

HOW ARMENIAN SYRIAN MILLENNIAL REFUGEES USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO
FACILITATE INTEGRATION INTO CANADIAN SOCIETY

ALYSSA RACCO

Supervisor: Dr. Sandra. R. Schecter

Supervisor's Signature: _____

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ABSTRACT

Using a conceptual framework that builds on the constructs of community of practice (Homles & Meyerhoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger 1998; Wenger 1998) and superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013; Blommaert & Rampton, 2012; Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011; Vertovec, 2007), this study reports on the ways Armenian Syrian millennial refugees access information via social media. Findings are based on data collected through participant observations, interviews and survey protocols. The study showed the use of semiotic resources as social media allowed respondents to extend the social implicatures of language beyond their verbal proficiency levels.

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DEDICATION

Louie

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

In this paper I explore how Armenian Syrian millennial refugees utilize text and image as a form of communication on Snapchat. According to Caidi and Allard (2005), cited by Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, and Qayyu (2013), very little is currently known about “the ways newcomers and longer established immigrant communicates locate and access content in forms that understandable and useable to them” (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013, p.5). The literature indicates that social inclusion is difficult for refugees because they lack English proficiency (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013, p. 17). As a result, they are unable to be part of the creation or sharing of information. This, then, perpetuates their social exclusion: Caidi and Allard (2005), cited by Lloyd, Lipu, and Kennan (2010), who have studied this issue [social exclusion as an information problem] in Canada, suggest that a lack of access to information creates barriers that prohibit full participation in education, work, and everyday life” (Lloyd, Lipu, & Kennan, 2010, pp. 45-46).

In this paper, I examine how millennials’ use of visuals and social media platforms helps to mitigate their social exclusion. Specifically, I explore if and how Armenian Syrian millennial refugees who frequent the Armenian Community Centre in Toronto access and communicate content through emojis and Snapchat.

Snapchat: History and Statistical Data

Snapchat was created by Bobby Murphy and Evan Spiegel in the Spring of 2011 for a product design class at Stanford University (Potlash, 2012, p. 6). The social media platform provides its users with the ability to search for and add friends, post pictures and videos, instant

message other users and to read and/or watch news segments. A snap is any picture, message or shared story between friends. Therefore, Snapchat's intended use is to use snaps to communicate.

Snapchat's popularity and usage continues to increase. In 2014 Snapchat had an approximate total of 46 million users ("Snapchat daily active users 2017," 2017). In 2017 that number increased by approximately 406% to 187 ("Snapchat daily active users 2017," 2017). Aslam (2018) reports that Snapchat users open the app, at least 18 times per day, with the average user creating more than 20 'snaps' per day ("Snapchat by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts," 2017). Moreover, over 20,000 photos are shared every second through the Snapchat app; and over 400,000,000 Snapchat stories are created each day ("Snapchat by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts," 2017). Snapchat stories, unlike snaps, can be replayed infinitely for 24 hours and can be seen by all Snapchat friends. A snap, in comparison, can only be seen by friend(s) the sender select(s) and for a predetermined amount of time set by the sender. On average, users under the age of 25 use Snapchat for an average of 40 minutes per day (Snapchat by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts). In addition, Aslam (2018) found that 71% of Snapchat users are under the age of 34 and 45% are between the ages of 18-24 ("Snapchat by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts," 2017).

In this paper, I use research that I conducted to address the impact Snapchat has had on communication and literacy acquisition for Armenian Syrian millennial refugees in Canada.

Literature Review

Definitions and Data

According to the United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1989), a refugee is: "...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, memberships of a particular social group, or political opinion, is

outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (p. 14). Because of the war in Syria, “More than half of the citizens of Syria have been forcibly displaced” (Pottie, Greenaway, Hassan, Hui, & Kirmayer, 2016, p. 208). As a result: “Repeated displacements have been a striking feature of the Syrian conflict, as frontlines keep shifting and formerly safe areas become embroiled in conflict. Experiences of violence are compounded by stressors, such as precarious living conditions, loss of family and supports, social isolation, discrimination and exploitation, and uncertainty about the future” (p. 208). Many Syrians have fled their country for refuge.

According to Statistics Canada (2018), in order to obtain refugee status one must enter a country as:

immigrants who were granted permanent resident status on the basis of a well-founded fear of returning to their home country. This category includes persons who had a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in particular social group or for political opinion (Geneva Convention Refugees) as well as persons who had been seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict, or have suffered a massive violation of human rights. Some refugees were in Canada when they applied for refugee protection for themselves and their family members (either with them in Canada or abroad). Others were abroad and were referred for resettlement to Canada by the United Nations Refugee Agency, another designated referral organization or private sponsors (“Census Profile, 2016,” 2018).

Again, according to Statistics Canada (2018), during 2016, a total of 319285 refugees were living in Toronto and a total of 482665 refugees were living in Ontario (Census Profile, 2016 Census). According to Barber and Ramsay (2017), citing Zilio (2016): “From November 2015 to

January 2017, Canada accepted 40,081 refugees from Syria alone (p. 348). Among those, 15 percent were between the ages of 15 and 24 and 48 percent were between the ages of 25 and 64 (Population Profile: Syrian Refugees). For the purposes of my study, “millennial” is defined as a person born between the years 1982 and 2005 (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 3).

Barriers to Language Learning

Refugees do not have the same academic competencies as native English speakers; nor do they hold the oral or linguistic proficiency: “the level of English proficiency, and in particular, reading and writing proficiency, prevents this group from engaging effectively with text based digital and print information commonly used to deliver and disseminate information” (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013, p. 17). This barrier to access information is a major alienation factor for refugees.

Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, and Qayyum (2013) assert: “*information* - and the *information literacy practices* and related skills which enable people to access information and to critically evaluate and use information are... [a] prerequisite for social inclusion...This knowledge is derived through information and appropriate information literacy practice” (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013, p. 2). According to Lloyd (2006; 2010), as cited by Lloyd, Annemree et al. (2013), information literacy is, “understood as a socially situated practice and is defined as a way of knowing an information landscape by developing practices and skills that will enable an individual to critically analyse....” (p. 5). Moreover, according to Lloyd (2010): “As a social practice, information literacy is understood not only to be in the possession of an individual, but also the possession of the community. It is there constructed as a co-construction brought about by those who are co-located and participating in the everyday life of a community” (p. 6). We see here how lack of literacy is understood as the “underlying cause of

social exclusion” (p. 4). Moreover, information literacy and knowledge of a particular society is rooted in the “language of ‘sayings’ and manifested in ‘doings’” (p. 7), which is difficult for refugees to decipher because of their limited English language proficiency. Without access to this “nuanced and taken-for-granted information” (p. 16), refugees are unable to obtain the knowledge needed to take part in the information literacy practices of a society because they do not possess information literacy.

Their social exclusion is the direct result of refugees’ inability to access information literacy. The risks of socially excluded individuals, according to Vinson (2009) as cited by Lloyd, Annemare, et al. 2013 include: “ ‘limited support network, inability to access the labour market, alienation from society and poorer education outcomes’ which can lead to further risk of disenfranchisement” (p. 3). Refugees who are socially excluded from information because of their lack of literacy may never “fully settle, [fail] to recognize and take up opportunities, and [fail] to participate in society as full citizens” (p. 4). In order to participate in society, refugees must have social information defined here as “information embodied within social networks which is difficult to articulate or express in written form, as it is drawn from real life experiences [...] (Lloyd 2010) plays a significant role in learning about the information of the landscape. These types of information are inherently tied to information sharing, and often shared via storytelling...” (p. 15). However, because refugees have difficulty accessing text-based information, and are unable to decipher nuanced information, they are unable to engage fully in real life experiences related to the character of the landscape. Thus, refugees risk being perpetually socially excluded.

This said, the risks of social exclusion are less pronounced for millennials, who have access to the Internet. Hershatter, Andrea and Epstein (2010) refer to millennials as ‘digital

natives' (p. 212) because "technologies are indigenous to [them]...technology for them is a sixth sense, as a way of knowing and interacting with the world" (pp. 212-213). Even during war, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are a standard part of life. Maitland and Xu (2015) conducted a field study on Syrian refugee mobile phone usage within the Za'atari Syrian refugee camp: "Refugees who settle in urban areas often have access to ICTs in a manner similar to host country residents...89% own a mobile handset...[and] in the total sample, nearly all of the 21 subjects who do not own a handset are youth (19/21)" (pp. 1-6). Nineteen of the twenty-one subjects had a mobile handset. Technology, then, has potential to be a bridge between refugees' low level of English proficiency and social inclusion.

Hershatter, Andrea and Epstein (2010), citing Tapscott (2009), explain that: "Millennials have developed unique abilities as fluent visual think[ers]" (p. 213). This assertion supports Lu et al. (2016)'s findings on emoji usage of smartphone users: "Emojis...have been widely used as complements or surrogates of plain text" (p. 770). It appears that the visuals replace the written word. Ivkovic and Lotherington (2010) explain: "The choice, prominence and juxtaposition of languages in cyberspace create an important dimension of global linguistic ecology, and the channels, choices and limits in languages in cyberspace affect fragile balances in individual and social linguistic repertoires" (p. 32). However, emojis, as a linguistic repertoire of their own, introduce a new language into cyberspace. Arguably, emojis are able to enhance or completely replace the need for written text.

In arguing for emojis ability to replace the written word because of the rich and nuanced meaning associated with them. Lu, et al. (2016) assert: "The compactness of emojis reduces the effort of input; the rich semantics they convey expresses ideas and emotions more vividly; emojis do not have language barriers, making it possible to communicate among users from

different countries...making them into a ‘ubiquitous language’ that bridges everyone” (p. 770). Similarly, Evans (2017) asserts: “emojis facilitate a better calibration and expression of our emotions in digital communication” (p. 34), when compared to text-based communication.

Hence, emojis replace the need for the written English word because they are their own language. These nuanced symbols have specific meanings but do not require fluency in any particular language. Evans (2015) reports:

Emoji is to text-speak what intonation, facial expression and body language are to spoken interaction. While emoji are not conventional words, they nevertheless provide an important contextualisation cue, which enables us to punctuate the otherwise emotionally arid landscape of digital text with personal expression. Importantly, emoji helps us to elicit empathy from the person we’re addressing – a central requirement of effective communication. It allows us to influence the way our text is interpreted and better express our emotional selves... emojis they can even replace words – this is what linguists refer to as code-switching. (Signs of our times: why emojis can be more powerful than words)

Emojis are a nuanced form of communication that add emotion to allow for better expression.

