The Image of Refugeeness
and the
Realities of the Refugee Experience in a Canadian City

Bindu Narula

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ABSTRACT

The Image of Refugeeness and the Realities of the Refugee Experience in a Canadian City

Bindu Narula

This is an ethnographic account of refugee resettlement as it occurs in a Reception House for government sponsored refugees. This thesis explores issues of agency and negotiation for those defined as refugees in an environment that can be complex, bureaucratic and controlled. Since Canada Immigration privatized the area of refugee resettlement, immigrant serving agencies are funded by the government to facilitate the refugee resettlement process. The contradictions of a system developed to assist refugees are explored at the local level. This thesis attempts to challenge the notion of forced migration, the image of refugeeness and homogenizing the people of the refugee category.

While there is vast literature that deals with asylum seekers or refugee claimants, very little has specifically been written about government sponsored refugees. Although these refugees are accepted to Canada as permanent residents, they are still subjected to many of the same stereotypes as other refugees without permanent status.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem: Images of Refugeeness and the Effects on Agency

Although throughout the history of the world, refugees have always existed, the birth of the United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) came after the Second World War when the need to organize and formalize aid to the thousands of displaced Europeans became all too apparent. A refugee came to be defined as a person either unable or unwilling because of fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, to return to his/her place of nationality of habitual residence [Loescher, G. 1993:5].

Since then, refugees and displaced populations have been growing at a phenomenal rate from 2.8 million in 1976 to 8.2 million in 1980 and nearly 18 million in 1992 [UNHCR: 2000: 6]. Today, there may be as many as 50 million people who can be categorized as refugees or displaced people. The largest displaced populations come to Canada for resettlement from war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, ex-Yugoslavia, Malawi, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Until recently, much of the burden of the refugee migration has remained on neighbouring host countries that suffer from poor economies and overpopulation. But at the beginning of this century, the global refugee crisis continues and has been brought closer to home by images of:

> …desperate men, women and children pushed out of their own countries by forces entirely beyond their control [that] are paraded with grim regularity across our television screens [Loescher, G. 1993:3].

Images such as these reinforce stereotypical perceptions of refugees as people who have little or no control over their circumstances. In turn, these stereotypical images have real and powerful consequences on refugees and their resettlement in a new country like Canada. Canada has made a humanitarian commitment to refugees for whom all other options have been closed. Each year over 20,000 refugees are resettled in Canada out of which 7,300 are government sponsored and provided with temporary financial support and immediate essential needs [Refugee Assistance Delivery Plan Book, 1998: 7]. Under Canada's humanitarian program, most government sponsored refugees that arrive in Canada, come to reception houses or old converted motels and are provided with resettlement services funded by the federal and provincial governments. Immigrant serving agencies are funded and contracted by the government in order to facilitate the resettlement of these refugees. Often, the process of resettlement is complicated by the constant threat of government cutbacks, the precarious position of the immigrant serving agencies dependent on government funding and the fact that many of the staff hired to render these services have themselves been refugees.

The focus of my study is the government-sponsored refugees who arrive at a Reception House for refugees, run by an immigrant-serving agency (NGO) in a mid-size city in Canada. My study is an ethnographical account of the complexities of the initial resettlement process at a Reception House. The purpose of the thesis is to explore the exercise of agency by those categorized as refugees and how it is complicated by stereotypical images of refugeeness and by the ambiguous position of many resettlement

workers. Drawing on the day to day interactions of the various participants at the Reception House and the structural constraints in which they operate, I will attempt to highlight the manifestations and implications of these complexities on refugee resettlement.

The thesis will begin with a literature review of refugee studies drawing on a diverse and vast disciplinary writings that are relevant to main issues discussed in the thesis. I will end this chapter by situating my study within this literature. Next, I will describe some of the current debates about fieldwork in anthropology in the methodology chapter. It will also cover the specific methodologies used in the fieldwork and briefly introduce the Reception House and the sample group of the study. In chapter three, an extensive analysis of life at the Reception House is provided highlighting details about the exercise of agency and the interactions between the various actors at the Reception House. Lastly, I will conclude the thesis by drawing upon some of the most salient issues highlighted by my study.

1.2 Literature Review: Relevant Literature from Refugee Studies & Anthropology

1.2.1 Professionalization of the Field

In the last twenty years, the study of refugee issues has become a significant and vast arena for study. The literature on refugee issues is just as vast, drawing from multidisciplinary academic writings such as sociology [Lanphier, 1990; Hein, 1993], anthropology [Malkki, 1995], law [Aleinikoff, 1991; Hathaway, 1995, Goodwin-Gill, 1987, Grahl-Madsen, 1990], philosophy [Adelman, 1991] political science [Loescher,

1993; Stein, 1991], psychiatry [Beiser, 1991] and geography [Black, 2001; Heipel, 1991]. Since the 1980's there has been an attempt to professionalize the field of refugee studies at many levels. The United Nations organizations as well as the Red Cross and other non-governmental, charity and developmental organizations together make up an "international refugee system" [Gallager (1989) & Gordenker, (1983) cited in Malkki, 1995:505]. For example, the UNHCR in the 1980's worked toward training staff, setting standards for measuring professional competence and providing a procedure for evaluation and feedback [Martin, Susan, 2001:227].

In addition, professionalization also took place in academia outside the bounds of specialized refugee relief agencies. The Oxford Refugee Studies Program at Oxford, England [Malkki, 1995:505] and the Center for Refugee Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada [Black, 2001:60] are examples of attempts to consolidate knowledge and social science research which would in turn influence national and international policies, developmental reports and academic writings pertaining to refugees [Malkki, 1992:506]. In turn, two scholarly journals dedicated to refugee issues have been published through these centers; *The Journal of Refugee Studies* and *Refuge* respectively [Black, 2001]. Other universities have also branched out offering Master's programs in forced migration such as the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, both voluntary and forced migration at University of Sussex [Martin, 2001:236].

A plethora of writing regarding diverse refugee issues has been published not only through these refugee centers but also in other academic environments. These issues

include: refugee camps [Malkki, 1995; Cha & Small, 1994], refugee repatriation [Stepputat, 1994], resettlement and adaptation [Montgomery, 1996; McSpadden & Moussa, 1993; Winland, 1994; Lippert, 1998], gender differentials among refugees [McSpadden & Moussa, 1993; Cha & Small, 1994; Winland, 1994; Ager, Ager & Long, 1995; Boyd, 1999], identity and community [Shami, 1996; Winland, 1998; Jung, 1999] nation states struggle with sovereignty and displacement [Keely, 1996; Jacobsen, K., 1996;], developmental agencies such as the UNHCR [Loescher, 1993], human rights [Crepeau, 1994; Hathaway, 1994], poverty and income differentials [Cha & Small, 1994, Ager, Ager & Long, 1995], refugee and asylum policies and laws [Copeland, 1992; Hathaway, 1995; Takkenberg, 1999], temporary status [Frelick & Kohnen, 1995] transnationalism [Shami, 1996; Stepputat, 1994; Winland, 1998; Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 2000]; refugee voices [Burgos-Debray, 1984; Afkhami, 1994; Flores-Borquez, 1995].

1.2.2 The International Refugee System

The international refugee system is made up of the UNHCR, non-profit, charity, relief and other international organizations that work together to manage and control the refugee problem [Malkki, 1995 (b):505]. These organizations work at a supralocal level in conjunction with nation-states and justify their existence in the plight of the displaced. However, as I will expand on in chapter three, these organizations are also dependent on nation-states with regards to funding, setting up relief centres and implementing international refugee laws and policies and therefore they are often limited in their approach [Loescher, 1993:129-141]. The unique locus of these organizations positioned beyond and yet working within the parameters of nation-states often places them in an

ambiguous position. State sovereignty and the right to control borders is often at the forefront of discussions on the movement of refugees [Jacobsen, 1996:92]. The net effect is the construing of the refugee as a threat and somebody who needs to be controlled.

Based on this premise, the refugee becomes a person for whom special policies and measures are required [Black, 2001:63]. Liisa Malkki argues that the existence of refugees is presented as problematic in refugee studies because, by drawing on a functionalist model of society, displacement is constructed "…as an anomaly in an otherwise whole, sedentary, society [Malkki, 1995(b): 508]." The threat that the refugee poses to the national order of things goes beyond challenging the 'naturalized' categorical order of nations, it challenges our political and social identities [Malkki, 1995 (a): 6]. At the political level, refugees, in themselves, threaten the international system of states because they represent a failure of the system [Aleinkoff, 1995:257]. At the social level, the refugee challenges the national order of things which refers to that "…powerful regime of classification, an apparently commonsensical system of ordering and sorting people into national kinds and types [Malkki, 1995 (a): 6]". In other words, the refugee brings disorder in an otherwise orderly world of sovereign nations-states made up of neatly ordered categories of nationalities. Ironically, the result of the international refugee regime is that refugees often become the objects of control by the very organizations meant to assist them.

1.2.3 The Refugee Category: Universalizing and Homogenizing the Refugee

Human intervention in the global refugee situation has intended to alleviate some of the problems that may accompany displacement such as starvation, health risks and lack of safety. However, human aid can also function to slow if not hinder solutions to the global refugee situation [Rajaram, 2002:247]. In addition to the controlling of refugees, Liisa Malkki has argued that one of the effects of bureaucratic human intervention in dealing with refugee situations is that:

> Refugees stop being specific persons and become pure victims in general: universal man, universal woman and universal child and taken together universal family [Malkki, 1996:378].

She argues that there are dishistoricizing and depoliticizing processes that people in the refugee category are subjected to through the processes and procedures of bureaucratic intervention. [Malkki, 1996: 378]. Some of these processes and procedures in Malkki's own study of Hutu refugees in a Tanzanian refugee camp included discouraging camp refugees to speak about the past for to do so was to speak about politics [Malkki, 1995(b):384]. In Voutira and Harrell-Bond's study of refugees in a refugee camp in Malawi, the authors describe the manner in which the structure of the NGO responsible for aid in the area polarizes refugees and camp administrators into the needy and the givers respectively [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:215]. The consequences of these bureaucratic processes on the refugee are two-fold. First, refugees are perceived as mute victims rather than historical actors. Consequently, they are silenced and rendered speechless. Not only does the speechlessness of the refugee reinforce "sense of universal, primordial humanity [Rajaram, 2002:252]", it also devoids the refugee of a particular history, politics and individuality.

Second, the effect is to homogenize all refugees and their experiences. The diversity of refugees backgrounds, ethnicities, nationalities, linguistic groups, age, gender, education, class, political and religious affiliations and individual experiences and personalities are disregarded and rendered non-existent in the face of an undifferentiated human suffering [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995: 211]. Refugee scholars such as Stein have argued that by identifying the common and reoccurring experiences of the refugee, we can move towards a "…comprehensive professional refugee assistance program [as cited by Malkki, 1995 (b):511]." As well, Stein and Keller have systematically reduced the experiences of the refugee into various fixed stages [as citied by Malkki, 1995 (b):510]. However, the homogenizing of the refugee experience is rendered even more ironic considering that the definition of a refugee is based on the individual who has a well-founded fear of persecution [Daniel, 2002:276].

In my own research, through my ethnographical account of the Reception House, I highlight the ways in which different individuals respond to the system of refugee reception and resettlement in Canada. In an attempt to illustrate the diversity among refugees, in *The Northern Route: An Ethnography of Refugee Experiences* (1990), Lisa Gilad provides a rich ethnographical accounts of flight, transition and resettlement of diverse refugee families. From a distinct perspective, in *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (1995a), Liisa Malkki, provides a rich ethnographical account of Hutu refugees in a refugee camp in Tanzania. In doing so, she highlights the way in which the refugee category is socially

constructed and rendered meaningful based on particular histories and self-defined identities that sometimes challenge one another.

1.2.4 The Image of Refugeeness

According to Liisa Mallki, the image of refugeeness refers to that process of becoming a refugee that carries with it a certain authenticity that novice refugees have not yet earned [Malkki, 1995a:223]. But in my own research, the image of refugeeness refers more to the stereotypical images one thinks of when one thinks of a refugee. These images are reinforced by media images that reinforce representations of an authentic refugee. In addition to a particular look, the image of refugeeness implies certain social and moral conduct rendered to be appropriate for a refugee. There is a tendency to disconnect people from their history and attribute certain physical, moral and social characteristics to the bodies of the suffering refugees [Rajaram, 2002:247; Malkki, 1996:379]. The visual images of thousands of no-named, dark, bare bodies are disseminated through television, newspaper and documentary [Loescher, 1993:3; Malkki, 1996:387-390] in what Allan Feldman called, "anonymous corporeality which refers to the display of "generalities of bodies-dead, wounded, starving, diseased and homeless…" which function to arouse our sentimentality [Malkki, 1996:388]"

The images I have described depict refugees as passive victims of their circumstances having lost their homes and consequently their identity. In other words, the image of the refugeeness is portrayed as helpless, vulnerable and weak. In a similar but distinct field situation, Joanne Passaro describes her fieldwork with the homeless in New York. She comments that:

> …some people assumed that the homeless were sacred in their marginality, while to others they were profaned by it. Both positions severely limited understandings of agency and subjectivity of homeless people. [Passaro, 1997:154].

Homeless people as well as other marginal groups of people are either victimized or condemned for their actions. Public images and media representations of refugees reinforce the idea that refugees are vulnerable, helpless and poor and indeed worthy of assistance. Thus, refugees become objects of control and power which reinforces and is reinforced by the polarization of the image of refugeeness as untrustworthy manipulative and not bonafide or weak, helpless and vulnerable. The polarization Passaro is referring to also takes place in the refugee context and similarly renders the refugee silent.

> The vision of helplessness is linked to the constitution of speechlessness among refugees: helpless victims need protection, need someone to speak for them [Malkki, 1996:388].

Moreover, the silencing of refugees is substantiated by moralistic value judgments of how one should look and act which lead to stereotyped images of refugeeness [(referring to homelessness) Passaro, 1997; (the poor) Bourgois, 2002:20] that almost always proceed interventions based on universal human rights [Malkki, 1996:378].].

However, often, when refugees do not act or look like they are helpless, weak and vulnerable they loose their credibility as bonafide refugees. In other words, with the refugee category comes a label, an expectation of how a refugees should look and act. The danger lies in the fact that policies and practices of human intervention are often based on the image of the refugeeness and the aforementioned essentialized notions of

identity [Malkki, 1995:511]. The naturalized notions of territorial based identity in conjunction with the image of refugeeness:

> ...renders reasonable the sealing of borders against asylum applicants...it makes obvious the need to control the movement of people "out of place" and thus acts to naturalize technologies of power like the refugee camp, the transit camp, the screening or reception center etc...[Malkki, 1995 (a):512]

The loss of culture, home and tradition sometimes render the refugee untrustworthy, a 'security risk'. Consequently, the need to control refugees is justified by the stereotypical image of the refugee as helpless, weak and vulnerable and thus in need of control and assistance. The contrary image also renders the refugee as someone who needs to be controlled because they may not be bonafide (regardless of the documentation provided) and consequently they may be considered to be untrustworthy, "a security risk" or manipulating the system. While discussing how refugees are perceived in the post Cold War era, Gil Loescher comments that refugees as security risks goes beyond traditional notions of security to include the maintenance of intercommunal harmony, political interests, economic stability and sovereignty [Loescher, 1993:23-24].

The marginalization of refugees does not only manifest itself in the image of the refugee as a security risk, but also in the refugees being perceived as people more prone to psychological problems [see Malkki, 1995 (a):9]. There is vast refugee scholarship about refugee mental health [see Beiser,1995; Woon, Wong, Woo, 1988; Chan & Lam, 1987]. Randy Lippert discusses a development of psychological professional field dedicated to dealing with the effects of displacement, violence and trauma on refugees [Lippert, 1998:384]. Often, the higher risk of mental illness is linked to their forced

migration [Lippert, 1998:385]. He cites an example from a ten-year study on Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. It reads:

> Although immigrants and refugees share many common problems, they also differ in ways that have important mental health implications. People usually choose to become immigrants, whereas they are forced to become refugees. This increases the risk for emotional disorder [Johnson & Besiker, 1994:3 as cited in Lippert, 1998:385].

The result is that the Canadian government sanctioned a task force in 1986 on Mental Health issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees. In addition, Centres for Victims (Survivors) of Torture were established in every urban center in Canada [Lippert, 1998:385].

To sum up, the image of refugeeness is a polarized representation of an authentic refugee. On the one hand, it refers to the image of the refugee as weak, vulnerable and poor and consequently worthy of assistance. On the other, the refugee can be perceived as untrustworthy, a security risk and perhaps manipulative. The refugee is further marginalized by the idea that because of their condition of uprootedness they are more prone to psychological disorders. These images have real and powerful consequences for refugees in various contexts.

1.2.5 Refugees as Agents of Change

In spite of the vastness of writings on refugee issues, scholars have questioned the differentiation between refugee studies and the broader migration studies [Black, 2001:61]. Most migration and refugee literature begin with the basic premise that

differentiates immigrants and refugees; that is that immigrants choose to migrate while refugees are forced into migration [Scott & Scott, 1989:4; Loescher, 1993: 5-6, 16; Escolana & Black, 1995:367-368; Gilad, L, 1990:52; Black, 2001:61]. I am not denying that refugees are compelled to flee because of violence, political unrest and civil strife. However, during my own fieldwork, I have found that refugees are precisely those people who have become empowered enough to migrate and ameliorate their lives, overcoming the political, institutional cultural and social barriers to migration. Given that many people are subjected to terrible political and social conditions, it is important to note that not all such people choose to leave their homeland.[1] People who are defined as refugees are people who, in spite of their circumstances, have found the resources, competence, courage, perseverance and organizational ability to change their situation. Thus, the action taken by the people who do leave their countries in search of safety is often a deliberate, planned active solution to a problem that threatens their very livelihood and well-being. The idea that refugees are forced to migrate not only implies that they are passive victims of the circumstances they have experienced, but it also denies refugees of the agency they have exercised. Based on her research in Newfoundland, Lisa Gilad points to the fact that most of the refugees who came to Newfoundland had to plan so carefully, because most regimes from which they came from put strict restrictions on freedom of movement [Gilad, L., 1990:24]· In a section of the book in which Gilad is discussing refugees fleeing Communist regimes, she comments:

> ...planning to leave may take several years and repeated attempts to obtain all the documents required for travel visas. Clearly, then, the refugee act-

[1] Some people choose to leave their homes without leaving the national boundaries such as the internally displaced [see discussion UNHCR, 2000:214-215].

> flight-is anticipated, and the only means of doing so-leaving...requires time [Gilad, L., 1990:74].

Although Gilad does not explicitly say so, all of her refugee stories allude to the fact that the refugees made a conscious and deliberate decision to leave their homes. These decisions have taken considerable, thought, courage, cash, planning and commitment to leave the countries in question. Planning requires certain decision-making that empowers people to take control over their own lives and destiny. In other words, they are active agents of change.

Making the decision to migrate is not the only area within which refugees exercise agency and control over their lives. From the moment people leave their national borders and begin their plight of refuge, they enter into a highly bureaucratic and controlling international system of refugees. Within this system, refugees often need to negotiate how to maximize their access to resources. For example, in their essay, *In Search of the Locus of Trust: The Social World of the Refugee Camp*, Voutira and Harrell-Bond describe the encounters between the refugees and their relief workers in a refugee camp in Malawi. They describe situations where families often divide themselves up in order to gain maximum access to resources such as food and water [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:218]. In other instances, refugees would deliberately refrain from providing certain information to relief workers if they thought it would work against their interests [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:216]. Some refugee families, in situations of starvation used more extreme coping strategies such as lying and/or selling sisters to prostitution [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:218].

In much the same way, drawing upon her fieldwork in a Hutu refugee camp in Tanzania, Liisa Malkki describes the process by which some refugees, although documented residents of the refugee camp, took up temporary residence in the town during commerce or fishing season in order to sell merchandise to the towns people. Other camp refugees would leave their wives and families for a few months in order to build a house or work in the town [Malkki, 1995 (a):199]. In my own research, refugees often divulged information about seeking false documents, paying off officials, lying about family members, in order to navigate their way in an international system developed to control refugees. In this way, refugees often used innovative ways to attempt to gain control over their lives.

In addition to these innovative strategies, silence was also used as a tool of empowerment in order to negotiate one's position in the often extremely structured environments that refugees find themselves in [Lawrence, 2000:178]. For example, *When Trust is on Trial: Negotiating Refugee Narratives* is John Knudsen's account of some Vietnamese refugees' experiences in flight, exile and resettlement. He tells a story of people who deliberately and carefully balance their desire to trust with the very real potential of betrayal and deceit [Knudsen, 1995:20]. Knudsen describes how after experiencing extreme violence in Vietnam, refugees lost trust in people who are not family. At the refugee camps in Hong Kong and the Philippines, or the resettlement centers in Norway, these Vietnamese refugees used silence in dealing with the relief workers to gain some control and security over their lives. In other words, by deciding

when to give out personal information and to what degree, the Vietnamese refugees could control the ways in which that information could be used. In this way, the Vietnamese refugees are exercising a form of agency. In much the vein, Marjorie Muecke discusses the ways in which Cambodian women who have been sexually violated use denial of their feelings and memories to protect their images as trustable. The women use silence about their sexual exploitation to regain control and to regain dignity over their lives [Mueke, 1995:49]. From another perspective, Beatriz Manz discusses the hundreds of years of violence and powerlessness that has been experienced by the Guatemalan Mayan Indians. While Manz traces the relationship of mistrust between indigenous people and mestizo (ladinos) back through history to colonial times, she also highlights the relationship of trust that has been established within the Mayan community. She maintains that the Mayan's identification with each other's situation in a context of terror and violence helps the individual to cope. In other words, the Mayan refugees draw strength from their history, community and identity [Manz, 1995]. In a similar way, in her article, "Christianity and Community: Conversion and Adaptation Among Hmong Women", Daphne Winland (1994) in her account of Hmong refugee women in Ontario use social networks at the Mennonite Church while maintaining strong cultural links as resources of empowerment

Coping strategies such as lying, retaining information, and manipulating the system are often used by refugees not only to express discontentment with the situation, but also to attempt to make changes in one's life. Using resources such as community, idenitity and social networks, as we have seen in the above examples, can also render

refugees empowered through the exercise of agency. All of the above examples provided illustrations of the ways in which some refugees use agency to navigate one's path through bureaucratic international system developed to deal with and control the movement of refugees.

It is important to mention that in refugee studies trust and rapport which are closely linked to silencing and agency have been central themes [Valentine & Knudsen, 1995; Turner, 1995; Peck, 1995; Mueke, 1995; Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995]. Trust according to Daniel and Knudsen is the foundation upon which human intervention in refugee situations is based. It is basic to human beings [Daniel & Knudsen 1995:4]. Yet, it is argued that in all phases of the refugee resettlement process, from flight to resettlement, refugees are denied control over how the relief workers, caseworkers, government organizations, or strangers use the information they have provided [Daniel & Knudsen, 1995:4]. Moreover, it is difficult to reestablish trust when the national and international systems of human intervention in refugee situations, are weighed down by bureaucratic, politically driven and cost motivated circumstances. Clearly, the people that choose to work with refugee organizations are not a homogeneous group.

> Add to the burden of the caseworkers who are overwhelmed by their case loads the myriad national and international bureaucratic microstructures that, once again, are primarily beholden to states' interests, and one ends up with caseworkers who are reduced to information gathering and information-dispensing functionaries [Daniel & Knudsen, 1995:5].

Past experiences, apathetic attitudes, lack of control, and insecurity about information provided can often lead to a relationship established with mistrust at its foundations. In

my own research, as I will attempt to illustrate later, the lack of trust between the refugees and the Reception House counselors became an important factor in understanding issues of rapport. The fragility of trust could be shaken by the slightest indication of apathy, disinterest or misgivings on the part of the counselor.

Daniel and Knudsen maintain that in order to make the information provided meaningful, the refugee must not only be sure that the information will not be used against her interests but she must also be able to construct and give meaning to her past [Daniel & Knudsen, 1995:5].

> Several anthropologists working with refugees have found out that one of the components in the recovery of meaning, the making of culture and the reestablishment of trust is the need and the freedom to construct an normative picture of one's past within which "who one was" can be securely established to the satisfaction of the refugee [Daniel, E., & Knudsen, Chr, 1995:5].

Regardless, it is sometimes a difficult feat to re-establish trust given that in many circumstances systematic harassment, violence, detention and interrogation are committed intentionally and are often state sanctioned for the mere purpose of destroying trust in all that one knows to be true [Turner,1995:37-38]. In many cases, because of these forms of torture, refugee's trust of their homeland government is replaced by fear "...and hatred the place of loyalty [Turner, 1995:37]". In fact, Daniel and Knudsen argue that restoring or re-establishing trust is one of the main aims of human intervention [Daniel and Knudsen, 1995]. However, in contradiction to this perspective, Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995) maintain that the global refugee aid system rather than working to reestablish trust, is intrinsically predicated on an relationship of authority which "...is

itself maintained and legitimized by the absence of trust between the givers (aid workers) and the recipients (refugees) [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:217-219]". The authors illustrate how camp refugees have come to work the system of the foreign aid at a refugee camp. In fact, Voutira and Harrell-Bond argue that it is to the benefit of the refugees to maintain and manipulate the existing paternalism of the aid regime in order to access material goods. [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:217]. Human intervention occurs and places such as the refugee camp or reception houses exist for the mere purpose of assistance or aid [Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:209].

