

THE MEANING OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN CANADA: AN OLD AND A NEW MEANING
AND A DISCUSSION OF THEIR LABOUR MARKET

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ABSTRACT

When the Syrian nation began a revolution demanding rights and freedom; Bashar Al-Assad lead the republic into a war that resulted in the largest mass migration since world war two. In their challenging journey to resettle in a new home; barriers like language, employment and discrimination pose a threat to their integration. Nevertheless, in their determination and strength, Syrians work their way to resettlement despite their unique challenges and unique settlement process. This research is a literature review with an analysis of relevant case studies of Syrian refugees who settled in Canada since 2015. Its primary objective is to explore the settlement of Syrian refugees and their access to the Canadian labour market. It will explore the Syrian refugee's settlement journey covering their history, barrier, challenges and examining their resilience in adapting to the Canadian system and to their new lives in Canada.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Since 2011 and until now, the world has experienced a massive number of refugees. These refugees have changed the host countries economically, socially, and politically. Most of the recent years' refugees to Canada are from Syria. Millions of Syrians have been forced to flee, leaving houses, businesses, families, and memories behind. Based on the UNHCR data, there were 6.3 million Syrian refugees at the end of 2017 (Immigration Canada, 2018). Some countries opened their doors to refugees more than others. Canada was one of the countries that took on a big number of Syrian refugees as it implemented *operation Syrian refugees*, a plan to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada in a one-hundred-day period, beginning November 2015 (Immigration Canada, 2019).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the labour market access of Syrian refugees in Canada. This study aims to add to the literature regarding refugees and their integration by providing an understanding of Syrian refugee's integration and labour market access in their resettlement in Canada. It has uses on debates, policy making and integration initiatives by providing a better comprehension of refugees' lives after settlement. This thesis will collect data by drawing on materials from and engaging in, relevant literature, theories and analysis of statistics and case studies of Syrian refugees that settled in Canada since 2015, with the main focus being on the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Alberta.

Who is a refugee?

In a typical everyday definition, a refugee is, "a person fleeing life-threatening conditions" (Shacknove, 1985). In this definition a refugee is simply someone leaving from danger. However, in 1951, the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR)

convention set a more detailed definition of refugees. This definition is still used by most countries today and is used as a guideline to accept refugees into host countries. The UNHCR defines a refugee as, “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (UNHCR, 1951). Canada, like many other countries, accepts and follows UNHCR definition of refugees and adds to it the criterion that the person is unable to return to their country of origin (Immigration Canada, 2008). Unlike an immigrant who chooses to leave their country for education and economic reasons, a refugee is forced to leave because of fear (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Refugees also differ from immigrants in that they are less likely to speak the country’s official languages, have fewer economic and social support networks, generally arrive in more vulnerable circumstances and many have experienced trauma prior to their arrival (Hynie, 2018). These differences give immigrants an advantage over refugees in their resettlement and makes their integration easier.

What is a refugee?

The previous section established who a refugee is, and the basic definition of a refugee, but what is a refugee? A refugee is an ordinary person who was put in an unfortunate circumstance of war, disaster, trauma and fear (Papadopoulos, 2007). In many cases in the literature, a refugee is pathologized and studied under mental health and trauma topics (Papadopoulos, 2001). Papadopoulos says that, “becoming a refugee is not a psychological phenomenon *per se*; rather, it is exclusively a socio-political and legal one, with psychological implications” (Papadopoulos, 2007). Papadopoulos establishes a critical point that is often overlooked in refugee literature and that is the de-normalization of refugees. The current system

ignores the positive affects of the refugee struggles. The challenges that refugees go through can serve as a reconstructive mechanism and creates resilience (Pupavac,2002). However, the pathologizing and creation of dependency on others can result in low self-esteem in refugees (Lee, 2016). Pathologizing refugees can increase their use of services provided to assist them, which could reduce their use of their own resources and resilience, lower their self-esteem and creates a dependency on services workers. (Lee, 2016; Papadopoulos, 2001). When associating refugees with trauma, it does not only dismiss their resilience but also discredits their other struggles (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). The association of refugees with trauma creates a barrier between them and the host society. It becomes those who faced trauma and ‘us’, and this makes it harder to integrate with them (Pupavac,2002). Although refugees face many challenges and are faced with mental health and trauma as consequences of the hardship they went through; however, it is important to realize that despite these many refugees have resilience. This is often over-looked in the literature and the focus falls on the negative consequence, weakness and vulnerability. It is important to concentrate on the positive aspects of trauma and work with the understanding that refugees could have the ability to overcome their disadvantages.

Why study refugees

Every year, hundred of thousands of refugees are settling in host countries around the world. Canada alone takes about 24,000 of Government Assisted refugees (GAR) and about 55,000 in refugees and protected person every year (Immigration Canada, 2016). Understanding the challenges, barriers and needs of refugees will allow governments to construct an appropriate approach for integration and resettlement services. Considering the large number of refugees Canada is accepting every year, it is inquiring to consider their economic contribution. Learning more about the needs of refugees allows for a better and easier integration on the refugees’ part.

It also reduces that government spending on refugees because the resources will be directed in a more efficient manner. For example, when resources are directed into making refugees more confident and independent, they will then use less government support services, and develop their capacity to be independent (Pupavac, 2002). This has a double effect of helping refugees settle faster and is less straining on the government, also the faster refugees are settled, the faster they can give back. Therefore, by studying the needs of refugees an effective resettlement strategy can be deployed. This thesis will discuss several drawbacks of the current refugee system and possible strategies to improve, while specifically focusing on refugees' employment statistics. As will be discussed later, employment serves a very important role in refugees' resettlement and it is very important for economic prosperity.

Refugee laws in Canada

Canada is an immigration country. It accepts refugees and immigrants every year. It has the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which is an act that holds the laws regarding admission, removal, and responsibilities the Canadian government and refugees have on each other (Branch, 2019). Its main purpose is to track economic growth, assist with family unification and to follow humanitarian treaties (Branch, 2019). Every year the Canadian government alone sponsors an average of 24,500 refugees; and a similar number is accepted through private sponsorships (Immigration Canada, 2016). However, due to the increase in the number of refugees in recent years, Canada has increased its intake of refugees. In the year of 2018, Canada had the highest number ever recorded, taking in more refugees than any other nation, and reaching 28,100 from a total of 92,400 worldwide (UNHCR, n.d.). Generally, refugees are accepted into Canada in a few ways. Refugees are either sponsored by the Canadian

government or by a private sponsorship group/organization; or refugees enter as asylum seekers where they travel to Canada independently and seek asylum (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014).

The level of social and financial support refugees receive is dependent on their method of entry (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014). The first method of entry is through being sponsored by the Canadian government. Individuals sponsored by the Canadian government are known as Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) (Immigration Canada, 2016). The UNHCR assists the Canadian government in selecting refugees for sponsorship (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). The selection is based on determining the level of safety refugees have in their current country of residence as refugee who are thought to be safe are not accepted in the program (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). GAR receive financial support solely from the Canadian government for their first year in Canada through the resettlement assistance program (Immigration Canada, 2019). This program provides monthly income that is enough to cover the essential needs of refugees (Immigration Canada, 2020). If refugees are unable to find employment after the first year of living in Canada, they can apply for provincial assistance regardless of their method of sponsorship (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014).

Canada has the private sponsorship program (PSR), which is a unique program that allows Canadian individuals or organizations to sponsor refugees from abroad. The groups in this program must provide financial and resettlement support to their sponsored individuals for their first year of living in Canada (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). There are several ways to sponsor within this program. The Group of Five method is when a group of five or more Canadians come together to sponsor (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). The Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is a religious, humanitarian organizations or ethnocultural groups that are given permission by the Canadian government to sponsor refugees (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). Finally, Community Sponsor

is a for-profit, non-for-profit, incorporated, non-incorporated organizations that are also approved by the Canadian government to sponsor refugees (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). The SAH and community sponsor are given a limit by year to the number of refugees they can sponsor.

