ethnic or cultural origin* [Catalogue number 98-316-X2021001]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

‘Selected places of birth for the immigrant population’

As per the definition provide by Statistics Canada (2023),

‘Immigrant’ refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group. In the 2021 Census of Population, ‘Immigrants’ includes immigrants who were admitted to Canada on or prior to May 11, 2021. The places of birth selected are the most frequently reported by immigrants at the Canada level. ‘Place of birth’ refers to the name of the geographic location where the person was born. The geographic location is specified according to geographic boundaries current at the time of data collection, not the geographic boundaries at the time of birth. In the 2021 Census of Population, the geographic location refers to a country or area of interest if the person was born outside Canada. For more information on the place of birth variables, including information on their classifications, the questions from which they are derived, data quality and their comparability with other sources of data, please refer to the Place of Birth, Generation Status, Citizenship and Immigration Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.

Table A.2 Tabulation based on ‘selected places of birth for the immigrant population’ (StatCan) in AB, BC, and ON

Place of birth	Total	Alberta	British Columbia	Ontario
Eritrea	31,385	9,720	2,485	14,200
Ethiopia	41,715	14,420	2,590	19,415

* Source: Statistics Canada (2023). *Census profile, 2021 census of population. Selected places of birth for the immigrant population* [Catalogue number 98-316-X2021001]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

‘Selected places of birth for the immigrant population’

As per the definition provide by Statistics Canada (2023),

‘Recent immigrant’ refers to an immigrant who first obtained his or her landed immigrant or permanent resident status between January 1, 2016 and May 11, 2021. ‘Immigrant’ refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group. The places of birth selected are the most frequently reported by recent immigrants at the Canada level. ‘Place of birth’ refers to the name of the geographic location where the person was born. The

geographic location is specified according to geographic boundaries current at the time of data collection, not the geographic boundaries at the time of birth. In the 2021 Census of Population, the geographic location refers to a country or area of interest if the person was born outside Canada. For more information on the place of birth variables, including information on their classifications, the questions from which they are derived, data quality and their comparability with other sources of data, please refer to the Place of Birth, Generation Status, Citizenship and Immigration Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.

Table A.3 Tabulation based on ‘selected places of birth for the recent immigrant population’ (StatCan) in AB, BC, and ON

Place of birth	Total	Alberta	British Columbia	Ontario
Eritrea	16,330	5,120	1,515	7,145
Ethiopia	9,385	3,960	620	3,480

* Source: Statistics Canada (2023). *Census profile, 2021 census of population. Selected places of birth for the recent immigrant population* [Catalogue number 98-316-X2021001]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

Appendix B.

Names of SAHs on the national list

Table B.1 List of SAHs as of December 1, 2023

Alberta		
Alberta Somali Community Center	Edmonton	11717 42 Street Unit 260 Edmonton, Alberta T5W 4V8
Anglican Diocese of Calgary – Refugee Support Group	Calgary	180, 1209-59th Avenue SE Calgary, AB T2H 2P6
Anglican Diocese of Edmonton	Edmonton	10035 – 103 Street NW Edmonton, AB T6J 0X5
Bethel Eritrean Evangelical Church Edmonton	Edmonton	6740 121 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T5B 0Y6
Calgary Ethiopian Community Association	Calgary	1420 40th Ave NE Unit 14 Calgary, Alberta T2E 6L1
Calgary Kidanemhired Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church	Calgary	618 2 nd Avenue NE Calgary, AB T2E 0B8
Canadian Baptists of Western Canada	Calgary	Suite 1100, 500 – 11th Avenue SW Calgary, AB T2R 1M7
Canadian International Immigrant and Refugee Support Association	Edmonton	10584 - 107 Street Edmonton, AB T5H 2Y6
Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton c/o Catholic Social Services	Edmonton	8212 – 118 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T5B 0S3
Centre for Newcomers Society of Calgary	Calgary	125 - 565 36 Street N.E. Calgary, AB T2A 6K3
Eritrean Canadian Community Association of Calgary	Calgary	Apt # 318, 223, 12th Avenue SW Calgary, AB T2R 0G9