By Knudsen's analysis, refugee camps and other reception centres for refugees are complex relief systems which often leave residents with little control over their own lives. He continues by adding that: "camp organization itself serves to increase feelings of uncertainty and insecurity [Knudsen, 1995: 21]." The same can be said for refugees in other phases of resettlement. The sheer complexity of resettlement process, in addition to the information that is provided by them and provided to them, creates fear and uncertainty about the future rather than the opposite. Often, the effect of the interactions of trust and mistrust between refugees and the resettlement workers in conjunction with the use of coping methods further dichotomize the relationship between "us" and "them"[Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995:209]. Moreover, social polarization often increases when refugees feel insecure about the future [Knudsen,1995:18]. In effect, the rapport needed for effective resettlement is non-existent.

The implication of the loss of rapport and trust or the inability to build trust is that mistrust is reinforced. Moreover, when feelings of insecurity are at the forefront of the refugees mind and trust is an issue when dealing with strangers "...a suitable identity is appropriated through a process of negotiation and strategic self-preservation [Knudsen, Chr.,1995:18]."

> ...the individual may decide on a role and create a personal mythos, selectively disregarding factual events that do not fit into the life history constructed and presented. This act of construction draws on appropriate cultural stereotypes. I shall add that added to this are, for refugees, more general strategies of coping. [As Slote as cited in Knudsen, 1995:18].

Often an environment of suspicion is created when refugees seem as though they do not wish to divulge information. Cultural stereotypes are reinforced. In effect, the morally charged images of refugeeness as untrustworthy and manipulative on the one hand, or poor, vulnerable and helpless on the other.

To conclude then, the anthropological literature on refugees has focused on the ways in which refugees, within the constraints and controls of international and national refugee regime, attempt to gain control over their lives by using coping mechanisms such as community, identity, silence, trust and denial. Rather than representing refugees as powerless, vulnerable victims of their circumstances, anthropological studies have attempted to focus on the ways in which agency is exercised. Where there is no rapport and little trust prevails in an environment of insecurity, the refugee, in an attempt to gain some control over his life, chooses to apply strategic adjustments, such as negotiating, lying, using silence, retaining, withdrawing and releasing information, denying or memorializing the past.

1.2.6 Government Sponsored Refugees: Selection & Resettlement

The 1976 Immigration Act makes provisions for Canada to choose Convention refugees abroad. Refugees are selected out of "hot spots" where civil strife, state-sponsored violence and political instability are all too common. Refugees are selected on the bases of a test of adaptability which much like the immigration point system in which a persons language ability, education, employment skills, work history are taken into consideration [Refugee Immigration and Gender, June 1995:19]. Once resettled in Canada, sponsored refugees are provided financial assistance for up to one year [Glossary in Gilad, 1990:348]. Canada's overseas refugee policy chooses people who are presumed to be more adaptable to Canadian society. Canadian officials chose those people who according to their points system have the potential for making an net contribution to Canada.

In doing so, these policies function to balance the rights of a country to choose who enters this country with the desire to assist displaced people. In a private paper that circulated amongst senior policy officials, Rafael Girard, a senior policy official argues that the "...principle thrust of Canada's refugee program should continue to be based on the 1978 concept of off-shore selection [Adelman, 1991:200]". He presents the argument:

> ...that the humanitarian program favoured those that best benefit (the ones chosen by Canada) versus those who self-select; was sensitive to domestic sympathies and priorities; could be controlled and managed; could be made consistent with foreign policy objectives; and was not faced with the

very difficult legal and political problems associated with removals once refugees arrived on Canadian shores. [Adelman, 1991:200].

Canada has adopted an integrationalist approach to government sponsored refugees in that government sponsored refugees land in Canada as permanent residents[2] and they are provided with resettlement assistance for one year. Even the selection process for being chosen as a candidate for resettlement in Canada requires that one meet certain relaxed admissibility criteria. Yet, as the public perceives it, the Canadian government's role in the global refugee crisis is based primarily on a humanitarian commitment to assisting the world's displaced people. While the commitment is worthy, there is room to explore other important factors that come into play. Some of these factors are largely restrictive and conditional based on a set of pre-determined criteria. For example, the Canadian government does not just accept anybody who applies. Rather, after application for resettlement in Canada, government sponsored refugees who are selected abroad are subjected to admissibility criterion which measure their potential for "successful establishment" in Canada [Gilad, 1990:128]. The admissibility criteria includes as specified by the Government of Canada in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2002) that to be accepted as a refugee, he/she must:

1. pass a medical examination. Successful applicants must not be suffering from a medical condition which is likely to be a danger to public health or safety or lead to excessive burden on health or social services. In exceptional cases for humanitarian and compassionate reasons, a medically inadmissible refugee may be allowed to enter Canada on a Minister's Permit with concurrence of the province of destination.

2. pass criminal and security screening (background checks), and not be otherwise inadmissible; Refugees are not required to submit police certificates from their country of origin. Canada will not accept

[2] Previously permanent residents were called landed immigrants but as of June 28, 2003 the Government of Canada has changed the terminology.

combatants who have participated in war crimes or crimes against humanity. Senior officials, including former or serving senior military officials, from certain regimes and individuals who belonged to organizations that espouse violence are inadmissible under the Immigration Act.

3. show potential to become self-sufficient in Canada within a three to five year time frame. Factors such as age, education, work experience and qualifications, ability to speak English or French and other skills, size and composition of family and personal suitability factors such as initiative, adaptability and resourcefulness will be taken into account by visa officers [Government of Canada in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook:2002:2].

To judge whether or not Canada should implement this admissibility criteria to refugees is not within the scope of my research. But it is within the scope to reveal the inherent contradictions of this selection criterion. Implementing the immigration point system in refugee selection abroad illustrates that the government is searching for a certain type of refugee, someone who is perceived as adaptable in Canadian society. Although the public may perceive it as such, it is not the most vulnerable and needy displaced people that Canada wants to immigrate but rather those refugees who are able to become independent promptly without putting an undue burden on the system. So, in addition to the humanitarian aspect of refugee resettlement, the government of Canada wishes to fulfil the economic and social needs of Canada.

1.2.7 Canada Immigration's Employment Focus: Immigration & Adaptation

Since Canada's immigration policy has been primarily driven by its needs to fulfill labour requirements [Green, 1976 as cited in Veugelers, 2000], the focus on self-support and independence in Canadian refugee policy is clearly evident. The refugees are expected to become self-supporting and contributing members of the society in a short

period of time. Randy Lippert argues that since the 70's the Canadian refugee policy, under the influence of advanced liberalist political perspectives, has been shifting the burden of resettlement to the refugee.

> Resettlement programmes associated with liberalism have come to imagine over this period the transformation of the migrating, marginalized refugee, into not merely a submissive worker, but a rooted, self-regulating citizen [Lippert, 1998:400].

In addition to the advanced liberalism that Lippert talks about, Canadian refugee policy is also influenced by its historical developments. Due to Canada's own history as a country of immigration that needed immigrants to work the land and to contribute to a newly developing Canadian society, the Canadian government's Department of Employment and Immigration (CEIC) was once a combined ministerial portfolio. Although the ministries have been now been segregated (Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) & Citizenship and Immigration Canada), many previous employment officers have become (re)settlement officers, thus retaining the strong focus on employment. As we will see in the following chapters, much of the interaction between resettlement counselors and government sponsored refugees is analogous to that between an employment counselor and a welfare recipient.

This refugee selection process, combined with the employment-driven remnants in the former employment and immigration profile of the C(E)IC, that seek to encourage financial independence in the refugees, ironically work to undermine the agency that government sponsored refugees do exercise. The government sponsored refugees' dependence on the system often places refugees in a context where they are the objects of

control. In addition, the attitudes of many government settlement staff reinforce some of the stereotypical images I have discussed earlier in the chapter. Although many refugees desire to be independent, they sometimes have to live out the image of refugeeness as poor, helpless and vulnerable people to avoid risking the perception of being unworthy of assistance or not being authentic and credible refugees. As Barry Stein (1981) said, refugees are helped because they are helpless [as citied in Malkki, 1996:388]. In this way, social and political meaning can be given to the stereotypical images of refugeeness that sometimes influence the distribution of goods and resources. The key result of the attachment of powerful images to the social construction of a refugee is that refugees are unable "to represent themselves authoritatively in the inter-and transnational institutions domains where funds and resources circulate [Malkki, L., 1996:385]."

1.2.8 The Evolution of Resettlement Strategies: From Governmental to Non-Governmental

As previously noted, during the 1980's, the resettlement of refugees was a government responsibility. With the arrival of an unprecedented number of racially and culturally diverse refugees, the need to better organize and facilitate refugee resettlement became apparent. The Canadian refugee resettlement system began to take shape in an attempt to deal with the resettlement issues that were becoming more problematic, such as reception, housing, entering the labour market, the school system, education, health, integrating services, referrals and so on [Indra, D., 1987:150]. Previously, refugees were "in a high state of dependency" on the two state Departments, Employment and Immigration and the Secretary of State [Indra, D.1987:151] because:

> They had to be received, have their papers processed, be supplied with temporary housing and be provided with food, clothing, furniture, medical care and be provided with basic information regarding their new environment [151].

The onus of responsibility of refugee settlement was on CEIC agents who were overworked, undertrained. It was also up to these agents to decide who received extended language training. With the release of the Green Paper in the mid-70's, a Canadian refugee resettlement program was formally developed. The Immigrant Settlement Adaptation Programme (ISAP) and the Adjustment Assistance Programme (AAP) were developed in to improve the services provided to immigrants and refugees. The AAP was designed to provide direct financial assistance to destitute immigrant and refugees during that initial settlement period. [Lippert, 1998:383]. Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) was aimed at contracting out the services provided to non-governmental, immigrant serving agencies. These non-governmental organizations were thought to be able to provide "...basic social services in a more personal, integrative and less bureaucratized way than government". [Lippert, R.,1998:382].. "Six types of services would be purchased from such voluntary agencies on an hourly basis: reception, information, orientation, counseling, interpretation, and referral [Indra, D. 1987:152]". No other service would be provided under this program. ISAP would, in turn, convert the services provided into hourly cash terms [Lippert, R., 1998:384]. Thus the responsibility was transferred from the State to the community. The CEIC resettlement staff became cheque-signing bureaucrats who were focused on getting people employed [Indra, D. 1987:153]. Indra suggests that the emphasis on finding refugee jobs stemmed from the

organization of "manpower paradigm whose responsibilities were employment". Indra argues that:

> the fact that CEIC's orientation toward refugee settlement was not preordained by refugee needs or by a clear sociological model of immigrant adaptation...CEIC officers were highly constrained to address primarily employment issues, even though refugee psychological and other non-employment needs were as great and extremely pressing [Indra, D.,1987:153].

Through ISAP, the care and investment needed to create self-supporting citizens would be provided by community level non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

> Far from being assumed to adapt naturally after arriving in Canada, refugees are thought to require considerable care and investment. They are deemed to require the inculcation of skills in order to develop into self-governing entities that exercise choice. [Lippert, 1998:382].

Another scholar, Robert Heipel provided an overview of the refugee resettlement system. In his study he asked three fundamental questions:

> First, Why is resettlement assistance granted to refugees? Second, what type of assistance do refugees need, and what organizations or individuals cater to these needs? And lastly, how can assistance providers improve on their efforts to assist refugee adaptation? [Heipel, R.,1991: 344].

He argues that refugees are provided with assistance for four reasons. First, resettlement implies that people were settled elsewhere before and the government is merely trying to facilitate this process. Second, refugees are considered to have different needs than the normal immigrants as their reasons for migration were forced rather than voluntary. He adds:

> Feelings of great personal and emotional loss accompany the involuntary process of involuntary migration. Frequently, refugees resettle with few personal possessions, limited financial resources, few economic motives, little knowledge of host culture, no housing, few items of clothing and no

> awaiting employment, and many leave behind their immediate family members (their spouses and children). Some may bring along the added baggage of deep emotional scarring from torture, imprisonment or witnessing human atrocities [Heipel, R.,1991: 346].

The third reason, the author argues, is that the Canadian government, as stated in the Immigration Act of 1976, has made a commitment to help adaptation of immigrants and refugees. Lastly, he argues and we have also noted, that the government's goal is to make these individuals self- sufficient and to deter or avoid mainstream backlash to immigration in general.

He breaks down refugee concerns into three categories [Heipel, R.,1991:347]

1. Basic living necessities, such as housing, clothing, furniture, living allowance, food and health care.
2. Economic Adaptation, such as employment, retraining, credential recognition, language training and awareness of social programs
3. Cultural Adaptation such as language training, cultural learning and emotional and psychological support.

Based on his study of sixty-seven Central Americans in London, Ontario, Heipel argues that while basic material assistance is provided to refugees, economic and adaptation is largely unsuccessful. He grounds this argument in the observation that most of the refugees he interviewed ended up in low paying and low skilled jobs such as janitorial work or factory work [Heipel, R., 1991:353]. Successful cultural adaptation is largely attributed to the implementation of the Host Program by the non-governmental agencies.

This program provides refugees with awareness of other social programs, provides volunteers with whom refugees can practice their newly acquired English skills and facilitates their familiarity with Canadian culture.

In conclusion, Heipel asserts that even though the material assistance is provided for the adaptation of new refugees, the onus of economic adaptation is left on the refugees themselves. For a potential solution, he proposes two possible alternatives: first, the government should provide extended and substantial assistance to refugees while they improve their credentials and second, promote services that facilitate employment opportunities for refugees and encourage interaction with the mainstream society. Finally, he emphasizes that the key to successful adaptation is that the refugee be at the same or higher social status as he/she was in his/her country before exile.

1.3 Situating My Research in Refugee Studies

In the foregoing material, I have attempted to highlight some relevant literature from refugee studies and anthropology. In doing so, I have touched upon the issue of agency as it pertains to refugee resettlement. I have made an effort to flesh out the contradictions of the international system of refugees, whose very existence is justified because of the global refugee situation. Media representations disseminated by many of the refugee-serving organizations represent refugees as helpless, poor and vulnerable. This tends to reinforce stereotypes which inevitably affect the way refugees are perceived and treated. Even more ironically, the Canadian system of refugee selection abroad is based on a premeditated immigration criterion leading to the selection of those who are perceived by the Canadian officials to make a net contribution to the Canadian economy. By taking these points into consideration, my study challenges the almost commonplace notions about forced and voluntary migration strives to step away from the development approach so often evident in refugee studies. My study is an ethnographical account of the realities and the experiences of some refugees who temporarily reside at a Reception House in Canada. By focusing on the particular everyday interactions, the research highlights the heterogeneity of refugee populations; not only in ethnicity, but also in age, gender, experience, political affiliations, religion and personalities. But not unlike other anthropological literature, I draw out some of the contradictions of a system developed to assist refugees. It is a thesis about agency that refugees exercise and in it I put into question the hegemonic discourses of people powerful enough to affect refugee lives. It is my belief that this study can be situated among other literature in anthropology and

refugee studies that focuses on the innovative ways that people discover to change their lives.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Recent Trends in Anthropology

2.1.1 The Evolution of Resettlement Strategies: From Governmental to Non-Governmental

Throughout my research, when asked where I had done my fieldwork, my reply would be "...in a reception house for refugees." Interestingly, the response was not the one people anticipated and I found myself time and time again awkwardly explaining that my "field site" was not in an exotic country or a remote village thousands of miles away. Rather, I had remained in the city to do my fieldwork amongst a group of people who spoke seven different languages, were of distinct ethnic groups, religions, genders, age, nations; yet they were all government sponsored refugees.

Despite the fact that anthropologists have been conducting research 'at home' for many years, it has been in the last few years, scholars of anthropology have taken a more in-depth look at the relevance of "the field" to the discipline. Fieldwork and its partner ethnography have since long distinguished the discipline of anthropology from the other social sciences. Anthropologists have depended on fieldwork through participant observation as their primary basis for collecting data, to become familiar with the alien society within which they have entered.

> Far from being a research technique, fieldwork has become "the basic constituting experience both of anthropologists and of anthropological knowledge" (Stocking in Gupta & Ferguson, 1997: 2)

Long extensive stays, co-residence, face-to-face interactions through participant observation in a far-away exotic place have traditionally described anthropological methodology.

Although this image of fieldwork remains, the discipline itself has in recent years opened the arena for debate about the limitations and advantages of its methodology. The differences between the field and home, self and other, rural and urban, sociology and anthropology, up and down, Western and non-Western and the importance of distance both spatial and social, characterize these debates. In doing so, many unspoken biases that are present in our methodology are being revealed. Even the word 'field' or 'going to the field' metaphorically:

> ...suggests a trip to a place that is agrarian, pastoral or maybe even "wild"; it implies a place that is cultivated (a site of culture), but certainly does not stray too far from nature. [Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:2].

Gupta and Ferguson have argued that ethnographic methods must be examined for two imperatives. First, fieldwork through participant observation defines the discipline and distinguishes it from other disciplines. In doing so,

> ...fieldwork thus helps define anthropology as a discipline in both senses of the word, constructing a space of possibilities while at the same time drawing the lines that confine that space [Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:2].

The second imperative relates to the geo-political and intellectual changes that the world has faced within the last 50 years. Since industrialization and post-colonialism, a method developed to study small-scale isolated communities or 'cultures' has become increasingly inadequate [Gupta and Ferguson, 1997:3]. In order to reveal, understand

and analyze these inadequacies, anthropology as a discipline must be open to developing new and alternative methodologies. The authors note that their objective is not to dismiss fieldwork in anthropology but rather to open the discipline to other methodologies as well.

> Our aim is not to propose a single alternative to the conventional image of the "field", but to denaturalize the Malinowskian model, and to rediscover it- not as the necessary methodological model foundation of all anthropology, but as the one methodological possibility that in all its political-academic success, has allowed us to forget the existence within our own disciplinary history, of alternatives [Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:25]

Anthropology's trademark, fieldwork and its partner participant observation have become synonymous with the discipline and consequently erected borders around what qualifies as legitimate anthropology.

By delimiting the borders of anthropology through the expectation of "exotic fieldwork", institutions have excluded or assigned low status to certain methodologies that in turn limits anthropology epistemologically. These "well-policed borders" [Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. 1997:30] have recently been challenged by current heterogeneous ethnographic trends. Gupta and Ferguson draw our attention to three of these borders:

> … the disciplinary challenge posed by folklore, sociology and ethnic studies; the questions posed by the heterodox representations of fieldwork such as novels of the field, novels written by natives and non-realist ethnographies; and finally the difficulties raised by heterodox "fieldwork" such as "insider" ethnography, or the use in ethnographic observations derived from the experience of growing up in a "culture"… [Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. 1997:30].

The authors argue that the hierarchical position that has been assigned to anthropological knowledge has valued experience but of an academically trained individual. Outside the

institutional framework of academia, experience is devalued [Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 32]. Is the knowledge produced by professional anthropologists in the field for a year or two better that the knowledge produced by someone who has 'grown up' in that community? What if anything does the discipline have to gain by maintaining such absolute boundaries so as to exclude one type of experience? Is there not any room for both within a politically, historically aware anthropology?

2.1.2 The Spatialization of Difference

In the same light, theorists have also been challenging the concept of spatialization of difference in anthropology.

> The unspoken premise that 'home' is a place of cultural sameness and that difference is to be found 'abroad' has long been the common sense of anthropology [Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 32].

Anthropology has a long tradition of challenging the presumption that non-Western societies or communities are not homogeneous but notions of 'home' or the 'West' carry with them unspoken but equally powerful implication of sameness. In addition to this, the categorical imperative (or "constitutive locations" as Clifford calls them) that brand anthropologists as 'virtual' or 'insider' are contextual, historical and political.

> These other constitutive locations might become central in other historical and political conjectures or in a differently focused project. One cannot represent "in depth" all salient differences and affinities...None of these locations is optional. These are imposed by political and historical circumstances. And because locations are multiple, conjectural, and cross-cutting, there can be no guarantee of shared perspective, experience or solidarity. [Clifford, 1997:214-215].

So, then, to reconstruct 'the field' one must make a theoretical shift in perspectives. Rather than beginning with the premise that location is a feature of geography, location becomes "…a site constructed in unequal fields of power relations [Gupta and Ferguson, 1997:35]."

> Yet, through the anthropological notion of "the field", this sense of location has too often been elided with locality, and shift of location has been reduced to the idea of going "elsewhere" to look at "another society"[Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:35]

2.1.3 Alternative Methodologies

Other scholars have suggested that anthropology has traditionally focused on the ordinary, the everyday and the routine [Malkki, 1997:91].

> Moreover what is most characteristically anthropological in the study of such communities is a focus on observable, face-to-face regularities; hence "everyday life" is observed over the "long term" [Malkki, 1997:90]

By doing so, she argues that the field has invariably neglected the unstable, transitory, anomalies and accidental circumstances which people share while focusing on "the stable, permanent and localized "community" or social world" [ibid.,1997:90]. Malkki gives the example of her own fieldwork in a refugee camp in Tanzania where people were together in a location not necessarily because of shared culture or ethnicity but rather because of circumstance. Far from being the 'natural setting' of those refugees, the refugee camp was "a temporary humanitarian arrangement"[89].

> It is perfectly reasonable to expect that in a refugee camp, the people, the everyday routines, their social relationships, political processes, and indeed, the entire social context might well have disappeared or been transformed virtually beyond recognition in a matter of a few months or years. This wreaks havoc on the expectation of the replicability of field studies [Malkki, 1997:89].

Anthropological methodology, inadequate to deal with anomalies or transitory phenomena, has limited the focus of most anthropological research to "finding patterns of culture, holistic principles of social organization, customary practices, oral traditions, bodies of law, systems of rules and prohibitions…[89]". Malkki argues that the implication of the focus on the everyday, the routine, etc. carries "a charge of expectation"; one in which the people that are being studied are not "…haphazardly being thrown together…" but rather, that they "…form a more stable, permanent and usually localized 'community' or social world [90]". The stability is drawn from the parameters established by family, ethnicity/race/culture, locality, membership of a social group, even bureaucracies, or institutions to name a few [90]. One of the consequences of these parameters of fieldwork is the exclusion of those "…experiences, social constellations that are *not* familial, communal or "representative" of a cultural region [91]".

Moreover, because of the focus on the everyday, violence has also long been ignored in anthropological writings. Until more recently perhaps, the discipline's tendency was to focus on cultural norms and stability that will eventually foster harmony [Colson (1989) as cited in Voultira &Harell-Bond, 1995:208]. More recently though, anthropologist have argued that war, violence, cruelty and unhappiness are realities in the communities or societies in which anthropologists conduct their research [Davis (1992) as cited in Voultira & Harell-Bond, 1995:208].

In their three-volume publication dedicated to the anthropology of violence, Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele and Pamela Reynolds discuss the everyday experience of violence be it forms of state violence, systemic practices of terror or structural racism, the erosion of community and/or marginalization. Their focus lies in the ways in which people cope with their violent contexts and begin the task of living again [Das & Kleinnman, 2000:1-5].

Although I agree with Malkki that anthropology's focus on the everyday has excluded some topics of study, I find Malkki herself focuses on the everyday life at a Hutu refugee camp in Tanzania [Malkki, 1995(a)]. Her critique of the anthropological focus on the everyday might be better understood as problematicizing the way in which transient communities and violence have been dealt with in traditional anthropology. In other words, by romanticizing notions of the other, anthropology has inadvertently focused on cultural harmony rather than conflict.

2.1.4 "An Accidental Community of Memory"

As I previously noted, my research subject did not specifically pertain to a particular ethnicity, nor a gender; but rather, I studied a group of people who were together at a particular point in time in the process of a refugee experience. Malkki suggests that " a community of memory" or a group of people that share memories out of a shared transitory, accidental experience is not a local or national community but rather, it is more biographical and microhistorical [Malkki, 1997:91].

> The importance of these accidental, shared contexts is not only that people carry traces of them in their heads…these memories-even when not very

> much narrativized-can powerfully shape what comes after. Who one is, what one's principles, loyalties, desires, longings and beliefs are-all this can sometimes be formed and transformed in transitory circumstances shared by persons who might be strangers [Malkki, 1997:92]

In other words, what makes these transitory experiences important to study is that they have a far-reaching effect on the people who experience them. They are "... not necessarily weak or fleeting in its effect [92]." [Malkki, L., 1997:91].

An accidental community of memory may not even define itself as a community but where its importance lies is in the fact that these memories may profoundly effect those who share them.

> These memories-even when not very much narrativized -can powerfully shape what comes after. Who one is, what one's principles, loyalties, desires, longings and beliefs are-all this can sometimes be powerfully formed and transformed in transitory circumstances shared by persons who might be strangers [Malkki,L., 1997:92].

In addition to the reconstruction of the parameters of the field, Malkki also suggests that anthropology has juxtaposed itself with journalism in that those transitory experiences are not "cultural enough" for anthropological research but journalists find them newsworthy enough. In order to deal more adequately with the research being conducted in unstable regions, Malkki suggests that anthropologists should attempt to bridge the gap between anthropology and journalism.