The Blended Visa-Office referred program (BVOR) is another sponsorship program that matches approved refugees overseas with sponsors in Canada. It is a blend of government and private sponsor support, in which the Canadian government provides support for up to six months and the matched sponsoring group provides the support for the next six months (Immigration Canada, 2020). Finally, some refugees enter Canada as asylum seeker as their enter Canada or while living in Canada and become refugee claimants. Refugee claimants are given settlement support but no financial support (Immigration Canada, 2017).

The Refugee Journey

This chapter will discuss the major phases refugees go through in their resettlement journey. The refugee journey is generally discussed as running away from war (Papadopoulos, 2001), However Papadopoulos explains that there are four distinct phases of the refugee journey, in which each phase has its own unique hardships.

The first phase is ‘anticipation’. This is before the traumatic events and it is governed by uncertainty of what is to happen. To many, this is the most traumatic phase because of the uncertainty of the events and in the difficulty of making correct decisions that will impact them for the rest of their lives (Papadopoulos, 2001). Some of the decision that refugees make usually include the following, whether to stay or move, move all together or in groups, take everything or leave everything (Papadopoulos, 2001). For many there will always be the “what if” this was not the correct decision, and that makes this phase very mentally difficult (Papadopoulos, 2001). The second phase is the ‘devastating events’ phase. In general, this is the witnessing of war

trauma (Papadopoulos, 2001). This phase is the most talked about because of the severity of the events that usually include fear of persecution, bombing, death of beloved ones, scarcity of food and others. Third is the ‘survival’ phase. This is a phase before the final destination and it usually involves surviving in unliveable refugee camps in neighbouring countries or taking a sea boat to a country that promises a better life (Papadopoulos, 2001). Refugee camps lack the necessities for the most basic human needs.

This phase can also be harder than the devastating events because living in camps usually means a new country, unemployment, no family and friends to help, and scarcity of food and electricity (Papadopoulos, 2001). Typically, during their camps stay, refugees are exploited and taken advantage of by being given hard jobs for extremely low pay, in which they are forced to accept because of their dire situations. The ‘adjustment phase’ refers to resettlement in the final destination site (Papadopoulos, 2001).

Usually refugees are helped by aid organization and service workers and sometimes financial support from the government or sponsors (Papadopoulos, 2001). However, this phase is, in many cases, a crush of hope as refugees are faced with the new reality of integration, which usually involves learning a new language, culture, finding employment and housing, getting credentials recognized, and dealing with social exclusion and discrimination from the host society (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Many refugees face major settlement challenges especially in their first years in the new country, because they must adapt to the cultural and language barriers, which are thought to be the most difficult challenges.

Other integration challenges include parental distress, perceived discrimination, and family financial difficulties (Isakson, Legerski & Layne, 2015). Many refugees who come from

war-torn areas struggle with mental health in addition to the integration difficulties, which adds to their challenge. (Isakson, Legerski & Layne, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO

Syria

Syria's History and Geography

Syria is located at the heart of the Middle East bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey with a total area of 187,437 square kilometres (“Middle East: Syria”, 2020). Syria has diverse ethnic and religious groups with Muslim Sunnis being the highest group (“Middle East: Syria”, 2020). Its capital city, Damascus, is thought to be the oldest city in the world (Masterman, E. W. G. 1898).

With a long history, the country that is now Syria has seen many civilizations from the Arameans and Phoenicians, to the middle ages, the Islamic Syria, the Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate and Finally the Ba’athist regime (“Middle East: Syria”, 2020). Syria’s geography puts it at an advantage, first because its land is plain and supplied generously with water (Masterman, E. W. G. 1898), which makes it perfect for agriculture (“Middle East: Syria”, 2020).

Secondly, its geographical location makes it a center point for travel between the east and west of Asia (Masterman, E. W. G. 1898). For these reasons, the land of Syria was highly valued over the history.

The Syrian Culture

Syrians are old traditioned in their culture and place great value on family, religion, education, self discipline, and respect (*Syrian Culture*, n.d). They have their traditional clothing, music, dances, and food (*Syrian Culture*, n.d). Syrians tend to interact within their bonding social capital and are very suspicious of bridging social capital (Hanley et al., 2018).

This theme of cultural form of social interaction in Syrians will be discussed later as a form of employment barrier to Syrian refugees in foreign countries.

The Syrian conflict

“Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world.”
-Filippo Grandi, UNHCR High Commissioner (“Syria Emergency”, n.d.)

It started on March 2011, when a group of college age boys in the Deraa province of Syria drew graffiti that read “Down Down Regime” (Celik, 2019). A popular statement of that time because of the Arab Spring demonstrations that were happening in neighbouring countries in the middle east. The statement was taken as a rebellion by Syria’s regime- Al Ba’th, and the boys were jailed and aggressively tortured (Celik, 2019). With this, the Syrians were furious and started peaceful anti-regime demonstrations across of Syria asking for freedom and change of rules from Al Ba’th regime, against corruption, low standards of living, and from dictatorship (Celik,2019). Al Ba’th regime, a dictatorship that has ruled Syria for almost half a century, replied to the demonstrations with percussion, bombing, killing, jailing, sever torturing and lock down of its cities, leading to scarcities of food, medicine, and basic needs of living (van Dam, 2011). After that, the country broke into a savage civil war that is still not near an end until now (van Dam, 2011). By 2015 only, there were at least 25 thousand deaths, 7.6 million internally displaced and 5.6 million Syrian refugees, 76% of whom settled in neighbouring countries (De Bel-Air, 2016). The Syrian conflict has resulted in the largest number of refugees in the world in the past two decades (Del Carpio & Wagner, 2015). It is also thought to be the worst humanitarian crisis since the end of the cold war (Berti, 2015).

Canada and Syrian refugees

There are several reasons that make the resettlement of Syrian refugee in Canada interesting to follow. First, normally Canada brings around 12,000 refugees each year. In *operation Syrian refugees*, the Canadian government went well above that number (Immigration Canada, 2020). By the year 2018, Canada has accepted 54,560 Syrian refugees, in which 26,240 were Government Assisted refugees (GARs) and 23,495 were Privately sponsored Refugees and 4,830 were blended Visa-office referred refugees (CIC, 2016; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018).

One reason that makes operation Syrian refugees different than previous refugee settlement processes is the big public interest and assistance through the private sponsorship programs that got implemented (group of five sponsor and SAH) in bringing of Syrian refugees (Immigration Canada, 2020). Also, this plan was different than other previous refugee settlement because the time between the refugees where chosen and brought to Canada was very fast and unlike any other program before, which made it a mental leap from just deciding, to actually coming to Canada (Immigration Canada, 2020).

Finally, the first wave of Syrian refugees did not receive the pre-arrival settlement services. These services are supposed to be the first step to prepare refugees for their settlement (Immigration Canada, 2020). All these factors make the Syrian refugees and their settlement an exceptional group, hence the interest to follow their progression and integration in Canada. The federal government estimated that it will put \$678 million to aid in bringing and settling refugees over the next few years (Chiasson, 2015).

The news of the large financial government investment in Syrian refugee resettlement stirred some backlash amongst Canadian. Drolet and Moorthi explain that although Canada is being humanitarian and increasing its diversity by accepting refugees to Canada; it is also

serving itself other benefits, such as economic benefits (2018). It is predicted that in twenty years, the resettlement of the newly arrived Syrian refugee will produce an economic value of \$563 million (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Marxism

One way to understand the backlash of the host society on refugees is by studying the theory of conflict by Karl Marx, also known as Marxism. Marxism looks at conflict as an economic reward between classes (Elliot, 2010). This theory explains that humans look for opportunities to secure resources for survival (Elliot, 2010). Marxism could explain the backlash of Canadians against the Government's support of Syrian refugees by simplifying it to basic human needs. Canadians showed backlash because they believe that the money that goes to bring and settle Syrian refugees is tax money paid by Canadian. Therefore, this money should go back to securing resources for Canadians who are paying it rather than into bringing people to Canada. Syrian refugees are also seen as stealing employment opportunities from working class Canadians, therefore stealing their resources for survival.