Eritrean Community Association of Edmonton	Edmonton	11115 108 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T5H 4J3
Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo St. Michael Church of Calgary	Calgary	235, 8th Street N.E. Calgary, Alberta T2E 4G6
Eritrean-Canadian Blin Association in Calgary (ECBA)	Calgary	223 12 Ave SW Calgary, AB T2R 0G9
Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Edmonton	Edmonton	12480 57 Street NW Edmonton, AB T5A 0E6
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Debre Selam Medhan Alem of Edmonton	Edmonton	11403 - 124 Street NW Edmonton, AB T5M 0K4
First Alliance Church	Calgary	12345 - 40th Street SE Calgary, AB T2Z 4E6
Focas-Foundation for Oromian Culture, Education and Art Services	Edmonton	101 – 10425 Princess Elizabeth Avenue NW Edmonton, Alberta T5G 0Y5
Hope for Tomorrow's Shade Association Canada (HT-SACA)	Edmonton	P.O. Box 81014 McLeod Park 15715-66 Street NW Edmonton, Alberta T5Y 2C0
Islamic Family and Social Services Association	Edmonton	Unit #85 4003-98 Street Edmonton, AB T6E 6M8
Kidane Mehret Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church Edmonton	Edmonton	6770-129 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T6V 1G1
La Corporation épiscopale catholique romaine de Grouard AKA: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard McLennan	Grande Prairie	8521 – 100 A Street Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3C4
Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation	Alberta	75 Abbey Road Rocky View County, Alberta T1Z 0A1
Oromian Community Association of Northern Alberta (OCANA)	Edmonton	105-9636, 105A Avenue Edmonton, AB T5H 0M4
Oromo Evangelical Church of Calgary	Calgary	3104 34 Avenue NW Calgary, AB T2L 2A3

Rehoboth Evangelical Pentecostal Church of Edmonton	Edmonton	10405-142 Street Edmonton, AB T5G 3G1
Roman Catholic Bishop of Diocese of Calgary	Calgary	500-1111-11 Avenue SW Calgary, AB T2R 0G5
Saint Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church – Edmonton	Edmonton	3107 42 Avenue Edmonton, AB T6T 1J4
Selihom God's Church Calgary	Calgary	1500-14 Street SW, Calgary, Alberta PO BOX 167
Somali-Canadian Education & Rural Development Organization (SCERDO)	Edmonton	12052 Fort Road Edmonton, AB T5B 4H1
United Cultures of Canada Association	Edmonton	11304-12 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T6J 6S4
British Columbia		
Anglican Diocese of British Columbia	Victoria	900 Vancouver Street Victoria, BC V8V 3V7
Anglican Synod of The Diocese of New Westminster	Vancouver	1410 Nanton Avenue Vancouver, BC V6H 2E2
Armenian Apostolic Church of B.C.	Richmond	13780 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC V6V 1A2
B.C. Muslim Association (BCMA) (The)	Richmond	12300 Blundell Road Richmond, BC V6W 1B3
Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society (CVIIAS)	Duncan	321 St Julian Street Duncan, British Colombia V9L 3S5
Cross Cultural Settlement Service Society of British Columbia	Vancouver	218 - 55 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V5Y 1P1
East Kootenay Friends of Refugees Society	Vancouver	402-1864 Frances Street Vancouver, BC V5L 1Z7
Emmanuel Free Reformed Church	Abbotsford	3366 Mount Lehman Rd Abbotsford, BC V4X 2M9 Send any mail to: City of Refuge 173 Delmar Drive, Hamilton, ON, L9C 1J8