Malkki's previous suggestion as an alternative to the fieldwork is centred more on the role of the fieldworker. She suggests that anthropologists should shift their role from that of investigator to one of witness. "Being a witness implies both a specific

positioning and a responsibility of testimony, 'a form of a caring vigilance'" [Malkki, 1997:94]. She argues that the witness role is more prone to see and adequately research the unnatural or out of the ordinary [Malkki, 1997:94]. Many testimonials have been used in Latin America for the purpose of political activism or protest [see Sommer, 1988; Salazar, 1991; Harlow, 1987; Scheper-Hughes, 1992, Bergos-Debray, 1984 as cited in Malkki:1997:94]. The anthropologist as a witness requires more than a methodological shift. Testimony also produces a knowledge that is located differently.

> Trying to be an attentive listener, recognizing the situatedness of one's intellectual work (Haraway, 1991) and affirming one's own connection to the ideas, processes, and people one is studying are more important in this kind of practice [Malkki, 1997:96].

Other scholars have made alternative suggestions to traditional anthropological methodologies that may bridge the gap between the Self and the Other, Home and the Field. The notion of ethnographers going "out-in-the–field" far away and risking their personal safety somehow carries the implication that the knowledge gained is "better" [Passaro, 1997:147].

> Such an evaluative stance, persistent if rarely articulated, is a holdover from the colonial mentality that once delighted in harrowing ethnographic accounts of the conquests of physical landscapes and of native reticence, when wrestling secrets from remote "natives" was the *raison d'être* of the endeavor [Passaro, 1997:147].

Historically, this unspoken bias was created in order to "...delimit the borders between sociology and anthropology [Stocking in Passaro, 1997:147]." Anthropology constructed these boundaries which ultimately have blurred the more substantial differences between anthropology and the other social sciences-that is the *type* of knowledge that is produced and *how* [Passaro, 1997:148].

But what of those research topics that are non-traditional or those sites that are at home? Passaro argues that besides the fact that funding and job security are at risk, the implication of doing anthropology at "home" is that the value of the knowledge that is produced is seriously deflated. The lack of distance to the "field" and the fact that there was no "entry to the new world", challenge traditional methodology.

2.2 My Field Site

Long before I conceptualized my research project, I had an interest in refugee issues and refugee resettlement in particular. Many years ago, before I went to university, I worked as a volunteer at a non-governmental organization (NGO) that assisted immigrants and refugees to resettle in Canada. Upon choosing a primary site for my fieldwork, this organization seemed ideal for a few reasons. First, the resettlement division of this NGO ran a Reception House for refugees. Second, refugees that came to the reception house came from various walks of life abroad. Some came directly from refugee camps while others had spent time in the initial country of asylum. This heterodox group of people would make for a challenging but interesting study. Third, the time allotted to the refugees in the reception house was a maximum of two weeks, and the fieldwork would have to be conducted in multiple sites. Fourth, this reception house was unique in that the offices of resettlement workers and the refugees all occupied the same building. This made for interesting, dynamic, short but intense contact between government workers, resettlement workers and refugees. Third, being a non-profit organization funded by the provincial and federal governments made the situation more

intriguing because of its positioning between government and the private sector. Taking all these factors into consideration, I approached the chief executive officer (CEO) of the NGO with a proposal to study refugee resettlement in Canada.

It was the CEO who was the gatekeeper to the Reception House. He not only gave me permission to conduct my research at the Reception House, but he also encouraged me to write about what I saw and heard. The CEO was an open-minded Iranian man who had begun working at the Reception House as an employment counselor in 1988. Often, he would proudly refer to the fact that he too was a refugee who came to Canada and stayed initially at this same Reception House. He was not only proud of his personal achievements of becoming CEO, but also of the Reception House and the foundation it provided to government sponsored refugees.

After the first day of participant observation, I had become intrigued by the seemingly complex, hierarchical relations between the government settlement workers, the NGO resettlement workers and the refugees. In time, as I began experiencing the resettlement process with the refugees, it became clear that images and perceptions that resettlement workers had of refugees influenced and affected the effectiveness of refugee resettlement and the interactions between the resettlement workers. I will expand on this in detail in the next chapter. For now, in the next section, I will describe the people at the Reception House and the methodology that I used.

2.2.1 When, What, Where & Why?

From September 2000 to December 2000, I conducted fieldwork amongst government sponsored refugees at the Reception House in a mid-size city in Canada. It was a residence for a diversity of transient people. The reception house as a field site has allowed me to go beyond the role of the anthropologist traditional participant observation and also implement other alternative methods of fieldwork. This is also facilitated by the fact that refugees arriving at the same time all go through the same processes for resettlement: the initial arrival, being received at the airport, the arrival at the reception house, the general orientation of the facilities. During the following two weeks the refugees are provided orientations and food, recreational activities and everything else together in the group. Alongside the participant observation that was conducted at the reception house, I also volunteered to accompany people to doctors offices, watch their children, translate for them in situations like health consultations, apartment rental, visiting Immigration Canada. When approached, I assisted people in finding employment. The situation was an interesting one because the people among whom I conducted my research were not familiar with their new environment. Rather they were in a transitory, accidental situation in which they had a limited time.

Initially, I watched, observed, attended orientations and followed the same routine as the new arrivals. Soon, people were coming to me and asking me about, employment, immigration rules, housing, schooling, religious communities, health and Canadian culture in general. The refugees and I were in a situation where we were both learning about and from each other. Later I would visit with people in their homes invited as a guest for dinner or tea.

2.2.2 How?: What Anthropological Tools

My fieldwork at the House was conducted mostly through participant observation, sampling and informal, semi-structured and structured interviews. Participant observation allowed me to attend the orientations and to familiarize myself with the group that I was following. The subtlety that came with participant observation lent itself to refugee studies as it allowed people to feel as comfortable as they could possibly be in a new, scary and unfamiliar environment. Because of the unique field site that I chose, the two groups that entered the city around the time when I started my fieldwork became my sample population. At any given point and time in the reception house one can find anywhere from 1-70 people, so timing decided my population sample for me. In general, the population at the House is a diverse one, not only culturally, religiously and linguistically but also through gender, background, education and age.

When I began my fieldwork, a new group of refugees had just arrived in the house. Initially, because the group was still dispersed and I was still becoming acquainted with the reception house, I did not introduce myself as a researcher; but just after the third day during an orientation I was introduced to the group by the Service Coordinator. I introduced myself as a Master's student of Anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal conducting research at the Reception House to study the effectiveness of resettlement services for refugees. I told the group that I would be asking them questions about their stay at the Reception House. I made it very clear that they did not have to participate in my research. They were also informed that their names

would be protected with the use of aliases. If they divulged any information that they did not want to be published then they would tell me and indicate so on the Ethics form.

My daily routine was that I would arrive at the Reception House everyday at 9:00 o'clock and I would leave at about 6:00 just before dinner. I also stayed for a few dinners and visited on some weekends to see how people were doing at various times of the day. Between the two groups I took some time to update my field notes and my journal.

Being around, without any formally assigned role, allowed clients to get used to seeing my face. When people started getting friendly, I would tell them a bit about myself and when they asked I provided them with extensive details of my research. I also spent time assisting the counselors with their daily activities. However, my primary concerns were to try to address the concerns of the clients. Soon, perhaps because of accessibility and rapport, I found that my role had evolved into a liaison between the administration and the residents.

Over the next months, I repeated the same process with another group allowing me to get to know a number of different people from different countries. I spent the rest of my fieldwork doing follow up work. After the groups had moved out of the House, I visited the former residents in their new homes. In order to assess how these people were adapting to their new homes and communities, I conducted informal and semi-structured interviews in peoples' homes. Informal interviews allowed me

knowledge of the refugee concerns about their resettlement. Semi-structured interviews provided me with the opportunity to question the former reception house residents about their general well being while maintaining a casual partially directed conversation. In total I conducted ten informal and semi-structured interviews in refugee's homes. By this time, we had forged personal relationships within which there was a certain level of comfort. In some cases, my informants asked me not to provide specifics of the interviews. In one case, Rafi, a refugee from Afghanistan insisted that I use his real name in the thesis so I did.

I chose mostly to observe the counselors (NGO resettlement workers) while they spoke with their clients. In some cases, earlier on I had conducted informal and semi-structured interviews with the counselors just to get an idea of how the house is managed and how the orientations are organized. This gave me an idea of how to schedule my day as well as some of the administrative issues involved in dealing with a population new to Canada, with linguistic, cultural and religious issues to take into consideration. It also provided me with insight into some of the issues of power, image and structure that might come into play in refugee resettlement.

I also conducted structured interviews with the chief officer of the NGO in charge of operations and administration of the House. With the counselors I conducted informal interviews, much information was shared relating anecdotal experiences around the office. In addition, interviews were done with a person who formerly worked with

resettling refugees and an immigration consultant who formerly worked with Canada Immigration Centre .

2.2.3 Who?: The Demographics

Over the four months, I came in contact with a diverse group of refugees, the majority of whom were from Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, North Africa, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the Sudan. A few families were from Colombia and Bosnia. Because many of the Afghanis had lived in Pakistan or India before they came to Canada, language was not an issue. We spoke in Urdu or Hindi. With the Colombians I spoke Spanish. In certain cases, with the Farsi and Arabic speaking families I used translators and we also spoke in broken English. In total, there were ten families or thirty-eight people. Eighteen were female and twenty were male. In total, there were three families were from Afghanistan, one Palestinian family, three Iraqi families and one single man from Iraq, one family from Northern Africa, and two single men from the Sudan. All of them had come via Malta where some of them had been waiting to enter Canada for three or four years. Many of the families had been in other places before arriving in Malta such as Syria and Lebanon. Other families came through Pakistan where they would travel back and forth into Afghanistan. One family had lived in India. There were also a few transfer clients that had moved from India as well. None of the families in these groups had come directly from refugee camps. The ages ranged from 3 months to 65 years. Later, I introduce the specific families and their family compositions.

The socio-economic background of this group varied. Most had low socio-economic background due to the limited opportunities in their countries of origin with prolonged histories of civil unrest, and political oppression such as Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq. When asked how they had made ends meet back home, some refugees had worked as street vendors, small farmers, small office clerks, hair dressers, beauticians or child minders and all had at one point in time depended on national and international aid whether it was for official documentation, food relief in a refugee camp or temporary loans to travel or establish themsleves.

In terms of educational qualifications, other than the Palestinian man, none of the refugees in this group had more than a grade nine education. The Palestinian gentleman had gone to university and had studied pharmacology in Lebanon. The average years of education for the men was six years while for the women it was 3 years. Only some of the younger people could speak English. Almost all the elders were illiterate in English but literate in their mother tongues.

From a religious perspective, the Afghanis that had arrived from Pakistan were a mixture of Sunni & Shi'a Moslems and Ismailis. I found all were extremely discrete about their religious affiliations. The two Sudanese men (Nuer tribe) and the family from Sierra Leone were Christians. The Palestinian family and the North African family were also Sunni Moslem.

In addition to these refugees, I also spoke with secondary migrants or 'transfers' who were not residing in the reception house but rather came to the house for help with filling out forms, applying for ESL classes or general resettlement issues. Transfers were people who had been designated to live in a different city by the Canadian government and chose on their own accord to come to this city. These people are not provided with housing but they are assisted with limited resettlement services. It was CIC's policy to provide limited services to these clients because it was thought that the refugees would have moved to the city because they have friends or relatives in the city. It was therefore considered to be the responsibility of these family members and friends to help with accommodations. Although these people did not reside in the house, they would often befriend the refugees at the resettlement centre. Transfer refugees would accompany Reception House refugees to the schools, doctor's or just hang out at the Reception House. So I have also included some of these people in my research.

In order to supplement the fieldwork observations, I spent time searching the internet for pertinent information on refugee resettlement in other countries. I often browsed websites such as the United Nations Human Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR). I also attended the Canadian Council for Refugees annual, three-day conference where CIC staff, academia, refugees and immigrant and refugee serving agencies and advocates unite to share information about the latest trends in refugee issues. The CCR then presents these issues to the national and international arenas to lobby and advocate on behalf of refugees.

2.3 The Reception House & Resettlement Services

In the following section then, I provide a detailed description of the reception house for refugees. But before I do that, I would like to clarify a few points. First, I have chosen not to provide the name of the city where I conducted my fieldwork. During my interviews, some refugees expressed concerns about the information they had provided me regarding the reasons for refuge, the manner in which they left their country and entered Canada. Some of the interviewees expressed concerns about being traceable both to the government workers and to other refugees and people 'back home'. To give the dates of my fieldwork and the location would be to practically provide the names of the refugees I interviewed. As there are very few government sponsored refugees and even fewer refugee reception houses, I have not provided the name of the city where these refugees arrived. I will say that it is a mid-sized city in Canada.

The process by which one becomes a refugee is more complicated that fleeing one's homeland in fear of persecution. After being documented by the UNHCR, refugees must apply for resettlement in a third country. After passing a medical exam, Government sponsored refugees[3] are then selected abroad on the basis of a relaxed set of criteria that are very similar to the categories used in immigration point system including factors such as education, language proficiency, work skills. Based on an interview, Canadian overseas staff decides if a refugee qualifies for resettlement in Canada. Once selected, these people are assigned to designated cities within Canada. This decision is based on the population of the city, the resources available and the number of refugees that have

[3] These refugees, unlike independent refugees have been chosen abroad by the government of Canada to enter the country. They do not have to wait for their case to be heard in front of the Refugee Board but rather they are issued immigrant status upon landing in Canada.

been sent there in that particular year. The government of Canada also offers loans to refugees for travel and other expenses (such as security deposits or gas, telephone or electricity deposits) both before and after their arrival to Canada.

Upon arriving in the designated city where my fieldwork was located, government sponsored refugees are brought to a refugee reception house by resettlement staff in charge of airport reception. There is only one reception house for refugees in the city and all government sponsored refugees are first brought there. Refugees are provided with temporary (two week) lodging at the reception house, as well as food, and monetary assistance. In addition, they are provided with resettlement services under the Resettlement Service Program (RAP). Upon arrival, the refugees are assigned rooms and served a light snack and then given some time to relax after a long journey. The next day, counselors (who usually speak the same language) meet with the refugees and assess their needs. In the days following, special concerns such as physical and psychological issues are addressed.

During these two weeks the refugees are given various orientations regarding life in Canada such as Immigration- rights and duties, housing, health, police, banking etc. The refugees are oriented in English and in their native language. It is a transitional period during which the refugees receive funding from the government, set up bank accounts, schooling is arranged for both adults and children and appropriate accommodations for the families are found. Generally, they are entitled to up to one year of government financial support while they learn English and become settled.

After the first six weeks of resettlement the services provided to refugees come under a federally funded program called Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). During the time after the initial six weekes, secondary resettlement services such as employment orientations, information on educational, upgrading or training programs, health referrals and such, are provided if necessary. Financial assistance is provided to the refugees for up to one year under the Adjustment Adaptation Program (AAP). ISAP funds resettlement services are provided to refugees and other immigrants for up to three years.

2.3.1 Reception House Location & Structure

The Reception House is quite centrally located in a mid-sized Canadian city. It is a large three-story house that also accommodates office space for the counselors. Up to seventy-five people can be accommodated in the five area clusters that house a total of twenty-five rooms. Each cluster has its own bathroom. The rooms are small but all have access to natural light. There are beds and a small chest of drawers in every room. The dining hall and the kitchen are on the main floor and tend to be where people mingle. In front of the dining hall, there is a large patio that looks out onto a small playground.

Besides these refugee accommodations, the reception house: eight apartments with kitchens and bathrooms (two-1 bedroom and six-3 bedroom apartments) which are rented out to new permanent residents independent immigrants) requiring initial resettlement support. Reception House refugees are not entitled to rent these

accommodations which are intended to provide income to the NGO in order to subsidize the services they provide to government sponsored refugees.

2.3.2 The Services Provided

The Reception House comes under the Resettlement Division of the NGO. Their services include: airport reception to new government sponsored arrivals; short term accommodation; initial resettlement services; housing referrals; support towards independence; orientations and information; interpretations and translations; referrals to other services; consumer education; resettlement counseling; social and recreational activities; non-financial emergency assistance; small donation program and follow-up services. Approximately three hundred and fifty government sponsored refugees arrive at the reception house in any given year. In addition, to these refugees, other government sponsored refugees transfer from other cities in Canada.

2.3.3 The Counselors

There are eight resettlement counselors at the reception house who are linguistically competent, respectively in Amharic, Urdu/Arabic/Sindhi/Hindi, Albanian, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi/Dari/Turkish and Serbo-Croatian. There is also a part-time Bosnian counselor. Whenever possible, people are assigned counselors that speak their native tongue.

Most of the resettlement staff has worked at the reception house for over four years but during the time of my research, the administrators hired two new staff, one speaking

Nuer and the other Dinka and Arabic, to accommodate the large influx of Sudanese refugees. The division manager has been at the NGO for over twelve years. She herself came to Canada as a refugee. The resettlement coordinator has been at the NGO since 1991 in the Resettlement Division. Although her background is Pakistani, she speaks Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and Sindhi. The operations coordinator speaks Spanish and has been WORKING AT the reception house for over 15 years. He was instrumental in planning, designing and building the structure and the floor plan of this building when they moved locations in 1995. Both the cook and the caretaker came to the reception house as government sponsored refugees. They have both worked with the NGO for four years. Although there is not a high turn over of staff at the reception house, new workers come and go as funding is won and lost. Because of the uncertainty of the funding of special or new programs, some staff members are on a contract basis to be renewed yearly. Other core staff members, like the coordinators are full-time staff and have remained with the reception house for many years. There are a few part-time positions at the reception house which are filled according to which language is required for government sponsored refugees at any given time.

2.3.4 The Afghani Refugees

The families from Afghanistan were a diverse group of people in terms of racial, tribal, religious and linguistic groups. There were in all seven families from Afghanistan totaling 30 people. The first family consisted of eight members and they spoke Farsi. Since they were Ismailis, they had been sponsored by the local Ismaili community in the city. The family consisted of a widowed grandmother, age 70 who was illiterate and did

not speak any English; a father (head of the family), age 55, an illiterate, former salesman with no English skills; a mother, also illiterate and a homemaker. There were five single children who all spoke English and Urdu moderately. The eldest daughter, age 21, had finished high school, while the two younger sons, 18 and 17, had not done so as yet. The fourth child was a daughter, 10 years old, who had had very little formal schooling. Her sister had taught her at home some basic reading and writing skills. The youngest child was four and was born in a refugee camp in Pakistan, where the family had lived for five years. He spoke Farsi and understood Urdu. Although the father was the head of the family, he relied on his eldest daughter to translate and explain things to him.

The second Afghani family comprised of a young couple with two small children. The father was the head of the family and at 26 years of age he spoke Farsi fluently, and could make do in Urdu and English. His wife was 24 years old. They both had had little to no formal education. They were also Ismaili and sponsored by their community. Their two children, a boy and a girl were three and two respectively. They had lived in a refugee camp in Pakistan for two years.

The third group from Afghanistan consisted of a family of two; a widowed mother, age thirty six and her twenty year old single son. She had been a widow for thirteen years. They had lived in Pakistan for the last seven years with the mother's brother. The son had left Afghanistan first after his father had died in the civil war. He went to Pakistan to live with his maternal uncle and then had returned home years later to bring his mother back with him. The mother had no formal education and only spoke Farsi.

Her son used to work initially as a street vendor and later as a clerk in an office in Pakistan. While he had little formal education (six years), he could speak, read and write Farsi, English and Urdu fluently. They had also been sponsored by the Ismaili community.

The next refugee group consisted of five people; a widowed mother (head of the family), age 40 with her four single children. The mother was illiterate and only spoke Farsi. Her eldest son age 25 spoke Urdu and Farsi, with very limited English. His siblings included two sisters and a brother, ages 18, 17 and 15 respectively. None received any formal education in Afghanistan and only limited education in Pakistan. These people were also Ismaili.

The fifth group from Afghanistan was a family of four. The head of the family was a man in his forties. His wife was thirty-tree years old and the two boys were sixteen and fourteen. The father had worked in a bank in Afghanistan but he and his family fled to Iran when the problems heightened. He lived in Iran for three years. The family's English skills were limited.

The next group was a young family of three. The husband was twenty-four years old. In addition to Farsi, he spoke Russian, Dari and Turkish. His wife, a confident twenty-two year old spoke English, Dari and Farsi. Their daughter was four years old and was born in exile in Pakistan. The young couple had lived in Pakistan for five years and both of their families, parents and siblings were also in Pakistan. The man had been

studying engineering in Afghanistan before the political situation worsened. She had completed high school. Since they were of middle class background, they had been able to avoid living in the refugee camps of Pakistan and instead they lived in a city in Pakistan and worked as a street vendor.

The last Afghani refugee group was a family of four; a young couple and their two daughters. The father was 29 years old. Besides speaking Farsi, he spoke perfect English and Urdu. He had finished high school in Afghanistan and had worked as a teacher both in Afghanistan and in exile in Pakistan. His wife had no formal education but she could read and write Farsi. Their two daughters were born in Pakistan in exile. They had lived in Pakistan for five years as well.

2.3.5 The Sudanese Refugees

Although many Sudanese have come to the Reception House, at the time of my research there was only a single mom with three children and four unmarried men.

The single mom, age thirty-three had come from Kenya with her two sons and a daughter. The eldest son was fourteen years old, her daughter was ten and the infant son just eight months old. She did not speak English but was fluent in Dinka and Arabic. She was a Sunni Moslem. As per her request, I have not provided too many details about her or her family.

The four Sudanese unmarried men had come from distinct places. The first two men had been living in Cuba for the last ten years. They were brothers, twenty-two and twenty one years old. They had completed their high school diplomas. They were sent by their parents to Cuba when they were younger and they were unable to return to Sudan. These men spoke Spanish and Nuer but their English was very limited.

The other two unmarried Sudanese men had come to Canada via Malta. These two friends had lived in Malta for four years. There, they worked odd jobs to make ends meet. They spoke English and Nuer fluently.

2.3.6 The Refugees from Sierra Leone

The refugees from Sierra Leone were a family of four. The father was twenty five years old. He was originally from Sierra Leone but had married a Nigerian woman who was twenty-four. They had lived in Malta for five years where their four year old son and four month daughter were born. They were Catholics and in Malta had received assistance from the local Church groups. While in Malta, he worked odd jobs and she braided hair to pay the bills. Upon arriving in Canada, this young family discovered they were pregnant with yet another child. The entire family could speak English perfectly. He had finished high school while she had a degree in sociology.

2.3.7 The Arabic-Speaking Refugees

The Arabic-speaking refugees were a religiously, geographically and culturally diverse group. There were three Iraqi families, an unmarried man from Iraq, a Palestinian family, and a Tunisian family.

The first Iraqi family comprised of five people. They had come to Canada via Malta. The father, 50 years old had worked under Sadaam Hussein's regime. His wife was a forty-two year old, stay-at-home mother. He had fled to Syria with his family about seven years ago. Both he and his wife had finished high school. If it were not for the fears imposed by the regime, they lived well in Iraq. They were Assyrian Christians and had three children; a boy and two girls. The eldest was a twenty-one year old man who had studied up to grade eight just before they left Iraq. The two girls were seventeen and fifteen. They had had no formal education since they left Iraq. In Malta, the girls took a few basic courses in English and in Italian.

The second Iraqi family consisted of a young couple with their three-month old son. They had lived in Syria before coming to Canada. Neither the young man (twenty four), nor his wife (twenty-one), could speak English.

The third Iraqi family consisted of a twenty-eight year old man who was a survivor of torture victim. His wife was twenty-four and eight and a half months pregnant when they arrived in Canada. They lived in exile in Syria for four years. Because she was wearing a full lengthen burka upon departing Syria, she passed the airlines unnoticed. They were Sunni Moslems.

The unmarried man from Iraq was a twenty-five year old who was born to two Iranian parents. His father was a goldsmith and moved to Iraq when he was very young.

Now his mother and sister live in Iran. They did not want to come to Canada. Recently his sister gave birth to a developmentally challenged child. He traveled through Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and finally Malta before coming to Canada. In Malta, he worked with developmentally challenged people as a volunteer and as a dishwasher under the table to make ends meet. He continuously expressed concerns for sending money back home to his mother.

The Tunisian family consisted of a family of six people. A forty two year old man and his forty year old wife. They had four children; three girls, ages sixteen, fifteen and eight and one boy age twelve. The family was conversational in English. They were Sunni Moslems and had entered Canada via Malta where they had resided over the past three years.

The Palestinian family was a family of five. They also came to Canada via Malta where they had lived for two years. The father was a sixty-year old man. His wife was forty four and together they had three girls fourteen, eleven and seven. The man used to work as a pharmacist in his home country while his wife was a stay at home mother. The kids had been to school in Syria.

2.3.8 The Columbian Refugees

The Colombian group consisted of a family of five. The father was a thirty-two year old man who used to work as a labourer in Columbia. His wife was twenty-eight years old. They were Catholics and were being assisted by the Catholic Church. Their

three children were young. The eldest son, age four, had down-syndrome. There two other children were girls aged two and a half and nine months. They all spoke Spanish but their knowledge of English was extremely limited. They came to Canada straight from Columbia.