Ervin Goffman – Stigma theory

The social challenges faced by refugees can be looked at in the light of Goffman's stigma theory. Goffman defines stigma as being different in a social construct, so this can be a race, class, or gender difference (Davis, 2016). Goffman explains that stigma makes an individual discredited, leads to an uncomfortable social interaction, as well as discrimination and a reduction of an individual's life chances (Davis, 2016). Even before the arrival of Syrian refugees, there was already a stigma towards them (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). The stigma originated from the fear of refugees being terrorist and from the fear of losing employment opportunities to refugees (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). This stigma makes integration of refugees harder and can affect it on several aspects including initiation and optimising for employment.

Stigma works by putting labels on individuals. This not only changes the way people perceive the stigmatized group, but it also changes the way the stigmatized groups see themselves (Slattery, 2003). This change in the view of one's self leads to a new self image and a new behaviour (Slattery, 2003). Refugees now see themselves in the eyes of the host culture as foreign and different and therefore their behaviour becomes that. This pushes refugees further away from the mainstream society and keeps them locked in their circle of cultural friends. All in all, this reduces their integration and employment opportunities.

Ervin Goffman – Theory of Interaction Order

The general idea of the symbolic interactionism theory is that humans give meaning to things based on how they interact with them and that every person can have a different perspective of the same thing, and this perspective is subject to change at every new interaction (Elliot, 2010). In line with George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, the author explains that immigrants want to view themselves positively as everyone does. However, this becomes difficult with all the hindering aspects of the host culture such as cultural differences, which usually produce low self-confidence in newcomers (Valenta, 2008). The symbolic interactionist theory can be used to explain the reason immigrants choose not to mix outside of their ethnic group, even when factors of differences in culture, religion and language are not taken into account, and that is to protect their self-esteem (Valenta, 2008). When newcomers see themselves in the eyes of people of the host country, they can see the prejudice and they then act according to it (Valenta, 2008). The author explains that immigrants may reduce their interaction with the host society to protect their self esteem from the negative judgment, stigmatization, and racism (Valenta, 2008). During the time of Syrian refugees' arrival to Canada, there were several terrorist attacks on the west from supposedly Muslim groups. An example is the Paris attack in

France in 2015. As a result of these attacks, there was an increase of the depiction of Muslims as terrorist in media, and this made the integration of Syrian refugees much harder. This is especially true for Syrian refugees as the majority are of the Muslim religion (Immigration Canada, 2016). If refugees see themselves as terrorist in the eyes of the host culture, this changes their identity in so many ways. It first reduces their self-esteem and confidence, and it also makes them as if they must prove that they are not terrorists.

Ervin Goffman adds to symbolic interactionism and takes it in a new direction in his theory called interaction order. Goffman's theory of interaction order is a code of the way unfamiliar people socially interact with one another in social situations as to achieve certain goals such as producing an absence of threat, marking territories, and managing their physical appearance (Elliot, 2010). This theory can be used to explain the integration of refugees into the host society. As refugees are arriving to a new place with a new culture, language, and people, they are faced with unfamiliarity everywhere they go, and they are strangers to the new host country. To integrate with the new environment and people, refugees must create an absence of threat in their body language and behaviour, as to appear more friendly and be able to blend in the new culture. This change of behaviour makes them strangers to themselves as this is not their normal way to interact in social situation. However, it is the necessary way in their current situation because it allows them to integrate and settle in this new culture and surrounding.

Theory of resilience

Finally, will be discussed the theory of resilience. It is important to consider the trauma of refugees when looking at their integration. Syrian refugees, and refugees in general, go through several adversities before they are settled in their new country. It starts with war, fear of bombs, rape, and death. Then many must live in unlivable camps where they deal with cold,

disease and a lack of electricity food. Finally, they travel to their new host country that promises safety food and shelter to be faced with new challenges of adaptation but also discrimination and prejudice. The ability to live through that and integrate shows resilience.

Resilience is defined as the dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of negative life events (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Resilience can be demonstrated in minor adversaries (e.g., exam/work stress, illness) and major adversaries (e.g., loss of a child and war) (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Resilience is very beneficial because unlike coping and recovery, it can bring the individual to normal-everyday life functioning in no time. Therefore, its affects are immediate rather than gradual and it does not require the use of resources and coping strategies (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Resilience is thought to work by appraisal. People with resilience have less negative appraisal of an adversary, therefore reducing stress symptoms and requiring fewer coping strategies (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Previously there was the conception that individuals who faced life adversities would not be able to perform everyday function; however, research has shown the opposite. Individuals who survive adversaries can enjoy sound mental health and well-being like those who have no problems (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). This has been attributed to adversaries allowing individuals to discover their resources and learn to utilize their social support network and adapt to future adversaries (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). This theory can be used to explain the quick adaptation of some Syrian refugees in Canada.

CHAPTER FOUR

Employment

Barriers to Refugee's Employment

Economic integration is thought to happen when the labour earning of migrants is equal to or surpasses that of the native-born population (Khabra, 2015). Refugees face many barriers to employment especially in the first phases of resettlement. As discussed previously, refugees arrive with more barriers than regular immigrants (Khabra, 2015). Language was found to be the major barrier to obtaining employment and a key factor to success in finding employment (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Many refugees must take the time to learn the country's official language before they are able to find employment because it is a necessity for communication in every job. In a large quantitative study of refugees' employment in Canada over a three-decade period, it was found that language was the strongest barrier in affecting employment rates among refugees (Picot, Zhang & Feng Hou, 2019). Refugees that have knowledge of the official language were able to enter the labour market faster and more successfully (Picot, Zhang & Feng Hou, 2019).

The second strongest barrier to employment after language is education (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Education plays a role in obtaining employment in two ways. Many refugees could not finish their education in their home country because of war or because of living in refugee camps (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Education also becomes a barrier because of credential recognition. Degrees like medicine, pharmacy, engineering, and many others take years of solely studying to get approved in Canada, and the process is also expensive (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). In an interview study of 525 GAR, 44% reported employment issues due to credential recognitions (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Further, many refugees are not able to apply

to get their credentials recognized. This is because they either were not able to bring certificates them with them when they fled, or because their country is reluctant to providing them for them (Jackson & Bauder, 2013).

Having Canadian professional experience was also among the top-rated reasons for unemployment (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Employers were found to prefer hiring employee with Canadian work experience (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Other barriers that refugees face include the unavailability of service providers, outdated information from unofficial sources, lack of convenient and affordable transportation, inability to take time off work to attend language classes, long wait time for language classes and unavailability of child care in language classes (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). To prevent these barriers settlement services must make sure refugees receive correct information about services available, have translation services at all service agencies, provide transportation cost to accessing service agencies, and improve the refugee employment matching process and the foreign credential recognition (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Working on reducing or eliminating these barriers will produce faster and easier integration of refugees. The next section will discuss culture and social capital access as a barrier to employment.

Access to Social Capital as Facilitator and Barrier

Social capital is an individual's personal social network which can serve as an opportunity for resources and it can explain the nature of social relations (Van der Gaag & Wbber, 2008). There are three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking (Hanley, 2018). Bonding social capital is the access to help and information from close family and friends (Gericke et al, 2018). People in this capital share strong ties and share a similar co-ethnic background (Gericke et al., 2018). Bridging social capital is the connection of people with a

different race, class, and religion (Gericke et al., 2018). Finally, linking social capital is the access to government organizations and institutions (Hanley et al., 2018).