Eritrean Community Association of Vancouver	New Westminster	262 - 720 6th Street New Westminster, BC V3L 3C5
Evangel Church of Kelowna	Kelowna	3261 Gordon Drive Kelowna, BC V13 3N4
Hohite Semay St Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church	New Westminster	304 8th St. New Westminster, BC V3M 3R1
Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)	Vancouver	2610 Victoria Drive Vancouver, BC V5N 1V3
Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)	Victoria	102-808 Douglas Street Victoria, BC V8W 2B6
M.O.S.A.I.C.	Vancouver	5575 Boundary Road Vancouver, BC V5R 2P9
Rehoboth Eritrean Church of Vancouver	New Westminster	2201 8th Avenue New Westminster, B.C. V3M 2T9
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver	Vancouver	John Paul II Pastoral Centre 4885 Saint John Paul II Way Vancouver, BC V5Z 0G3
Saint Gebriel Eritrean Orthodox Church, Vancouver	Surrey	313-14358 60 Avenue Surrey, BC V3X 0G3
Synod of the Diocese of Kootenay	Kelowna	#201 – 380 Leathead Road Kelowna, BC V1X 2H8
Unitarian Church of Vancouver (UCV)	Vancouver	949 West 49th Ave Vancouver, BC V5Z 2T1
Manitoba		
Accueil Francophone	Winnipeg	190, avenue de la Cathédrale, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2H 0H7
City Church of Winnipeg	Winnipeg	484 Maryland Street Winnipeg, MB R3G 1M5
Corporation archiépiscopale catholique romaine de Saint-Boniface	Winnipeg	622 avenue Taché Winnipeg, MB R2H 2B4
Covenant of Glory Church Inc.	Winnipeg	580 Victor Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 1R2

Debre Genet St. Mary's and St. Gabriel's Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church	Winnipeg	353 Mountain Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R2W 1J9
Hospitality House Refugee Ministry Inc.	Winnipeg	513 Pacific Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3A 0M6
Living Gospel Church	Winnipeg	520 William Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3A 0J8
Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (Welcome Place)	Winnipeg	521 Bannatyne Street Winnipeg, MB R3A 0E4
Mennonite Central Committee Canada	Winnipeg	134 Plaza Drive Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9
Roman Catholic Archiepiscopal Corporation of Winnipeg AKA: Archdiocese of Winnipeg	Winnipeg	1495 Pembina Highway Winnipeg, MB R3T 2C6
St. Michael Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church	Winnipeg	357 Dufferin Ave Winnipeg, Manitoba R2W 2Y2
Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land AKA: Anglican Diocese of Rupert's Land	Winnipeg	935 Nesbitt Bay Winnipeg, MB R3T 1W6
New Brunswick		
Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada	Moncton	P.O. Box 6003 Moncton, New Brunswick E1C 0V7
North West Resource Center for Newcomers	Edmunston	167 Hébert Boulevard Edmunston, NB E3V 4H2
Roman Catholic Bishop of Saint John	Saint John	1 Bayard Drive Saint John, NB E2L 3L5
Newfoundland and Labrador		
Association for New Canadians	St. John's	144 Military Road St John's, NL A1C 5R6
Nova Scotia		
Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island	Halifax	1340 Martello Street Halifax, NS B3H 2Z1
Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia	Halifax	6960 Mumford Road Halifax, NS B3L 4P1

Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Halifax	Halifax	1531 Grafton Street P.O. Box 1527 Halifax, NS B3J 2Y3
Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace (SAFE)	Antigonish	204 – 219 Main Street Antigonish, NS B2G 2C1
Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax	Halifax	5500 Inglis Street Halifax, NS B3H 1J8
Ontario		
Afghan Network for Social Services Foundation (ANSS)	Scarborough	203-100 McIven Avenue Scarborough, ON M1B 5K1
Afghan Women's Counseling and Integration Community Support Organization	North York	150 Consumers Road, Suite 203 North York, Ontario M2J 1P9
Allies In Diversity	London	630 Wharncliffe Road South, 3B London, Ontario N6J 4V7
Anba Abraam Charity	Mississauga	158-5260 McFarren Boulevard Mississauga, ON L5M 7J5
Anglican Diocese of Toronto Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Toronto / Anglican United Refugee Alliance (AURA)	Toronto	2723 St. Clair Avenue E Toronto, ON M4B 1M8
Armenian Community Centre of Toronto	Willowdale	45 Hallcrown Place Willowdale, ON M2J 4Y4
Armenian Family Support Services	Scarborough	920 Progress Avenue Lower Level, Scarborough, ON M1G 3T5
Asmaro Chaldean Society	Windsor	1621 Stoneybrook Crescent Windsor, ON N9G 2Z4
Associated Gospel Churches	Burlington	1500 Kerns Road – Lower level Burlington, Ontario L7P 3A7