The other refugee from Columbia was a single lady. She was in her mid thirties. She had been working in rural Columbia as a doctor. She spoke English and Spanish fluently. She was also being assisted by the Catholic Church and an international organization involved in medical assistance in areas of civil strife.

2.3.9 The Schedule

After arriving at the reception house, the clients followed a schedule of attending orientations and information sessions in a group. The reception house procedure for destined CR1's (CR1's are Convention Refugees as defined in the Canadian Immigration Act) went as follows:

1. People are greeted at the airport and sent to the RH in taxi
2. Upon arrival there is a tour of the facility, clients are informed about house rules, room assignment and provision of bedding
3. A meeting is arranged with the assigned Resettlement Counselor. At this time, the counselor does an initial needs assessment, opens a file, and fills out the appropriate applications forms for health care and SIN forms. School registration for children and ESL assessment appointments for the adults are arranged.
4. The client is provided with initial incidental allowance ($60.00/adult)

5. Various orientations are booked; CIC (Canada Immigration Centre), general information, police, health and host orientations.
6. CIC orientation is conducted by a resettlement officer from the local Canada Immigration Centre
7. A bank account is opened and banking and budgeting is explained
8. Any health issues are addressed the appropriate appointments are made and follow-up testing takes place such as lab work, or medical surveillance. Before arrival to Canada, a medical check up is necessary. During this check-up, marks on the lungs may be detected. If so, a medical surveillance is required for more extensive TB tests upon arrival in Canada.
9. Police orientation
10. The Host Orientation
11. Accommodations are viewed and accepted
12. Move Out Day
13. Initial Shopping is done with the client

The schedule that I have provided is a general outline of the fifteen day process that government sponsored refugees follow upon their arrival at the reception house. Each day the group attends an orientation that will facilitate the resettlement process. In the following section, I will present a description of these orientations and the information sessions.

2.3.10 The CIC Orientation

The first orientation that is attended by the refugees in house is the CIC orientation. It is during this time that government sponsored refugees enter into a formal and legal agreement with the federal government called the *"Agreement For Support": Rights and Responsibilities*. It is a legally binding contract signed by the refugee. Generally speaking, the government settlement officer takes this session to explain the document and the rights and responsibilities of becoming a permanent resident of Canada.[4] Translation is provided in the refugees' mother tongue. Government sponsored refugees have the right to be supported financially for one year. In this year, they have the responsibility to learn English and report any extra income that they may have earned. During this session, the refugees are explained how much money will be provided to them. In addition, the settlement worker provides a description of the allocation of all the money such as rent, food and transportation. The government covers the cost of English language instruction for up to one year for all sponsored refugees. For children, if needed, daycare facilities are provided. The refugee is responsible and obligated to report any change in employment, change in family composition such as a pregnancy, death, divorce or marriage. In addition, if a client moves, it is very important that they provide the correct change of address. When CIC makes an error in the cheque, clients must report an overpayment immediately. All this information should be provided to the assigned reception house counselors who are the liaisons between Canada Immigration and the refugee. The CIC counselors specifically mention that the ultimate goal is for everyone to become self-supporting members of the community but before this is possible, English apprehension is a must.

[4] Permanent resident now refers to the status formally know as landed immigrant

After the agreement is signed, the officer discusses the loans that were provided for transportation costs to Canada. These should be repaid almost immediately in installments ranging anywhere from twenty to eighty dollars a month. If needed, additional loans are provided to cover utility and security deposits. Also, those refugees that arrive between October to April are provided with winter clothing. If not, the funds to buy appropriate winter clothing are also allocated.

Refugees are instructed that before they leave the reception house, household items such as furniture, pots, pans, eatingware, glasses, sheets, blankets, and pillows are supplied. At the end of the session, each head of the family signs the agreement, and the start-up cheque is provided. The start-up cheque includes funds allocated for initial start-up (one time) expenses. These include non-perishables bulk items such as flour, sugar and rice. This is in addition to the funds allocated for monthly groceries. Moreover, installation fees for phone and electricity are provided for the first accommodation. These are not loans. For those families with school age children, one hundred dollars per child is provided to buy school supplies.

Besides the signing of the contract and the distribution of the start-up cheques, the CIC orientation gives the settlement worker the opportunity to meet the refugees and explain some of the issues that other refugees in the same position have had in the past. They also explain other sources of income such as Child Tax Benefit, the refugees are entitled to receive. For example, Child Tax Benefit is paid to those people who are

considered low-income. For children 17 years and under, money is paid to families (the mother) from Revenue Canada. After the initial application, funds are paid retroactively from the date of arrival to Canada. As the age of the child increases, the amount of money also increases. As this benefit is available to all low-income Canadians, it continues as long one is considered low-income even after federal assistance under AAP is over.

2.3.11 Employment

During the CIC orientation, settlement workers emphasize the financial aspect of the sponsorship. They speak extensively about monthly payments and financial responsibility. In the terms of the contract with the federal government, all government sponsored refugees are legally bound to attend English instruction while they are on assistance. But the system also encourages people to work if they can find employment. While under the RAP or ISAP programs, refugees are allowed to earn up to twenty-five percent of their monthly cheque without penalty. In order to monitor the income earned, there are sets of checks and balances set in place. For example, according to the government settlement workers, NGO counselors are to inform their clients (refugees) that the client must inform the counselor if they are employed. Inclusive, every month or bi-weekly, they are to submit a copy of the pay-stub or cheque so that it can be submitted to Immigration. If it is found that the person has earned more than twenty-five percent of his/her monthly government cheque then he/she will be deducted the extra amount earned from their monthly cheque.

2.3.12 Provincial and Federal Health Care

Although in some provinces health care is completely subsidized, it others it is only partially subsidized. In the province where I conducted my study, the provincial health care bill must be paid every three months. For government sponsored refugees, health care compensation is paid on a monthly basis. It covers all your trips to the doctor, lab work and hospital fees. It does not cover ambulance fees, dental work, eye care or cosmetic surgery. During the CIC orientation, the settlement worker also distributes the Interim Federal Health Care (IFH). This is a federal health care card that is issued for government sponsored refugees. It covers emergency dental and eye expenses but the client must seek permission from the government in advance or they may be denied compensation. It is valid for use for up to one year from date of arrival to Canada.

To sum up then, the CIC orientation is usually the first orientation where the governmental and non-governmental settlement counselors meet the client and explain the terms and conditions of their residency in Canada. It marks the beginning of a relationship that will be influential in the refugees' lives for at least a year. It is a long session in which much information is provided to the refugee. After this orientation, all the information sessions are provided by NGO resettlement counselors at the reception house. In the following section, I will elaborate on the overall resettlement process and the information provided to government sponsored refugees.

2.3.13 Initial Needs Assessment

Upon arrival, the counselors initially open the clients' files, do the initial needs assessment and fill the appropriate forms. Because of the nature of the work, counselors were privy to personal and often intimate information. For example, often before people arrived, Immigration would inform the administration about particular cases of victims (or survivors) of torture. Also, while counselors open files, clients give snippets of personal information such as education, class status, how many years were lived in exile, etc.

The initial needs' assessment establishes the resettlement adaptability of the refugee including language skills, life skills and health and psychological needs. Life skills are assessed by the level of formal education, urban/rural environment, refugee camp etc. It is at this point that counselors assess if the client may have other resettlement issues such as illiteracy (same people speak English perfectly but cannot read or write at all), health issues such as deafness, blindness or other disabilities. In addition, refugees that have suffered trauma or torture have these issues that also need to be addressed. Many refugee women come pregnant and the appropriate steps must be taken to ensure health for the baby. Some people come with family issues-children, spouses or parents that have been left behind either in the first country of asylum or the country of exile. In some cases, it is discovered that people do not know where their families are after years of displacement. The counselors take their time and get to know the clients and make the appropriate arrangements for them to address the issues noted in the initial needs assessment. Referrals are made to clinics, psychiatrists, doctors, dentists, ESL classes and schools for children.

In addition to the administrative aspects of a counselors job description, people are also provided with soap, deodorant, laundry soap, feminine napkins and diapers (if necessary). To explain the purpose of these products and the manner in which they are to be used is the responsibility of the assigned reception house counselor. Although sometimes awkward, it marks the beginning of a relationship that will last for years-especially the first year.

2.3.14 Daily Life at the Reception House

As the refugees get over the jet lag and become more comfortable with their arrival to Canada, daily life at the Reception House takes on a different feel. When people first come they are tired and weary after a sometimes long and unnerving journey. A typical day at the reception house begins with breakfast. Breakfast is prepared and served by the refugees themselves. There is a small fridge, microwave, burner, toaster and coffee maker in the dining hall that remains open for the refugees to access. The main kitchen remains locked until the day cook comes to prepare lunch. While having breakfast, the refugees often help each other out. For example, some of the mothers of teenagers make breakfast for the single men just as she would for her own son. The young girls do a quick clean up for everybody and the men go out to have a smoke. The younger girls watch over the small children while their mothers finish up their own breakfast.

After breakfast, usually there is a bit of free time before some orientation or another. In the meantime, people spend their time chatting in small clusters sitting

everywhere. Some were sitting quietly on the benches outside the dining hall. Others were out on the patio smoking or in the dining hall talking over a cup of tea. There is always somebody on the phone talking loudly as if they were talking overseas (usually they are) trying to get in touch with relatives or friends left behind. The phone system is always quite a problem. People are constantly trying to decipher how to operate the calling cards. In the yard, children of all different ages and nationalities play together outside on the swing set or the slides.

When the weather gets colder, people seek shelter inside. The children can be found in the playroom watching television. Because the rooms are small and crowded, people spend a lot of time mingling in the dining hall or on the bench just in front.

After the scheduled orientation or free time, lunch is served at twelve o'clock precisely. The dining hall holds about eight long tables for eight people. Flowered plastic tablecloths cover the tables. Lunch consists of a simple salad made from iceberg lettuce and vinegar dressing. Sometimes there are side vegetables but they are usually negligible. Soup (usually chicken with noodles) is always on the menu. The main course varies from meat balls to baked chicken (legs and thighs) or fried fish on Fridays. There is very little variation between the daily food. For special occasions such as a holiday or staff meeting, the cook may bake something sweet for dessert. Because staff and refugee residents eat together, resettlement staff is more approachable to the residents. It is commonplace to see counselors talking about the afternoon schedule or a housing situation over lunch.

After lunch, again there is usually an appointment booked either at the bank or at the doctor. Refugees, usually of the same linguistic groups often accompany each other to these appointments often just for moral support or translation assistance. For logistical reasons, all the orientations and information sessions are presented to large groups. By doing so, refugees became acquainted with each other. They begin to rely on each other by watching each other's children or helping each other with breakfast.

In the following section, I will expand on the resettlement process and the orientations and information sessions that government sponsored refugees attend during their fourteen day stay at the reception house.

2.3.15 The General Orientation

During the stay at the reception house, refugees are bombarded with information regarding life in Canada. The general orientation is conducted in the clients first language whenever possible. This orientation is meant to give an overview of life in Canada. It has been incorporated into the resettlement process because many clients, once out of the reception house have problems with common things such as banking, rental responsibilities, garbage disposal or simply mailing a letter. Often, life has been very different in their countries or at the camps. The counselors attempt to cover a broad range of issues or concerns that may be encountered from the day the client moves out of the reception house. Orientations are flexible so that a counselor may add information if he feels the refugees may have particular issues. He addresses issues such as: Canadian

currency, budgeting, banking, renting and living in an accommodation and the rights and responsibilities of being a Canadian resident. In addition, counselors discuss the telephone, mail and postal systems, food and cooking, shopping, local transportation, 911, personal rights and freedoms, women's, seniors and children's rights, norms and expectations of and from society, including privacy, domestic violence and the law. They talk about neighbours and respecting their rights, mainstream society, health and hygiene, cultural barriers and differences, and schooling. Clients are provided with information regarding hospitals, clinics, health care and hygiene in general. Employment is touched upon briefly because a full employment orientation is conducted after the year of sponsorship has finished. Then the clients are given an opportunity to ask questions.

2.3.16 Banking and Budgeting

After the start up cheque is given to the refugees by CIC, the first step is to open a bank account to access the funds. Initially, because government sponsored refugees do not have Canadian documentation, or employment, in the past they have had difficulties open bank accounts. In order to facilitate the banking process, the service coordinator has forged relations with two of the major banks in the city. The reception house provides the refugee with a reference letter that the bank accepts as a guarantee of the immigration status of the refugee along with the Canadian landing document. If the refugees need translation services, they are accompanied by a counselor. When the refugee can speak English, they go to the bank themselves. The bank teller begins by explaining the rights and responsibilities of having a bank account. He or she proceeds by verifying the refugees' documentation. Next, he opens the account for each family in

the computer and assigns them signature cards and bank cards. Explaining the banking system becomes complicated at the pin code machine where the concept of a secret code is confusing especially for the elder refugees. Adding to the complications is the fact that many refugees are illiterate (at least in English) and have had limited exposure to technology. When the children assist their parents with the codes the tellers get agitated. They often repeat that the code should be secret; it should not even be revealed to the immediate family. The next step involves taking the refugees to the teller to assist them in depositing their cheques. If the counselor has accompanied them, they will explain the automated banking machines and how to fill out the deposit and withdrawal slips.

Once back at the reception house, the counselor takes the opportunity to reiterate some basic budgeting and banking concepts. An extensive explanation of depositing, writing cheques, savings plans and bill payments is provided. Counselors warn refugees of potential money problems and provide examples of how difficult life in Canada can become without food, money and warm clothes. In the past, some refugees have had financial troubles because the monthly allowance from the government provides for the bare essentials. In spite of their tight financial situations, many refugees send money to family that has been left behind. Unfortunately, those limited resources are also spent paying off high long distance bills. The budgeting and banking orientation was developed and implemented to try to deter financial problems amongst refugees before they occur.

2.3.17 Language Instruction

Taking into consideration that most refugees cannot speak English well when they arrive in Canada, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is of utmost importance to the resettlement process of refugees. Although the NGO provides second language instruction for immigrants, the classes are over booked and there is limited capacity for government sponsored refugees. The NGO refers the government sponsored adult refugees to another immigrant serving agency in the city. Although the wait list for instruction is no shorter at the other agency, they offer more courses for extended periods of time. Also, because of the short period of sponsorship, government sponsored refugees are accepted on a priority basis. Refugees are given an appointment for an assessment test both oral and written. Based on the results of these tests, they are appointed to a level from where they begin language instruction. At the time of my research, the wait list after application for instruction was two to three months[5].

In recent years, the agencies serving immigrants in the city have realized that women of child bearing age and seniors usually get lost in the system and as a result never become conversational in English. Most women have child rearing concerns. Taking into consideration the cost of daycare or babysitter, women attend school less often then men. Seniors are often isolated because of physical or intellectual impairments so they tend to shy away from formal school settings. In order to bridge these gaps, immigrant- serving agencies in the city have begun to provide free daycare services for mothers wanting to attend English instruction. In addition, new programs have been developed for seniors to practice English in informal and casual environment.

[5] in 2002, government sponsored refugees were waiting sometimes as long as six months to begin ESL classes.

School-age children are also required to take an assessment test for school at the local Board of Education office. Although the test is written within the first few days of arrival, the school where the children are placed depends on the community where they live. Because most refugees do not find accommodations immediately, children usually begin school after the fourteen-day stay at the reception house. Children begin with ESL instruction within the local board of education system. They take second language courses along side the regular courses taken at the appropriate grade level.

2.3.18 Police Orientation

By assessing the gaps in refugee resettlement process, the NGO has developed extensive programs in order to facilitate the process. Some of these programs are on going due to their effectiveness. After the implementation on a trial basis, based on effectiveness and funding, the NGO administrators decide if the program should and can be continued and implemented on a permanent basis in the resettlement process.

One such program began as trial program in a joint effort with the local police force. The local police force had made considerable efforts over the last few years to bridge the perceived gap between immigrant communities and the police force. Moreover, the local police department wanted to access communities and develop a rapport with them. It is thought that this may deter crime before it happens. In addition, amongst refugees who lived in political or social strife, it is found that there is a general fear and suspicion of authority figures and especially the police. Lastly, a brief orientation allows people to better understand the legal system. For all the above reasons

then, the local police implemented a program that provided specific cultural training based on certain regional areas in the world. It came to be called the Multicultural Resource Unit. Some of these regional categories include Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, Latin American, Middle Eastern and North African, Pacific Rim and Indian Subcontinent.

So, in collaboration with the multicultural resource unit, the service coordinator facilitated the program that was eventually implemented into the overall resettlement process. In a very informal session, the policeman discusses issues such as the legal systems, crime and justice, domestic violence, juvenile rights and Natives rights. Moreover, the session is interactive. In order to capture the refugees' attention, the police officer dress up a volunteer refugee as a policeman in uniform that helps to bridge the barriers between the refugees and the police.

2.3.19 Host Orientation: The First Step to Friendship In Canada

Bridging the gap between the police force and the refugee population is one way in which the NGO attempts to foster an understanding between mainstream society and refugee populations. Another such program is the Host program which is a voluntary activity that promotes understanding and friendship between mainstream people and newcomers. In other Canadian cities the Host program is also known as the Family Friend, Friendship Families, Foster Friends, Canadian Friends, Mes Amis Partout Programmes [Lippert, 1998:389]. Basically local residents volunteer their time to befriend newcomers so that they might learn from each other. Often, newcomers share

recipes and volunteers take people shopping or help with schooling issues. Ideally, both are to become a part of each other's lives spending time talking, celebrating festivities together or learning about life in Canada. This was a voluntary activity that promotes understanding and friendship between Canadian residents and newcomers. Local citizens volunteered their time to befriend newcomers so that they might learn from each other. Often, newcomers would share recipes and volunteers would take people shopping or help with schooling issues. Ideally, both were to become a part of each other's lives spending time talking (means practicing English) or celebrating festivities together.

2.3.20 Housing

In the city where I conducted my research, over the last few years, the housing and accommodation situation has reached a crisis situation[6]. A couple of days to a week before the refugees complete a fourteen day stay in the reception house, they are taken to see potential accommodations. The funders, (CIC) compensate the NGO for the initial fourteen days of stay at the reception house.[7] Because rent is so high in the city, one staff member was hired specifically to find appropriate housing for every family staying in the house. By appropriate I mean that the house or apartment must be within budget, clean, affordable and in an accessible location but priority is given to finding an accommodation within the allocated budget (although it may vary by fifty to a hundred dollars a month). In order to distribute funds equally across the province, the funders assess the cost of housing based on provincial averages (as opposed to municipal averages). Those resources are then allocated across the province regardless of the size and economy of the

[6] The city has been economically booming over the last few years. With the influx of people, housing vacancy had dropped to under 1% in 2000.

[7] In 2002, CIC after much dialogue with the NGO and complaints about the housing situation in the city changed this to 20 day period that would be compensated.

municipality. For refugees who are destined to a city with a housing crisis, the rent differential greatly affects the monthly income. For example, a single person receives $303.00 for housing[8]. This meant that most singles had to share accommodations or work to pay the difference. At this time, it was impossible to even find a basement for $303.00/mth. In such a case, it is the refugees' responsibility to re-allocate the money from other sources such as Child Tax Benefit, GST refund or part-time work. To compensate for the rent differential, CIC encouraged people to dip into the child tax benefit for larger families.

As I have previously mentioned, CIC only compensates the NGO for the initial fourteen days at the reception house. In cases where finding accommodation becomes difficult and the refugees must stay beyond fourteen days, it is called an over stay period. Because the NGO is not given money for the clients' occupancy of those days, although it is a difficult task, there are very few over stays at the reception house. Refugees are very rarely satisfied with the accommodations provided to them for many reasons. First, often affordable housing centrally located are small, old often run down apartments. Second, if one can find a clean, roomy accommodation, it is often far away in the suburbs. Third, most refugees hope to qualify for subsidized housing. Although resettlement counselors help refugees with the applications, only few people are chosen due to limited availability. Despite these concerns, refugees still move out of the reception house. If they refuse to take one of the accommodations shown to them, the refugees are told that they will have to pay their extra days at the reception house at the rate of twenty-five dollars day each person for room and board.

[8] This is the cost of housing in 2002.

2.3.21 Moving Out

After the fourteen-day period at the reception house, the refugees have gone through the initial resettlement process of attending the orientations, opening bank accounts, applying for their social insurance numbers and health care cards and looking at accommodations. Usually this is a time of much anticipation in the reception house. People are busy exchanging new phone numbers. The hallways are filled with suitcases and newly acquired household goods such as plates, pots, pans, eatingware, glasses, sheets, blankets, and pillows. Everybody works together to help the family moving out. Usually all the young men bring the suitcases out to the taxi. The counselors arrange the taxi providing information, moral support and money for the taxis. Electricity, gas, phone and furniture are usually prearranged before the clients arrive at the new home. The government contracts a furniture company to supply furniture for government sponsored refugees. Furniture is ordered according to the family size. For example, a single person would receive a loveseat, a small table with two chairs and a lamp, a small chest of drawers and a single bed. The size of the bed is always a problem. Some refugees would request bigger beds especially because back home whole families sleep together in one big bed. Only very tall people qualify for a queen-size bed. Couples receive a double bed and a sofa instead of a love seat.

Finally, once everyone and everything is loaded into the taxi, the counselor accompanies the refugees to their new accommodation. At the property, the counselor reviews the terms of the lease. Together the refugees and the counselor view the

apartment. If everything is agreed on, the lease is then signed and the terms of the lease are also explained in the native tongue.

After all formalities were done, including the signing of the lease, the counselor takes the refugees shopping for their first groceries. Taking into consideration, special dietary concerns, the counselors try to take refugees to supermarkets with fair prices and where they carry imported foods and spices. On the way to the supermarket, the counselor takes the opportunity to show the family the nearest facilities such as shopping, bus/train stop, recreation centres and schools. Before ending the information session, counselors remind people that any issues or concerns that they may have, clients were welcome to call or come by for assistance.

2.3.22 After the Reception House

As the refugees go through the resettlement process, their first fifteen days become their stepping stone into Canadian life. Although the time spent in the reception house is very influential, it is merely the beginning of the refugees' lives in Canada. It also marks the beginning of a relationship with the NGO that will guide the refugees' lives throughout the year of sponsorship and beyond.

While under AAP assistance, refugees remain in contact with their resettlement counselors. As I have previously mentioned, they must report any change in family composition, income or address. In addition, the resettlement process is monitored through home follow-ups. At five months and ten months (after the initial date of

arrival), the NGO resettlement counselor books an appointment when they can visit the refugees in their homes. Visits such as these provide resettlement counselors with the opportunity to see how well people are adapting to life in Canada first hand. As the sponsorship deadline comes closer, most refugees, even if they have lost continuous contact over the year, contact their resettlement counselor. The potential options for the future are discussed such as upgrading high school, employment and training programs. For example, although federal government assistance ends, there are various provincial programs in place to facilitate extended English language instruction. In addition, the NGO offers employment orientations and job referrals for those people interested in employment. Moreover, the NGO has created excellent training programs in collaboration with the local technical college which provide funding and training for engineering and technical courses, computer, cook prep, electricians, ceramic tile setters courses and many more. Counselors explain the various options to the clients and help each through the application process.

For extended services, under the Integrated Service Plan (ISP), the NGO provides resettlement services to immigrants and refugees for a three- year period. During this time, refugees are welcome to bring their concerns to the attention of the NGO. Employment, family sponsorship, legal issues, training programs, emergency translation and upgrading are amongst the most pressing concerns for most refugees. The NGO has trained counselors available at the main office to attend to these concerns in over forty-five languages.

The description provided was just a brief introduction into The Reception House for refugees. In the next chapter, I will provide a brief historical background into the protection of refugees and how this process has evolved over time and an overview of Canadian refugee policy .

CHAPTER THREE: BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of time, people have fled their homes in order to escape cultural, social or religious persecution, armed conflict and political violence. In the last century alone, refugees have been the by-product of wars, military coups, human rights violations and civil unrest [Loescher, 1993:3]. Consequently, the need to formally address and establish universal standards to protect and assist refugees became of utmost concern in the last century.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an historical background into the protection of refugees and the evolution of this protection. In the first section, I will provide a brief discussion about the UNHCR, the definition of a refugee as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention and some of its limitations. In the next section, I will examine some of the viable solutions available to refugees of which resettlement is one such solution. Following that, I will provide an historical overview of the Canadian policy as it pertains to refugee resettlement.

3.1 The UNHCR: Definitions and Limitations

After the Second World War, and in the light of displacement due to war, communist persecution and the political upheavals in former colonies, the need to internationally formalize and organize the resettlement of thousands of displaced refugees became all too apparent [Loescher, G. 1993:4].

> The Berlin blockade of 1948-9 was followed in quick succession by the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb, the formation of two separate

> German states, the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Mao Zedong's victory in China, and the start of the Korean war in 1950. It became increasingly apparent that the refugee issue was not a temporary post war phenomenon. New crises were generating new outflows of refugees, as had happened following the communist seizure of power in countries from Czechoslovakia to China [UNHCR, 2000:18-19].

The establishment of a new UN refugee body was proposed by various actors, including the International Red Cross (ICRC), the US, Western European States, India and Pakistan [UNHCR, 2000:19]. But each actor's vision of the scope and authority of the organization differed. The US conceived of "a strictly defined, temporary agency, requiring little financing and with limited objectives...[UNHCR, 2000:19]." A compromise was reached and in 1949, the UN General Assembly formed a temporary Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). [UNHCR, 2000:19]. In 1951, at the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee was defined as:

> ...a person either unable or unwilling, because of fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, to return to his/her place of nationality or habitual residence [Loescher, G. 1993:5].