Bonding social capital is thought to be helpful for refugees' settlement because it provides information resources, emotional support, and it enhances confidence (Strang & Agar, 2010). Refugees report that bonding capital is very important for their initial stages of integration because it can strengthen ties between newcomers, but also because it provides feelings of inclusion and safety (Strang & Agar, 2010). Bonding social capital can also provide newcomers with confidence in their language skills through their interactions with each other (Strang & Ager, 2010). In a survey and an interview study of 100 newly arrived Syrian refugees that settled in Alberta cities, 88% reported that the presence of a Syrian community was very important as it helped in reducing the migration stress and it also helped assist with basic migration needs of finding housing and sharing tips (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Some believe that refugees are at a disadvantage in larger cities because of the large population causing employment competition. However, in this study, refugees fared better in large cities because of the presence of co-ethnic groups, which assisted with language and employment (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). In another example, a four-year longitudinal survey examined the social capital of 626 privately sponsored Syrian refugees in Montreal, Quebec (Hanley et al., 2018). It was found that Syrian refugees utilized their bonding capital more than their other capitals. Syrian refugees reported that their family and friends had a major role in helping them find employment (Hanley et al., 2018). Montreal has a high ratio of Syrian population and the majority of the newly arrived Syrian refugees in Montreal were sponsored by their Syrian family and friends (Hanley et al., 2018). The access to bonding capital was highly associated with finding employment and a faster integration of Syrian refugees in Montreal (Hanley et al., 2018). Therefore, access to bonding

capital had positive integration outcomes on employment for Syrian refugees. However, Syrian refugees' access to bridging social capital was found to be low because of their cultural beliefs (Hanley et al., 2018).

Bridging capital is very important because it can mean the difference between finding employment to finding better employment. In the literature, there has been a consistent finding of low access to bridging capital in refugees (Hanley et al., 2018). Bridging capital allows the interaction of newcomers with people of the host society who would know more about the host countries' opportunities; therefore, it is associated with more career related information (Gericke et al., 2018). Cultural beliefs have been found to affect Syrian refugees' access to bridging capital. In the Montreal Syrian refugees' study, participants stayed away from accessing their bridging capital (Hanley et al., 2018). Syrian refugee participants stated several reasons for their low access. One participant reported that it is unusual for them ask for help outside of their immediate circle, and that they are used to counting on themselves (Hanley et al., 2018). Syrian refugees reported that they are not used to having community groups assist with employment and similar issues and if there were such groups, they are known to be useless in their home country (Hanley et al., 2018). More importantly, Syrians refugee explained that asking for help is feared amongst Syrians because strangers and authority figures can be dangerous in Syria (Hanley et al., 2018). All these reasons served as a cultural barrier to repel Syrian refugees away from accessing their bridging capital.

Despite their distrust of bridging capital, Syrian refugees did highlight their belief in the importance of interacting with the host culture specially to learn culture and language. (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). In an interview study of 17 newly arrived Syrian refugees in Canada looking at their overall settlement experiences, Syrian refugees reported that they wish to make Canadian

friends (Oudshoorn et al., 2019). This shows that Syrian refugees both wish to enhance their Canadian connections and that they understand the importance of accessing their bridging capital in their settlement.

Discrimination can also act as a barrier to accessing bridging capital. Living in an area with the same ethnic and cultural groups reduces discrimination (Vaz et al, 2018). Syrian refugees reported that living in an area with people of same culture reduced the stigma. (Hanley et al., 2018). Therefore, refugees could be avoiding access to bridging capital as to avoid discrimination. Although with more time in Canada, Syrian refugees became more comfortable of their bridging capital but their rate of adopting to it was slower than other refugees (Hanley et al., 2018).

Bridging capital is not easy to access especially when refugees are aware of the host society's stigma of them. Therefore, a bidirectional effort from refugees and from the host society is necessary. Bridging social capital can be built by friendly and welcoming interaction with neighbours and friends in the new host culture. (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Simple acts of friendliness of the host culture, such as smiling and saying hello, have a significant impact on refugees' sense of security. (Strang & Ager, 2010).

All in all, bonding capital has many advantages to refugees especially in the early stages of resettlement; however, refugees must access their bridging capital to achieve full integration. Cultural beliefs and discrimination have been found to be barriers to accessing of bridging capital in refugees. It is important for refugees to realize the benefits of bridging capital and be aware of their cultural beliefs, on the other hand the host society must project a welcoming effort and avoid discrimination.

Refugees in Media

The Canadian media was very active in following Syrian refugee's migration to Canada. Examining the media representation of Syrian refugees' migration and settlement in Canada can provide an understanding of their settlement outcomes as well as their integration in the Canadian culture.

The Canadian media is dichromatic in its representation of refugees (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Jackson explains the dichotomy of the refugee representation in the media. Refugees are either presented as 'good' which are those who are hard working, adapt on their own, find employment and don't require government assistance; or they are depicted as 'bad' which are refugees who are free-loading, don't learn the language, refuse low paying jobs, live on government assistance, and use tax money (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Refugees are aware of this distinction and depiction of them in the media and try to be 'good' refugees, as they know that that will assist in their integration (Jackson & Bauder, 2013).

A qualitative, media content analysis by Ryerson University examined many Canadian newspaper articles from *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail* and *National Post*. It examined online videos, and other media posts researching the content on "Syria", "refugee", and "Canada" (Tyyskä et al., 2017). The main themes found in the analysis included, the positive representation of the Canadian government and the public as humanitarian and generous, the representation of Syrian refugees as vulnerable, needy, and lacking agency, finally, the representation of the Syrian male as dangerous (Tyyskä et al., 2017).

The study also found the theme of "othering" of Syrian refugees (Tyyskä et al., 2017). This "othering" was depicted in the form of Canadians as humanitarian and "saviours" while representing Syrian refugees as "vulnerable" and "victims" (Tyyskä et al., 2017). On one hand,

this led to some increase in public empathy and private sponsorship of Syrian refugees, as the media was reported as a strong source to initiation of sponsorship of Syrian refugee (Immigration Canada, 2020). However, this representation also brought with it some negative integration outcomes for Syrian refugees. The victimizing of refugees in the media focused on their vulnerability and deprived them of their agency and resiliency (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Only one article out of all articles researched, stated that refugees need proper post migration care, which should include the need to promote their resilience rather than pathologize them (Tyyskä et al., 2017). The victimization of Syrian refugees leads to discrimination from the host society because it begs the belief that Syrian refugees are living on their tax money.

Also, the representation of refugees as valuable is thought to impact their self-confidence, therefore increasing their dependency. Hynie states that this pathologizing can impede refugee's integration because it creates a sense of weakness and dependency in them (Hynie, 2018). Papadopoulos proposes that generally refugees can adapt on their own with minimum help because the challenges that refugees face in their journey tends to make them resilient and resourceful (2007). Therefore, it is essential to maintain refugees' capacity to tap into their resilience and resources. If that capacity is negatively affected, it will reduce their self-confidence and increase their use of services (Papadopoulos, 2007), and this makes it harder for them to integrate and find employment.

The Canadian media further devalued Syrian refugees by dismissing the reporting of their integration struggles which include, unemployment, employment exploitation, and housing and by also presenting them always as inferior to Canadians (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Syrian refugees were also devalued by the media in the absence of their voices in interviews for newspaper articles (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Syrian refugees were almost always voiced by an expert or insider

speaker rather than by refugees themselves (Tyyskä et al., 2017). All this connotes to Syrian refugees and to Canadian that Syrian refugees are not important enough and can be replaced by others. Therefore, the representation of Syrian refugees as lacking agency, disregarding their struggles and not voicing them in interview all signifies the lack of agency representation which further oppresses refugees and challenges their integration even more.

Finally, the Canadian media acted as a barrier to integration in its representation of the Syrian male as terrorist (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Citizens of the west have the fear of terrorists acting as refugees and using the immigration system to enter the country (Hynie, 2018). There is also the association of local crime rates with refugees (Hynie, 2018). Hynie points that in the recent decades there has been an increase of association of criminality with migration (Hynie, 2018b). In representing the Syrian male as terrorist, the media strengthened these fears in Canadians which is thought to increase of negative integration outcomes and discrimination.

In conclusion. The media acted as an employment barrier to Syrian refugees, in its representation of them as vulnerable, lacking agency, in “othering” them, in dismissing their struggles, in representing them as inferior, and finally in representing them as terrorist. The next section will discuss backlash, its affects on integration and the role of the media in the host society’s backlash.