Berhan Semay Church of Toronto	Toronto	345 Bloor Street, East PO Box 72616 Toronto, Ontario M4W 3S9
Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec	Etobicoke	5 International Boulevard Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3
Canadian Centre for Torture Victims (Toronto) Inc	Toronto	194 Jarvis Street (2nd floor) Toronto, ON M5B 2B7
Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services	Brampton	3 Davenhill Road, Brampton, Ontario L6P 3E1
Canadian Lutheran World Relief	Waterloo	101-470 Weber Street North Waterloo, ON N2L 6J2
Canadian Unitarian Council	Toronto	100-344 Dupont Street Toronto, ON M5R 1V9
Catholic Centre for Immigrants	Ottawa	219 Argyle Avenue Suite 500 Ottawa, ON K2P 2H4
Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada	Mississauga	2580 Matheson Blvd E, Suite 101 Mississauga, ON L4W 4J1
Christie Refugee Welcome Centre Inc.	Toronto	43 Christie Street Toronto, Ontario M6G 3B1
Danby Products Limited	Guelph	5070 Whitelaw Road Guelph, ON N1H 4L5
Emmanuel Free Reformed Church (c/o City of Refuge)	Hamilton	173 Delmar Drive, Hamilton, ON L9C 1J8
Ethiopian Association in the Greater Toronto Area & Surrounding Regions	Toronto	1950 Danforth Avenue Toronto, ON M4C 1J4
Ethiopian Evangelical Church in Ottawa	Ottawa	225 McClellan Road Ottawa, ON K2H 8N5
Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Toronto	Toronto	746 Pape Avenue Toronto, ON M4K 3S7

Governing Council of the Salvation Army	Toronto	2 Overlea Blvd Toronto, ON M4H 1P4
Grace Communion International – Canada	Russel	42 George Street Russel, ON K4R 1C2
Hamere Noah Kidanemihret Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church	Petersburg	1677 Snyder's Road East Petersburg, Ontario N0B 2H0
His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council for Canada/Focus Humanitarian Assistance Canada	Toronto	49 Wynford Drive, Suite 200 Toronto, ON M3C 1K1
Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East - London Ontario Parish	London	182 Hale Street London, ON N5W 1E8
Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron	London	Huron Church House 190 Queens Avenue London, ON N6A 6H7
Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Ontario	Kingston	90 Johnson Street Kingston, ON K7L 1X7
Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Ottawa	Ottawa	71 Bronson Avenue Ottawa, ON K1R 6G6
International Christian Voice	Brampton	26 Timberwolf Road Brampton, ON L6P 2B3
Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services	Toronto	909 Jane Street Unit 205, Toronto, Ontario M6N 4C6
Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Toronto (JIAS)	Toronto	4600 Bathurst Street, Suite 325 Toronto, ON M2R 3V3
Life in Christ (LinC) Ministry	Scarborough	16 Industrial Parkway South, Suite 408 Aurora, Ontario L4G 0R4
London North Park Community Church	London	1510 Fanshawe Park Road E London, Ontario N5X 4A3
Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto	Toronto	115 Simpson Avenue Toronto, ON M4K 1A1