Moreover, in article 33 in the Statute, the principle of *non-refoulement* became important. It stipulated that "no state shall expel or return (refouler) a refugee...to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom should be threatened [Loescher, G. 1993:143]". Thus, international regulations were established to guide states in dealing with refugee flows.

1.2.1 Limitations

Although these were important steps in their own right, they generated other complications. First, the definition of a Convention refugee, as most authors agree, was narrow and problematic in that it differentiated between persecution that was individualized, and a more generalized fear that was a result of state-sponsored violence, a denial of fundamental human rights, natural disaster and war [Loescher, G, 1993:6]. In other words, by emphasizing 'persecution' as a key, determining factor of asylum, the Convention formally limited the scope of its assistance for displaced people. In addition, the distinction between individual persecution and a more generalized violence becomes irrelevant from the refugees' perspective, when considering that the net effects are quite comparable. In both situations, one feels compelled to leave because one's safety, security and life are being threatened. Moreover:

> Technically, refugees flee to save their lives and migrants to improve their economic prospects; but distinguishing between them becomes very difficult when people flee from countries where poverty and violence are direct consequences of the political system [Loescher, G., 1993:6].

In a rapidly changing world, the interdependency of difficult social, political and economic conditions have blurred the reasons for migration in general; thus often creating confusion between refugees and economic migrants [Loescher, G.,1993:6].

The second limitation of the refugee definition is that the Statute had not provided for any means to enforce these rules. The UNHCR could only establish guidelines for states to follow if it suited them. There were no methods; nor did they have the power to enforce these regulations. In effect, refugees were answerable to the same state system

that produced them [Aleinikoff, T.A., 1995:259][9]. Because of this, many people who flee nations where there has been a breakdown between the state and its ability to protect its citizens are more generally referred to as refugees [Aleinikoff, T.A., 1995:258]. The state's desire to control and the internationally recognized need to assist displaced people then is fundamentally at odds.

> The result appears to be a logical contradiction: "solution" of the "refugee problem" within the existing system of states threatens a first principle (state control over admissions) of that system [Aleinikoff, T.A., 1995:258].

Further limiting the controls of the UNHCR was the total dependency on the generosity of certain nations' donations [10].

> ...the UNHCR has often become either subservient to the policies of powerful donors or become immobilized, thereby damaging its credibility as an impartial and effective advocate for refugees [Loescher, G. 1993:138].

Basically, the UNHCR is funded by the generosity of the developed nations such as the United States, Japan, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Canada, Finland, Denmark, United Kingdom and France [Loescher, G., 1993:133]. Thus the powers of the organization are limited to say the least. The policies set out by the Geneva Convention are simply guidelines for nation states to follow; implementation of these policies are left at the mercy of the nation states who are politically, economically and socially motivated[11].

[9] See Aleinikoff's discussion about the contradictions of international refugee protection in Aleinikoff, T. Alexander (1995). "State-Centered Refugee Law: From Resettlement to Containment" in Mistrusting Refugees. University of California Press: Los Angeles.

[10] p137 see discussion and possible solutions

[11] Some authors have argued that developing nations refugee policies are inextricably linked to the political, economic and trade relations that these nations have with the refugee producing states (see....).

Another limitation of the international system to protect refugees is that the system in itself creates a backlash against refugees when the number of asylum seekers increases.

> On the one hand, they-we- genuinely wish to provide a haven for the persecuted. On the other hand, we still value the reassurance that comes from reasonable control over the entry of aliens [Martin, 1991:30].

The result has been that with the increase in refugees comes the public perception that we are limited in our capacity to police our borders and this threat provokes a backlash which bases itself on the validity of one's refugeeness [Martin, 1991:34-35]. In other words:

> When the number of asylum seekers increases sharply, the ability to control appears increasingly threatened, at least in the absence of a convincing demonstration that the increase came from a real outbreak of implacable persecution-that is evidence that most of the new arrivals are "true refugees" [Martin, 1991:35].

Since the 70's, many of the refugees come from the poorer nations of the world [Loescher, G., 1993:4]. The sheer number of people who have fled war-torn countries has become threatening to many other nations.

> The asylum caseloads in all Western countries grew rapidly, as most asylum applicants came from places where a mixture of political and economic hardships prevailed. Most of the new refugees did not fit the image of refugees for most foreigners: asylum seekers arrived from all over the world; they generally had few political and cultural links with the industrialized countries; their religions were often foreign; and their ways of life were completely alien [Loescher, G. 1993:93].

Although the brunt of the burden of the refugee situation globally is placed on neighbouring developing nations with extremely vulnerable economies, the trends of late have been to control, restrict, and even, deter people from claiming refugee status in

developed nations such as the United States, European nations, Australia and Canada [Loescher, G., 1993:7]. For example, in the 80's, Iranian refugees in Turkey were provided with no means to resettle in a resettlement country. Visa restrictions from Western European countries were strictly enforced. Aircraft carriers were punishable by law if they were found to allow anybody to travel with improper or fraudulent documentation [Matas, 1989:153][12]. Canada too implemented visa restrictions in the 1980's on those countries that were increasingly refugee producing such as Guatemala, El Salvador [Girard, 1990:118-9]. Similarly, the United States had no resettling process centers for the Central Americans within their own region [Loescher, G. 1993:94].

In much the same way, boats full of Cubans and Haitians have been stopped at sea by US officials and diverted back to the island[13]. Both Cubans and Haitians have been detained and incarcerated at INS without just cause for detention [Helton, 1990:254]. Canada too is guilty of implementing policies of detaining undocumented refugees who look or act suspiciously [Helton, 1990:254]. In response to outcries of the national governments, the Executive Committee at the UNHCR then issued a statement about "irregular asylum seekers":

> ... these individuals are in fact only persons who have failed to comply with 'structured international efforts to provide appropriate solutions...' They are people who, sensing themselves to be in jeopardy, dare to take their own fate into their own hands and move on 'without the proper consent of...national authorities [Loescher, G. 1993: 95].

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[12] Airlines are required by Canadian law to strictly enforce and patrol visa regulations. In May 1988, the UNHCR found that to impose sanctions of this type of transport carriers is against the Refugee Convention but it has fallen on deaf ears.[see discussion in Matas, D. (1989). Closing the Doors: the Failure of Refugee Protection. Toronto: University of Toronto p153.

[13] In the 80's, the US took drastic measures to deter Haitian and other refugee populations from entering the US. (see Loescher, 9, 95-96)

The fact that these "irregular asylum seekers" failed to comply with international efforts to assist them insinuates that only the international community can decide and control how refugees can be assisted. It implies that refugees are incapable of making decisions about their lives and not allowed to exercise agency and take matters into their own hands. In addition, this type of rhetoric reinforces the idea that refugees who have made attempts to better their situations are somehow unworthy of assistance, perhaps fraudulent or manipulating the system.

Amnesty International has summarized the ways in which European nations have attempted to control the movement of asylum seekers.

> ...restrictions on entry (through frontier controls, visa requirements, and carrier sanctions); removal of asylum seekers to third countries; reduction of safeguards in the determination of which state is responsible for examining an asylum claim; and implementation of accelerated procedures for dealing with asylum applicants, including the establishment of lists of safe countries [Escalona & Black, 1995:377].

So, to conclude, the UNHCR is severely limited in its role as stated in Article 2 as a non-political, humanitarian and social organization relating to groups and categories of refugees [UNHCR, 2000:19].

> According to one analyst: 'The severe limitations of UNHCR's functional scope and authority were principally the result of the desire of the United States and its Western allies to create an international refugee agency that would neither pose any threat to national sovereignty nor impose any further financial obligations on them'. [Gil Loescher in UNHCR, 2000:19].[14]

[14] Gil Loescher in "American Foreign Policy; International Politics and Early Development of the UNHCR' paper presented at conference on "the Uprooted: Forced Migration as an International Problem in the Post-War Era"

In spite of the criticisms, the UNHCR is the most prominent international organization dedicated to short and long term solutions to an increasingly overwhelming problem and it has demonstrated its international commitment to organize, administer and implement relief efforts in areas where they are most needed. The bottom line is that millions of people worldwide are dependent on the organized effort of the organization. Even in my own fieldwork, the Reception House refugees were all provided with UNHCR refugee status before applying for resettlement in Canada. The UNHCR is the organization which provides refugee with credible documentation recognized by nation-states. In addition, the UNHCR is also increasingly involved in the development and implementation of viable and permanent solutions for the worlds' refugee populations which are local integration, voluntary repatriation or third country resettlement[15] [Loescher, G. 1993:148-50]. But having said this, it is important to note that organizations such as the UNHCR have contributed to the idea that refugees need to be controlled and assisted. In doing so, these forms of human intervention have reinforced stereotypes of authentic refugees as helpless. In the following section, I will discuss these limited choices for refugees.

3.2 Limited Viable Solutions for Refugees

Local integration refers to the efforts made for refugees to remain in the first country of asylum after fleeing their homeland [Loescher, G. 1993:148-9]. Considering that most of the developing nations with extremely vulnerable economies are carrying the burden of the refugee situation globally, this is a very difficult solution. Most host

[15] Other solutions have been practiced in the past but have not been viable nor humanitarian such as involuntary repatriation. In the absence of solutions to the refugees situations, most refugees end up staying in refugee camps which were supposed to be temporary. Conditions in these camps can be quite dreadful [see Gilad, L., 1990: 87-110]

countries are unable and unwilling to absorb these people into local economies. "A sudden influx of refugees can disrupt a fragile economy, exacerbate unemployment, and heighten ethnic tensions [Loescher, G., 1993:149]." Moreover, many host countries, such Malawi [see UNHCR, 2000:112 for discussion of Mozambican refugees in Malawi], are in volatile and unstable political, social, ethnic predicaments, the integration of refugees can often fuel domestic conflicts, public backlash and perceived security threats [UNHCR, 2000:112-113]

Voluntary repatriation refers to the refugees' return to the country of origin on the basis of the freely expressed willingness to do so [Gilad, L. 1990:350]. In the 1970's, large-scale repatriation efforts began with newly independent countries such as Bangladesh, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe [UNHCR, 1995:31]. During this time, the focus of the UNHCR shifted to ensure people had the right to return to one's homeland the way it is stipulated under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These efforts have been implemented in Rwanda and Burundi, Myanmar, the Horn of Africa and Sudan, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, the Balkan states, Guatemala and El Salvador and more recently, Afghanistan to name a few.

In the following section, I will provide a brief example of such a repatriation effort. In Rwanda, repatriation has been a reoccurring issue over the past 30 years. With a history of civil unrest and consistent failed repatriation efforts, the UNHCR has found that voluntary repatriation without violence cannot occur until some key factors are addressed. In Rwanda, they found that repatriation efforts have failed because:

> [First,] there remains a continued pressure on the refugees to remain outside their homeland. [Second,] disputes over property ownership linked to the long awaited return of the Tutsi exiles from Uganda. [Third,] persistent reports of arbitrary arrests in Rwanda, leading to grossly overcrowded prisons and forcible closure of camps for internally displace people in south-west Rwanda. [Lastly,] the slow rate at which the US$600 million in rehabilitation assistance has become available [UNHCR, 1995:32].

Because of such criticisms, over the last decade, the UNHCR had developed a homeland-oriented approach that focuses on the reintegration and rehabilitation needs of returnees in their communities. According to them, this was "a far cry from the days when returnees were provided with transport back to their own country and largely left to fend for themselves [UNHCR, 1995:47]." With such efforts, since 1990, (until 1995) about nine million people had been repatriated to countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Cambodia and El Salvador [UNHCR, 1995:172].

3.3 Refugee Resettlement in the Canadian Context

1.2.2 Canadian Refugee Resettlement Policy: An Historical Overview

In the following section, I will attempt to provide a brief overview of Canadian Immigration laws and policy as they pertain to refugee resettlement. Although the Canadian public prides itself on being a supporter of humanitarianism in the world, at the same time, the Canadian public is juxtaposed between desire to assist those who are consistently denied human rights elsewhere and the right to decide as a society on who can become a member. Nevertheless, Canada has in some form or another made a commitment to refugee resettlement in Canada since 1933.

In the period prior to the Second World War, the Jews fleeing Hitler's expansion in Europe were the largest group of people on the move. Despite the extreme violence and the denial of human rights in Germany and Eastern Europe, all European nations were reluctant to take in large numbers of these people in exile. Canada was no different. Canada took in the least amount of people before, during and after the war. From 1933 to 1945, Canada took in a mere 5000 Jews fleeing the terrors of Nazi Germany [Adelman, 1991:188].[16] At that most crucial time, Canada's refugee policy was motivated by anti-Semitic sentiment that prevailed through the Canadian government and was supported by strong public opinion [Adelman, 1991:188].

In the next years, from 1947 to 1956, the Canadian government's refugee policy had not improved much. To boot, the rights of refugees were limited and the Canadian government had not yet signed the Geneva Convention in 1951[Adelman, 1991:189]. For many of the same reasons, Arabs fleeing the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 were also denied resettlement opportunities in Canada. In the camps in Europe, fifty percent of the people waiting to be resettled were Jews. Eventually though, between 1947 to 1956, through special programs and family sponsorship, Canada took in 186,000 refugees from Europe [Adelman, H., 1991:189). A famous Canadian scholar of refugee studies, Gerard Dirks reasons that the motives for this were multifaceted:

> Canada wanted to control who came to their country. Though clearly humanitarianism and some sense of obligation to clear out the camps in Europe (so that the process of rebuilding could begin in earnest) were key factors in Canadian policy, the key that unlocked the door to Canada was self-interest, for labour was needed to feed a rapidly expanding and

[16] This was in comparison to the US at 190,000; France at 55,000; the UK at 65,000 and Palestine at 120,000. (Adelman, H., 1991:188).

> industrializing economy. Racism too was a factor. [Gerard Dirks in Adelman, 1991:190].

In the next era, from 1956 to 1968, Canadian policy began to be affected by the international political environment of the Cold War. It was an era in which there was a strong ideological differentation between the Western capitalist free economy and the state-planned Soviet regime. It was in this context that there was an influx of Hungarian refugees entering Austria that increased at the end of 1956. The Cold War was in full swing and the Canadian government and its public were in full support of helping the Hungarians fleeing the oppressive regime which denied its citizens of fundamental human rights. Initially security was an issue until 1956 because the Canadian government was concerned that the refugees could spread the seed of communism in Canada. These fears did not last too long and were soon taken over by a humanitarian urge to help people fleeing from Communist oppression [Adelman, H., 1991:191]. Politically and socially, the intolerance of and the persecution of the dissidents created an ideological and moral high ground, upon which the Canadian government built their policies.

> Non-governmental organizations, universities, local communities, private sponsors, and the provincial and federal governments worked in a coordinated fashion to make the resettlement effort a success [Adelman, H., 1991:191].

Ideologically speaking, in the cold war climate in which anti Soviet propaganda was commonplace, the support of the refugees fleeing Soviet oppression was wholeheartedly supported by the public and the media [Adelman,H.,1991:192]. In addition, economically, Canada was in a situation where they needed skilled labourers to support an active economy.

> The Canadian response to the Hungarian crisis was overwhelming. Canada took in more than 37,000 Hungarian refugees, almost 20% of those that had reached Austria''[17] in 1956 to 1957 After 1957, no formal policy guided Canada refugee resettlement; rather people were accepted based on ad hoc initiatives [Adelman, H., 1991:190-1].

Through special programs, these initiatives were justified by humanitarianism, although a closer look reveals a more complex net of political, social and economic interests [Dirks, 1990:94].

The next large flow of people occurred after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union to overthrow the new regime. The flow of people fleeing Czechoslovakia was limited because there was very little devastation and even fewer casualties. But Canada still took in approximately 11,000-12,000 Czech refugees in response to a direct appeal from the UNHCR in spite of the fact that Canada had still not signed the Geneva Convention on Refugees and its Protocol [Dirk, G., 1995:61; Adelman, H., 1991:193]. Unlike the Hungarians, the Czechs were screened for the most professionally and technically skilled, young, educated people: a population that Canada needed [Adelman, 1991:194]. So by the end of the 60's, still dealing with largely Eastern Europeans, Canada refugee resettlement policy was shaped by humanitarian, political and economic objectives [Adelman, 1991:193].

In 1969, Canada formalized their commitment to the rights of refugees by signing the Geneva Convention on Refugees [Adelman, 1991:193]. Although the Immigration Act of 1967, "overtly" declared that Canada's immigration regulations would not

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[17] This compares to the US who took in 38,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956-7.

discriminate against people because of their race, religion nor national origin, it took about three years to see the changing demographics of the new immigration policies [Adelman, 1991:193]. As Canadian immigration policies were opening up, culturally and racially distinct peoples were coming to Canada, and the face of the nation had began to change. In 1970, Canada took in several hundred Tibetans fleeing communist China. In 1972-73, more than 7,000 Asians were accepted after being expelled from Idi Amin's Uganda. Over 7,000 left-winged Chileans fleeing the right-wing Pinochet were accepted in 1973. Lastly, in 1975, after the US defeat in Vietnam, Canada supported its neighbours by accepting 9,000 Vietnamese refugees [Dirks, G. 1995:6; Adelman, H., 1991:194].

Although the new anti-racist Canadian immigration and refugee policy was reflected in the colourful population of refugees being accepted for resettlement, the policy represented Canada's political and economical interests as well. The Ugandan Asians not only settled relatively easily but they also were "in terms of age, education and skills highly qualified for immigration to Canada" [Adelman, 1991:194]. Because humanitarian interests and Canadian domestic interests interceded, by the end of the movement, 7069 Ugandan Asians had been accepted to resettle in Canada [Adelman, 1991:194].

Unlike the refugee populations accepted before, the Vietnamese refugees of 1975 to 1976 were accepted for political and diplomatic reasons. The US had been defeated in Vietnam and "as a token of solidarity [Adelman, H., 1991:198]" with our neighbour,

Canada accepted 9,000 Vietnamese refugees [Adelman, H., 1991:198]. Prior to 1982, more than 60,000 immigrants came to Canada through some type of sponsorship [Indra, 1987:6]. The mid-80's, Canada's refugee policy, urged on by interest groups such as religious and human right groups, focused on Central American refugees, in particular Salvadorian and Guatemalan refugees fleeing the oppressive right-winged dictators [Dirks, 1995:72]. By 1985, although there was an increased focus on family reunification and business immigration, the Canadian commitment to refugees remained in tact [Veugelers, 2000:101]. In the 1990's, the focus has shifted towards refugees categorized as people in "genuine danger" in Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan [Dirks, 1995:75-6]. Along with these large groups of refugee populations, smaller numbers of Baha'I's Iranians, Tamils from Sri Lanka and Lebanese Christians have continuously trickled into Canada [Dirks, 1995:75]. As noted, then, Canadian refugee policy is a complex, fluid system of increasing population and labour requirements as well as a maintaining a commitment to the humanitarian cause of refugee resettlement.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

4.1 Background and Occupational Culture and Work Ethos

The Reception House where I conducted my fieldwork came under the auspices of a larger organization that I have called the NGO. Although its foundations traced back to the early 1900's when Catholic women helped immigrants to settle in the province, the NGO was only certified as a non-profit organization in 1981. It was a non-profit immigrant serving agency that worked to facilitate the resettlement of refugees and immigrants that had been in Canada for less than three years. Some of the other divisions of the NGO included: Finance, Administration, Family and Children Services, Business, Employment and Training Services and Community and Education Services. Each division was headed by a manager to whom everybody in the division was to report. The division managers all reported back to the Executive Director whose office was at the main building of the NGO. The Executive Director is accountable to the Board of Directors and to the Funders.

The Reception House although it came under the Resettlement Division of the NGO, for all intensive purposes functioned as a separate entity. This was reinforced by the fact that the NGO's main office was located eight kilometers away from the Reception House. At the Reception House, the focus was on resettlement issues of government-sponsored refugees such as language acquisition, housing, cultural understandings, legal issues, education and many other issues. In particular, the

Reception House's purpose was to provide temporary accommodation to government sponsored refugees until appropriate and affordable housing could be arranged for them.

In any given year, over three hundred government-sponsored refugees stayed at the Reception House. Approximately the same number of transfer refugees also arrived from other provinces. In previous years, refugees had come from diverse and distinct regions in political or social strife. Refugees were chosen from refugee hot spots countries such as Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua in the 80's, Ethiopia, and the former Yugoslavia in the 90's. At the time of my fieldwork, there were over fifty people in the house from countries like Sierra Leone, Sudan, Columbia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Generally, government sponsored refugees arrived at the Reception House from first countries of asylum, countries other than their country of origin. Most of the people in this group had come from the island of Malta. It was an ethnically diverse group. There was one family who was originally from Iraq. Another family was from Tunisia and another from Sierra Leone. There were three unmarried men-one Iraq national and two of Sudanese origin. Some of the families had met each other in Malta while waiting for their papers for Canada. Others had met recently on the plane coming to Canada. Some of the other group members were Afghanis who had come from Pakistan where they had also been living for years. In both of these countries, refugees stayed without any legal status and no financial support from the local governments.

4.2 Interactions with CIC

It is significant to mention that prior to the outsourcing of refugee resettlement services, the Employment and Immigration Department of the federal government was responsible for facilitating refugee resettlement. The Department of Immigration was not a separate portfolio but combined with Department of Employment. But given limited resources of time, qualified people and funds, the government opted to contract out immigrant-serving agencies to meet the specific needs of government sponsored refugees under federally and provincially funded programs of Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP) and Immigrant Settlement Adjustment Program (ISAP). Historically, one of the Canadian government's immigration goals in accepting immigrants was to fill jobs. Since the 1980's, while the Department of Immigration had become a separate entity, its employees had retained a certain focus on employment and employability as being an integral part of immigration. As I will attempt to demonstrate later on, the employment focus has influenced much of the interaction between the Reception House counselors, CIC staff and the refugees themselves.

As viewed by the Canada Immigration Centre, refugees should become self-supporting, productive members of society. However, this view of what a refugee should be is based almost exclusively on financial considerations. In turn, the refugees' self-constructed role is in many ways in alignment with the government's expectation of them. But in addition, the refugees also hold a strong desire to integrate, work, put down roots, establish secure and safe environment for their families and ultimately, to help extended family members left behind in their countries of origin.

Fueled by the fact that the federal Department of Immigration funded the NGO and the Reception House, the relationship between the Canada Immigration Centre (CIC) (the funders) and the Reception House counselors was one of power based in hegemonic discourses regarding the refugees and structural constraints. In other words, the Reception House counselors were very aware of the power the CIC counselors had over the happenings at the Reception House. Therefore, CIC objectives at the Reception House were often reiterated and supported by NGO counselors regardless of the effect on the refugees themselves. In addition, the federal government (under Adaptation Assistance Program (AAP)) provided financial assistance to government sponsored refugees. Taking this into consideration, the interactions between CIC settlement workers, Reception House counselors and government-sponsored refugees[18] were characterized by complex, intricate relationships of structural constraints, power and negotiation. It is within this framework of power that NGO staff and refugees negotiate and interpret their roles.