CHAPTER FIVE

Backlash

“How countries treat those who have been forced to flee persecution and human rights abuse elsewhere is a litmus test of their commitment to defending human rights and upholding humanitarian values”. (Human Rights Watch World Report 2001, 2001, para. 1)

Backlash trauma is defined as aggression towards minority groups as a response to an act of aggression by an individual who is supposedly associated with that group (Kira et al., 2014). Backlash trauma has three sub-types of systemic abuse. These include intergroup, such as verbal and nonverbal abuse; institutional abuse, such as discrimination in employment opportunities; and finally, media abuse which is negative representation in the media (Kira et al., 2014). Backlash trauma has more severe and more mental health outcomes than other types of traumas, and it is believed to cause exclusion and potential identity subjugation (Kira et al., 2014). In a study by Kira et al, investigating seven different types of trauma on 224 Muslim Iraqi adolescents, it was found that backlash trauma had the strongest negative affect on mental health (2014). This shows the severe and serious affects of backlash trauma. Integration is a difficult journey. Government institutions and service workers work to ease the process of integration for newcomers, and backlash trauma is an area that can be easily worked on and improved to assist with the process of integration.

Backlash and Integration

To better understand the relationship between backlash and integration, it is essential to first understand the definition of integration. The UNHCR defines integration as,

“a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one’s own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for

communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population”. (Pressé & Thomson, 2008)

This definition explains the complex, multi-faceted and bidirectional process of integration. Pressé & Thomson explain that the process of integration begins much before settlement and continues for years after the actual settlement (2008). This definition also highlights the integral part of the host society on refugee’s settlement. Integration is both the responsibility of the newcomers and the host society as well. It is a process where both newcomers and host society must change (Hynie, 2018). Most theories would define ‘successful’ integration as reasonable access to resources and opportunities, participation in society and having feelings of security and belongings in their new homes (Hynie, 2018). However, backlash from the host society can hinder the development of these feelings and opportunities. Social inclusion from the host society is necessary for refugees to mix with the host culture which will then create affection and open opportunities for refugees (Hynie, 2018). Public attitudes can affect the degree newcomers are able to form social relationships and the willingness of institutes to come up with policies that meet refugees’ needs (Hynie, 2018). Therefore, welcoming efforts from the host society are necessary for a successful integration of refugees. The next section will discuss the Canadian society’s reaction to Syrian refugees’ settlement in Canada as well as the consequences of backlash trauma on refugee’s integration

Backlash on Syrian Refugees

Despite the large initiative, support and welcome from many Canadian about the migration of Syrian refugees (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018), there was still many Canadians that demonstrated a strong backlash with the news of bringing 50,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. The backlash was shown in several incidences of discrimination on Syrian refugees. Newly arrived Syrian refugees reported that the main challenge to building social connection was the racism

(Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). A family of Syrian refugees in Alberta reported that their kids got mistreated at school by being told to go back to their home country and that they brought mice and dirt with them (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). The family also reported having to deal with people who accused them on coming on the government's money (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). In a hate incidence in Vancouver, a man sprayed a group of newly arrived Syrian refugees, which included women and children, with a pepper spray (*Pepper-Spray Attack on Refugees*, 2016). Although this act was condemned in the media, it was still hurtful and discouraging for the newly arrived Syrian refugees. Finally, a restaurant and cafe in Downtown Toronto city, which is owned by a newly arrived Syrian refugee family, was forced to shutdown temporarily because of receiving hate messages and death threats (Rintoul, 2019). The discrimination Syrian refugees face in their new lives in Canada is real and affects their integration and employment in many ways.

There are several reasons that can explain the backlash of Canadian on Syrian refugees. Social and economic reasons are thought to be the main factors. The fear stems from losing of material resources, housing opportunities, and crowding of the health care system (Hynie, 2018a). Refugees are viewed as competitors with working class Canadians, on the available employment opportunities (Hynie, 2018a). The federal government estimated that it will put \$678 million to aid in bringing and settling Syrian refugees over the next few years (Chiasson, 2015). Canadians believe that their tax money should not be wasted into bringing more people to Canada, instead it should be used to fix the problems of the people who are already living in it (Chiasson, 2015). Also, the media had a strong role in causing the Canadian backlash. The representation of Syrian refugees as lacking agency made Canadians believe that Syrian refugees are not in Canada to work but to live on government assistance. Hynie explains that public

support or rejection of refugees falls on the representation of refugees as “others” (Hynie, 2018b). The “othering” of Syrian refugees was very evident in the media and the presentation of them as terrorists triggered fear and led to more even discrimination. The association of refugees with terrorism leads to the dehumanization of refugees which strips them from moral obligations and decreases prosocial behaviour towards them, it also makes the acts of backlash justifiable towards them (Hynie, 2018a). All these economic and social factors led to public backlash and trauma which hindered Syrian refugees’ settlement and negatively affected their integration. The next section will discuss consequences of backlash trauma

Backlash Consequences

Backlash and discrimination from the host society can pose a strong negative affect on refugees’ integration. This is evident in backlash causing identity subjugation and social exclusion (Kira et al, 2011). Identity subjugation is caused by labelling refugees with the ‘refugee’ title. In an interview study looking at refugee claimants in Canada, refugees reported that the ‘refugee’ title lead to discrimination and prejudice that hindered them from finding employment opportunities, which led them to unwillingly take government assistance (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). The refugee title can change the identity and discredits one’s values and their roles in life. The ‘refugee’ title changes people’s identity from a ‘Mother’, ‘Teacher’, ‘Doctor’ and even ‘Human’ into ‘Refugee’ (Kira et al, 2011). Refugees feel that their valued identities get discredited and is instead replaced with the negatively connotated ‘refugee’ title. The prejudice that is associated with the ‘refugee’ title donates to many employers a lack of proficiency and is associated with low expectations of refugee’s abilities, even though many refugees held professional jobs before becoming refugees. (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Refugees reported that the discrimination from the ‘refugee’ title is what hindered their employment outlook and lead

them to rely on government assistance (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Not only that, but these stereotypes shape the refugee's ideas of their employability (Jackson & Bauder, 2013).

Consequences of identity subjugation and social exclusion include a reduction in self-confidence and in resilience. When refugees are aware of the prejudice, they are less likely to apply for employment as they believe that no one will hire them, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The loss of social status that is associated with one's role can have major side effects on integration. In a study of 145 Vietnamese boat refugees after three years of their settlement in Norway. It was found that loss of social status and war trauma were independently negatively related to unemployment when mental health was controlled for (Hauff & Gaglum, 1993). This study shows that even with no existence of mental health issues, the loss of social status has the same negative effect on employment as witnessing of war trauma (Hauff & Gaglum, 1993). This shows the significance of the social aspect in refugees' employment. It is important to consider the multi-faceted role of discrimination on refugees' integration. Syrian refugees in Ontario reported that facing racism and social exclusion impeded their sense of belonging (Immigration Canada, 2019). It is very important for settlement agencies and government migration services to realize the importance of proper social integration on refugee's employment, and to develop services according to that.

CHAPTER SIX

Refugees and Syrian Refugees Employment Discussion

Statistics on Refugees Employment in Canada

Despite the media's negative lens on refugees and the barriers that hold them back, refugees have a good economic contribution to Canada. It was found that 11-17% of Canada's new-comers are refugees and that 60% of them are under the age of 25 years (Korntheuer, 2017; Wilkinson and Greceas, 2017). As Canada has an aging population, young people are needed and refugees often come to Canada early in their lives (UNHCR, n.d.). This means that more than half of refugees are of a working age and should be looking to building their careers (Korntheuer, 2017). Canada statistics found that the unemployment rate of refugees between the ages of 25 and 54 is 9% which is only 3% lower than Canadian born (UNHCR, n.d.). The employment rate of refugees improves with time (UNHCR, n.d.). Refugees arriving in Canada between 1982 and 1990 have the same unemployment rate as Canadian born. Within five years of their arrival, the rate was equal to the Canadian average (UNHCR, n.d.). It was found that refugees' labour market contributions include, being workers, innovators, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, consumers, and investors (Korntheuer, 2017). It was also found that half of refugees work in high-skilled jobs and 14% are self-employed or own their own businesses (UNHCR, n.d.). It is estimated that 60-100% of the growth in Canada's economy is due to immigrants and refugees' labour, income, taxes, and investments. (Korntheuer, 2017). It was also found that, in the long run, the lifetime employee rate of refugees in Canada, the US and Australia is higher than that of native born and that refugees will earn more, pay more taxes and use less resources than native born (Korntheuer, 2017). Finally, over a period of 20 years, refugees pay more in income tax alone than they received from governmental services. These statistics give evidence

to the contribution of refugees to their host country. When refugees integrate and overcome their barriers, they find employment and give back economically.