Muslim Society of Guelph	Guelph	286 Water Street Guelph, Ontario N1K 1W6
Newcomer Centre of Peel	Ontario	165 Dundas Street West Mississauga, Ontario L5B 2N6
Northwood Neighbourhood Services	Toronto	1860 Wilson Avenue Unit 400 Toronto, ON M9M 3A7
Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada	Mississauga	2450 Milltower Court Mississauga, ON L5N 5Z6
Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough	Peterborough	350 Hunter Street W P.O. Box 175, STN Main Peterborough, ON K9J 6Y8
Roman Catholic Diocese of Thunder Bay	Thunder Bay	1222 Reaume Street P.O. Box 10400, STN P Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T8
Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of London	Windsor	25 Hanna Street West P.O. Box 1316, Station A Windsor, ON N8X 1C7
Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of St. Catharines in Canada	St. Catharines	Catholic Centre P.O. Box 875, STN Main St. Catharines, ON L2R 6Z4
Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Toronto in Canada	Toronto	Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto 830 Bathurst Street, Suite 104 Toronto, ON M5R 3G1
Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa	Ottawa	200-1209 Michael St North Ottawa, ON K1J 7T2
Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of the Diocese of Hamilton in Ontario	Hamilton	700 King Street W Hamilton, ON L8P 1C7
Saint Mary's International Charitable Organization	Pickering	357 Strouds Lane Pickering, ON L7V 7J2
Saint Vartan Armenian Church of Mississauga	Mississauga	P.O. Box 53010 5100 Erin Mills Parkway Mississauga, Ontario L5M 5H7

ShamRose for Syrian Culture	Kitchener	202 Dawn Ridge Court Kitchener, Ontario N2N 3J5
South Nepean Muslim Community (SNMC)	Nepean	3020 Woodroffe Ave Nepean, Ontario K2J 4G3
Spiritans, the Congregation of the Holy Ghost	Scarborough	34 Collingsgrove Road Scarborough, ON M1E 3S4
St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Society of Ottawa	Ottawa	700 Ridgewood Avenue Ottawa, Ontario K1V 6N1
Synod of the Diocese of Niagara	Hamilton	252 James Street North Hamilton, ON L8R 2L2
The Free Methodist Church in Canada	Mississauga	4315 Village Centre Court Mississauga, ON L4Z 1S2
The Presbyterian Church in Canada	Toronto	50 Wynford Drive Toronto, ON M36 1J7
The United Church of Canada	Toronto	3250 Bloor Street West, Suite 200 Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada (WTBTS)	Georgetown	13893 Highway 7 Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4S4
World Renew (formerly the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Canada - CRWRC)	Burlington	3475 Mainway P.O. Box 5070, STN LCD 1 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
World University Service of Canada – Student Refugee Program (SRP)	Ottawa	1404 Scott Street Ottawa, ON K1Y 4M8
Saskatchewan		
Archiepiscopal Corporation of Regina	Regina	445 Broad Street N Regina, SK S4R 2X8
Babylon Ethnic Society Incorporated	Saskatoon	2451 A Dudley Street Saskatoon, SK S7M 3Z7
Episcopal Corporation of Saskatoon	Saskatoon	123 Nelson Road Saskatoon, SK S7S 1H1

Eritrean Muslim Association in Queen City	Saskatchewan	668 Sangster Blvd, Regina, Saskatchewan S4R 7N8
Fugug Heritage and Relief Association	Saskatoon	1627 19th Street West Saskatoon, SK S7M 1C5
Saint Maratken Community Society	Saskatoon	1620 Idylwyld Dr. N Saskatoon, SK S7L 1B1
St Mary Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church Regina	Regina	4205 7th Avenue Regina, Saskatchewan S4T 0P8
Synod of the Diocese of Saskatoon	Saskatoon	1403 - 9th Avenue N Saskatoon, SK S7K 2Z6
The Diocese of Qu'Appelle	Regina	1501 College Avenue Regina, SK S4P 1B8

Source: Government of Canada. (2023). *Private sponsorship of refugees program – Sponsorship agreement holders: To find a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html>

Appendix C.