As a result, emojis have become their own recognized semiotic system: “...many emojis have made their way into the Unicode in recent years (722 were included in version 6.0 of the Unicode and 291 were added to version 7.0 and 8.0)...[it] provides a full list of 1281 emojis” (p. 770). Unicode is a collection of every letter, number and characters, regardless of language, platform or program, all of which are provided with a unique number. In addition: “The emoji “*Face with Tears of Joy*” was even elected as the “*Oxford Dictionaries word of 2015*,” as it best represents the mood, the ethos, and the preoccupation of the world in that year” (p. 770). The

inauguration of emojis into Unicode and as Oxford Dictionary's 'word of 2015' is an acknowledgement of their widespread use and ability to communicate complex sentiments (p. 771). Additionally, Danesi (2016) argues that emojis are a universal language: "In the age of the 'electronic global village' where people of different national languages and cultures are in frequent contact through online interactions, the emoji code might well be the universal language that can help solve problems of comprehension that international communications have always had in the past" (p. vii). More than a recognized semiotic system, emojis have the ability to enable people of any tongue to communicate with one another.

Millennials use emojis more than other age cohorts (p. 774). Emojis are used most by people between the ages of 21 and 24 with 28.8% (Figure 4, p. 774), followed by people between the ages of 18-20 with 25.2% (Figure 4, p. 774). Overall, 74.3% of emoji-users are under the age of 25 (p. 773). Millennials also comprise the majority of Snapchat users: "71% of Snapchat's approximate 341 million users are under 34 years old" (Aslam, 2017). Also: "41 percent of 18-34 years-old use the app on any given day" (Newberry, 2016). A vast majority of millennials, regardless of their country of residence, use Snapchat. Newberry's (2016) research also indicates a dramatic increase in videos watched on the app per day: 2 billion were watched per day in May of 2010 whereas 10 billion per day were watched in 2016. The statistic supports Hershatter, Andrea and Epstein's (2010) assertion that millennials are visual thinkers (p. 213).

Through Snapchat, with emojis, refugee millennialas can mitigate their experience of social exclusion. Kennan, Mary Anne, et al. (2011) assert: "Social inclusion requires an ability to develop effective information practices that enable connection to compliance, making available everyday and nuanced information that constitute elements of the information landscape which need to be accessed and understood in order to participate in their adopted community" (p. 191).

The complex and nuanced meanings associated with each emoji would allow millennial refugees to access and understand everyday items in the information landscape, enabling participation in their adopted Snapchat community.

Conceptual Frameworks

This study was embedded in a meshing of two conceptual frameworks: community of practice (CofP) and superdiversity theory. In this study, respondents' registers on social media, including the use of Snapchat and emojis, create a community of practice that allows them to access information and mitigates their social exclusion.

Community of Practice

Community of Practice (CofP) theory focuses on “what members do: the practice of activities that indicate that they belong to the group, and the extent to which they belong” (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1990, p. 175). The practice of meaning being negotiated within forming communities is the foundation of this theory (Wenger, 1999, p. 72). Wenger (1998) stipulates the three defining components of a CofP: “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, [and] a shared repertoire” (p. 73). Wenger (1998) describes mutual engagement as: “people are engaged in actions whose meaning they negotiate with one another” (p. 73). He (1998) then goes on to explain three subcategories of mutual engagement: enabling engagement, diversity and partiality, and mutual relationships (pp. 74-77). In order to enable engagement, members must be included (Wenger, 1998, p. 74) which allows for diversity and partiality – no community or practice within a CofP requires homogeneity (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). According to Wenger (1998), mutual relationships are created and sustained among participants because they are able to connect “in ways that become deeper than more abstract similarities in terms of personal features or social categories” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Next, members of CofP share a joint enterprise: participants

negotiate and collectively pursue an enterprise which thereby belongs to them, i.e., the group as a whole and each individual (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Wenger (1998) explains three subcategories of joint enterprise: a negotiated enterprise, an indigenous enterprise, and a regime of mutual accountability (pp. 78-81). A negotiated enterprise as the interaction and compromise of all participants' instrumental, personal and interpersonal aspects (p.78). The participants are diverse and therefore they must find a way to live with their differences and coordinate their "respective aspirations" (p. 79). In relation to this, under an indigenous enterprise, Wenger (1998) acknowledges that the participants must also resolve the potential historical, social, cultural, and institutional conditions that exist in the environment in which the CofP exists and operates within (p. 79). With regards to accountability, within the community, Wenger (1998) explains:

Negotiating a joint enterprise gives rise to relations of mutual accountability among those involved. These relations of accountability include what matters and what does not, what is important and why it is important, what to do and not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what to leave unsaid, what to justify and what to take for granted, what to display and what to withhold, when actions and artifacts are good enough and when they need improvement or refinement. (81)

Mutual accountability therefore relies on the understanding of a common goal and mutual engagement of who and when participants will work to modify or sustain the community's practice.

Finally, a shared repertoire, according to Wenger (1998), is the practice which includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (p. 83). Armenian Syrian millennial refugees are part of a

community that includes a shared repertoire that allows them to bypass text script literacy. According to Lave and Wenger (1998), this common repertoire results from practice: ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members (p. 2). On social media, the shared knowledge of the nuanced meaning of emojis is enhanced through communication. Because CoPs do not require homogeneity – rather negotiation of difference – they are able to thrive within superdiverse social contexts, a theme to which I now turn.

Superdiversity

Superdiversity is a notion “intended to underline a level and kind of complexity...distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among...multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified” (Vertovec, 2007, 1024) individuals. Vertovec (2007) highlights the differences between diversity and superdiversity. He explains diversity as one-dimensional, concerned with “ethnicity or country of origin” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025), and superdiversity as complex and multifaceted. Vertovec (2007) lists the variety of variables that determine superdiversity: “differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distributions, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents” (p. 1025). Similarly, Blommaert and Rampton (2012) differentiate superdiversity from diversity by the amount of variables entailed: “a tremendous increase in the categories of immigrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns, and itineraries of migration, process of insertion into the labour and housing markets of host societies, and so on” (p. 7) characterizes superdiversity. However, Vertovec (2007) explicitly qualifies that it is “the interplay of these factors” (p. 1025) that constitutes what is meant by ‘super-diversity’.

Superdiversity in Relation to Language

Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen and Møller (2011) explain that the current sociocultural construction of a language “rarely represent[s] real-life language use” (p. 27): “The idea of separate languages as bounded systems of specific linguistic features belonging together ... is found to be insufficient to capture the reality of language use, at least in late modern superdiverse societies, and perhaps altogether” (p. 27). Language instead is understood as the “use [of] linguistic features as semiotic resources” (p. 29). Language is considered individual because “no two people share precisely the same features...the same pronunciations” (p. 35) and social because “every feature we do ‘know’ or ‘possess’, we share with somebody else” (p. 35).

The Internet and ICTs, “synchronous with the new forms of migration – have created a ‘network society’” (Blommaert, 2013, citing Castella, 1996, p. 1) necessitating the development of “new forms of human communication” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 1). These new forms of communication, “shape new norms, and so acquire a potential to perpetually reshuffle the linguistic-symbolic hierarchies” (p. 1). As a result, social lives are organized “in relation to many competing norms and complementary ones – a feature of sociolinguistic superdiversity...call[ed] polycentricity” (p. 1). An individual’s identity therefore, may have many ‘centres’ all with their own sets of norms, reflected in their “communicative competence” (p. 1). These many centres are also referred to as “registers” (Blommaert, 2013, citing Agha, 2007, p. 2) and are what enables us to “shift from one set of norms (those in the classroom, for instance) into another (say, those on Facebook)” (p. 2). Registers of communicative competencies are chosen based on functionality “within the specific niches in which we intend to deploy them” (p. 2). These different registers additionally contribute to a superdiverse society.

An important factor that determines an individual's social integration is determined by their success in acquiring the necessary registers to function in different aspects of the society in which they live. Blommaert (2013) asserts: "Superdiverse social environments are intensely polycentric and, thus, put high demands on register development for those who live and act in them" (p. 3). These pressures are excessive for on immigrants who have to acquire the resources to navigate different sub-cultures of society. (p. 2). The linguistic-symbolic hierarchy, derived from a monofocal bias (p. 2) within a society, impedes immigrants' integration (p. 2): "Immigrants are increasingly subjected to pressures to acquire the standard varieties of the national languages of their host societies, and this pressure is driven by a monofocal and generative view of 'standard' as the unique instrument for integration" (p. 3). This expectation is somewhat unrealistic when considering that immigrants, as citizens of a particular society, are expected to integrate into "the many niches that compose their actual social environment" (p. 2).

The notion of integration is directly related to that of citizenship. In order to appear to be a citizen, an individual must be able to seamlessly integrate into a given society. However, without access to semiotic resources associated with that culture, individual may find themselves perpetually excluded. Blommaert (2013) states:

We expect [immigrants] not just to pass the mandatory language test administered by the administration in charge of immigration; we also expect them to be fluent in the register of education, of labor, of gender, age and so forth – we expect them to be 'fully' integrated in every niche we detect in society. Failing that, immigrants will perpetually be regarded as 'dis-citizens'. (3)

‘We’ refers to those who create and refuse to modify the ‘standard’. As a result, “the current institutionalized sociolinguistic face of citizenship in a growing number of countries...is sociolinguistically ludicrous” (ibid, p. 3).

Notwithstanding, in this study I show how Armenian Syrian millennial refugees are able to mitigate their social exclusion through participation in an online community of practice created on social media that involve use of a semiotic system comprised of emojis and their nuanced meanings. I view my investigation as a contribution to the growing body of work that grapples with the ways refugees mitigate social exclusion and, through their participation, negotiate membership in new communities to which they previously did not have access (Schechter, 2015).

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

The War in Syria

“The war in Syria,” as we have come to refer to this global crisis, has been going on for over 7 years. Howard et al. (2011) attribute Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation as the catalyst for the Syrian civil war (p. 2). Bouazizi was a vegetable merchant who set himself on fire in front of a “municipal building in Tunisia...in protest of the government on December 17, 2010” (p. 2). As a result, “democratic fervor spread across North Africa and the Middle East...civil war broke out...and protestors took to the streets in...Syria” (p. 2).

In March of 2011, anti-government demonstrations and peaceful protests began, as part of the Arab Spring. Participants of the Arab Spring are described by Posen (2017) as “regime opponents” (p. 176): “Regime repression was often violent, but the regime also attempted to deal with the demonstrations politically, both with messaging and modest forms” (p. 176). In March of 2011, there was a forceful crackdown on the peaceful protests seeking government reforms, against the government of Bashar al-Assad. March 15, specifically, is “dubbed the ‘day of rage’” (“Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help,” 2018) because of the mass amount of protests that took place across Syria and “is internationally recognized as the anniversary of the Syrian civil war” (“Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help,” 2018). However, as protests spread, they were countered by strong government crackdowns and increasing violence from both government forces and protesters.