Employment of Syrian refugees in Canada

This section will discuss the labour market outcomes of the newly arrived Syrian refugees to Canada. Studies on Syrian refugees that landed in Canada since 2015 have found that for the privately sponsored refugees, over a half were working less than a year after their arrival to Canada (Immigration Canada, 2019). For the government sponsored refugees, over a half were employment after four years of their arrival to Canada (Immigration Canada, 2019). Initially, the employment rates of Syrian refugees were lower than other refugee groups who arrived at the same time. The 2016 tax record report shows that, the newly arrived Syrian refugees had employment percentages of 5% for GAR, 40% for PSR and 15% for BVOR, in the first few months from their arrival (Immigration Canada, 2019). Other groups of refugees who arrived in the same time reported higher employment percentages of, 22% for GAR, 56% for PSR and 30% for BVORS (Immigration Canada, 2019). Although Syrian refugees had lower employment percentages initially, they were able to move along the same trajectory as other refugees. In 2018, two to three years after their settlement, the percentage of employment of Syrian refugees went up to be 43% for GAR, 60% for PSR and 55% for BVOR (Immigration Canada, 2019). This shows that the percentage of employment for Syrian refugees significantly increased especially for the GAR group, which had over 35% increase in employment. The large increase in the employment percentages of Syrian refugees donates their resilience and motivation to acquiring employment. The initial lower employment rate of Syrian refugees can be attributed to several factors. One major factor is the low knowledge of Canada's official

languages especially in the GAR group (Immigration Canada, 2019). Wilkinson and Garcea identify that language is a key factor to obtaining employment (2017).

Weak knowledge of the official languages creates a barrier to employment opportunities and the types of jobs available (Immigration Canada, 2019). A study of refugees in Australia found that refugees with better language skills were more likely to be employed (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014). The Syrian refugees GAR group reported less knowledge in both of Canada's official languages as compared to other refugee groups and when compared to Syrian PSR group as well (Immigration Canada, 2019). A majority of 92% of Syrian GAR reported language to be their main barrier to employment and 83.2% of them reported no knowledge of either English or French (Immigration Canada, 2019). When compared to Syrian PSR who arrived in the same time, only 19% reported no knowledge of either of Canada's official languages (Foley, Bose & Grigri, 2018). Therefore, the large disparity in employment ratios between the two Syrian refugee groups can be attributed to language skills. In comparison with other refugee populations that arrived in the same time period, 65% of Syrian refugees reported no knowledge of Canada's official languages; while 42% of other refugee population reported to knowledge of Canada's official languages (Immigration Canada, 2019). Therefore, Syrian refugees and especially the GAR had lower knowledge of Canada's official language by more than 20%, as compared to other groups and by more than 60% when compared to Syrian PSR. This can be taken as the major reason for the initial low employment percentage.

In several studies, Syrian refugees discuss their frustration and report more barriers related to learning the official languages. In a study looking at Syrian refugees settlement in Canada, one participant expressed their frustration over their inability to find a job because of weak language skills stating that, "the main issue is the language and to have a job here I should

have the language otherwise I can't have a job." (Calvert, 2018). Access to language education classes was not easily available to Syrian refugees. Syrian GAR reported long waiting lines for classes and lack of support as the main barriers to accessing language classes (Foley, Bose & Grigri, 2018). One newly arrived Syrian refugee reported that, "In other words, we haven't learned any English until now. It is because of the long waiting time to enter the school. How can I justify this after six months? I am still in level 2 or 3! How can I justify to the government that I couldn't learn English? Our [government] sponsor didn't connect us with Canadian families to meet with them or to practise the language. And, they didn't provide us with training programs or orientation programs or volunteer programs. (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). This shows the frustration of a GAR and their motivation to settle is not being met with support; in their inability to find a spot at language schools but also in not being offered the services and help to settle into training programs. This also shows the disadvantage GAR have in connecting to friends in their settlement. PSR have this easier because they are usually already sponsored by family and friends which serves a social network. Even if PSR are sponsored by non-family and friends, usually the sponsorship group tends to have more care for them than the government (Foley, Bose, & Grigri, 2018). Syrian refugees also reported that language classes are insufficient especially for learning English communication and that they face barriers in attending classes such as childcare availability (Oudshoorn et al., 2019). The reported lack of support, unavailability of classes, and childcare support all negatively affected Syrian refugees' integration.

Syrian refugees also stated that their weak English language is a barrier to forming Canadian connections (Oudshoorn et al., 2019). An interview study with 13 newly arrived Syrian refugees of working age who have been living in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for 8 months to

1.5 years further discussed the language barrier. A Participants reported that language was their main barrier and that they were confident of finding employment once their language improves (Khabar, 2015). Others also reported that the resettlement difficulties of adjusting, housing, childcare and financial responsibilities did not leave them with time to attend language classes in the first year (Khabar, 2015). Also, the financial pressures Syrian refugees face, especially knowing that their financial assistance will expire after the first year in Canada, forces them to go back to work without taking the time to learn the official knowledge and to accept any “survival job” (Khabar, 2015). Some participants reported not given the jobs during job interviews because of their language skills (Khabar, 2015). Others reported being given jobs that required almost no language knowledge such as a chef (Khabar, 2015). For example, one participant reported being given a chef job over a cashier or bartender because of his low English skills; which was impeding because he is not going to be able to improve his English language being a chef (Khabar, 2015). These statement from Syrian refugees demonstrate their felt frustration of language barriers to employment and to social integration. Financial constrains, lack of time, unavailability of language classes, unavailability of childcare services to attend classes and the incompetence of language classes in teaching English communication were all barriers to learning Canada’s official languages.

Other reasons that could have resulted in the lower initial rates of Syrian refugees’ employment is their unique settlement process. As mentioned earlier, the resettlement of Syrian refugees was different from other groups in several ways such as the speed they were brought to Canada. Syrian refugees were brought to Canada very fast as the time between their acceptance and coming to Canada was very short (Immigration Canada, 2019). The fast speed at which Syrian refugees arrived at Canada had a few negative consequences on Syrian refugees, but also

on the Canadian government and the host society as well. The sudden large numbers of which Syrian refugees were sponsored to Canada meant that there would be a competition for resources (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). This could have caused the longer wait times for language classes and other settlement services. Refugees in the highly populated province of Ontario said that the large number of refugees created a challenge for service workers (Immigration Canada, 2019). The first contingent of Syrian refugees arrived too quickly and missed their pre-arrival settlement services (Immigration Canada, 2019). Missing the pre-arrival settlement services probably had a major effect on refugees' employment because this meant that there were not given the knowledge to navigate their new lives early on in their settlement.

The fast speed and large number at which Syrian refugees were brought to Canada was also hard on the Canadian government's preparation for settlement. The fast speed meant that services to accommodate the settlement of Syrian refugees had to come together very quickly. (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Canada agreed that measures must be put in place prior to the resettlement of refugee to ensure smooth and easy integration (Pressé & Thomson, 2008). However, with Syrian refugees this was not the case and might have caused slower labour integration because of the lack of resources including language classes (Immigration Canada, 2019). The settlement services were more costly to be put together quickly, but also this may have caused them to be not as efficient or enough for refugees (Immigration Canada, 2017).