NVivo codebook

Name	Description
Background	Participants' backgrounds.
Key informants	A reference to key informants, e.g., who they are, and their work in the context of refugee sponsorship and work with diaspora communities.
Deep-rooted involvement	A reference to being involved in sponsorship for a long-time, beginning with personal involvement (e.g., in the household or community).
Sponsors	A reference to sponsors, e.g., who they are, their experiences in exile, how they came to Canada, and their resettlement experiences.
Continuity of involvement	A reference to the continuity of being a refugee, working and/or volunteering to support refugees while in exile and after resettlement.
Comparing PSR to GAR	Comments about the comparisons drawn between the two resettlement programs. Positive or negative.
COVID	Comments about the positive and negative implications of COVID on refugee protection.
Equity, diversity, & inclusion	Comments about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Either the lack of these or examples of how they are being strengthened in the PSR program.
Motivational factors	Comments about the underlying motives that explain 'why' participants got involved in refugee sponsorship.
Community lived experience	A reference to collective and shared experiences of a group of individuals within a specific community, e.g., shared experience of displacement, war, and suffering.
Human rights	A reference to a political point of view based on human rights.
Necessity to protect	A reference to being compelled out of necessity to secure the safety and well-being of refugees living in extended exile.
Obligations	A reference to feeling obligated to provide refugee protection e.g., because of family pressure/expectations, financial responsibility by way of remittances, etc.
Possibility to protect	A reference to the 'potential' of providing refugee protection.
Pragmatism	A reference to the tangible and practical considerations of making refugee protection happen.
Refugee lived experience	A reference to the past, lived experiences of being a refugee and having an embodied understanding of what it means to be at risk and in need of protection.
Norms of reciprocity	Comments reflecting the different ways in which sponsors (once refugees) give back. E.g., they repay in kind what sponsors and others have done by way of support.

PIF	Comments about the Program Integrity Framework. Positive or negative.
Changes to relationships	A reference to how PIF is changing relationship dynamics between SAHs and their co-sponsors. E.g., shifting away from operating on the basis of a trusting relationship.
Corruption	A reference to concerns that PIF will backfire and potentially drive up 'corruption' in the PSR program.
Hierarchies of selection	A reference to concerns that PIF may result in hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion in refugee protection.
Fear of 'big brother'	A reference to feeling fearful of making missteps under PIF and having sponsorship agreements suspended or revoked.
Financialization	A reference to concerns about the increasing financial burden of sponsorship under the PIF. E.g., the cost of audited financial statements.
Generalized approach	A reference to criticisms about the blanket approach taken with the development and implementation of the PIF.
Increases inequity	A reference to how SAHs are different in terms of their infrastructure, size, and capacity.
Lack of clarity	A reference to sponsors being concerned about not being provided adequate clarity about PIF since it was launched.
Paperwork-administrative burden	A reference to worries regarding the extensive paperwork, documentation, and administrative tasks necessary to meet sponsorship requirements under the PIF.
Stepping back	A reference to SAHs having to 'step back' from sponsorship, either by reducing their commitments to sponsors or by terminating their sponsorship agreement with the federal government.
Time poverty	A reference to sponsors having limited time available to fulfill increasing bureaucratic requirements.
Policy implications	Comments about existing policies.
Missing voices	A reference to racialized sponsors being invisibilized in critical policy discussions with key stakeholders. E.g., IRCC.
Unequal voices	A reference to issues of power dynamics, marginalization, and unequal access to platforms for expression. E.g., at the annual SAH conference.
Politics of sponsorship	Comments related to the politics that underlie refugee protection.
Political will	A reference to how the determination of political actors can either boost or impeded private refugee resettlement in Canada. E.g., changes that happened to the CAPs under the Harper administration.
Racialization of refugee sponsorship	A reference to how the sponsorship program has been racialized through various institutional mechanisms. E.g., caps, RSD, etc.