The Syrian civil unrest was internationally broadcast live through different media forms. In response to the regime’s behaviour the United States and Europe imposed a range of economic sanctions on Syria (Posen, 2017, p. 176). However, Russia and China vetoed the UN

Security Council resolution calling for an end to the regime's crackdown (Posen, 2017, p. 177). This, in turn, led regime opponents to turn increasingly violent (Posen, 2017, p. 177). The rebels' success was met with support from Iran and Russia by the regime (Posen, 2017, p. 177): "This precipitated still more outside assistance to the rebels, which prompted still more assistance to the regime" (Posen, 2017, p. 177). Devi (2018) asserts: "The country has become a proxy battleground, with the intervention of regional and world powers that has fostered sectarianism and made a settlement elusive" (p. 15). As a result, Syrian opposition groups decided to reject Russia's proposed peace talks on December 26, 2017 (Devi, 2018, p. 15). The Syrian civil war has not yet come to an end.

A large majority of the Syrian refugees were originally Armenian. Lieberman (2017) reports: "They are ethnically Armenian, and bear a deep pride for the land many of their ancestors were driven out of just over a century ago, during the 1915 Armenian genocide" ("Lessons learned as Syrian-Armenian refugees return to Armenia," 2017). Teicher (2017) explains that these Armenian Syrian refugees are also Christian who speak Armenian ("After a Century, Syrian Refugees Return to Armenia," 2017). This gives reason to the fact that all four respondents in this study speak Armenian.

Following is a brief timeline of the events in Syria, throughout the civil war, since 2011:

2011 – Syrian civil war begins;

2012 – Syrians flee bombing and repression;

2013 – conflict increases as other countries join the fight;

2014 – humanitarian needs increase, but access to people in need becomes much more difficult for aid groups;

2015 – Europe feels the pressure of Syrian refugees and migrants;

2016 – Syria is devastated by years of war;

2017 – Syrians seek safety, stability;

2018 – humanitarian aid is limited as the conflict continues (“Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help,” 2018).

The Immigration Context for Armenian Syrian Refugees

Federal Legislation

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is Canada’s legislation that outlines the nation’s “objectives...with respect to refugees” (Legislative Services Branch, 2018, p. 3). These objectives include: “saving lives and offering protection to the displaced and persecuted” (p. 3); “fulfil[ing] Canada’s legal obligations...and affirm[ing] Canada’s commitment to international efforts to provide assistance to those in need of resettlement” (p. 3); “fair consideration” (p. 3); “[a] safe haven” (p. 3); “to establish fair and efficient procedures that will maintain the integrity of the Canadian refugee protection system” (p. 3); “to support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada” (p. 3); “to protect the health and safety...and to maintain security of Canadian society” (p. 3); and “to promote international justice and security by denying access to Canadian territory to persons, including refugee claimants, who are security risks or serious criminals” (p. 4). The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is responsible for the administration and implementation of this Act (p. 4).

The Act works at both the federal and provincial level. According to the “International agreements” subsection of this Act: “The Minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may enter into an agreement with the government of a foreign state or with an international organization for the purposes of this Act” (p. 7). However, the “Federal-provincial agreements”

subsection of this Act states: “The Minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may enter into an agreement with the government of any province for this purposes of this Act” (p. 7). In this manner, two levels of government are involved in order for this Act to operate.

Canadian Refugee Protection Programs

The refugee system in Canada is divided into two parts: the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program and the In-Canada Asylum Program.

The Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program is designated for people who “need protection from outside Canada” (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017). These individuals may have had to live in refugee camps for many years (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017); and therefore once they arrive, they must start their lives over again (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017).

The In-Canada Asylum Program is designated for people making refugee protection claims from within Canada (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017). Asylum seekers must “have a well-founded fear of persecution” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017) or they must be “at risk of torture, or cruel and unusual punishment in their home countries” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017).

Who Gets Accepted

Under the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, only the “United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), along with private sponsors” (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017) can select refugees for resettlement. Without a private sponsor or the UNHCR a person cannot be settled as a refugee because “a person cannot apply directly to Canada for resettlement” (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,”

2017). There are private sponsors who help resettle refugees on an ongoing basis (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017); however, other private sponsors, known as “Groups of Five and Community Sponsors...do not generally sponsor refugees on an ongoing basis” (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017). Group of Five and Community Sponsors are private organizations or groups of people that willingly sponsor refugees. Canada also offers another variation for resettlement through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017). In this program, refugees who have been pre-identified by the UNHCR are then matched with private sponsors in Canada. All refugees selected for resettlement must have “no issues related to security, criminality, or health” (“Find out if you're eligible – Refugee status from inside Canada,” 2017).

Under the In-Canada Asylum Program, claimants are responsible to file for refugee status (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017). Officers then review the claim and decide if it should be brought to the Immigration Board of Canada (IRB) – “an independent board that decides immigration and refugee matters” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017) – for consideration (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017). Officers will not bring the claim to the IRB if a claimant is under a removal order (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017), has “been convicted or serious criminal offenses” (Citizenship Canada, 2018), had “had previous refugee claims denied by Canada” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017), “have been recognized as a convention refugee by another country that you can return to” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017), “ha[s] already been granted protected status in Canada” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017), has “abandoned or withdrew a previous refugee claim” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017), or has “arrived via the Canada-United States

border” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017). The last stipulation is part of Canada’s Safe Third Country Agreement (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017) which states: “if you enter Canada at a land border from the United States, you cannot make a refugee claim in Canada” (“How Canada’s refugee system works,” 2017). Instead, the refugee claim would have to be made in the United States.

The Application Process

As mentioned, an individual must be identified by the UNHCR for resettlement or must be sponsored privately. Individuals must then fill out an application, pass a medical exam and security and criminal check (“Resettlement from outside Canada,” 2017). After the individual is identified and selected for settlement it takes time to process the case (Citizenship Canada, 2018).

After the application is submitted the visa office will send the applicant a letter to confirm they have received the application and that it has been completed correctly (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017). According to the Citizenship Canada website, “most applicants will be asked to attend a personal interview...[and] dependents may be asked to attend as well” (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017). The interview will involve an officer asking questions such as why the claimant should be considered a refugee and whether they are able to present any supporting documentation “that may help the officer establish your identity and support [the] claim” (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017). As of 2014, applicants over the age of 14 and under the age of 80 must also provide biometric information which is defined as: “a digital photograph and all available fingerprints” (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017). This is done

so that upon arrival “a CBSA border services officer may use ... biometrics to verify that you are the same person approved for resettlement” (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017).

Upon approval, the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will issue a permanent resident visa and a Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017). If refused, the decision will not be revised, but the applicant may complete a new application (“After You Apply: Get next Steps – Refugee Status from outside Canada,” 2017).

For the In-Canada Asylum program, to make a claim for refugee protection, a border services or immigration officer must first be notified (“Refugee Claims – Claimants,” 2018). Applicants must then fill out documents that include a generic application form, additional dependents declaration, a background declaration and a basic claim form (“Applying for Refugee Protection from within Canada,” 2017). After completing the application form, the claim must be approved and referred to the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) (“Refugee Claims – Claimants,” 2018). Then one must attend a “hearing to explain your circumstances and tell your story” (“Refugee Claims – Claimants,” 2018) where “you have a right to be represented by counsel in your proceeding before the RPD at your own expense” (“Refugee Claims – Claimants,” 2018). The RPD member then makes the decision on your claim.

The Canadian Council for Refugees website states: “Section 117(9)(d) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* imposes a lifetime ban on sponsorship of a family member, if the family member was not examined by an immigration officer when the sponsor immigrated to Canada” (“Excluded Family Members”).

The Resettlement Assistance Program helps refugees “with essential services and income support once they are in Canada...during the first four to six weeks after [arriving]” (Citizenship Canada, 2017). These services include: “welcoming them at the airport or other port of entry, helping to find a temporary place to live, helping to find a permanent place to live, assessing their needs, information and help getting to know Canada, and referrals to other federal government and provincial programs, and to other settlement services” (Citizenship Canada, 2017). Other services may also include: “language training in English and French, search for jobs, build community networks with long-time Canadians and established immigrants, and access [to] support services which help with: childcare, using transportation, finding translation and interpretation services, finding resources for people with disabilities, and accessing short-term/crisis counselling if needed” (Citizenship Canada, 2017)

The Armenian Community Centre of Toronto

Nestled behind KRG Insurance and Tropicana Employment Centre, at 50 Hallcrown Place, off of Consumers Road and Victoria Park Avenue, in North York, is the Armenian Community Centre of Toronto (ACC). This gargantuan complex, comprising a church, school and community centre, is a trifecta for Armenians living in Toronto and for countless newly landed Syrian refugees.

A.R.S. Private School faces this hub’s parking lot. A red-brick façade covers the exterior of the rectangular structure. The left side of the school is approximately eight feet high, is shorter than the right side of the school, approximately fifteen feet high. The left side of the school has four large rectangular windows, approximately five feet tall and three feet long, facing the parking lot, and four windows on its adjacent right side. Each window begins approximately two feet from the ground. These windows are filled with colourful paintings on large white pieces of

paper. The right side of the school has three sets of three of the same rectangular windows, beginning approximately 8 feet from the ground. Underneath those large windows on the right side of the school, are three smaller windows, approximately two feet tall and two feet long, approximately three feet directly underneath the larger rectangular windows.

North of the parking lot sits the Armenian Community Centre. The façade of this building is comprised of smooth, light grey brick windows and glass-paneled doors. About twelve feet from the ground is a large rectangular awning, approximately five feet wide. This awning is about thirty-five feet long, extending from the beginning to the end of the Armenian Community Centre. It is supported by large rectangular-prism-shaped columns, approximately one-foot-wide and twelve feet tall. The face of the column parallel to the front doors of the ACC are shiny and gold in colour and ornately designed with small triangular, circular and rectangular cut-out shapes. The columns are about twelve feet apart. Above the awning, within the first ten feet of the building, is a large rectangular window approximately five feet long and two feet tall.

After the first ten feet of the building, the exterior is floor-to-ceiling double glass-paneled doors that are approximately two feet wide and ten feet tall. At the bottom of the doors is a two feet wide and one-foot-tall black panel with an adjustable metal door stopper. There is also a long cylindrical silver metal handle on each door that is approximately four-feet-long. The cylindrical silver metal handle is approximately three feet from the ground. There are six doors in a row. Above each door and below the awning are three windows, approximately four-feet-long and one-foot-tall. Each window has a small black panel, approximately ten centimetres wide, outlining the exterior of the window.

Beside the six doors are two more doors of the same size and shape that are isolated by two columns of the same smooth grey brick on the exterior of the ACC. The rectangular-prism-shaped columns are about one-foot-wide and twelve-feet-tall.

Inside of the isolated two doors is a small octagonal foyer with a desk. With this opening of about four-feet long and three-feet-wide, sits a smiling woman with large brown eyes, red lips, and brown shoulder length hair. On the desk are many different posters and behind the desk are typed flyers, taped to the wall, in Armenian and Arabic. Just past the wall with the woman at her desk, slightly to the left, is a larger multi-level foyer with tables and chairs where people of many different ages are seated speaking in Armenian and Arabic. Young children run and laugh around the tables where their parents are seated at.