The unique and fast way Syrian refugees arrived at Canada might have triggered more discrimination from the host society. This is thought to be caused by economic and cultural reasons. The sponsorship of Syrian refugees meant that a large amount of money had to be spent on refugees on a short period of time (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018), which led to public discontent, backlash, islamophobia, discrimination, and racism. Other reasons for the strong backlash from

the host society on Syrian refugees could be attributed to their visibility as a minority. Syrian refugees came in big numbers, and many of them settled in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta (Foley, Bose, & Grigri, 2018). This could have increased the negative attitudes towards them because of the fear of this new group to change the cultural norms of the host society (Hynie, 2018a).

Another reason for the discrimination is that most Syrian refugees are of a Muslim religion (Hanley et al, 2018). This makes Syrian refugees more visible as a group but also brings the stigma of terrorism about Muslim to them, which has been depicted recently in the media. The host society might reject Syrian refugee more because of their visibility as Muslims which are being presented as violent and terrorist in the media (Hynie, 2018b).

Different access to social capital can be thought to explain the different employment rate between GAR and PSR Syrian refugee groups. Most individuals from the PSR group were sponsored by their family and friends (Hanley et al., 2018). Therefore, giving them easy access to their bonding capital. In a study of Syrian refugee in Alberta, it was found that PSR were more likely to report that their needs were met, and that they received more help as compared to GAR (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). PSR have the advantage of close family relation and the advantage of maintaining the feelings of inclusion and social identity. The PSR reported receiving more support than GAR such as in, resume assistance, being a reference, childcare, connecting them to employers (Khabar, 2015). Ethnic bonds also played a role in hiring of Syrian refugees. Some participants reported being hired because their boss was Syrian (Khabar, 2015). At the first stage of integration, placing refugees in their bonding capital benefits their employment access. This is thought to be because, being within their bonding capital provides them with a network but also with the feelings of inclusion and confidence and the chance to practice their language skills.

After some time, refugees must join their bridging capital to access better employment opportunities. However, this shift can only happen with positive feedback from the host culture.

The initially weak language skills, barriers to accessing language classes, large numbers of refugees arriving on the same time, and missing pre-arrival settlement services are unique factors that affect the labour market access of Syrian coming to Canada. For the PSR, the advantage of being sponsored directly within their social capital created an easier access of them to the labour market over GAR.

Cases of Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurship

Despite the barriers and the resettlement challenges some Syrian refugees proved their resilience by pursuing entrepreneurship soon after their arrival. This section will discuss two examples of Syrian refugees who opened their own businesses less than a year after their arrival to Canada. These cases are examples of resilience because despite the social, mental and economic challenges refugees face in their resettlement journey, as well as the unique challenges faced by the Syrian refugee group, these cases show resilience, hope, and motivation in overcoming adversities and in starting a new life, in a new home country.

The first case is of Downtown Toronto city's first Syrian restaurant and café. Alsoufi's are a Syrian family who migrated to Canada as refugees in 2015 and opened their restaurant, Soufi's, after finding it difficult to get their credentials recognized. (Rintoul, 2019). Alsoufi's opened their restaurant less than a year of their arrival to Canada and their business was very successful. They even hired other Syrian refugees in their restaurant to support the local community and refugees. (Syrian restaurant, 2019). Alsoufi's were even profiled in New York Times as an example of successful integration of Syrian refugees (Syrian restaurant, 2019). When interviewed by a newspaper, Alsoufi's stated that, "it's nice when you bring a piece of

home into a new place and share it with other people” (Calvert, 2018). Despite the success of the restaurant, Alsoufi’s had to close it down because they were receiving hate messages and death threats (Rintoul, 2019). These acts of hate and racism towards them got triggered after their son attended a demonstration against the people’s party of Canada (Rintoul, 2019). These events led Alsoufi’s to unfortunately close their restaurant. However, the local community was very upset about the closure of the restaurant and were very supportive and helped convince Alsoufi’s family to reopen (Rintoul, 2019). Finally, Alsoufi’s did not want to set a negative example of refugee business owners and decided to reopen. (Rintoul, 2019). Alsoufi family is an example of resilience and motivation in not only opening a business less than a year of their arrival, but also in their courage to overcome the discrimination and remain open for themselves and for future refugees.

The second example of entrepreneurship is of the Hadhad’s family. The Hadhad’s are Syrian refugees who landed in Canada in 2015. They are the first Syrian family to settle in Canada at Antigonish, Nova Scotia (MacMillan, 2016). The Hadhad’s owned their own chocolate factory back in their home country in Damascus, Syrian; and they wanted to make Canada their new home (MacMillan, 2016). Less than a year after their arrival and with the help of their local community, they opened their own chocolate factory in Canada, naming it “Peace by Chocolate” (MacMillan, 2016). Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mentioned The Hadhad’s in his UN speech as a refugee success story (MacMillan, 2016). To give back to their community for their support, the Hadhad’s employed neighbours at their chocolate factory and have donated some of their profits to the red cross Fort McMurray fire relief efforts (MacMillan, 2016). Their donation was motivated by knowing the difficulties people face in having to leave

their homes. The Hadhad's wish that their story can be a motivator for other refugees to rebuild their lives and to contribute to their new home and community (MacMillan, 2016).

Contraindications in Refugee Success in Canada

There is conflicting research on the economic success of refugees compared to immigrants in Canada. Some studies show that refugees do almost equally well to economic migrants in terms of their labour contribution in Canada; however, other studies show that refugees do not fare as well as economic migrants. In a research paper on the economic integration of refugees, Wilkinson and Garcea, state that refugee do equally well to immigrants but over a longer period (2017). There are several reasons that make the labour market access of refugee different than that of immigrants. Refugees face more barriers and challenges in their integration. (Khabar, 2017). For example, immigrants plan their trip for resettlement; however, for many refugees the decision to migrant is sudden and happens without previous planning, such as preparing by learning the official language. Yu and colleagues report that refugees enroll in language classes at a larger number than immigrants (2007). This shows that refugees must put more effort to integrate after their arrival. Second, the selection criteria to entering Canada is different for economic migrants and for refugees (Khabar, 2017). Refugees are selected to enter based on humanitarian basis and the need for protection; while economic migrants are selected based on the prediction of the success of their economic contribution (Khabar, 2017). Wilkinson and Garcea report that refugee youth aged 20-29 are less likely to be employed compared to other youth migrants from the same country of same-aged Canadian born (2017). This could be because refugees must spend a few years learning the language and networking before entering the labour market. Some refugees deal with the effects of war trauma, which may also make it harder for them to enter the labour market (Khabra, 2015). Yu and colleagues report that

refugees arrive with lower educational attainment and that indirectly affect economic outcomes (Yu et al., 2007). This is because of the disruption to their education because of war or from being in refugee camps (Hynie and Changor). All these reasons can explain the slower labour market access for refugees as compared to immigrants.

Refugees Motivation for becoming Independent

Despite the media's representation of refugees as lazy, several cases in the literature have reported refugees need and motivation to be financially independent. In an interview study of 17 refugee claimants in Canada, refugees report that they do not wish to rely on government assistance and hope to find employment (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Refugees further explain that receiving government assistance makes them feel humiliated because they carry professional designations, but must be on welfare (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Refugees in the study also reported that having a job has many more benefits to them over receiving government assistance; these benefits include being financially independent, making a network, feeling more Canadian, learning the official language, and feeling that they are giving back to Canada (Jackson & Bauder, 2013). Korntheuer reports that two thirds of the newly arrived Syrian refugees reported that finding a job was their main problem less than a year of their arrival (2017). In another study examining the experiences of newly arrived Syrian refugees in Alberta, one participant explained his motivation for finding a job by saying, "We are Syrians. Our priority is our job. We like to work. I miss working more than anything else honestly...I used to work, for example, for seven or eight hours. Now it has been a year [that] I am at home. Regardless of the financial situation, we just want to work. When we work, we help ourselves and at the same time we help the government" (Kumar Agrawal, 2019). In another research study on Syrian refugees, one participant also showed similar interest in stating, "in the end, we would like to be integrated

with the Canadian community, so the more we attend these lectures, the more we educate about the Canadian culture.” (Calvert, 2018). Syrian refugees see employment as more than just financial means. For Syrian refugees, employment means getting to learn the language, make connections, and learning the Canadian culture (Khabar, 2015). This shows the motivation for refugees to work not just for financial reasons but also to regain their identity and self-esteem as well.