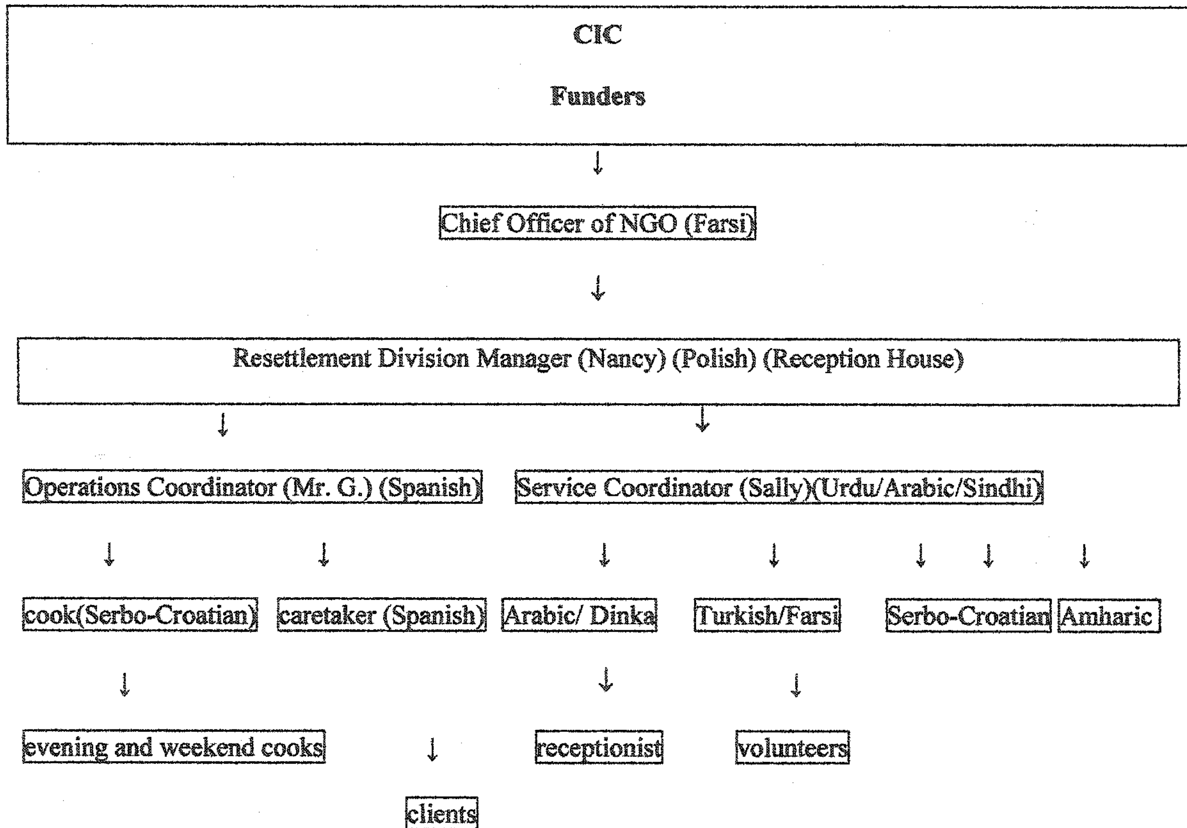
For example, in many instances, in the absence of CIC staff, the NGO counselors would make references as to the appropriate manner in which to talk to CIC staff. The Resettlement Division Manager, Nancy would monitor and specify who should (from the staff) have contact with CIC staff and who was not important enough. In one situation, in a CIC and Reception House staff meeting, a new employee had responded to a generalized comment made about some resettlement problems that occurred within his

[18] Government sponsored refugees can interchangeably be referred to as CR1's, CR5's, (refers to the immigration category they are classified under) clients or in-house refugees.

ethnic group. After the meeting the Resettlement Division Manager made it clear to the Service Coordinator that she should tell the new Reception House counselors that they have no place to speak in a meeting with CIC. Nancy's personal ambition provoked this response. Although, the new employee had only made a general comment, she worried about how this would reflect on not only the NGO and CIC relationship but also her personal relationship with the CIC staff.

In addition, in general inferences were made by Reception House administrators regarding the likes and dislikes of the CIC staff; Reception House staff was made extremely conscious not to aggravate CIC staff. For example, any correspondence sent from the Reception House to CIC had to be addressed to one of the three government-settlement counselors. At the specific request of a CIC settlement counselor, not assistants nor summer staff were to be personally addressed on official or unofficial correspondence. Furthermore, CIC resettlement counselor would come to check inventory every fiscal quarter implying that they were always keeping an eye on what was goods were accounted for at the Reception House. In diagram 1, I have provided an illustration of the structural framework within which all these actors maneuver.

Diagram 1: Hierarchical Structure Between CIC, Reception House Staff and Refugee Clients[19]



(languages refer to languages spoken by the particular employee)

The logistics of running a Reception House were quite complicated. In order to clarify roles and responsibilities, the house administration was divided into operations and service. In general, the operations coordinator took care of the daily operations of the House while the service coordinator was in charge of developing, implementing and coordinating services for the refugees. Within this general division of labour, there was an overlap because the operations service coordinators also worked on individual client cases especially when the Reception House was full or there were particular linguistic needs that they could meet. The cooks and the caretaker worked under the operations

[19] At the Reception House, any government sponsored refugee who had come to be provided with any services was called a client.

coordinator. The resettlement counselors reported to the service coordinator. Both the service and the operations coordinators had been at the NGO for over ten years. Both of these individuals reported to the Resettlement Division Manager, Nancy who had worked at the NGO for over fifteen years. She had immigrated to Canada from Poland. Her first job in Canada was at the NGO where she had risen from counselor to Service Coordinator to Resettlement Division Manager.

4.3 Operations Coordinator

The operations coordinator, Mr. G., was in charge of maintaining the house within the operations budget, assigning rooms to 'destined' refugees, overseeing kitchen and maintenance staff, shopping for and distributing household goods provided to refugees as they leave the Reception House and billing the government for services provided. He was also responsible for the counseling of Spanish speaking refugees. The operations coordinator was a Latin American man in his early fifties. He was not a refugee himself but he was an immigrant who had lived in Canada for sixteen years with his Canadian wife. He had worked with refugees in the Reception House for over twelve years but he began with the NGO as a volunteer. Both he and the current Executive Director of the NGO had started their jobs as counselors together over twelve years ago. Mr. G. took his job very seriously. For him, the most important aspect of his job was the safety and well being of all the residents of the Reception House. His colleagues and the other residents of the Reception House consider him a tough guy. In an interview with him, he described his job as a challenging one. "I love to meet people…but I have to be tough". He justified his tough position as necessary because most of the time he received most of

the complaints and the blame for situations that had gotten out of hand. He was laughing as he told me that one refugee at the house used to mimic him: "Mr. G., no! no! no! no! no! ...Mr. G., no! no! no! no! no!" . His mimicking related directly to the fact that Mr. G. maintained a position of authority around the house.

During that same interview, Mr. G. provided me with an example of the difficulties of his job and why he must project himself as a tough guy. The previous year at the Reception House, a large group of unmarried Iraqi men arrived. Twenty-seven men were 'destined' for our city while the rest were distributed and designated to the provinces' other cities. Most importantly however, these Iraqi men had lived together in a refugee camp for years. They did not want to be separated from each other so the men destined to go to the other cities refused to go because they did not want to break up the group. Although they eventually had to go to the destined city, within a few days they all showed up at the Reception House looking for accommodations at the Reception House. CIC and the NGO had strict policies against providing accommodations to people that have transferred from other cities. It was assumed that government sponsored refugees who decided to move to another city so soon after their arrival do so because they knew somebody in that city. CIC expected those friends or family known to the refugee to take some responsibility for their resettlement such as providing temporary shelter or assistance with finding appropriate accommodations. Mr. G. said that when these men showed up, they were insisting on staying at the Reception House. When consulted, Nancy, said that Mr. G. should talk to them and explain the situation and if they still did not listen to call the police. To this Mr. G. replied: "no I won't call the police because the

next day it will be *my* name in the paper saying such and such kicked the refugees out on the street!" Mr. G. reaction was based in part on the fact that he thought that it was human nature for the people to want to stay together. At the same time, he was worried that any type of seemingly unjust behaviour would reflect badly on him. Part of the challenge of his job was to balance the desire to help people in need with professionalism, and the need to look good. In the case of the young Iraqi men, Mr. G. decided to bring the case to his superiors. They came to the conclusion that even though the government would not pay for their accommodations, the NGO would pick up the tab for two weeks for the men that were insisting on accommodation. Despite all the efforts that were made for this special case, Mr. G. eventually had to threaten to remove one of the Iraqi men because he was a "nuisance". Mr. G. said that he was disrupting the other residents and he would complain about everything so he gave him an ultimatum. In those days it was very cold out (-30°C) so Mr. G. warned him that if he did not start behaving properly, he would have to leave the Reception House. To this the young man responded, "I will sleep in the streets then." Mr. G. replied angrily, "...during a Canadian winter that means you will never wake up…you are going to be like that (he knocks forcefully on his desk) hard like a rock…you'll never live to see all the beautiful things Canada has to offer. It will have gone to waste." He told me that later the man came back and apologized but he would have thrown him out if he did change his behaviour.

However, Mr. G. was always negotiating his authority at the Reception House, alternating between assertiveness and drawing back. For example, he would sometimes take a position of apathy when it came to advocating on behalf of refugees. He was

always careful not to cross the line between professionalism and sympathy. In most situations, Mr. G. would simply say, "I am sorry but I can't help you…those are the rules". For example, a resident refugee was a young Colombian girl with a recently divorced sister in the city who was the mother of two. The girl had made a request to Mr. G. to allow her to stay at her sister's house to take care of her sister's children while her sister was at work. Because government sponsored refugees received orientations to facilitate the resettlement process, it was essential that the refugees were in house to receive instruction. Mr. G. told her that she was not allowed to stay at her sister's house and it was essential that she attend all the orientations. When the girl did not show up at the Reception House, after various attempts at contacting her, Mr. G. informed CIC that she had not been attending her orientations.

In other cases, Mr. G. would take a stance and try to make changes to benefit the refugees especially if he felt that the refugees were being treated unfairly. For example, Mr. G. told me a story about a government-sponsored refugee who had been at the Reception House a few years ago. Previously, the practice was that upon arrival at the reception house a man and his wife were measured in order to assess what size of bed to order for them. A couple of average height was entitled to a double bed. In order to qualify for a queen size bed, one had to measure over six feet. According to Mr. G., people always wanted bigger beds especially because back home whole families would sleep together in one big bed. This ex-resident had told him almost a year or two after he had left the Reception House that his arrival at the Reception House was the worst time of his life. When Mr. G. questioned him why, he replied, "As soon as we arrived, you

There was a lady from Vietnam who proudly presented him with a small paper doll wrapped in tissue paper in a Kleenex box or the Russian man who brought him a flower as a way to say thank you.

4.4 Service Coordinator

The operations side of the Reception House was juxtaposed with the service dimension of the Reception House. All counselors reported to the service coordinator, Sally, who was a middle-aged woman from Pakistan and spoke Urdu, Arabic and Sindhi. She had worked at the NGO in various capacities since 1991. Even though her background was not in social work, she had some experience working as a translator with the Immigration and Refugee Board. As service coordinator, her role was to develop programs that would facilitate the refugee resettlement process. Like the operations coordinator, the service coordinator was not a refugee herself but she was an immigrant who lived in Europe, Kuwait, the US and ultimately Canada. Sally was a very capable person who had worked her way up to her position at the NGO. Like Mr. G., Sally was consistently negotiating her authority and her position at the Reception House. Sally had a lot of direct contact with CIC and that had put her in a position of relative influence. At times she would use this influence for the benefit of refugees. For example, there was a case of a man from Sudan who upon arrival to Canada became very sick. Although he had mentioned to Sally, his counselor, that he was not well, he did not follow her advice and consult a doctor for several months after falling sick. Finally, he did see a doctor at a walk-in clinic who prescribed him antibiotics for a stomach ailment. A few months later, Sally received a phone call informing her that her client was in the hospital. Since the

Sudanese man did not know anyone in the city he had put Sally's name down as a reference. She was told that his liver was not functioning well and that his condition was deteriorating. He had been put on a list for a liver transplant but that may take several months. Perhaps his sponsorship may run out before he recovered from the transplant, provided he survived the surgery. Sally was distraught. Without the client's knowledge, when she returned to the Reception House, she called a CIC regional supervisor and explained her client's situation. Both of them came to the conclusion that they would provide him a loan for any extra costs incurred because of the illness. In addition, they would suspend his travel loan payments until he became well. Most importantly, they agreed to expedite sponsorship of the client's wife who was still back in Africa in a refugee camp so that he would have somebody to take care of him after the transplant.

Although in this case Sally took the initiative to go beyond her direct means and call CIC, she used this type of influence sparingly. Rather, in most situations, Sally was subjugated to suggestions of policy implementation at the Reception House by CIC. For example, at CIC's suggestion, Sally implemented the use of a new form that was to be filled out by every transfer client.[20] In order to demonstrate to the government sponsored refugees that had transferred, because they had shown initiative to move and should take extra responsibility for their lives, a CIC worker had devised a special form to be filled for transfer clients exclusively. In the form, the refugees were required to provide the reasons they had decided to move to the city, if they knew anybody in the city and how friends and family were willing to help in their resettlement. It was imperative that this form be filled and signed or the "client would not be paid their cheque". Interestingly, the

[20] Transfer clients are those secondary migrants who have taken the initiative to move away from their destined city.

aforementioned practices were in place despite the lack of any overt policies restricting government sponsored refugees from leaving their designated cities. Most importantly, the form was representative of the power equation between the Reception House staff and CIC staff. The Reception House staff was hired to facilitate the resettlement process of refugees but from CIC's perspective, the staff was not accountable to the refugees themselves. Rather, the Reception House staff was accountable to the CIC and was subjected to its pressures and suggestions. So Sally had to learn how to negotiate her position of authority at the Reception House with the CIC staff.

Sally's ability to maneuver and negotiate her position at the Reception House was also well illustrated in a case where a twenty-two year old, single, male, Iraqi client, Haitham, was complaining that he did not want to go to school full-time. Haitham had been in Canada for eight months and he had transferred from two other cities before he decided on the city mentioned in my study. He barely spoke any English. Sally had suspected that there was more to Haitham's story than he let on. Most newcomers are eager to learn English as they know that without it, they will never find a good job. He would also come to the Reception House wearing flashy clothes and carrying two cell phones. Haitham had two months left before his government sponsorship would be terminated and his English was not nearly at the level it should have been especially taking into consideration that he was so young. At Sally's request, I visited Haitham with a translator in his home. Home visits were thought to be appropriate after every five months because it would allow counselors to assess the individual's level of resettlement. The service coordinator used these home visits as a way to measure the effectiveness of

the orientations that are provided at the Reception House. Also, it was thought that by watching people in their homes, many resettlement issues would become transparent. These could include issues of domestic violence, working under the table, excessive poverty, child abuse or neglect and many others. Haitham lived in the basement of a house owned by an Iraqi man and his family. It seemed as if this family had not only been providing Haitham with moral support but had also been helping him financially. It was surprising to see that Haitham had a fully furnished apartment with stereo, phone and television. Most people that transfer from other provinces did not have much money because they would have spent most of it on the travel expenses incurred by transferring. In addition, Haitham complained that he had not received his last cheque. But further questioning revealed that the cheque had already been spent. It was very close to the end of the month and he would be receiving another cheque soon. He told me that he could not go to school full-time because he was ill and had problems sleeping, making it very difficult for him to get up so early to go to school. I suggested that he seek medical attention and he did. The doctor's report was negative and proved that nothing was medically wrong with Haitham. Before the doctor's result came in, I had briefed Sally on my conversation with Haitham and my advice to him. She was put in an awkward position as my briefing further strengthened her suspicions about Haitham working under the table. The fact that Haitham could not speak English well and that he did not want to attend ESL instruction, did not help the situation either. Taking everything into consideration, Sally decided that she would not tell CIC about her suspicion that Haitham was working under the table. Instead, she decided to would ask Haitham to come to the Reception House so that she could reiterate the rules and regulations of government

sponsorship and more specifically, explain again that if he was working he must report it or he might have to pay back any extra income to CIC. Sally told me that she was going to give Haitham a chance because she was always uncomfortable with these types of situations. While she did not want people to abuse the system, she also did not want to feel like a spy for the government. By making the decision to remain quiet about a feeling about a client, Sally exercised discretion and took a concrete stand regarding her role in this particular case. She negotiated her role within certain structural constraints. Ironically however, a few weeks later, a CIC settlement counselor called Sally and said, "…a little birdie told me Haitham has been working!"

4.5 The Resettlement Counselors

Being the service coordinator, Sally had a few more avenues through which she could exercise her discretion regarding her relationship with CIC. Other Reception House counselors were more limited in the decisions they could make in dealing with the pressures placed on them by CIC and the role they could play with the refugees. The Reception House counselors were of distinct ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and their unique circumstances and backgrounds influenced how they interacted with each other, their superiors, CIC, and their clients. It is important to note that all of the resettlement counselors at the Reception House were refugees themselves not long ago. Even more interesting was the fact that they themselves have stayed at the Reception House as government sponsored refugees. In fact, many counselors were drawn from the repertoire of refugees that had passed through the Reception House. Specifically, they were hired for their multi-linguistic abilities but appearance, mannerism and social conduct were

also taken into consideration. For example, the Afghani counselor, Daoud spoke four languages fluently including English, Farsi, Turkish and Russian. He did not have a professional social work background but because he had been a refugee himself and he spoke the languages needed (especially Farsi and English), he was hired to assist with the resettlement of a rapidly growing number of Afghanis in the city. In the same way, just before I left the Reception House, the Resettlement Division Manager hired Lol, a Dinka and Arabic speaking counselor who had came to Canada four years ago as a government sponsored refugee and had stayed at the Reception House.

Considering that almost all of the Reception House staff was hired because of their linguistic knowledge, most of their work related training was provided on the job. Consequently, new counselors would sometimes find the whole training experience overwhelming as they themselves were still struggling with many resettlement issues. For example, Lol, the Dinka/Arabic speaking counselor, told me that when he first arrived in Canada, it was his dream to work as a resettlement counselor at the Reception House. However, Lol felt overwhelmed with the on-the-job-training and the situation was further exacerbated by the large influx of Sudanese refugees into the city. Frustrated, he one day told me, "now that I have accomplished my dream, I have to figure out how to keep it."

The idea of striving to retain employment at the Reception House was also influenced by the fact that employees were hired on yearly contracts that had to be renewed at the end of each fiscal year. Taking into consideration job performance, counselors contracts would be re-signed pending government funding each year. With

nation wide government cut-backs in all programs, most counselors would feel insecure and anxious about preserving future employment at the Reception House. This anxiety over job security was further augmented by the changing Reception House demographics, which could render certain linguistic skills redundant. In an attempt to alleviate these precarious conditions, Reception House administration made efforts to absorb good employees in other roles. For example, there were two Serbo-Croatian counselors, Anna and Ziggy. After the majority of ex-Yugoslavian refugees were resettled in Canada, and the situation in the region was relatively improved, the Reception House still maintained the employment of these two counselors as well as a part-time Albanian speaking counselor, Gordan. Anna was offered a part-time position as a resettlement counselor and a part-time Airport Receptionist. Airport Reception was the program developed to welcome refugees to the city at the airport and to orient the new arrivals on processes and procedures. They were to provide assistance with cases such as missing luggage, emergency medical issues, lay-overs and so on. In addition, from the months, October to April, winter clothing would be distributed to the new arrivals right at the airport. Ziggy was provided with a part-time position as a resettlement counselor and a part-time position as the Housing counselor, responsible for securing appropriate accommodations for designated refugees.

Anna was a thirty-nine year old woman who had been a veterinarian in the ex-Yugoslavia. She had come to the reception house seven years ago as a government sponsored refugee. Her jobs at the Reception House were initially those of a caretaker and then a cook. As her English improved and the need for Serbo-Croatian speaking

assistance rose, she began working part time as a resettlement counselor. Anna had gone through many personal issues since the time she had arrived in Canada. She had worked to support her husband while he studied to get accreditation as a veterinarian in Canada. When he graduated, he filed for a divorce and left the city. After that, both her brother and her father were murdered back in the ex-Yugoslavia. Her concern for her widowed mother and her limited finances did not stop her from taking on more responsibilities. In addition to her two jobs at the Reception House, she worked at a retail clothing store during weekday evenings and attended courses at the local technical college in order to get her diploma in Information Technology.

Although she was a strong independent woman, her insecurities would become apparent in the daily interactions with other counselors, CIC staff and refugee clients. The Resettlement Division Manager, Nancy would always bother Anna. Anna was a very beautiful, well-dressed woman and Nancy would give her a hard time. For example, she would always comment on Anna's clothes and would even go to the extend of calling to check-up on what time Anna got into the office. Both Nancy and Anna, along with an Arabic-speaking counselor, were responsible for the Airport Reception and had to work very closely together. Nancy would insist that only she talk to Immigration staff at the Airport Reception. In one case, Nancy threatened to fire Anna because she complained about a pair of snow boots Nancy distributed to a child that were too big and the child was uncomfortable. Anna felt confused and upset, as Nancy was not like this with the other Airport Reception counselor. The most visible difference between the two was that

the Arabic-speaking counselor was a man who had not worked his way up from a caretaker to a cook and then a counselor whereas Anna had.

Anna allowed herself to get easily convinced that she did not handle a case professionally or appropriately. For example, Anna shared her office with an Amharic-speaking counselor, Sisay who had his degree in Social Work from the local university. Although he too had arrived as a refugee, he never lived at the reception house. After leaning English, he drove a cab to put himself through university. As a professionally designated social worker, Sisay was always telling the other counselors how to address certain cases. As the two of them shared an office, Sisay would often overhear Anna counseling her clients. After the client would leave, Sisay would tell Anna that she is making her clients too dependent on her. He believed that as a professional counselor, a certain objective distance should be maintained to encourage independent thinking and actions. He would also encourage her to stand up to Nancy. He was a firm believer in principles of professionalism and if somebody crossed the professional boundary with him, he had no trouble standing up for himself. For example, during lunch one day, Nancy, Anna, Sisay and myself were sitting in the dining hall. We were chatting about general things like the global situation of refugees. Out of this topic, Nancy made a comment about how Sisay should not waste his food (he had left a few bites on his plate) because "...people in Ethiopia are starving." To this, Sisay replied offended, "what do you know about Ethiopia?" as he walked to the garbage bin to throw away the rest of his lunch. Nancy was taken aback by his offensive tone but she did not reply. Instead, later on that afternoon, she complained to Sally that Sisay was out of line to speak to her that

way. In the meantime, Sisay, still bitter from the incident, called Nancy at her office and told her he was offended by her comment. He told her that she did not have the right to speak to him like a child. He told her that her comment implied that because he was an Ethiopian, he should appreciate the privileged position he had. Nancy's comment had disturbed Sisay so much that he told her he was not willing to work in a place that did not respect him for who he was and if she did not apologize, he would resign. Needless to say, Nancy was shocked. She apologized and tried to explain that she did not mean anything by the comment.

These two counselors in distinct interactions with the Manager provided illustrative examples of the way in which gender and education influence the interactions between the resettlement staff at the Reception House. Because Sisay had a "Canadian" education, he was secure enough to stand up for himself even if it meant he might lose his job. He mentioned to me many times that he could find a better paying job in his field but he wanted to stay because he loved the work. Most of the other counselors were thankful that they had an office job since almost all of them had worked in low paying menial labour jobs. The distinct responses to the Manager's attitudes towards them were also influenced by gender. Anna was the only female counselor, other than Sally, who had a very different position at the Reception House. (Sally also had her share of issues with the Manager but after ten years of working as her subordinate, Sally learned how to deal with Nancy such as allowing her to take credit for programs Sally developed or proposals she wrote). Being a woman who began her Reception House career as a caretaker certainly affected the way she was treated by the Manager. The other

counselors did not treat Anna the same way however; rather they respected the work that she did. Even Sisay, who did not agree with the way she counseled certain clients, knew that she was a good counselor with only the client's best interests in mind.

In many cases, Anna went beyond her job description to assist her clients. She was always asking around if anybody had extra baby clothes or bicycles that she could pass on to her less-fortunate clients. In one extreme case, Anna became very emotional regarding a pregnant single mother and her two-year old son from Ghana. There were chances that the unborn child may have birth defects. The two-year old was very confused and scared when his mother went into the hospital in an emergency situation. Anna said that she would take the child home with her and God forbid if anything should happen to the mother, she would have adopted him. The service coordinator, Sally, said it would not be necessary and made arrangements for the child to be cared for by a local childrens' charity. Anna went to visit the child three times a day and took him to visit his mom in the hospital. Unfortunately after the mother was released from the hospital, the child was diagnosed with a severe type of blood infection and was admitted to the hospital. Anna did not want to leave her client's side but Sally insisted that she go home and get some rest.

In another example, Anna was deeply affected by a case where three transfer clients were evicted from their new apartment. Three brothers from Sudan, Riec, age twenty-two, Tut age seventeen, and James age sixteen came to the Reception House to inform CIC that they had transferred from another city. Because the two younger brothers were

under 18, the eldest brother was their legal guardian. The boys spoke perfect British English, Nuer and Arabic. They had a fifty-year-old niece in the city who accompanied them to the Reception House. Because they were transfer clients, the Reception House counselors could not help them find housing but did promise to help them find donated furniture. Until they could find appropriate accommodations, they would stay with their niece. This was risky as their niece lived in subsidized housing where extended visitors can not stay. Without seeking permission, eviction was a risk. Eventually after a week, they found the ground floor of a house in a low-income area of the city for $925.00 a month including utilities. The boys were very happy when they came to the Reception House to inform Anna. Anna noted down their change of address to inform CIC and started making some calls for donations. She also referred them to a local charity in the city called the Work for Furniture Program where they could work a few days and trade those hours in for the furniture they needed. On one Friday afternoon, as the boys were excited to spend their first weekend in their new home, they found an old mattress in a dumpster nearby. They dragged it into the house and decided to sleep on it. On Saturday morning, the landlady knocked at the door. Riec answered the door and after a few minutes of talking, she began to ask him what smelled so bad. She started accusing him of smelling terrible and angrily told Riec and his brothers that they had to get their things together and leave the premise. The landlord caught the boys off guard. They got all their stuff together and left leaving the stinky mattress behind. The consequences of this episode were quite traumatic as the youngest brother, James had to be admitted to the hospital that same evening. He was diagnosed with severe schizophrenia and was detained at the hospital for over three week. The two brothers went back to their niece's

house who had already received a warning about having too many guests in her home. Monday morning Riec was at the Reception House doorstep before the doors opened. Anna came down to see him immediately and after Riec explained the story, she asked if he had signed a lease agreement and if so, to show her a copy. He showed Anna the lease agreement that was partially incomplete. He had mentioned he had given the landlady a $900.00 advance on one month's rent and a $900.00 damage deposit. It did not state anywhere that a deposit was paid or an advance on the one-month's rent. Anna asked Riec what the paper was and was told him that he did not know because none of them could read or write. They just knew how to sign their names. Anna was shocked, she (and the rest of us) had assumed they could read and write fluently because they spoke so well. He told Anna he had only completed grade three in Arabic and his brothers had not had any formal education in any language.