To the left of the community centre is St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church. The church is pentagonal with two large cone shaped apexes on the roof. The first cone is significantly smaller than the one behind it and holds a bell. On top of the apex is a brown cross, approximately two-feet-tall. The larger cone shape also holds a bell and has the same cross on top of its apex.

According to their website, the Armenian Community Centre is a “non-profit organization that offers the GTA and community at large the richness and traditions of Armenian culture through artistic, athletic, recreational, intellectual, social and spiritual programs” (“Armenian Community Centre”). The ACC has been a place of welcome for Syrian refugees since 2015: “The Armenian Community Centre has signed sponsorship agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees from abroad when they resettle in Canada” (“ACC-Sponsorship Agreement Holder-Armenian Community Centre of Toronto”).

The Armenian Community Centre of Toronto was established in 1979, 64 years after the Armenian Genocide in Europe. The Armenian Genocide, perpetuated by the Turks, began in 1915. The genocide was widespread, affecting “the entire Armenian population, men, women, and children” (Adalian, 1991, p. 2). However, the bulk of women, children and men were deported to neighbouring countries, especially Syria (pp. 2-4). Those who survived, remained in Syria: “ ‘During the Armenian Genocide, which occurred during World War I, many who survived the death marches through the Syrian deserts of Der Zor began new lives in countries like Syria and Lebanon, and have inhabited that region for over a century’ ” (Halajian, 2015, interviewing Antranik Tchilingirian). In this manner, Syria became a home for many Armenians during the Armenian Genocide; and in return, the ACC in Toronto, has created many initiatives to help Syrian refugees, most of whom are Syrian Armenian refugees, feel welcome and establish a comfortable life in Toronto.

Halajian (2015) reported as follows on the transition services the ACC provides to Syrian refugees: “we assist with their resettlement needs – social insurance, medical papers – essentially everything you need to come to Canada” (Toronto Armenian Community Resettles Syrian Refugees). Black (2015) reported: “Besides processing applications, the centre has set up a committee to aid sponsors in finding accommodation, clothing and furniture for the new arrivals. The local Armenian private school has agreed to waive tuition for all children for their first year” (Armenian community gives a wide welcome to refugees). In addition, the ACC assisted in finding employment for those eligible to work in Canada. According to Halajian (2015), “nearly all of the Syrian refugees [the ACC have] helped come to Canada—besides the elderly and children—have found jobs within the first week. The office helps pair employers with refugees through community contacts that speak Arabic and Armenian to help with the language barrier”

(“Toronto Armenian Community Resettles Syrian Refugees). This said, most jobs are deemed minimum wage and precarious (Halajian, 2015).

Ari, a respondent interviewed in this study, revealed his experience as a newly landed refugee and the assistance provided to him by the ACC:

From the first day they welcomed me at the airport and then they gave me an appointment date. I attended the meeting and they discussed with me the things that I have to do. I also attended events that they organized like career path, education and tax related issues. They also helped me to make connections with people in my field of studies. And when [I] had any questions related to legal papers or government issues, they always had answers. For me personally, what they did was enough. I learned the rest by myself by the time. It would be great if they can have more events and invite guest speakers in order to give more information on different issues to new immigrants to make their life easier, [e]specially the first 6 months.

Ari typed this message to me via Snapchat. His response, confirms Black’s (2005) observation regarding influence and assistance that the ACC provides Syrian refugees.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this study, I employ a qualitative case study approach in order to explore my research interests in Armenian Syrian refugee millennials' uses of social media to communicate. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), an advantage to a qualitative case study approach is: "the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993)" (p. 545). I have tried to elicit what Geertz (1973) described as "thick descriptions" of respondents' stories and views to capture and subsequently render an emic position. By "thick description," Geertz is referring to a process by which detailed accounts of experiences and patterns are documented. I then use this information to understand and interpret the complexity of the respondents' behaviours and tendencies while using social media.

Data for this study was collected through participant observations, interviews and surveys. The respondents were observed virtually, and interviewed and surveyed individually, in person, at the Armenian Community Centre. I used these methods to triangulate my findings in the next chapter.

Research Questions

I have used the following research questions as a heuristic for my inquiry:

1. What issues related to the use of social media arise for respondents as they make efforts to adapt to their New World habitat and to continue to maintain connections with issues individuals and cultural phenomena related to their linguistic and cultural heritage?
2. What themes emerged related to the lived experiences of millennial refugees through their Snapchat communications?
3. In what ways do the devices offered by Snapchat complement and supportive development of language and literacy on the part of this demographic cohort?

Site and Respondents

The site of my research project was the Armenian Community Centre in North York; the virtual site, Snapchat. The process of respondent selection was a collaborative venture between myself and the Armenian Community Centre. I spoke to a staff member at the Armenian Community Centre and outlined the criteria for the study: a Syrian refugee, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. After one week, I was connected with four willing candidates who constitute the respondents for this study. All of the candidates are of Armenian descent. All speak Armenian.

In this section, I provide descriptors of each respondent. Pseudonyms have been given to all of the respondents to protect their identity and safeguard any confidential information that may have been divulged during the research study.

Ari

Ari is a 24-year-old male. He is lanky, standing at approximately six feet tall with deep beige and olive skin undertones. He sports an all white baseball cap worn backwards that covers his hair and keeps his ears tucked back. His eyebrows are bushy, thick and dark black. He has

small brown eyes and a thin nose. He is clean shaven and has full pale pink lips with a high cupid's bow.

Ari arrives for his interview wearing a bright green t-shirt with white circles, of differing sizes – from approximately two centimetres in diameter to 5 centimeters in diameter – sporadically placed along the left side of his t-shirt. His skinny jeans are a dark denim with a lighter wash on the thighs and white stitching. His shoes are a square-toed dark chestnut brown loafer with a thick black rubber sole.

Ari arrived to Canada, from Syria, one year and five months ago, in 2017. He credits the Armenian Community Centre for his status as a salaried employee. His voice is deep but he speaks quietly. When answering questions, Ari is very pensive. He takes a moment to think about what he wants to say, considering the words and their meanings before speaking. When he is unsure of what to say, he fidgets with his hands or scratches his head. He also laughs to himself, nervously.

Sarine

Sarine is a twenty-four-year-old female. She is approximately five feet and four inches tall. She has pale white skin with pink undertones. Her light brown hair, resembling the colour of buttered toast, has been pulled back from her face and tied in a high pony-tail with a black hair tie. Her pony-tail reaches the middle of her back. Her eyebrows are slightly darker than her hair and her eyes are round and dark brown. Her eyelashes are long and coated in a thin layer of black mascara on the top and bottom. Both of her ears are pierced and she wears a small square diamond stud on each lobe. Her mouth is small and round and her lips are a very pale pink.

For her interview, Sarine is wearing an all black sweater with a hood. The fabric of the sweater is tighter around the ends of the arms, at her wrists, and around the end of the torso, at

her waist. She is wearing all black, fitted, matte black spandex leggings. Her shoes are an all white leather round-toed sneaker with white laces and an all white sole.

Sarine came to Canada, from Syria, one year and seven months prior to being interviewed, in 2016. Like Ari, Sarine has salaried employment which she obtained through connections made at the Armenian Community Centre. Sarine presents as talkative and willing to share. She answers all my questions quickly and, as compared with other respondents, provided the most detailed responses.

Atom

Atom is an eighteen-year-old male. He is approximately five feet three inches, with black hair that reaches to just above his shoulders. His hair is pulled back and loosely tied in a black elastic. He has light green almond shaped eyes and wears thin square black rimmed glasses. His skin is pale and has yellow undertones. Atom's nose is round and he has full pale pink lips. He is clean shaven.

Atom is wearing a navy blue crew neck t-shirt that has white block letters written horizontally across his chest that read: science. His jeans are wide-legged dark coloured with a lighter blue wash down the centre of the leg. On his feet he wears black and white Vans classic sneakers.

Atom came to Canada, from Syria, three weeks prior to being interviewed, in 2018. Atom is a full-time student and does not yet work but intends to soon. While being interviewed, Atom presented as serious. Most of his answers revolved around academics and science in particular.

Tamar

Tamar is an eighteen-year-old female. She is tall, approximately five feet nine inches, and lanky. She has a thin face with long curly blonde hair that reaches to the middle of her back. Her

eyes are round, small in shape, and dark blue in colour. Her eyelashes are coated with a thin layer of black mascara, but only on the top. Her bottom lashes are short and light blonde in colour. She has high, naturally pink cheekbones and a long thin pointy nose. Her lips are long and thin and are painted an orange red.

For her interview, Tamar has on a tight stark plain white tank top with an open dark blue cardigan with three big dark blue buttons on top. She also has a thin silver chain with a diamond cross pendant, approximately three centimetres long, around her neck. The cross lays on her sternum just slightly above her tank top. Tamar's nails are painted a pale pink with a white flower on each of her thumbs. Her pants are skinny, tight and light grey. Her tank top is pulled over the top of her pants. She is wearing all white sneakers with white laces.

Tamar came to Canada, from Syria, 9 months prior to being interviewed, in 2017. She is a full-time student and has a part-time job where she is paid hourly. Tamar presents as friendly and talkative and was the most willing to share out of all the participants.

Data Collection

I collected data for my study during March of 2018.

The strategies I used to triangulate my findings were: participant observation, interviews and surveys. I elucidate each data collection strategy in turn below.

I used multiple research methods, also known as triangulation (Jick, 1979). According to Jick (1979), citing Denzin (1978, p. 291), triangulation is: “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 602). Triangulation “can improve the accuracy of [researchers'] judgements by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon” (Jick, 1979, p. 602).

Participant Observation

According to Becker (1958): “The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches...to see what situation they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters in conversation...and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed” (p. 652). Also, Castellán (2010) explains: “Most data comes from fieldwork where the researcher spends time in the setting under study. The researcher makes first-hand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in those activities as a “participant observer” (Patton, 1990, p. 10)” (p. 7).

My participant observations were conducted via Snapchat. All of the respondents added me as a friend on Snapchat and communicated with me via the social media platform. I was able to view pictures and videos that the respondents made public to all of their Snapchat friends and the ones that were sent to me directly. Throughout, I took screen shots and field notes, recording details of the way in which each participant used the app, daily. I noted themes and patterns (Castellán, 2010, p. 7) among the data.

Interviews

I interviewed each respondent individually and audio-recorded the sessions. Once transcribed, all audio-recordings were erased. Interviews were of the standardized, sequenced variety (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). That is, every respondent was asked the same interview questions, prepared ahead of time, in the same order. Field notes were also taken during the interview.

I grouped the questions into sections. The first section of the interview protocol sought to elicit personal information about the respondent’s life and journey to Canada. The second section inquired about different forms of education. The questions in the third section were about the

respondent's social media uses. The questions in the fourth section were about communication styles most often used on social media. The interview provided respondents the opportunity to explain, give examples, and justify their techniques and understanding of emojis.