Moreover, Syrian refugees’ eagerness to obtain employment is demonstrated through their use of settlement services. A study found that Syrian refugees accessed settlement services at a higher rate than non-Syrian refugees who arrived at the same time (Immigration Canada, 2019). A recent interview study of 36 Syrian refugees in Germany and UK showed that, Syrian refugees want to continue their education, past careers and earn new education (Shneikat & Ryan, 2017). Further they stated that having a job gave them a sense of independence and boosted their resilience (Shneikat & Ryan, 2017). They also reported that the over reliance on support services created a dependency they did not wish for (Shneikat & Ryan, 2017). A Syrian refugee woman in Alberta reported that being able to teach again will help her regain her identity and self esteem. She mentions that a strong part of her identity is in being a teacher, and by being able to teach again she would be able to maintain her identity and self esteem (Strang & Ager, 2010). All these examples show the need for independence and the demonstration of resilience in Syrian refugees. This shows the importance of employment on restoring the identity and reaching integration. Refugees lose parts of their valued identities in their migration journey. The professional standing and employment are an integral part of the identity to many individuals. The barriers that refugees face in obtaining employment in their new country does not only pose a financial challenge, but also an identity one because of the relation of their professional

employment to their identity. Working on overcoming the employment settlement barriers around refugees will positively affect their financial, mental, and social aspects.

Although refugees are eager to obtain employment in their new country, the media representation and host society's discrimination of refugee being lacking agency is a strong factor in their inability to obtain employments. Refugees are not lazy and free loading as the media depicts them to be, but they wish to find employment and live normal lives.

Syrian Refugees Labour Market Discussion

Syrian refugees had unique settlement process that made their integration more challenging than other refugee groups. These challenges included coming in their large numbers, fast speed between sponsorship decision and arrival to Canada, missing pre-arrival settlement services, lower knowledge of official languages and lower educational attainment. Many of these reasons lead to unavailability of settlement resource, and backlash from the host society which led to an even slower integration and a slower labour market access.

However, despite the challenges, Syrian refugees showed resilience by reaching the same employment rate as other refugees in two to three years after their arrival, despite starting at a much lower point. Hynie states that requiring refugees to find employment very soon after their arrival can be counterintuitive, as it can have long-term costs (2018a). Also, when refugees are forced to stay with labour jobs after having been professionals in their home country, it can negatively affect their mental health (Khabar, 2015).

In an interview of Syrian refugees in Toronto, participants reported that they wish to pursue higher education but are unable to because of their financial situations. Therefore, giving refugees time to better learn the language, to obtain an education certificate or get their credential recognized will provide more economic benefits to Canada in the long run.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Recommendation and Future Work

This paper looked at the economic integration and labour market access of refugees in Canada with a specific focus on the newly arrived Syrian refugee group. This paper found that refugees have the motivation and resilience to finding employment and do so for both financial and non-financial reasons but are challenged by their barriers. This section will discuss several ways governments and support services can tackle these barriers to ease the integration of refugees. Areas such as media representation, public backlash, government services, social cohesion and identity maintenance can be improved to help maintain the resilience of refugees.

A study on a perinatal community health and social center known as La Maison Bleue in Montreal investigated the affects of community social support on refugee resilience. La Maison Bleue provides a medical, educational support, but its social support services sets it apart for other centers (Aubé et al., 2019). In a focused ethnography study of 9 migrant women who have been in Montreal Canada for less than five years and are a part of the La Maison Bleue center, It was found that the center had many positive benefits on the women's settlements (Aubé et al., 2019). The center benefited its participants by showing them respect, building relationships, finding meaning, maintaining identity and helping them gain independence (Aubé et al., 2019). This was done by taking the time to learn about their strengths, struggles and hope, and by implementing small services such as letting them to call at any time if they need assistance. These services made women develop hope and feel safe and supported. Participants reported benefits such as promoting independence towards building their capacity to be more self-reliant

over the long-term (Aubé et al., 2019). All this provided the women with feelings of comfort and belonging and feelings of a formed community. (Aubé et al., 2019). This study showed the benefits, of social inclusion, social support, and identity maintenance on integration and on building resilience.

Moreover, a study by Goodkind looked at the benefits of social inclusion and identity maintenance on integration. This study used a mutual learning project, where one-one learning opportunities, cultural exchange and an advocacy between undergraduate students and Hmong refugees took place. Undergraduate student would help Hmong refugees learn the culture and language; while Hmong refugees would help undergraduate students learn the Hmong culture (Goodkind, 2006). This project was beneficial because it assisted refugees in an atypical way. Instead of focusing on helping refugees, it focused on mutual helping and this offset the power hierarchy that refugees are usually faced with. Also, refugees usually feel that the knowledge and skills that they bring them to their new country is useless, such as their language and education. However, in this project, the exchange of knowledge with undergraduate students made refugees feel valued. this process of validating the refugee's experiences, knowledge and identities had many benefits including maintaining their identity and increasing their confidence.

Muldoon et al, proposes that identity can be maintained by access to associated social identity resources such as social inclusion and group life, and this access can positively affect employment outcomes because it increases self-confidence (2019). Social inclusion and identity maintenance can be achieved through programs like the La Maison Bleue and through mutual exchange programs. implementing similar service program will have many benefits on integration and may reduce the use of other service programs like mental health and language classes. These programs also have the added benefit of helping refugee connect to their bridging

capital, because it creates a two-way change and makes refugees and the host society interact with one another.

This paper also found the benefit of having refugees initially settle in an area with population of the same ethnic group. Refugees would be more confident to interact with their co-ethnic counterparts which will provide them with resources and information and help build confidence and language skills to later interact with the host society. It also helps refugees maintain identities, provides feeling of inclusion which then provides resilience. Once these benefits have been acquired then migrants can start shifting into forming connections with the host society. Yu and colleagues propose that unique employment and training programs that target the multifaceted barriers can be developed. These programs would be like federally funded Enhanced Language Training that currently target highly educated new comers. However, the new proposed programs would be unique to refugees (Yu et al., 2007). When programs are more focused solely on the refugee population, they can better address their specific barriers and hence provide better support.

Conclusion and Final Remarks

While Syrian refugees are escaping trauma and facing many challenges in their integration, they are showing resilience by their determination to find employment despite their barriers. They are also showing resilience by overcoming their unique challenges and accessing the labour market ladder in the same trajectory as other refugee groups despite their weaker entry to the market. The review of the literature shows that Syrian refugees are contributing positively to their host country and giving back economically.

Taking in the knowledge of refugees' initiative in integration and need for independence; government resources could be directed towards helping refugees become more financially independent as this is something, they want but struggle to achieve. Considering refugees already

have the initiative, instead of having government assistance focus just on mental health, it could be directed on language and skill development to help refugees enter the labour market faster and with more confidence, as a result this will also improve their mental health indirectly. Language classes can also be made easier to access through easier or cheaper transportation and through the availability of childcare services. Language classes can be more specific on language communication as this is the most important aspects of language for employment. Some of the mental health issues in refugees stems from financial dependence and inability to secure employment. Therefore, focused programs that are targeted on helping refugees find employment can be very helpful. These programs can aid in both helping refugees enter the labour market in addition to helping with their mental health. Correct and positive media representation of refugees should be emphasized in the media to reduce the public backlash, help maintain refugee's self esteem of refugees and keep their positive outlook. Finally, service programs that are socially focused and help maintain the refugee's identity and provide social inclusion and access to social capital are also necessary methods to improve integration. This way refugees will be more settled mentally and financially and be able to compensate Canada.

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