Practical experiences	Comments related to the practicalities of undertaking sponsorship.
Ad hoc group structure & dynamics	A reference to the experiences and dynamics of 'ad hoc' sponsorship groups.
Existing supports & resources	A reference to readily available assistance, or lack thereof, to address specific needs or challenges.
Investments	A reference to the time, energy, efforts, funds, etc., that sponsors and diaspora communities make.
Partnering with SAHs	A reference to partnerships between sponsors and SAHs.
SAH structure & dynamics	A reference to the experiences and dynamics of SAHs as a more formal entity of sponsorship.
Strategic relations	A reference to deliberately cultivated relationships aimed at optimizing the sponsorship process and achieving a favourable outcome.
Racialized diasporas in PSR	Comments related to the sponsorship role of racialized diasporas.
Recommendations	Comments about the ways in which the PSR program can be improved.
Differentiated approach	A reference to desires for differentiation regarding how the federal government manages and administers the PSR program.
Building partnerships	A reference to different ways in which partnerships can be strengthened between sponsorship groups.
Built-in supports	A reference to the need for greater built-in supports through IRCC.
Empowering sponsors	A reference to desires for resources and support that will strengthen the empowerment of racialized diaspora sponsors.
Funding supports	A reference to the need for more funds to help racialized SAHs develop their organizational infrastructure and hire paid staff.
More diversity in staff & leadership	A reference to the increase of cultural competency in staffing and leadership roles, including IRCC.
Raising awareness	A reference to the lack of knowledge that exists in communities (e.g., racialized diasporas) that are deeply committed to sponsorship, and thereby, why knowledge needs to be increased for both sponsors and the community members they serve.
Reframing understandings & policy	A reference to how sponsorship can be reimaged.
Redefining 'sponsors'	Comments underscoring the different ways in which racialized diasporas facilitate sponsorship, including informal contributions and supports.
Ad hoc sponsorship supports	A reference to the informal support provided by racialized diasporas. E.g., pre-settlement: application support, guidance, tips; post-settlement: in-kind supports, supports to carry out settlement expectations.
Hybrid identities	A reference to how sponsors and key informants wears multiple hats in delivering refugee resettlement and protection.

Selection criteria	Comments about how sponsors select refugees for resettlement.
Family-linked sponsorship	A reference to the sponsorship dynamic that is kinship-based.
Diaspora-diaspora sponsorship	A reference to how 'shared-identity' sponsorship groups sponsor 'strangers' from other ethnonational communities. E.g., an Oromo sponsor resettles a Syrian family.
Naming	A reference to the mechanisms and rationales for identifying or nominating refugees for resettlement.
Sponsor the 'stranger'	A reference to the sponsorship dynamic which acknowledges that both sponsors and refugees were 'strangers' to each other.
Sponsorship builds-mobilizes communities	Comments reflecting how private sponsorship builds diasporic communities in Canada, e.g., around notions of 'identity' and 'belonging' to Canadian society.
Between sponsorship groups	A reference to how sponsorship builds bridges between formal and ad hoc sponsors.
Diaspora & non-diaspora community relations	A reference to how sponsorship builds bridges between diaspora and non-diaspora sponsor groups.
Within diasporas	A reference to how sponsorship strengthens the bonds and relations between members with a shared diaspora community.
Sponsorship challenges	Comments reflecting the distinct challenges that racialized diasporas experience in establishing and facilitating refugee sponsorship.
Becoming a formal sponsor	A reference to the challenges of meeting the application requirements that racialized diaspora sponsors have faced in trying to become private sponsors. E.g., failing to complete all aspects of the application.
Establishing partnerships	A reference to the challenges that aspiring sponsors have experienced in trying to establish co-sponsorship arrangements with existing SAHs. E.g., the process of making connections is obscure, and language/communication are barriers.
Fear of government consequences	A reference to existing fears that sponsorship will be taken away.
Insufficient support & resources	A reference to the challenges that arise from not having access to support and resources.
Knowledge & capacity	A reference to the challenges that arise from not having the know-how and abilities to navigate sponsorship in a way that satisfies 'Canadian' standards.
Language & literacy	A reference to challenges experienced in relation to language fluency. E.g., not being able to communicate with SAHs when trying to get information for establishing a co-sponsorship arrangement.
Organizational infrastructure	A reference to racialized SAHs not having the organizational capacity to sponsor. E.g., no paid staff means that they are volunteer-based, and working off the sides of their desks.
Outsourcing work	A reference to the need to rely on and pay third parties to undertake paperwork and applications.
Processing times	A reference to inequitable wait times.