Survey

All surveys were done individually and questions were prepared ahead of time. The survey allowed the respondents to choose more than one answer and generate alternate answers if they were unsatisfied with the options provided.

I chose to supplement my study's data collection with surveys in order to "ensure the most comprehensive approach [was] taken to solve [my] research problem" (Morse, 1991, p. 120). The data collected from the interviews was supplemented with surveys to "ensure validity" (Morse, 1991, p. 120) of the previous method of data collection. The overlapping of questions afforded me the opportunity to ensure answers were consistent. Moreover, the surveys limited and narrowed the respondents' answers. This form of data collection encouraged respondents to categorize themselves based on the options provided. The survey provided information on the respondents' opinions to the importance and use of social media. It also illuminated which social networking and media apps were most often used and what language the participants had programmed in their phones.

Data Analysis

According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) a common strategy for data analysis is grounded theory: "Grounded theory...[is] the meshing of theorizing of data collection...after some data collection and reflection in relation to a general issue of concern, the researcher generates 'categories' which fit the data...the researcher then attempts to formulate more general (and possibly more abstract) expressions of these categories, which will then be capable of

embracing a wider range of objects” (p. 4). The analysis, then, involves a search for generalization and commonalities among the multiple methods of data collection. As is suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013), data analysis is ongoing. Castellan (2010) explains: “Data analysis is an ongoing, inductive process where data are sorted, sifted through, read and reread” (p. 7).

I followed Castellan’s (2010) process to analyze the data in this study. I comparatively analyzed each respondent’s postings on Snapchat to determine their individual uses. The respondents sent messages to me and then explained the intended meaning of the message. This was compared to their shared public information and individual use of social media. These findings were compared across all four respondents.

During interviews, I took field notes and then compared my notes while listening to the audio-recordings, once the interviews were completed. Again, for each individual respondent, I compared themes generated from interviews with data retrieved from participant observations on Snapchat and in the survey. Then, I compared the interview responses across the respondents.

For the survey, I carefully reviewed each of the respondent’s answers for each question (respondents were permitted to choose and/or create different answers). Common themes, responses and intentions were noted throughout all surveys.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents were assured the study would pose no anticipated risks to them. Respondents were also informed that they could terminate their participation at any time of the study. In the case of participant withdrawal, students were guaranteed that all written submissions and audio-recordings would be destroyed and no longer used for any purpose.

Role of the Researcher

This study originates in my interests as a student in studying language acquisition and as a long-time and frequent user of social media. I therefore approached this study from the positionality as a graduate student researcher, a teacher and an avid user of social media. This latter descriptor may have induced me to overestimate the beneficial effects of social media use with regard to the adaptive and integrative odysseys of refugees, a theme I return to in my final chapter.

Ever since I began using social media, I have noticed a change in the way that I communicate. I have stopped and began using different platforms and even altered the way in which I communicate a message or opinion across all platforms.

I have been a certified teacher with the York Catholic District School Board for three years, a private tutor to three “generation 1.5” (Schechter, 2012) boys for seven years, and have been as Teaching Assistant to undergraduate students for three years. At York University, I taught a first year ESL tutorial (SOSC 1000: Introduction to Social Science) where the students and I struggled to communicate. Eventually, we found creative ways to convey our messages, comments and questions to one another. In this manner, my experiences as a user of social media and as an educator have led me to investigate the role of social media in millennial refugees’ lives, as well as how to explore the potential of these vehicles.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: ARMENIAN SYRIAN MILLENNIAL REFUGEES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In this chapter, I report on the information gathered about each respondent through qualitative research methodology involving the use of a survey protocol and interview questionnaire. This chapter serves as a recount of the communication processes and patterns volunteered by those interviewed for the purposes of this study.

Current English Education

Questions from interview protocol:

5. *Are you learning English?*
6. *Do you take any English classes? Where?*
7. *How are you/did you learn English?*
8. *Do you spend time watching or listening to anything in English?*
9. *Do you consider yourself fluent in English?*

Only one respondent is currently enrolled in an English learning program; however, the remaining three respondents indicated they learned English in school in Syria. The participant enrolled in an English language program takes her classes at a secondary school. During the day Tamar is enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. However, she also indicated that English was taught in Syria: “I take classes because I want to know English more. I did not learn enough to speak fluently, when I was in Syria” (Tamar).

In response to question 8, Ari, Sarine and Atom all indicated that they watch television and movies and listen to music in English. Ari answered: “I watch and listen to things to learn new words and sayings like the ones the translation apps do not get right.” Sarine revealed: “Almost everything I watch and listen to is in English but sometimes also Armenian and Arabic.” Tamar stated: “Yes all the time. I learn new words. Now I only watch and listen in English because I got better.” Atom explained that because both parents were fluent in English, it

was frequently spoken in the home and therefore had the opportunity to improve his English proficiency. None of the participants identified themselves as fluent English speakers.

Communicating with Syria

Questions from interview protocol:

10. How do you communicate with friends and family back home?

Question 10 intended to elicit information on communication practices between/among friends and family in Syria. The respondents used different languages and communication platforms to speak to different groups of people. Ari stated: “I only speak to them in Armenian and Arabic. My family Armenian and my friends Arabic. My family we speak on the phone but my friends on social media like Snapchat, Facebook and FaceTime. My friends from here we speak English.” Sarine revealed: “When we talk it is in Armenian or Arabic. Friends on Facebook and Snapchat and family on the phone. I send pictures to my friends on Snapchat and videos sometimes to show them life here. But everyone from here that I met I speak in English.” Atom clarified: “I speak Armenian to my family only on the phone. My friends in English but usually on Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat.” Tamar disclosed: “Armenian to my family because we speak Armenian. All my friends we speak Arabic so I talk to them in Arabic. I use some apps on my phone to message friends like Kik, Facebook and Snapchat. All my friends from Canada I talk to them in English.” The respondents indicated a tendency to communicate via social media platforms when communicating with friends. However, all of the respondents indicated they called their families and spoke to them on the phone rather than sending them a message or picture. Also, all English speaking friends were spoken to in English. When probed, all respondents said they did not feel as though they had any difficulty communicating with friends in English.

Social Media Use

Questions from survey:

How long have you been using social media sites? Which social media platforms do you use most? How do you access your social network account(s)? What language is your phone set to? What language is your keyboard in your phone set to? Do you switch the keyboard or language of your phone?

When surveyed, all four respondents indicated they had been using social media for over one year. Ari indicated he began using social media at the age of 14; Sarine, at the age of 13; Atom, at the age of 12; and Tamar, at the age of 13. When surveyed, all four respondents revealed that they used Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Two of the four participants indicated they also used LinkedIn. Survey results also indicated that all of the respondents accessed social media apps via smartphones, two out of four, via laptop, and one of the four, via tablets. Additionally, the survey indicated that all four respondents' phones and keyboards were set-up in English. This said, half of respondents often switch their keyboard language between English, Armenian and Arabic. Sarine clarified: "I switch my keyboard language when I talk to my family. That way I can talk to them in Armenian – it's a different language you know." Tamar revealed: "When I do not know a word in English I search it up in Armenian. When I talk to my friends and we don't speak English, I switch the keyboard. Most of them do not know English very well."

Most-Used Social Media Platform

Question from interview protocol:

14. What social media platforms do you use? Which do you use most?

Question 14 asked participants to identify which social media platform they used most often. Ari answered: Facebook and Snapchat; Sarine responded: "Facebook. Actually no. Instagram and Snapchat because I like to take pictures. If I had to pick one, Snapchat." Atom

stated: “Facebook, because it makes it easy to participate in communities or groups where people like the same things and Snapchat because it is easy to talk to friends. But Snapchat more.” Tamar reported: “Snapchat and Facebook to talk to friends. But Snapchat most because I use it all day.” All four respondents identified Snapchat as the social media platform they use most.

Time Spent on Social Media Platforms

Questions from interview protocol:

- 13. How often do you use social media?*
- 15. How many times a day do you open Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.?*
- 16. How much time a day do you think you spend on social media?*
- 17. What part of the day do you use social media most?*

Questions 13, 15, 16 and 17 inquired about when and how much time respondents spent on social media (Table 1). All respondents indicated that they used social media ‘a lot’. There were significant differences between how often the social media apps were opened each day with a range of 50 to 300 plus. Additionally, respondents indicated that they spent between an hour to three hours plus a day on social media. All respondents indicated a tendency to use social media in the evening, especially before they went to sleep.

Table 1 Time of Social Media Usage

Time	Responses
How often is social media used?	<p>Ari: “A lot!” [laughs to himself] Sarine: “Everyday. [laughs] All the time.” Atom: “A lot but I think my friends use it more.” Tamar: “All the time.”</p>
Amount of times social media apps are opened	<p>Ari: [Scratches head with right hand. Right hand resting on forehead] “I don’t know like 200.” Sarine: “More than 200 times a day for sure.” Atom: “50 times per day, on average.” Tamar: “I don’t know. [laughs] If I had to guess more than 300.”</p>
Time Spent	<p>Ari: “It depends. Like 2 hours total.” Sarine: “2 hours plus. Some days a lot more, like if I am bored.” Atom: “About an hour.” Tamar: “Maybe 3 hours average.”</p>
Part of day social media is used most	<p>Ari: “The morning like when I wake up and before I go to sleep. I guess in bed the most.” Sarine: “When I get up in the morning and before I go to bed at night.” Atom: “During the evening.” Tamar: “Most in the morning and evening but before bed is when I am on longest. I don’t sleep sometimes because I am on my phone talking to my friends.”</p>

Most Frequently Accessed Parts of Social Media

Questions from interview protocol:

19. Which part of the site do you use most often?

20. Do you use any form of social media for news or news about pop culture?

Questions 19 and 20 were intended to elicit information on which parts of the social media platforms were most often used and if any were used as sources for news and pop culture. Each respondent identified a different part of social media platforms as most frequented. Ari answered: “On Facebook I like to look at my newsfeed for articles to read and videos to watch. On Snapchat the news stories – I follow DailyMail, and CNN .” Sarine narrated: “On Instagram the Newsfeed and Explore pages to look at pictures. I follow photographers and architects mostly so I like looking at their pictures. On Snapchat I like reading articles or watching videos about the news. I follow some news channels like Stay Tuned, and some pop culture ones like Cosmo and People.” Atom stated: “On Facebook I like groups to discuss particular topics and get info. On Snapchat: taking pictures. I am subscribed to the CNN channel on Snapchat.” Tamar explained: “I think I use it for the pictures most so the part for pictures. On Snapchat I follow MTV and Cosmo and DailyMail for celebrity stuff.” All four respondents indicated they were subscribed to pop culture or news accounts, or both, on Snapchat, that they watched daily. A subscription is a free feature on Snapchat that activated by a user through swiping upwards on an account. Even though unsubscribed users are able to see news and popular culture channels, scribed users are notified when the channel is updated with new content.