Because the lease agreement said nothing, Anna tried to phone the landlady to have her fax a copy of the signed lease agreement with a copy of the receipt for the payment they had made. The landlady refused to provide any such information. So Anna went to the house to talk to the lady for herself. When she got there, the landlady told Anna that it would be better if she left because she was going to call the police. She said that the boys owed her money for the damage they caused in the apartment. Anna asked to see the damages but the landlady refused and closed the door in Anna's face. Frustrated, Anna went back to the Reception House where she reported the events of the day. Riec and Tut had been waiting for her as well. In a meeting with Administrators, it was suggested the boys go to the Rental Board to make a formal complaint. Anna wrote

down the address for them and explained to them how they were to proceed. In the meantime, Anna asked the housing counselor, Ziggy if he could assist them in finding accommodation and she also asked CIC if they would be willing to issue another damage deposit loan. In the end, the young boys did lodge a complaint with the Rental Board but did not get their money back because they could not prove that they had actually paid the landlady as no receipt was issued. However, they were issued another loan from CIC for a new damage deposit.

Anna's response to the situation was juxtaposed with the manner in which she had responded to in previous cases. In this case, Anna maintained certain professional boundaries between herself and her clients. Although she visited James in the hospital, and tried to speak to the landlady, she was not as emotionally involved as she had been with the young single mother from Ghana. In their eviction case, even though she did not accompany the boys to the Rental Board and advocate on their behalf, she stood back and guided her clients while maintaining a professional distance. Although she had received notice that CIC would provide them with another loan, she waited to tell the brothers until they had found accommodations. In this case, she was very conscious of the fact that everybody was watching to see how the situation would turn out. CIC staff and Reception House staff asked for updates on the situation all the time. Also, as Sisay put it, her lack of objectivity in other cases had placed her in a less preferred position for acting service coordinator when Sally had gone on holidays. It may have been her desire to be perceived as a person who was able to provide rational, professional and objective

counseling despite her sympathetic nature was coming into play. She wanted to prove that she was capable of acting as a service coordinator.

It is important to note that Anna's insecurities did not exclusively lie in that fact that she would sometimes become emotional involved with her clients but were also fueled by her own struggle with resettlement and adaptation in Canada. In many casual conversations, Anna would ask me to advise her about what the proper way to say a certain thing was. She would ask me to correct her English if I thought she was pronouncing something wrongly or if she had said something that was grammatically incorrect. Her insecurities about her language abilities perhaps affected her ability to defend the boys to the landlady. The result of these insecurities was that she shied away from taking on a more active role of an advocate of refugee rights. In certain situations, Anna perceived her role as a caregiver. In other situations, she took a more objective stance that was reinforced by CIC staff as well; one that was to encourage independence and self-supporting attitudes in government sponsored refugees. Anna's work "ethos" were constructed and reconstructed based on a framework that took into consideration and negotiated factors such as the desire for mobility, professionalism, the desire to help but not advocate and her own insecurities about her own ability to resettle well or adapt to Canadian society. All these complexities created ambivalences in the interpretation and negotiation of her role in the daily interactions that Anna had with her clients, colleagues and superiors and CIC staff.

Although Anna and Ziggy were from similar ethnic backgrounds, Ziggy interpreted and negotiated his roles at the Reception House in a very distinct manner. Ziggy was a single, thirty-two year old man from the former Yugoslavia. He was a Serb from Sarejevo who had to abandon his university studies in philosophy because of the war. He had come to Canada five years ago as a government sponsored refugee. Ziggy had experienced the gruesome effects of violence first hand as he worked as a nurse's assistant during the war. He had some family in the city with whom he had very good relations. Always dressed in a black suit and white shirt, Ziggy had a very strong personality based on very strong views and a loud authoritative voice. Everybody at the Reception House would tease him that the reason he had an office to himself was because nobody could talk over his voice. However, Ziggy had a softer side to his personality which few people realized. For the most part, Ziggy was perceived by his colleagues as the perfect person for Housing counselor. His tough demeanor and abrupt mannerisms were perceived as harsh for refugees but appropriate in dealing with landlords and rental property managers. Interestingly, despite Ziggy's rough and tough exterior, he too would not advocate on behalf of refugees even if he thought they were being wronged. For example, with the recent large influx of Sudanese, Iraqi and Afghanis communities into the city, in conjunction with an on-going housing crisis, finding accommodations for people with sometimes unusually large families from new and exotic places could be difficult and complex. The city in my study is a medium sized city in Canada that had become ethnically diverse about fifteen years ago. However, there were large communities of certain more established ethnic populations, like the Chinese or South East Asian so the city was relatively new to such diversity. It is important to note that the

counselors, including Ziggy, were very aware of the racial dimension to the housing problem. For example, in many instances, Ziggy would make an appointment to take a family to view a house or an apartment with the concierge or property manager of an available apartment. Ziggy would mention the number of people in the family, the desired date of possession and any other pertinent information. Needless to say, he would not mention the country of origin of the family concerned but he would specify that they were government-sponsored refugees. During my fieldwork, there were countless times when the family would come back to the Reception House without viewing the apartment. Ziggy could tell from the way the concierge reacted to "visibly distinct" people. For instance, women wearing hijjabs or tall, dark African men with initiation markings carved into their foreheads. He would immediately know that the family would never have a chance to rent that particular property. Upon returning to the Reception House, Ziggy would discuss the experience with Sally and the other counselors. Although everybody admitted that there was an undeniable racial dimension to the housing difficulties faced by Ziggy, nobody was willing to lodge a complaint with the rental board or write a simple letter of complaint to the property management company. When I asked Ziggy why he did not take a more active role in protecting the housing rights of refugees, he answered that he was to busy, there were too many racists and it would not change anything anyway. However, he would describe the experiences he had to bear soliciting potential accommodations on the phone with his loud voice and heavy eastern accent. Sometimes, people were rude and would not even entertain his calls. Others would complain that they could not understand his accent. Ziggy had learned to deal with these attitudes by placing people in buildings where he already had

established contacts. As a result, many of the refugees that lived in the Reception House would be clustered in certain areas and specifically certain buildings in the city.

Although Ziggy was a very different person than Anna, he too had to face ambivalence and insecurities in his role as a Reception House counselor. By putting on a hard exterior, he presented an image of a person who was very secure and sure of himself; but his vulnerabilities were reinforced by the fact that he too was dealing with similar discriminatory practices that his clients were facing. Even more ironic was the idea of placing people in buildings where he had accommodated other refugees because not only did this allow Ziggy to take a position of apathy towards blatant racist attitudes but also indirectly protected himself from those very racist attitudes. Moreover, government sponsored refugees living in the same building would establish networks with each other. I will expand on this notion in detail later on.

Reception House counselors were constantly left with feeling of insecurities regarding contract renewals because of the eminent threat of cut backs in funding. Ziggy was no different as was often reflected in his attitude. He would constantly be making jokes about how he was just about to type up his letter of resignation "…because if they do not want me, I do not want them...". His joking manner was his way of coping with the insecurities that came along with job as resettlement counselor. It was important for Ziggy to reach a certain level of social status. He once told me about a friend of his who came over from Sarajevo with him. They were both of similar ages but they took very distinct paths when they arrived to Canada. His friend learned English and applied for

university to study engineering. He had recently graduated and had been offered a job at $40,000 a year. He compared his friend's situation with his own and commented, "I don't even make that much after five years of working here!". Nonetheless, Ziggy wanted to secure his position in this field and in order to do so, he had attempted to return to university part-time to finish a degree in Social Work.

Within the structural constraints of the Reception House, each resettlement counselors interpreted their role based on their own individual "ethos". Because many of the employees had risen to higher ranks within the Reception House, the counselors too had the expectation or hope to achieve a higher social position within the organization, which was not far from reality. Interestingly, even the Executive Director of the NGO was a refugee from Iran who came to Canada as a government sponsored refugee over twelve years ago. As mentioned before, many of the house counselors were people who had experienced the Reception House first hand as they too came to Canada as government sponsored refugees. Although this assisted them in relating to the situation of many refugees, but it also brought many of their own insecurities regarding their own resettlement to the surface, such as English skills, strong accents or lack of appropriate training in resettlement. All of the complexities in conjunction with structural constraints such as language spoken no longer needed, contract renewal pending funding or limited decision–making power create ambiguities in the interpretations of the role and the interactions amongst Reception House staff and counselors with the clients.

4.6 Government Sponsored Refugees: The Contradictions of Selection to Designation

As the Canadian public perceived it, the government's role in the global refugee crisis was based primarily on a humanitarian commitment to assisting the world's displaced people. While the commitment was worthy, there was room to explore other important factors that come into play. In contrast to some other countries in the world, Canada's refugee policy had been based on an integration through immigration perspective. The Canadian resettlement program did not simply provide refuge or protection to displaced people rather it provided a chance to establish a new home, to establish their roots. After application for resettlement in Canada, government sponsored refugees who were selected abroad were subjected to admissibility criterion that measured their potential for "successful establishment" in Canada [Gilad, 1990:128]. In fact until June 28, 2002, when drastic changes were made to the Immigration Act, refugees and immigrants alike could be refused on the basis of medical problems for example. Generally then, these selected refugees were relatively more adaptable on the basis of language, work skills, education and personal issues; or they seemed to have the potential to adapt to Canadian society. The implementation of the immigration point system in refugee selection abroad illustrated that the government was searching for a certain type of refugee could adapt easily in the Canadian society. It was not the most vulnerable and needy displaced people that the Canadian government wanted to immigrate but rather those refugees who were able to become independent promptly without putting an undue burden on the system. So, in addition to the humanitarian

aspect of refugee resettlement, the government of Canada had wished to fulfil the economic and social needs of Canada.

To judge whether or not Canada should implement this admissibility criteria to refugees is not within the scope of my research. But it is within the scope to reveal the inherent contradictions of this selection criterion. This preliminary method of selection, combined with the employment-driven remnants in the former employment and immigration profile of the C(E)IC, sought to encourage autonomy in the refugees. While the selection process abroad for refugee resettlement was designed to create self-supporting independent refugees, the at-home policy of designating[21] government refugees actually worked to make new arrivals more dependent. The designation program was the product of a suggestion made as a joke in a CIC conference once[22]. Previously, the CIC staff were continuously bothered by the number of refugees who wanted to go to Toronto. Not only were the government staff overloaded in that city, but the immigrant serving agencies that were funded to facilitate the refugee's resettlement could barely keep up with the new arrivals. Moreover, other resources, such as jobs, housing, language instruction were limited for the growing number of people entering the city. As a result, CIC decided to divide and disperse the number of refugees selected by the Canadian government per year as per the necessary resources for resettlement available in each urban centre. In other words, government sponsored refugees were sent to certain designated cities the most being sent still to cities like Toronto or Vancouver while less numbers would be sent to smaller cities like Ft. McMurray, Alberta or

[21] designated refugees were also sometimes referred to as destined refugees
[22] CIC staff referred to this in a lecture regarding Designated Refugees given at the CCR conference in Calgary Nov. 2002.

Brandon, Manitoba. The net effect of the designating of refugees had been to deny these people of choice of where to live and in fact deny them access to potential personal resources such as friends and family in other cities.

In addition to the denial of control over one's lives, the 'designating' policy also created secondary migrants or transfers clients who have chosen to move away from the designated city to another urban centre[23]. They were offered limited resettlement services by CIC because it was thought that if these refugees could find the money, the courage and the willingness to move here from their designated cities for family or friends, then the family and friends should also be responsible for their resettlement. One particular government worker when referring to transfer clients claimed that, "…they are not our priority". This attitude was reinforced by the fact that when refugees took the initiative to move to another city, CIC workers had to work harder to communicate with CIC from the destined city. Extra effort was needed to track what payments had been received by the refugee and to avoid the risk of double payments. The extent to which the CIC wanted to demonstrate its power to transfer refugees is illustrated by a special form devised exclusively for transfer clients by a CIC worker. Since the transfer refugees had shown initiative to move and take extra responsibility for their lives, it was imperative that the form be filled and signed or the "client would not be paid their cheque". In the form, the refugees were required to provide the reasons they had decided to move to the city, if the client knew anybody in the city and how friends and family were willing to help in their resettlement. These control measures were used even though

[23] I suppose refugees could also move to rural areas but given the lack of resources, they generally do not.

there were no overt policies restricting the government sponsored refugees from leaving their designated cities.

The form might seem harmless in itself; but there were a few striking points to be made. First, not surprisingly, because transfer clients could potentially be penalized for not filling the form, the existence of the form had not been challenged by any refugee because there always lurked the eminent threat of withholding funds. In actuality, this implied that refugees were being penalized for moving away from their designated city[24] where the government had allocated resources for their resettlement. Consequently, transfer clients were constantly left feeling alone, isolated and without resources. Second, the NGO had implemented filling the form as an imperative part of their intake procedure for transfer clients at the request of CIC even though it was unfair to subject transfer clients to this type of questioning and not other refugees. This innovative form and the attitude of the government worker tied in with the idea of controlling refugees. Third, these types of control measures reinforce the ambiguous position of the NGO staff that, in turn, tarnished efforts to build relations of trust with the refugee. Later, I will discuss how trust between the resettlement counselor and the refugee is essential to effective resettlement. Lastly, the inherent contradiction of choosing people deemed adaptable and potentially self-supporting and putting them in a position where they are being punished because they had taken decisions and made choices was obvious.

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[24] Interestingly, the concept of designated city was first suggested as a joke at a CIC meeting. It was later on implemented as policy. [CIC official at CCR conference. Calgary: Nov., 2002].

4.7 The Reception House Clients: Establishing a Transient Community

The resettlement process for government sponsored refugees at the Reception House was very structured. People would generally go through the scheduled orientations in groups according to their arrival date. So the service coordinator would try and cluster people in linguistic and time based groups. The structural and organizational dimension to the Reception House would influence the way in which people interacted with each other.

Most refugees at the Reception House did not exclusively interact within members of their respective ethnic groups. The group of people who had come from Malta seemed to have forged exceptionally strong bonds amongst each other perhaps because most of the families had spent time together in Malta. Almost all of them also spoke Arabic. In Malta, they had not lived together as in the Reception House but they had developed a loose network of acquaintances. In addition, experiencing the process of resettlement together at the Reception House solidified these bonds. The refugees began to feel responsible for each other. Especially with the younger single males, families would tend to foster them and include them in their nuclear families. Women would often make breakfast for the single males in the group. Young mothers would rotate and alternate watching each other's children especially when viewing prospective accommodations. Often people would accompany each other to the doctors, clinics or labs for moral support. In other situations, people would go together to open bank accounts especially when the counselors did not accompany their clients. In many cases, those refugees who

did not speak English well would rely on the younger males, who generally had a better command of the language to clarify misunderstandings or explain procedures.

There was a comfort level amongst this group that allowed for relationships to be developed and fortified. Some people would share their stories of hardship, survival and family left behind with others in their group. For example, Amir was a twenty-five year old single guy from Iraq who was born to two Iranian parents, because of which he spoke Arabic and Farsi fluently. Although his English was not perfect, he could easily get by. His father was a goldsmith and moved to Iraq when he was very young. After the divorce of his parents, his mother and sister lived in Iran. He had traveled through Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and finally Malta before coming to Canada. In Malta, he worked with developmentally challenged people as a volunteer and as a dishwasher under the table to make ends meet. During his stay at the Reception House, Amir shared information about his family back in Iran with many of the people of the group. The men would often advise him that as soon as he gets a job he would be in a position to help out his mother and his sister. When he expressed love, longing and concern for his family, the women would console him. Ironically, one day, he received news from Iran that his sister had given birth to a developmentally challenged child. The concern that people showed Amir was beyond sympathy. I sensed that there was a feeling of 'one of us was hurting'; they were all grieving together. The mood of the usually noisy and cheerful house became somber. People were talking quietly, talking amongst themselves about poor Amir and how he must have felt. The men of the group gathered around the dining table listening remorsefully as Amir told the story of his mother and sister's hardships,

now worsened by the fact that his sister could only provide limited opportunities to this child. The gravity of the situation was further exacerbated by the fact that Amir was so far away and helpless.

But most importantly, in this group people would stand up and support each other. In another example, Amir took it upon himself to complain to Sally that the Palestinian man, Omar had not slept properly since his arrival to Canada. Apparently, Omar had severe back problems as he had been sleeping on the floor because his daughter Nora did not fit in the crib provided for her and she had been sleeping in his bed. (Although Amir did not know this, there had been some kind of administrative problem because Nora was seven years old and needless to say, did not need a crib). Taking into consideration that the beds in the rooms at the Reception House were singles, one could understand why he had been sleeping on the cold floor. Sally fixed the dilemma immediately and had Mr. G. find the Palestinians a room suitable for their family. While they were talking, Amir also took the opportunity to complain about the fact that his room was too small. He was even more disturbed because Mr. G. mentioned that he wanted to put somebody else in his room. In certain situations, when the house was too crowded, Mr. G. sometimes had to put singles of the same sex together in the same room. Amir was furious as he explained that his room was: " …too small even to pray…it is like some prisons in Baghdad". I tried to explain to him that the accommodation is just temporary. Fortunately, Amir was spared a roommate as the person destined to arrive decided to move to Toronto the very next day.

Interestingly though, the relationships that were developed went beyond helping each other to advocating on behalf of each other. To a certain extent, people seemed to depend on each other like an extended family. In certain cases, young men would take the role of young maternal or paternal uncle. In some cases, the children would not call the young men by their name but rather as *Khalo* that meant maternal uncle in Arabic. Using kinship terminology to relate to each other was a way of expressing the level of acceptance of each other. Besides the fact that it was a way of showing respect for the elders, it also was a way to reproduce the community feeling. The refugees of this group felt responsible for each other. This point was well illustrated when there was an incident of the youngest daughter of the Palestinian family eating sugar out of the dispenser. The Palestinian family was headed by a sixty-year old pharmacist who had lived in Syria with his forty-four year old wife and together they had three girls from ages fourteen, eleven and seven (Nora, above). Being the youngest, Nora was very spoiled and she would throw a tantrum when her wishes were not met. While Nora's mother and a Tunisian lady were sitting together and chatting over tea, Nora was pouring sugar out of the dispenser straight into her mouth. Amir briskly walked towards her and grabbed the sugar out of her hand. He started scolding her in Arabic. Surprisingly, she did not squeal or cry, she ran to stand behind her mother. Then he turned to me and smiled, and said, "her parents never stop her, somebody must". The girl's mother, even though she heard the comment, did not seem bothered by the fact that her daughter was being reprimanded. Amir continued by telling me stories about how he was stuck sitting behind Nora on the plane from Malta. He told me proudly that he was the one who had put a stop to her screaming and shouting on the plane as well.

The examples I have provided have referred to the refugees that had come from Malta in a group, however, a similar yet less intense feeling of support and friendship was extended to the other in-house refugees of distinct ethnicities. It should be noted though that the relationships forged amongst these refugees seemed to be based on necessity and commonalties rather than a strong sense of family or community. There were a few distinct situations that well-illustrated the type of interactions refugees of diverse background had. The first example relates to the time when I drove two in house refugees, Mohammed and Janet, to see a doctor. Mohammed was a twenty-four year old Afghani man who came to Canada with his wife and a four-year old daughter. They had lived in Pakistan for six years and their daughter was even born in exile. Although his wife spoke English very well, Mohammed spoke Urdu, Dari and Russian, so I offered to translate at the doctor's office on his behalf. Mohammed had been complaining of stomach pains. Janet was a young Nigerian mother of two, a three-year old son and a four-month old daughter. Janet had a degree in Sociology and she and her husband, who was from Sierra Leone, had lived in Malta for five years where their children were born. They were Catholics and in Malta had received assistance from the local Church groups. While in Malta, he worked odd jobs and she braided hair to pay the bills. The entire family spoke English very well. I was not told why she needed to go to the doctor but I told her I would be happy to drive her. Upon arriving at the doctor, Mohammed was diagnosed with some type of parasite in his stomach pending stool testing. Janet on the other hand came running out of the doctor's office extremely upset. She sat down next to us and started to cry. I asked her what was wrong. Visibly upset, she replied "I am

pregnant!" with this she began to sob again. Both Mohammed and I were taken aback because she had a four-month baby. Given their situation in Canada, life would be difficult. As these thoughts raced through my head, she began to talk about how bad it would look, she said, "I am an educated woman what will people say? A child on her breast and one in the womb…even a fly passes by me and I get pregnant!" On the way to the lab for testing, Janet was still crying and both Mohammed and I were trying to console her. I told her that everything has a way of working itself out. Mohammed tried to console her by telling her that God was watching out for her that is why He brought the family here to Canada where they could have a safe future for all their children. Janet calmed down just as we got to the lab. Janet and Mohammed walked inside together while I parked the car. When I met up with them, both of them were sharing their experiences of having children in foreign countries without any family support. Over the next few days, I watched while Mohammed and Janet interacted at the Reception House. She would be nagging him to quit smoking and to remember to take his medication three times a day, while he would accompany Janet's husband to watch the kids playing while she rested.

In another example, Monica was a single female doctor from Columbia in her mid thirties. She spoke English and Spanish fluently. She worked in rural Colombia with an international organization involved in providing medical assistance in areas of civil strife. When the Reception House refugees discovered that there was a doctor in the House, they would ask to consult her on various ailments that they were suffering from. We

started teasing her that we should keep her on at the Reception House as "the House Doctor".

In another situation, Abdul and Laila were a Moslem couple from Iraq who had lived in Syria in exile for four years. He was twenty-eight year old man who was a survivor of torture. His wife was twenty-four years old and eight and a half months pregnant when they arrived in Canada. Because she was wearing a full length burka upon departing Syria, she passed the airlines unnoticed. Neither of them spoke any English but she needed immediate prenatal attention because her baby was in a breached position. Sally had suggested that the eldest daughter of the Zakaria family go along with us to the obstetrician's office in order to translate and provide moral support to Laila who seemed withdrawn since her arrival.

The Zakaria family was a family of five people. They had come to Canada via Malta. The father, Joseph, 50 years old had worked under Sadaam Hussein's regime. His wife, Nijaad was a forty-two year old, stay-at-home mother. He had fled to Syria with his family about seven years ago. If it were not for the fears imposed by the regime, they lived well in Iraq. They were Assyrian Christians. Together, they had three children; a boy, Nicolas who was the eldest was a twenty-one year old man who had studied up to grade eight just before they left Iraq. The two girls, Mona and Maria were seventeen and fifteen respectively. They had had no formal education since they left Iraq but they had done a few basic courses in English and in Italian while in Malta. Mona spoke both Arabic and English.

Both Mona and her mother agreed to come to the hospital to have her a breached baby around moved into delivery position with Abdul, Laila and myself. Laila seemed very nervous so Mona, the translator and I tried to make her feel at ease. She tried to smile and laugh but the fear in her eyes could not be hidden. On the way to the hospital we made small talk. We arrived at the hospital and I let them off to go park the car. After a few wrong turns we arrived upstairs to the Labour and Delivery Unit. The nurse explained what was going to happen. (I have already been explained) but it seemed that Laila did not understand despite the translator. Finally, it occurred to me that Laila thought that was going to have the baby now. Nijaad, Mona and I are shocked. So I reconfirmed with the nurse that she was only to have the baby moved around today and not delivered. The nurse reassured me that unless something would wrong, the baby would not be delivered today. Rather he or she would be placed into the appropriate positioning for delivery. Once again I explained to the couple that they would not go home with a baby today. They would be positioning the baby properly so as to deliver on the expected date. So I left them there to go through the procedure and Mona and her mother wanted to stay for moral support. The situation with Laila and Abdul went on for three weeks even after Abdul and Laila and the Zakaria family had moved out into their respective homes. Despite all other commitments and obstacles, Mona and Nijaad came to be by Laila's side. One time, Abdul called Nijaad and Mona to come to the hospital at four in the morning. Both women, took a cab at their own expensive and went to the hospital only to find out that it was a false alarm and Laila was not in labour. By the end

of the situation, Mona called me to complain that Abdul had been expecting too much and that it would be difficult to maintain the level of support for Laila.

The Reception House refugees supported and guided each other in situations of need. They found ways to relate to each other not despite diverse backgrounds, interests, philosophies and social status but rather, negotiating and interpreting these differences. When the need arose, the Reception House refugees were there to support each other. But the need of others had to be carefully weighed with one's own constraints whether they were financial, emotional or personal.

In this way, new friendships and relations were being created at the Reception House. In many ways, in-house refugees tried to relate to each other on the basis of the universality of the refugee situation often downplaying their specific religious, tribal or political affiliations. In doing so, it seemed like they would avoid talking about these differences out of respect for each other; almost sensing the fragility of the relationships based on coincidental circumstances and destiny. Rather they would stress the suffering dimension of becoming a refugee. In one case, a mother and son had a disagreement about what type of information should be divulged. One day there was a whole group of us sitting around on a bench in front of the dining hall. The Zakaria family was accompanied by Amir, Abdul and Laila. In addition, there were the two single Sudanese men (Nuer) Tuc and Yut who had also been in Malta with group and a Ismaili Afghani family. We had been chatting about Abdul and Laila and I was commenting on how well Mona spoke English. Mona said that it had been difficult because she did not know a lot of the

technical language. Moreover, being so young she did not know very much about the child birth process. Proud of her daughter's accomplishments at the hospital, Nijaad, Mona's mother began to comment on how Mona spoke four languages fluently. She told me that while in Malta, her daughters and son learned to speak Italian and English. She went on to say "We are Assyrian Christians…like Jesus. We speak Arabic and our Assyrian language, the ancient language of Christ". Suddenly, in Arabic, Nicolas told his mom "you shouldn't discuss religion so openly…and what difference does it make if we are Christians or Moslems, in Iraq, everyone is suffering."