Seed capital	A reference to the challenges experienced due to a lack of financial capital. E.g., not being able to meet the funding requirements for the PSR and even the BVOR applications. Not having funds to hire paid staff.
Sponsorship 'groups'	Comments about specific sponsorship categories.
BVORs	A reference to the BVOR program.
CGs	A reference to ad hoc sponsorship through CGs.
Co-sponsors	A reference to racialized diasporas being sponsors through informal co-sponsorship arrangements.
G5s	A reference to ad hoc sponsorship through G5s.
SAHs	A reference to SAHs.

Appendix D.

Coding framework: Example of power-related themes

Table D.1 Three power-related themes

Code	Definition	Excerpt	Case
Equity, diversity, & inclusion	Comments about diversity, equity, and inclusion. Either the lack of these or examples of how they are being strengthened in the PSR program. E.g., who is represented?	And I say all of that because I think it's connected to this reality that the racialized diaspora groups are not just at the sponsor level, as you already know, they're also now, not now, but have previously been, but are growing within who is a SAH representative within [the SAH] Association. And needing to intentionally create avenues where that perspective and voice can be heard and intentionally supported in leadership spaces and in spaces where we're speaking truth to power. That it's not just having a Council that only represents the paid staff, faith-based SAHs but that also is a space that is intentionally accessible for the diversity of who [the] Association is, which includes the volunteer-run, single population focused SAHs as well.	Maria: Racialized key informant <i>Note:</i> Better representation of racialized sponsors and SAHs in leadership spaces.

Missing or unequal voices [two child codes merged]	A reference to racialized sponsors being invisibilized in critical policy discussions with key stakeholders. E.g., IRCC. A reference to issues of power dynamics, marginalization, and unequal access to platforms for expression. E.g., at the annual SAH conference.	I wanted to maybe key back to something you said. It's just an offering, you can reject it if you want. But I don't know if part of your interview process will be speaking with somewhat at the SAH Navigation Unit or the SAH Council, or maybe even someone at RSTP. They might be able to probably expand this conversation around governance within the SAH structure because even though racialized SAHs or ethno-SAHs are a third, arguably maybe even more, I don't think they're as involved in these broader discussions with IRCC. I think there's been some talk about how do we kind of make these tables more accessible?	Hawi: Racialized key informant <i>Note:</i> The voices of racialized diasporas need to be at the table.
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		But there are also groups of five and community sponsors, which I think their voice is not heard. And there are many challenges. And yeah, I think somehow there should be some kind of... again, I think RSTP works with groups of five and community sponsors, but because [they] are fully funded by IRCC, [RSTP] can't advocate for them. [RSTP] can only provide information and training, but not advocating on behalf of groups of five and community sponsors. And I think that's a big miss. Obviously... behind every CG or sponsorship agreement holder, there is a family member, there is a person from the ethnic community.	Ermias: Sponsor <i>Note: G5 and CS voices are not represented, and these sponsors are primarily from racialized diasporas.</i>
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Racialization of refugee sponsorship	A reference to how the sponsorship program has been racialized through various institutional mechanisms. E.g., caps, RSD, etc.	In the late 70s, we did not have the same numbers of racialized diasporas in Canada as we have now. Remember that there was early on, you know, in Canada's immigration programs, there was a very decisive white bias. We were taking in people that looked like "me," you know, not like "you." We were taking in mostly people from European backgrounds, those were the 'desired,' you know, immigrant communities. And that racial bias wasn't done away with until later, I think it was in the 60s, you know, when the Immigration Act finally changed in that regard and larger numbers of people that we now called racialized diaspora and communities came into Canada.	Lola: Key informant <i>Note:</i> Canada's immigration policies and practices were not always inclusive of African people and communities.
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		When they announced the global caps [redacted name of SAH board member referenced] was at that conference, I wasn't, it was a much smaller group. I don't even know if there was a SAH Association at that point or it was just the very beginning. And that notion of like, don't speak up, don't rock the boat, and she was like, kind of treated badly because she said here's the racist implication of these caps being shut down. So that could have turned off people. I don't know if you have the opportunity to reach out to some of those folks and ask them.	Maya: Key informant <i>Note:</i> Discuss the racists implications of caps on the number of PSRs.
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