Communication

Questions from interview protocol:

21. Do you use words, pictures or emojis to communicate most?

22. Which is easiest to use?

Questions 21 and 22 of the interview protocol were intended to decipher which form of communication was the easiest and most often used on social media. All four respondents stated that emojis or pictures were the easiest to use. Ari responded: “Emojis because they are easy and quick.” Sarine explained: “A picture just says what your message is or the emojis can mean things all by themselves. They’re like a message.” Atom answered: “I think pictures and emojis but more emojis. They are easier.” Tamar replied: “Emojis with a picture because it makes it easy to communicate.” All four respondents opined pictures and emojis and the most and easiest to use form of communication.

Use of Different Communication Methods

Questions from interview protocol:

- 23. *When do you use words to communicate?*
- 24. *When do you use pictures to communicate?*
- 25. *When do you use videos to communicate?*
- 26. *What makes words easier than images? OR What makes images easier than words?*

Questions 23, 24 and 25 of the interview protocol were intended to elicit information on when each communication method was used (Table 2). Words were used by three of the four respondents to leave a response or remark on a social media post. Atom explained that words were best suited to explain a scientific concept. Pictures were used “all the time” by two of the four respondents because they allowed their friends and family to know exactly what they are doing and where they are. Sarine stated that pictures were her main source of communication on social media platforms and Atom used pictures to analyze scientific diagrams in a group chat. All four respondents asserted the ease, clarity, and efficiency of communicating through visual images.

Table 2 Communication Methods

Communication Method	Responses
Words	<p>Ari: “To type a quick message I guess or leave on comment.”</p> <p>Sarine: “To answer a question or leave a comment.”</p> <p>Atom: “To write on my Snapchat stories and write on people’s walls on Facebook”</p> <p>Tamar: “When messaging in a group or explaining a concept.”</p>
Pictures	<p>Ari: “If I want to show my friends and family something...I do not know, all the time really.”</p> <p>Sarine: “When I am on Instagram and Snapchat. A picture is like a message of words. Like an emoji too.”</p> <p>Atom: “For a concept and analysis diagrams. I am part of a physics groups and I take pictures of diagrams to talk about physics in the group. It makes it easier than typing it all out.”</p> <p>Tamar: “All the time. People can see what I am doing or what I am talking about that way.”</p>
Videos	<p>Ari: “Only when I send memes to my friends...they are like videos of funny things. People make them and post them and I share them.”</p> <p>Sarine: “I don’t. The only time is when I post a story on Snapchat. I send friends funny videos too, like memes.”</p> <p>Atom: “I just post videos to my Snapchat story or send them to my friends.”</p> <p>Tamar: “On Snapchat stories to tell or show friends my day.”</p>

The responses from questions 23, 24 and 25 support the responses from question 26 which inquired on what specifically makes words or pictures more effective to use for communication. Ari said: “Pictures are fast and so are emojis.” Sarine replied: “A picture is much faster.” Atom revealed: “Emojis are easier because they have more meaning.” Tamar divulged: “Emojis are easy because my friends back home and my new friends here all know what they mean and they are so quick.” These responses support Hershatter, Andrea and Epstein’s (2010) assertion that millennials are visual thinkers (p. 213).

Communication Processes

Question from interview protocol:

29. Do you think emojis help you communicate and how?

Question 29 was intended to elicit information on communication processes occurring on social media. All respondents agreed that emojis made communication easier because they themselves provide an enhanced meaning. Ari expressed: “Ya, they can make a message sound happy or angry or something and it is less words.” Sarine volunteered: “Ya because they help people know what you mean. A message can sound mean but an emoji can make it sound nice. This is good for me because I am learning English and if I am talking to someone who is from Canada I am worried I might say the wrong thing.” Atom asserted: “Yes they give a deeper meaning to what you’re saying or they make it quick.” Tamar confessed: “Yes. Always. They tell other people what you message or picture means. A picture with an emoji let’s the other people know what you mean by it.” The participants’ responses support Lu, Xuan, et al. (2016)’s assertion that emojis are a quick way for anyone to communicate because one avoids encountering language barriers (p. 770).





Emoji's Meanings

Question from interview protocol:

35. What do these emojis mean to you? How do you use them? How do they change the meaning of a message?

Question 35 explored the understanding of the nuanced meaning of 4 emojis (Table 3). The first emoji was unanimously understood as having a double meaning. The image appears to be laughing with tears; however, it was interpreted as simply laughing or as a sarcastic remark. The respondents agree that the meaning of the emoji is dependent on the context of the message received. Three of the four participants also identified this emoji as their favourite and most used emoji. Ari and Atom reported that they did not use the second emoji. Sarine and Tamar suggested it was a sign of hesitation and anxiousness. The third emoji was also unanimously understood as having multiple meanings. Respondents associated it with situations that are humorous and flirtatious. Atom asserted that the emoji itself is a symbol for double meaning – as it is used to be coy and not directly answer or ask a question. The last emoji was unanimously understood by all the respondents to be a sign of empathy. All respondents stated they used that emoji when they are feeling sad – themselves or for someone else.

Table 3 Emoji Interpretation

Emojis	Responses
	<p>Ari: “It means LOL it a good or bad way. It depends how I use it, then it is clear how I think”</p> <p>Sarine: “It is sarcastic. If I get a joke I use it but if I think my friend did something dumb I also use it.”</p> <p>Atom: “Laughing at someone or yourself, sometimes to be mean.”</p> <p>Tamar: “It means funny but sometimes it’s a sarcastic funny like I am making fun of something.”</p>
	<p>Ari: “I do not use this one.”</p> <p>Sarine: “When I do something funny or bad and am nervous. Or if I do not encourage my friends.”</p> <p>Atom: “I do not like this one. It is a little mean.”</p> <p>Tamar: “It is funny to me this one but irritating. If someone sends it they want a reaction.”</p>
	<p>Ari: “It means LOL. It could be funny or flirting.”</p> <p>Sarine: “Funny. Maybe you are making fun or someone for fun.”</p> <p>Atom: “I use it when I want to say something but not directly, understand what I mean. I use it with girls a lot.”</p> <p>Tamar: “This one has a lot of diverse emotions. It usually is for flirting. I do not use it.”</p>
	<p>Ari: “This is sad.”</p> <p>Sarine: “Sad or you feel bad.”</p> <p>Atom: “Sadness.”</p> <p>Tamar: “Sad or feel bad for someone.”</p>

Social Media Uses in Canada and Syria

Question from interview protocol:

12. *Is there a difference between the kinds of social media you used to use and use now?*
32. *Do you have streaks on Snapchat?*
33. *How is the way you use social media different in Canada than in your previous country?*

Question 12 of the interview protocol intended to elicit perceived differences between social media platforms used in Syria in comparison with Canada. Two of the respondents indicated they did not recognize any difference between the kinds of social media used; however, the remaining two indicated that they used Facebook significantly less in Canada than in Syria.

Question 33 of the interview protocol sought to establish the differences, if any, between social media used in Canada and their previous country of residence. All four respondents indicated that the way social media were used prior to their arrival in Canada in the same manner as Canada, supporting Maitland and Xu (2015)'s findings on refugee phone usage.

Question 32 inquired about a specific Snapchat ritual referred to as *streaks*. Streaks are a consecutive number of snaps shared between two people over a certain number of days. A number appears beside the person's name the streaks are sent to, in order to keep track of how long the streaks are maintained. Three out of the four respondents sent streaks regularly to their friends on Snapchat. Atom divulged: "I have about 5 streaks. The longest I've ever had was 87 days. I send the routine black screen and 'S' in the morning. It's fun because the numbers go up and a lot of people think it is important. It means like you are friends." All three respondents who sent streaks to friends, indicated the importance of streaks was greater in Canada in comparison to Syria.

Most Important Parts on Social Media Platforms

Question from the interview protocol:

30. What is the most important part of social media?

Question 30 intended to elicit the most important parts of a social media platform for a millennial refugee. Ari expressed: “Communication I think. On social media you get to talk and read and watch videos on any subject.” Sarine reported: “Education because you can learn a lot on different things from social media like news and about products. I get to learn from my family back home and know what is going on there.” Atom revealed: “I think education, because you can read and watch in any language. Even for translation social media is good. It helps me learn English.” Tamar disclosed: “The educational aspect of social media, because you learn a lot about the world and your friends.” The respondents considered social media platforms as a way to engage and learn from people by interacting or through observations. These responses support my findings from question 6 of the survey which asks the respondents to indicate the importance of social networks. Three of the four respondents strongly agreed with the statement “Social networks are important” and one respondent agreed.

Snapchat Observations

I was added as a friend by all four respondents via Snapchat. All four participants use a Bitmoji. A Bitmoji is a downloadable app that allows icon users to create a cartoon-like rendering of themselves. The Bitmoji is then used as a display picture on Snapchat.

All four respondents had Snapchat stories. Each story was comprised of both videos and pictures, with different filters, stickers and emojis placed on top. The respondents’ stories included images and videos from the previous day. Atom and Tamar included a location filter on their stories. All four respondents included an image of themselves in their story. None of the four included written words in their Snapchat stories.

Each respondent also sent me a snap prior to leaving the Armenian Community Centre in order to explain the meaning behind the image. Appendix D is an image of the CN Tower and surrounding downtown area with an emoji. Ari explained: “I sent this because I was here a few weekends ago and it is a cool picture. The emoji means that I wish I was here again.” Appendix E is an image of a painting with two emojis. The image is supposed to convey Sarine’s admiration of the painting: “I liked this one and wanted to share that idea with you.” Appendix F is an image of an empty plastic water bottle in black and white with an emoji. The black and white filter was added after the phone was taken. Atom volunteered: “I added the black and white filter because I think it looks cool. I put the emoji because I am annoyed I am out of water.” Appendix G is an image pen and laptop on a table with a red ‘S’ drawn over it. Tamar narrated: “I took this picture so we can start a streak. It doesn’t matter what the picture is if its for streaks. You just open, close and send one back.” All of the respondents used pictures without words to convey their message. Three of the four respondents used emojis with their images and one of the four respondents used a hand-drawn letter ‘S’. Additionally, only one respondent used a filter.

Summary of Findings

All four respondents have been actively using social media for at least one year. Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook are the most used social media platforms; however, decidedly, Snapchat is used most. All respondents asserted that they used pictures, words and videos for communication but, unanimously, pictures were used most often. With regard to when social media was accessed, most respondents indicated a tendency to spend the most time when they woke up and before they went to bed. Atom was the only respondent who volunteered spending time on social media only in the evenings.

With regard to the nuanced meaning of emojis, all respondents expressed a common understanding. Respondents addressed the multiple meanings of each emoji and identified similar situations in which they would be used. All respondents recognized emojis as visual symbols able to convey emotions and more accurately express the tonality of a written message.

All respondents used social media to communicate with friends and family, access information, and to make friends. Different social media messaging platforms like Kik, Snapchat and Facebook were used among respondents to communicate to family and friends in Canada and Syria. All respondents were subscribed to news and/or popular culture channels on Snapchat that they used to access information. Three of the four respondents engaged in – what was identified as a Canadian ritual – sending streaks to make and maintain friendships.

Differences Among Respondents

Atom, unlike the other respondents, indicated that he used social media mostly for academic purposes, as a way to communicate about science-related topics and diagrams. He also was the only respondent who expressed that he did not watch television or listen to music in English in an attempt to improve his English proficiency. Tamar was the only respondent to report that she was taking English classes to improve her proficiency.

Two respondents did not feel able to express what unused emojis meant. Ari and Atom were unwilling to share or guess at a meaning of the second emoji from question 35. Atom and Tamar were the only respondents willing to talk about the flirtatious uses of emojis.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In this study I reported the findings on the social media uses of four Armenian Syrian millennial refugees within a Superdiversity and Community of Practice framework. While there was diversity with regard to variables such as respondents' social locations, statuses, experiences, ages, genders, motives, intersection into the labour and housing markets (Vertovec, 2007, p. 7), the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) my millennial respondents had in common deemed this cohort a community of practice. This community of practice was additionally reinforced after the respondents befriended me on Snapchat and we began communicating with one another.

We see also how members of this community of practice display multimodal (Adawau, 2012; Jewitt, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 200) communicative practices as they negotiate their adaption to Canadian society. As shown in this study, the use of a variety of semiotic resources on social media allowed respondents to extend the social implicatures of language beyond their verbal proficiency levels. Respondents agreed upon the ease and depth that emojis provided them when communicating to *both* those who spoke their first language and to native English speakers, like myself.

In addition, respondents' uses of social media indicate a decreased pressure for immigrants to adopt a standard societal variety. Blommaert and Rampton (2012) pose the question: "who actually speaks the standard variety?" (p. 8). This "fallacy of linear models of language learning" (Blommaert & Rampton, 2012, p. 8) fails to acknowledge the reality that individuals' repertoires "point towards an entire life, spent in various places" (p. 8). Each of these places then becomes a learning environment; individuals acquire and mimic the "high

specific and selected resources” (p. 8) that are available in each place. These points in various learning environments shape repertoires and, therefore, mitigate the importance of a “ ‘national’ origin” (ibid, p. 8; Schecter, 2015). A standard variety therefore becomes moot and thus the generative view of ‘standard’ cannot be used as the instrument to measure newcomer integration (Blommaert, 2013, p. 3).

Implications

According to the data from my study, respondents were able to communicate with interlocutors without writing. Specifically, emojis eliminated the need for writing when millennial respondents communicated via social media. Respondents were able to hold basic conversations and extract a variety of information.

Specifically, respondents could obtain practical information such as location, as well as information on affective states and opinions through emoji and picture-based communication. They could use geolocation filters and interactive maps to track the exact locations of all Snapchat friends. Snapchat stories also gave insight as to where friends were and what they were doing at all times. Emojis, both their presence, and lack-there-of, gave insight to emotional states and opinions. The used a smiling emoji or a laughing with tears emoji indicates the tonality of the message and the affective state of the user.

Moreover, Kaye, Malone and Wall (2017) explain that virtual communications allow individuals to take time to consciously consider how and what they would like to say in comparison to the spontaneity of face-to-face conversations (p. 67). The authors (2017) additionally assert that: “This therefore reveals that there may be unique underpinnings associated with emotional communication via emoji usage which may be inherently different from face-to-face expression. This is indicative of how our virtual interactions may impact upon

our emotional and social affordances, perceptions, and appraisals” (p. 67). Emojis benefit users with an ability to understand and reciprocate emotionality. This technological innovation is especially beneficial for language learners because the emoji is able to capture a range and depth of emotion that a limited vocabulary can not.

The preceding notwithstanding, there are potential disadvantages to using emojis when learning a new language and adapting to a new culture. Over-dependency on this particular modality can result in missed opportunities to learn written language and to develop academic language skills. As this study has shown, communication through images like emojis and pictures, with limited to no text, is useful for conveying basic information. However, there are numerous advantages associated with incorporating academic language skills, like vocabulary building practices, into language learning. According to Pulido (2009), vocabulary building is needed for language acquisition because those “who comprehend more also achieve greater levels of lexical intake and gains through reading” (p. 67). Reading and writing aid in vocabulary building and in developing language learners’ linguistic repertoires. This development allows for an increase in comprehension which in turn enables more varieties and quantities of texts to become accessible. I would also argue that verbal language acquisition can positively impact the social realm of the language learner’s life.

Moreover, an enhanced linguistic ability in the target language, including comprehension, would enable the individual to carry on a functional conversation which could expand and diversify their social involvement. Consequently, everyday tasks such as reading a menu, a store name or the instructions on a bottle of medicine, would become more accessible, thus enhancing their functional literacy. All of these factors would allow the individual to feel more at home in their New World environment and to integrate more easily into the social fabric of the society.

There are other advantages associated with verbal capacity such as increased access to job opportunities and overall economic benefits (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 19).

This said, according to Cobb (2008) the success and growth of language learners' experience in reading development is dependent on an effective instructional strategy rather than on an innate inclination to learn language. Cobb (2008) states: "just having a basic representation of words in memory or a vague sense of their meaning in certain contexts is not quite all that is needed for their effective use, especially in oral or written production, but also in effective reading comprehension" (p. 154). For this reason, explicit vocabulary teaching, where new word knowledge is incorporated into schema, is advisable. In addition, "guesses about new word meanings and short-term gains were greater when learners read passages that depicted very familiar topics" (Pulido, 2009, p. 79). Educators, therefore, do well to familiarize learners with specific topics to promote vocabulary learning (p. 79), bearing in mind that "schema theory is culturally specific" (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 560). This information, when combined with the findings of this study, suggests potentially effective practices that would utilize the respondents' semiotic schema to develop their linguistic repertoires.

All respondents arrive at schema reflecting shared understanding through emojis, their nuanced meaning and the 'unwritten rules' of social media. Educators could create a visual verbal matching exercise that would help improve language development. The visuals could be an emoji and the verbal/written component would be associated with the image. Thus, the exercise would provide the student with an opportunity to read and say the word or phrase aloud. The words or phrases would then become associated with the image and the student would be able to incorporate the newly learned lexical items into appropriate linguistic repertoires.

Additionally, respondents indicated that in Canada social media use was relevant to the sustaining of relationships and maintaining of friendships. Respondents noted that the pressure to consistently comment, like and send streaks via Snapchat was specific to their new home in the Greater Toronto Area. This perceived difference is a potential area for future research regarding cultural variables impacting second language learning and societal integration of millennial immigrants.

Conclusion

Findings from this study have suggested that Armenian Syrian millennial refugees who were newly arrived to Canada were able to communicate and convey and acquire knowledge using non-text based communication. Facilitating these patterns of communication was that the culture surrounding social media and its use in Canada dictated to a great extent the way in which this information was perceived and understood. However, it remains unclear whether social media uses - for immigrant, second language learners especially - are to be regarded as a form of enrichment or a compensatory strategy. Certainly, arguments can be made for each interpretation. Is social media use beneficial or does it provide an 'out' for English language learners to give up on verbal language acquisition and settle for a restricted code, dependent on visual cues alone?

According to Doyle (1970), compensatory education attempts to "improve the educational opportunities and eliminate the differences that some students bring" (p. 39). Choice (1997) defines enrichment education as: a way to "enhance cognitive functions necessary for independent thinking and improved learning ability" (Abstract). Emojis, pictures and videos were a way to compensate for the respondents' lack of English language skills but also, arguably, enriched their repertoires and allowed them to communicate to monolingual, English language

speakers. However, if this semiotic practice indeed constituted learning enrichment, is the degree of enrichment considered sufficient for the practice to continue? And how can its continued success be monitored?

Certainly, the scope of this study cannot provide sufficient evidence to support either side of the argument. This emerging area of study, coupled with “the transportation of people across national and local boundaries...[thereby creating] global economies” (Schechter & Bayley, 2002, p. 199), invites educators and researchers to be proactive. Schechter and Bayley (2005) assert: “We see bilingualism, or multiculturalism, as part of a larger vision that regards cultural pluralism as a desirable state, one with additive potential (p. 199).” The jury is still out on the beneficial uses this new pluralistic society may make of social media and, specifically, on millennial refugees’ capacity to harness these new technological devices to other literacy skills they will need in order to realize their life goals and career aspirations.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS



Informed Consent Form Template

Date:

Study Name: FOSTERING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF SYRIAN REFUGEE MILLENNIALS: A SOCIAL MEDIA APPRIACH

Researcher name: My name is Alyssa Racco. I am a Year 3 Masters of Education student at York University. I am the Principal Investigator for this research. My email address is alyssa_racco@edu.yorku.ca.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to show the importance and relevance of image-based media especially when learning a new language and living in a new environment. I intend to discover how Snapchat, as used by millennials, can help with language and literacy. The research will be conducted through interview, survey and ethnography. It will be presented and reported in a Major Research Paper.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

Participants will be responsible to answer all questions in an interview, are required to complete a survey and send an image over Snapchat. The total estimated time commitment for each participant is one hour. An inducement of \$50 is offered to participants.

Risks and Discomforts:

We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

The participants may gain useful knowledge about themselves and how they communicate. The participants may also learn additional features on Snapchat

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise, and you will still receive the promised inducement.

In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

- Methods of documentation include an audio recording, handwritten notes, survey and Snapchat photos
- All hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic data will be securely stored in a password protected device
- Data will be destroyed permanently by June 2018
- Data will not be archived

Student Version 08.09.17

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Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Data will be collected through audio recording, surveys, handwritten notes and Snapchat messages. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and all electronic data will be stored in a password protected device and only the researcher and Dr. Sandra R. Schechter will have access to this information. The data will be stored until the paper is written and then will be deleted permanently. All data will be destroyed by June 2018. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at alyssa_racco@edu.yorku.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Sandra R. Schechter at sschechter@edu.yorku.ca and/or 416-736-2100 ext. 30730. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Masters of Education at gradprogram@edu.yorku.ca and/or 416-736-5018

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____ consent to participate in FOSTERING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF SYRIAN REFUGEE MILLENNIALS: A SOCIAL MEDIA APPRIACH conducted by Alyssa Racco. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____
Principal Investigator

Date _____

Additional consent (where applicable)

1. Audio recording

I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

2. Video recording or use of photographs



Office of Research Ethics
York University

Kaneff Tower, Fifth Floor -- 4700 Keele Street,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3

ore@yorku.ca
research.info.yorku.ca

I _____ consent to the use of images of me (including photographs, video and other moving images), my environment and property in the following ways (please check all that apply):

In academic articles	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
In print, digital and slide form	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
In academic presentations	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
In media	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
In thesis materials	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y

Signature _____
Participant Name:

Date _____

APPENDIX B: SURVEY PROTOCOL

Survey

Name:

1. What age range do you fit into?
 - a. 13-18
 - b. 18-35
 - c. 36-50
 - d. 50+
2. Select your occupation:
 - a. Student
 - b. Working
 - c. Both
 - d. None
3. What social media platform do you use most?
 - a. Snapchat
 - b. Instagram
 - c. Facebook
 - d. Twitter
 - e. Other: please specify _____
4. How do you access your social network account?
 - a. PC
 - b. Laptop
 - c. Smartphone
 - d. iPod/iPad
5. How long have you been using social media sites?
 - a. Less than a month
 - b. 1-6 months
 - c. 7 months – 1 year
 - d. more than a year
6. Do you think social networks are important?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Fair
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
 - f. I do not know
7. Do you use social media for any type of learning?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes. How? _____

8. Which of the applications do you use most for social interaction?
- a. Twitter
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Google+
 - d. Skype
 - e. Instagram
 - f. Snapchat
 - g. Other: _____
9. Which of the applications do you use most for business (news updates, school)
- a. Twitter
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Google+
 - d. Skype
 - e. Instagram
 - f. Snapchat
 - g. Other: _____
10. What language is your phone set to?
- a. English
 - b. Other: _____
11. What language is your keyboard in your phone set to?
- a. English
 - b. Other: _____
12. Do you ever switch the keyboard or language of your phone?
- a. Yes. When? _____
 - b. No

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Personal Information

1. What is your name
2. How old are you?
3. What country are you from?
4. How long have you been in Canada?

Current Education

5. Are you learning English?
6. Do you take any English classes? Where?
7. How are you/did you learn English?
8. Do you spend time watching or listening to anything in English?
9. Do you consider yourself fluent in English?
10. How do you communicate with friends and family back home?

Social Media Use

11. What is your experience with social media?
12. Is there a difference between what kinds of social media you used to use and use now?
13. How often do you use social media?
14. What social media platforms do you use? Which do you use most?
15. How many times a day do you open Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.?
16. How much time a day do you think you spend on social media?
17. What part of the day do you use social media most?
18. Which do you use most? Why?
19. Which part of the site do you use most often?
20. Do you use any form of social media for news or news about pop culture?

Communication

21. Do you use words, pictures or emojis to communicate most?
22. Which is easiest to use?
23. When do you use words to communicate?
24. When do you use pictures to communicate?
25. When do you use videos to communicate?
26. What makes words easier than images? OR What makes images easier than words?
27. Do you use emojis often?
28. Which do you use most often?
29. Do you think emojis help you to communicate and how?
30. What is the most important part of social media?
31. Do you have a spam account on any social media? Explain.
32. Do you have streaks on Snapchat?
33. How is the way you use social media different in Canada than your previous country?
34. Look at this group of emojis. Which is your most used? How do you use it?



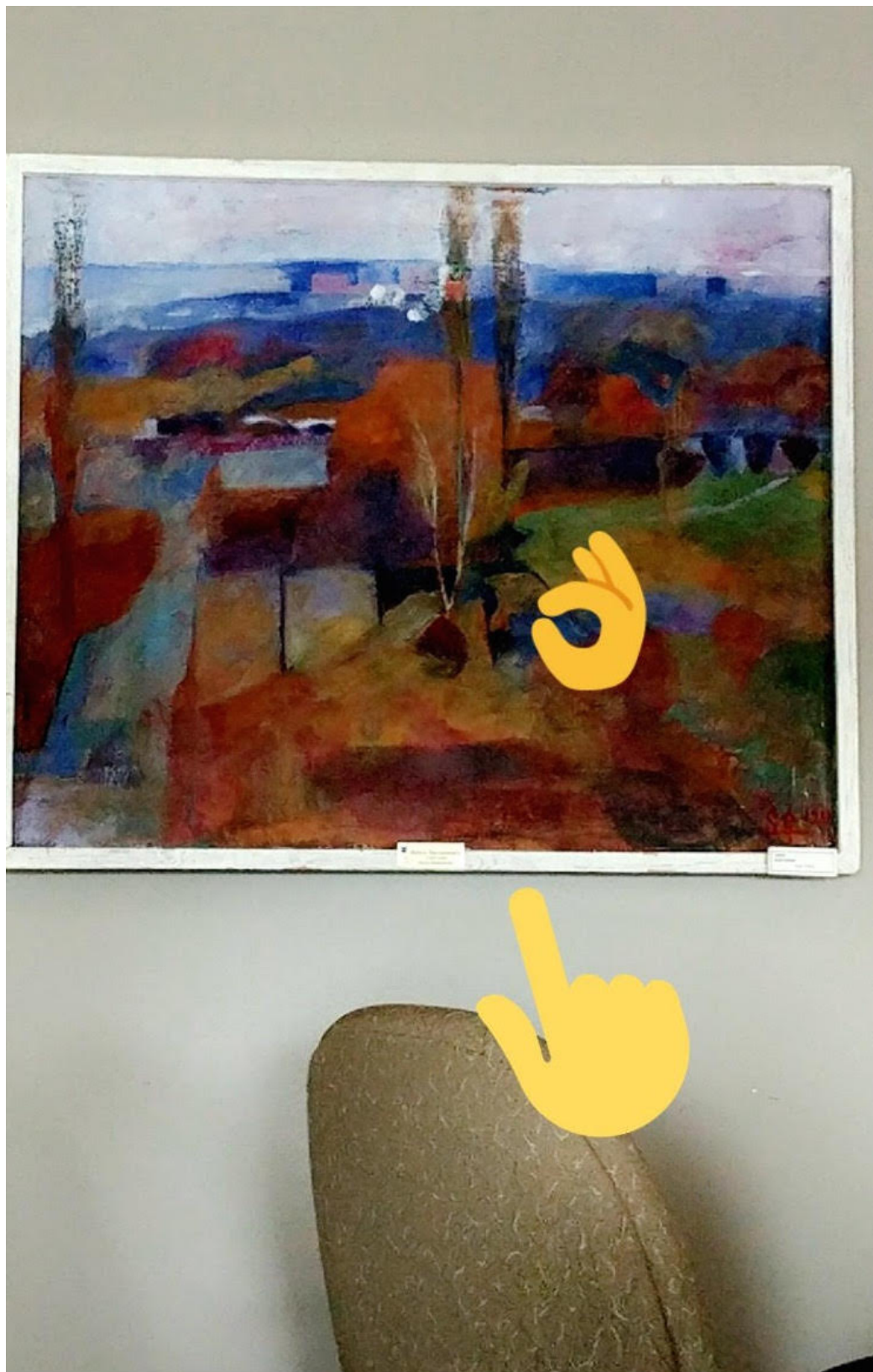
35. What do these emojis mean to you? How do you use them? How do they change the meaning of a message?



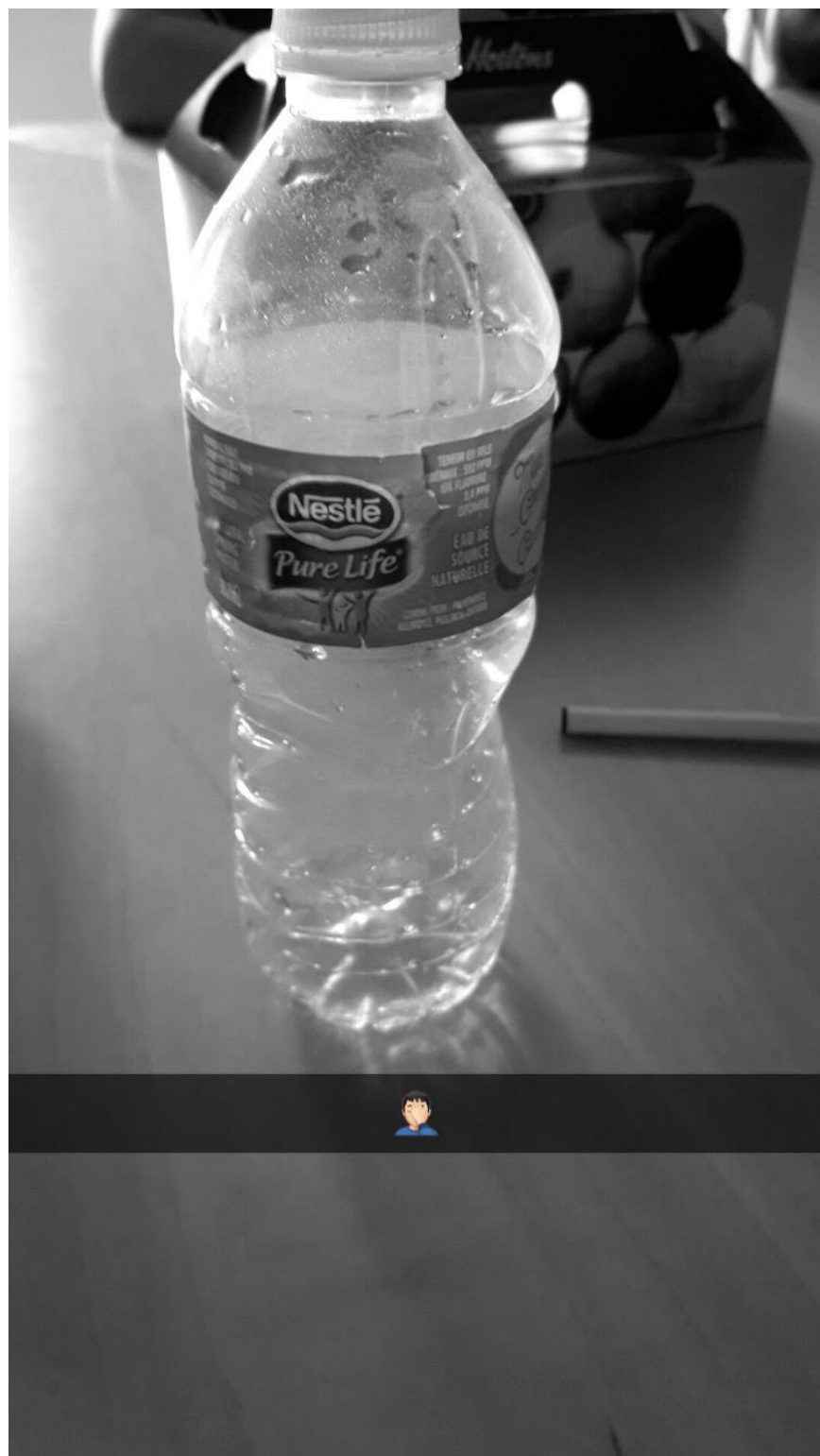
APPENDIX D: ARI'S SNAPCHAT



APPENDIX E: SARINE'S SNAPCHAT



APPENDIX F: ATOM'S SNAPCHAT



APPENDIX G: TAMAR'S SNAPCHAT