Nicholas's reaction to his mother's comment was based on the fact that he did not want the comment to be construed in such a way as to imply that Christians are the only people suffering in Iraq. Such a comment would function to negate the suffering of all the people in the Reception House. In this way, refugees at the Reception House were conscious yet respect of differences amongst them. In other situations, in other communities, some refugees would clearly avoid making statements about their religious beliefs in group settings. Even Amir who would pray five times a day, was never public about it. However, in a personal conversation with me, he commented that he was a Shi'ite Moslem.

In conclusion, life at the reception house was characterized by complex interactions between distinct and diverse refugees who were brought together by coincidental circumstances. The process of resettlement was shared amongst these people and helped them to develop and establish a transient and temporary community upon which one

could rely for moral support and practical support in a new and often cold environment. However, the fragility of the loose networks and the support for each other could be sensed. Refugees at the Reception House seemed to negotiate what personal information should be divulged and to what extent regardless of the seemingly friendly and supportive roles they played in each other's lives.

4.8 Refugees & the CIC: Housing, Fears and Family Reunification

While at the Reception House there were some reoccurring themes that were at the forefront of concerns that refugees had. In particular, the most frustrating phase of initial resettlement was finding appropriate housing. The clients were taken to see the accommodation a couple of days to a week before they had completed fourteen days in the reception house. CIC paid a per head fee to the NGO for the initial fourteen days.[25] Beyond the two week period was considered an over stay and the NGO was not compensated for the clients' occupancy of those days. It was the housing counselor's responsibility to find appropriate housing for every family unit staying in the house. By appropriate I mean that the house or apartment must be within budget, clean, affordable and in an accessible location. In a city with 1-3% vacancy rate, this was an almost impossible task. Many Reception House refugees were continuously unhappy with their accommodations for a few reasons. First, some refugees had contact with people from their communities who were more established in the city. When they would visit their homes, the refugees' expectations of the standard of living available to them in Canada would go up. Second, because refugees talked amongst themselves, information

[25] In 2002, CIC after much dialogue with the NGO and complaints about the housing situation in the city changed this to 20 day period that would be compensated.

regarding subsidized housing would spread very fast. Third, the housing crisis in the city in conjunction with the limited funds allocated for housing, affordability was a big issue. For example, when it came time for Abdul and Laila to move out, the housing counselor found them an accommodation. They were very quickly approaching the fifteenth day in the house and finding accommodation had become critical. They moved into the apartment but their counselor had forgotten to have the electricity turned on. They waited the whole day in the dark. The phone was not connected either. Adding to this frustration was the fact that Laila was about to give birth any minute. The place was dirty and the stove did not work and the furniture had not arrived either. Abdul called Sally complaining so she asked me to go and assess the situation. I went to the apartment and checked the apartment completely. It was a dark, dirty and grungy apartment. The lock on the apartment door was broken. The bathroom light did not work but it was just the fuse. I fixed that for them. The only furniture that they had not received was a coffee table that was on back order. The apartment was not great, but was livable. I reported back to Sally. Just as a note, a few months later Abdul and Laila moved out of that apartment with the help of their friends. Cases like Abdul and Laila's were complicated by the interactions between Sally, the Resettlement Service Coordinator, with her quiet demenour, and the housing counselor, Ziggy's with his loud explosive personality. Often, after taking into consideration the housing situation in the city, the logistics of finding another apartment and moving Abdul and Laila, Sally chose not to aggravate the situation. Insofar as approving another apartment for the couple, she would have to explain the situation and make a case for the couple to CIC. Her ability to assess the

situation and make a decision to act or not was the way Sally exercised agency within the structural constraints of the Reception House.

The city's housing problem was compounded by the fact that CIC, in the name of equality, assessed the cost of housing based on provincial averages (as opposed to municipal averages) and allocated those resources across the province regardless of the size and economy of the municipality. For example, a single person received $303.00 for housing[26]. This meant that most singles had to share accommodations or work to pay the difference. At the time of my study one could not even have found a basement in the suburbs for $303.00/mth. To compensate for the rent differential, sometimes people were encouraged to dip into the child tax benefit for larger families. There were a few cases where people had refused to move out of the reception house until they were provided with accommodations exactly in their allocated housing allowance. For the reception house counselors and CIC staff alike, people who took a stand like this were thought of as 'problem clients'.

In addition to the complaints people made to me about housing, family reunification was another area of concern for most government sponsored refugees. This was compounded by the fact that for the fear of not being accepted as a government sponsored refugee, many refugees had lied about their family members, both living in Canada and others applying for sponsorship abroad. In one case, an Afghani refugee, Mohammed was extremely worried about his family back home. He had left his father and elder unmarried sisters behind. In a conversation with him, he began to describe how

[26] This is the cost of housing in 2002.

he felt about leaving his family. Mohammed face went serious as he explained to me that after everything he saw back home, he could not believe that he was in Canada. He felt like he did not deserve to stay. He said, "Maybe the government will realize that and send me back." He said that sometimes "I feel like was a coward for leaving especially because I left my father with my unmarried sisters. "They need me. Well, anyway, I will try to help them from here".

Mohammed's description of his feelings echoed what many refugees felt about leaving their families back home. Family reunification was expressed as a major concern for most refugees. However there was little constructive policy in place that would provide an inexpensive means for people to help bring over their loved ones. Often, the lack of choices available to assist loved ones reinforced fears in some government sponsored refugees, a fear that has often accompanied people fleeing war-torn, violence ridden countries.

The fact that many refugees who enter Canada as government sponsored refugees have lived in exile for many years, many had grown accustomed to living with a certain amount of fear. Upon arriving at the reception house, in the haste of photocopying documents and getting people into their rooms, Reception House staff often overlooked refugee's apprehensions and fears. It became easy to forget the human dimension to resettlement. Although the CIC settlement counselor, in the initial orientation reassured people that, unless they do something illegal, they will not be sent back, many refugees still carried a fear of the future and a fear of being returned. For example, after

Mohammed, Janet and I came back from the doctor's office, Mohammed received a phone call that made him very nervous. He came running to me in a panic to tell me that he had received a phone call from some government office. His lack of English further compounded his fears. "Maybe I am in trouble…maybe they will send me back." I told him not to worry that I would find out what was going on. Slightly trembling, he gave me the number to call. I called the number and it was the office of infectious disease. I told the woman on the other end that I was calling on behalf of Mohammed who did not speak English and wanted to know what the problem was. She explained that some parasites were found in his stomach. I told her that he was on medication and she instructed me to tell him to have himself tested again after he finished the current prescription. Until I got off the phone, Mohammed was nervous. When he asked me what the problem was, I replied, "Worms". He laughed. Then I explained to him that he must not handle food items, he would have to do the testing again once his prescription is over. "They are not sending me back?" he asked. "No Mohammed, they won't send you back".

In my research, I found issues regarding housing, family reunification and fears and insecurities about the future the greatest hindrance to refugee resettlement. Although CIC and the NGO and Reception House counselors knew about these issues preoccupying client's mind, very little was done about it. This point brings me back to the fact that there are inherent contradictions within the resettlement program for refugees. Although CIC's main aim is to have these refugees make a net contribution to the Canadian by becoming financially independent, they do very little to alleviate fears

and insecurities about their futures in Canada or their families back home. Other than providing financial support while government sponsored refugees acquire the language skills needed to become autonomous, not CIC staff nor Reception House staff could provide refugees with concrete solutions to the real and imagined problems of the refugees.

4.9 Refugees and the Outside World: Building Networks and Accessing Resources

The Reception House was meant to be a place of transition where government sponsored refugees were to become accustomed to life in Canada. But ironically, while staying at the Reception House, these refugees had very limited contact with members of their new society. Most of the counselors were relatively recently arrived refugees or immigrants themselves. The orientations provided by outside organizations, such as CIC, the bank, doctor appointments and police orientations were the only opportunities for the refugees to interact with the members of the host society. For example, at the Reception House, there were few organized religious activities. According to the service coordinator, people were free to go to Church or visit the Mosque if they wished but most people avoided those until after they had moved into their permanent accommodations. The only exception to the rule was the Ismaili community who had organized bus services twice a week to pick up Ismaili refugees and take them to *Jamat Khanne*, the Ismaili place of worship. The Ismaili community was also considerably involved in the

sponsorship of Aghani Ismailis[27] in Pakistan. In addition, the community would provide moral and some financial support to new arrivals from their religious community.

The Reception House refugees would nevertheless attempt to use what limited contact they had with the outside world to their benefit. Interestingly, I was perceived as a 'Canadian' who knew the system, could speak English well. A few days after my fieldwork began, in-house refugees began to come to me for housing advice or employment opportunities. I was perceived as a person who knew how they could access precious resources in spite of the fact that I repeatedly told them that my purpose at the House was to conduct a study about the resettlement process. For example, one day, a young Ismaili man from Afghanistan approached me to ask if there was any way I could arrange for him and his mom to visit *Jamat Khanne* for prayer. Shah was an eighteen-year old single man who had lived in Pakistan for the last 7 years. His mother, Nadira, is 36 years old. She could not read or write Farsi or any other language. She lost her husband to the war when Shah was only ten years old. Shah had been travelling over the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan since he was five under the guidance of his maternal uncle. While in Pakistan, Shah used to have a good job as a clerk in a school. After Shah asked me about *Jamat Khanne*, he also asked me if I knew where he could find employment. He said that he needed to find work because he was without a father and he was financially responsible for his mother. He told me later that he also wanted to get a job so desperately because he was engaged to be married to his distant cousin who lived in Western Canada. She was however relatively better established in Canada than he was

[27] Ismailis are a Moslem sect that believe in Aga Khan as their living spiritual leader sometimes the community is referred to as Aga Khanis.

as she had come to Canada seven years ago. Because government sponsored refugees are allowed to earn up to twenty-five percent of their monthly cheque, and he spoke English well, I asked around and Shah was able to start his first job in Canada at a local restaurant as a bus boy.

In much the same way, after Janet and I came back from the doctor, she constantly asked me to help her find a job because she said that she did not have much time because she was four months pregnant. I had noticed that she would do her son's hair in beautiful braids so I asked her if she would be willing to work in a hair salon. It took me almost a week but I finally found a hair salon where she could work part-time around her and her husband's English instruction schedule. The two of them were only on government assistance for three months and then they both decided to work full-time.

Clients would approach me all the time at the Reception House but it was not always for employment opportunities. In some cases, refugees needed advise about schooling for their children or housing options. In one case, an Afghani family insisted that I go along with the service coordinator and themselves to see a house that they had viewed. The Faqir family was an extended family of eight people; a widowed grandmother, age 70; a father, age 55; a mother. There were five single children. All spoke English and Urdu moderately. The eldest daughter, Kamila, age 21 had finished high school. The two younger sons age 18 and 17 had not finished high school yet. The daughter following them was ten. She had had very little formal schooling. Her sister had taught her at home how to read and write. They had lived in Pakistan for the last five

years in a refugee camp where the youngest child was born. Although the father was the head of the family, he relied on his eldest daughter to translate and explain things to him. I had become quite friendly with this family despite a language gap. I could only communicate with the children in the family because they all spoke English, Farsi and Urdu fluently. Unfortunately as many elderly that come as government sponsored refugees, the grandmother, the father and the mother were all illiterate in English and the father read and wrote basic Farsi. Because of the large family size, the Housing counselor had attempted to find a reasonable sized house for the whole family to live together. The House was in a good area very close to a school but it was two hundred dollars a month over the allocated amount for housing. They had wanted me to come to see if the house was worth the extra money. I went along as per their request but I was reluctant to give them a final answer. Instead I provided them with a list of pro's, such as proximity to the school and bus stop, central location, good neighbourhood etc. and con's such as shoveling sideways in the winter, cutting grass, utilities not included etc. about the house. After taking everything into consideration, they decided the house was perfect for their needs. In a discussion afterwards, the father of the family, through his daughter's translation expressed gratitude for the balanced opinion that I provided. He made me promise that I would return to their new home one day for afternoon Afghani *chai*.

In some cases, this reputation as a person who could work the system preceded me. Clients would become angry when they thought that I could do something for them and I

did not. For example, there was the case of Rafi a transfer client[28] who thought I could have assisted him in receiving subsidized housing for him and his family. Rafi was a twenty-seven year old Afghani man who came to Canada with his wife Manella and their three-year daughter Sahiba. Rafi was a clever man who, upon arriving in the city with limited skills in English, had solicited the help of some of his friends to find a beautiful roomy apartment in a good area of town for $600.00/month (utilities included). Within three days he and his family had moved in, received furniture and he was already asking me to refer him to a potential employer. All the counselors at the Reception House were impressed by his adaptability. Rafi and his family had moved to Canada from India where they had lived in Delhi. He spoke limited English but he was fluent in Hindi and Farsi. After a month, Rafi came back to the Reception House asking his counselor for a subsidized housing form. Because I had seen his apartment, I was curious to know why he wanted to move. He told me that one of his friends had suggested that he could get a better apartment or even a house for half the price he was currently paying, and that his Reception House counselor did not want to help him get it. Rafi's friend projected the image of an expert in subsidized housing, reinforced by the fact that he and his family of five had lived in a subsidized house for over four years. Moreover, this friend fabricated the fact that certain Reception House counselors had contacts at the Housing Company but they only used those contacts for special clients. Although I tried to explain that his friend was fabricating stories, he did not believe me. I tried to explain to him that some clients may have better luck applying for subsidized housing because generally they have larger families who are harder to accommodate in apartments. I gave him the form and I told him to go to the Housing Company's office. Although he asked me to accompany

[28] Rafi specifically asked me to use his real name in the thesis so he does not have a pseudonym

him, I told him that contrary to his opinion my presence at the Housing Company office would not affect his chances of receiving subsidized housing. So he reluctantly went alone. As one could assume, Rafi did not get subsidized housing. In general, a small family of three living in an affordable, clean spacious apartment does not get chosen for limited subsidized housing. The point I intended to make here is that Rafi approached me because he thought that his counselor was not taking the extra step needed for him to be selected for subsidized housing. The attitudes of the Reception House counselors, reinforced by the insecurities and ambivalences of the counselors, often confused refugees about why their counselors seemed to hold back. Ironically, the counselors attempt to encourage independence and autonomy in the refugee clients often got misconstrued as an unwillingness to help. This would often result in a loss of trust between refugees and their counselors that consequently resulted in less effective resettlement process for the refugees. For example, it was assumed by many of the resettlement workers that refugees preferred to remain dependent on the system. Often these attitudes became obvious in the daily interactions with refugees. For instance, in one case in a discussion with his counselor, an Afghani transfer client, Safi expressed his concerns regarding a discrepancy in his previous cheques and the one issued most recently. He also was concerned regarding his entitlement to pots and pans in this city. (As a transfer client, if he had received the pots and pans in cash or kind, already in the destined city, he was not eligible). The counselor attempted to explain this to him but there was an obvious language gap. Safi frustrated and confused finally asked, "but this is not enough money, how am I supposed to survive?" The counselor's immediate and abrupt response was "You have two hands and two feet, get up and work". The client

was taken aback. The counselor then explained that the government was not here to make the refugees life easy. "They want you to get a job and work for a living; not take money from the government." The client listened quietly and after the counselor finished his speech, the client responds, "I just wanted to know why there was $20 less on this cheque and if I get pots and pans or not". Later the client came to me and asked me to find out if he was eligible or not.

In both cases, I was approached because of my perceived skills in regards to knowing how to use the system for their benefit and because a relationship of distrust had developed between the client and the counselor. In this manner, refugees tried to manipulate the system so as to have access to resources that were otherwise not so easily accessible. They were active agents in the navigation of their futures.

Refugees also used other opportunities to gain access to resources. For example, there was a case of Rosa who was a fifty-year old Colombian divorced woman who had come to Canada with her sixteen-year old son, Miguel. Back in Colombia, she lived with her mother on the family farm. The family she grew up in was a strong matriarchal Catholic family. One day, Rosa approached me about taking her son to the doctor's office for a referral to an optometrist. Once at the office, she began talking to the doctor who expressed a life long desire to learn to speak Spanish. Rosa jumped at the opportunity and offered to teach the doctor Spanish twice a week for ten dollars an hour. I was shocked, not only at the courage to approach the doctor (when she does not even speak English) but also at the speed by which all the arrangements were made. The

following week Rosa and the doctor began their first Spanish lesson at the doctor's office.

Some refugees were particularly skillful at assessing how to manipulate the system to work for them. Rosa was one of those skillful women. She was a feisty woman who was not afraid to stand up for herself. When she first arrived at the Reception House she thought that Mr. G was not treating her well because after showing her two different apartments, he had to tell her that she was approaching the fifteen day deadline at the Reception House. She was upset because both apartments were fifty dollars a month over the allocated amount of money for rent. Here, Rosa was expected to compensate the rent differential with her own income or child tax benefit. After the deadline, if clients had been shown appropriate and affordable housing, the Reception House administrators could charge the refugees themselves. For each extra day the client stayed at the House, they would be charged twenty-five dollars a day each person for room and board. Frustrated and angry, Rosa took the situation into her own hands and went to see CIC. Rosa walked to the CIC office where she repeatedly demanded to speak to her CIC settlement counselor in Spanish. She decided to take matters into her own hands and she headed in the direction of the local CIC office in order to 'correct the wrongs that were being done to her'. Once at the CIC office, Rosa was completely enraged. She demanded to see her CIC settlement counselor, Ana. The girls at the counter did not usually allow clients to see the CIC counselors without an appointment but after judging how angry Rosa was Ana was called to the front. Rosa began screaming her story to the counselor in Spanish. Although it took a few minutes to call a translator, a Colombian

man from the community, Rosa did not stop screaming and crying. When the translator arrived, Rosa explained that her Reception House counselor was trying to force her out of the house against her wishes and send her to a place that she would not be able to afford. She alleged that her Reception House counselor was a terrible man who had tried to kill her and watched her at night from her window. Nobody could understand how terrified she was, all alone in a strange country. Ana tried to calm her but had no luck. When Ana told her that Mr. G. had provided her with all the correct information within the CIC regulations, Rosa ran out of the office crying.

I meet up with her at the Reception House. While she was packing she told me the story still crying. She said that on her way back to the Reception House, she saw a building that said, "Women's Centre". She entered and introduced herself and because a woman at the office spoke Spanish, asked her if she could help her. Rosa explained her situation and how she had been treated at the Reception House. The woman told her that there was an apartment for rent upstairs in the building. When Rosa saw the apartment, she loved it. With the help of these women, she signed the lease right away. When describing it to me, she said she found "a beautiful two bedroom apartment" and within her price range. This stuck me as odd given the renting situation in the city but I told her that was fantastic. I reassured her that I would help her with whatever she needed. So, we called a taxi and I ordered her furniture and phone line and we proceeded to move her into her "new home". When we arrived at the apartment, I was shocked. The apartment was dirty, dark and as we found out later rat infested. But she was happy so I did not say anything to her. The old gas stove did not work so I called the landlord who only spoke

Italian and broken English. Between trying to explain to the old man in Spanish, broken Italian and English, and translating for Rosa my head was spinning. Rosa had started cleaning the apartment, scrubbing down the shower that was literally black with dirt and scum. Finally, the landlord understood what I was trying to tell him. His solution to the problem was to simply turn off the stove and call a repairman who would come when he could. Worried about how they would survive the weekend, with limited funds and a broken stove, I brought her a few instant soups, bread and lunch meat and my home microwave so that she could make do until the stove was repaired. Much to my surprise, when I brought the soup, she said to me "you can take this back with you, in my country we don't eat tomato soup, we only eat tomato in salad or sauces". I came back to check on her two days later, and she yelled at me for not coming sooner. I told her that I had been busy. She spent the next half-an-hour telling me that both she and her son had spent the whole day in bed under the blankets because there was no heat in the apartment and that she could not get in touch with the concierge. I called the landlord's number and his wife told me that the he would not be able to take care of the problem because he was in the hospital. He had had a heart attack. She would try to send her son when her husband was more stable. When I explained the situation to Rosa I told her that if she wanted she could go back to the Reception House until her heat was on. She became agitated once again and commented that the only way she would enter the Reception House would be in a coffin.

Rosa asked me if I could make an appointment with the eye doctor for her son and I did. I spent the next week taking Rosa and her son to see the doctor, the eye doctor and

going grocery shopping. Finally, I had to tell Rosa that I was not her resettlement counselor that I was doing a project which was coming to an end. I reassured her that if she needed any assistance she could go to the Reception House and another counselor would see her. They just had to arrange a translator. She thanked me for my time and told me that I should keep in touch. I told her I would.

Rosa's example illustrated many insightful points. Certain refugees like Rosa realized the structural constraints of the system and did their best to work around them using outside sources. Moreover, she realized that the Reception House staff was in a precarious position as that they reported to CIC. (This was not always the case; many refugees amongst themselves referred to the Reception House as *Migration* assuming that the Reception House was the CIC office.) Rosa not only saw the opportunity to use me to drive her around and speak on her behalf, she tried to gain some ground by going straight to the top by approaching CIC. In order to make her case and gain some sympathy, she was even willing to fabricate stories about Mr. G. She jumped at the opportunity to make some money teaching the doctor Spanish and she had the women at the "Women's Centre" working for her. In this way, Rosa made the system work for her and her son.

Rosa was not the only government-sponsored refugee that knew how to make the system work for her though she was the most extreme. However, other refugees learned to manipulate the system in order to make it work for them. For example, when Amir complained to Sally about his living conditions, he was using the choices available to him

to make a difference in his situation. In another case, Amir asked Sally if he could trade counselors because he was not happy with Ziggy's attitude towards him. Sally obliged him and transferred his case to Anna. Moreover, before Amir left the Reception House, he wrote a letter to CIC informing them about his opinion about his experience at the Reception House and who he felt was a good counselor. The examples I have provided illustrate the ways in which the government sponsored refugees at the Reception House had found ways to make the system work for them by using whatever means possible within the structural constraints.

In another situation, just before I finished my fieldwork, there was a group of Iraqi single men who had survived torture in the home country and immigrated to Canada as refugees. Lol, the new Arabic/Dinka speaking individual, was their counselor. After the men were moved into their new accommodations, Lol took a few days of sick leave. As I had mentioned before, Lol was visibly overwhelmed by the number of clients and on the job training process. One day, the five Iraqi men showed up at the Reception House without an appointment. I informed them that Lol was out of the office sick, and that if I could assist them with anything. The men started to complain that their counselor did not answer the phone, nor did he return messages. I told them again that Lol had been on a sick leave for a few days. They all started to sarcastically laugh and one of them said, "Lol is not sick, we saw him walking downtown at 12:00 am last night". I did not know how to react to that comment, so I just laughed it off and tried to address their issues.

In fact, what these Iraqi refugees were doing was reversing the control measures placed upon them while they were at the Reception House. These same men had an incident one day with Sally, the service coordinator, and Lol when they had an appointment at 1:30 PM to see a counselor about the torture they experienced in Iraq. The counselor was held up and was late for the appointment. Sally had been told that the woman would be late by half an hour but she could not inform Lol because he had gone with some other clients. The Iraqi men waited for half an hour and when she did not show up they were getting ready to go around the town with some community members. As Sally came downstairs, Lol also came back from his appointment. Sally informed Lol that they had to wait for the counselor to come. Upon hearing this, one man began complaining in Arabic about how nobody treats them with respect. He said that they had been waiting there for half an hour and nobody had the decency to inform them. Just because they were refugees did not mean that their time was not worth anything. Finally, the man said, "It's like being in an Iraqi prison". The situation was resolved because as Sally, Lol and the men were arguing in the hallway, the counselor showed up apologizing profusely.

In this situation, the Iraqi men exercised agency directly and verbalized their discontentment with the control measures put in place by the Reception House administrators. Their verbal command for respect was clearly understood by the Reception House administrators and was taken as a threat rather than an individual's right to be treated in a certain way. It was in situations like these when the struggle for control over refugees became apparent.

4.10 Control, the Policing of Refugees & Image: The Counter-Hegemonic Discourses

It became Reception House regulation that in-house refugees were not allowed to leave the House on personal outings until after four o'clock when the office closed. In fact, this was just one of the many rules and regulations that were implemented to control the refugees. For example, the front door at the reception house always remained lock. The keys that refugees were given to enter their respective rooms did not give them access to the building. During office hours, the receptionist or myself would open the door. After hours they would have to buzz the caretaker to enter. The operations coordinator and the caretaker, who were located on the main floor, would constantly keep an eye on who came and left the building. They said that refugees would pull the fire alarm or call 911 from the house phone just for the experience. It was the operations coordinator's duty that everything "ran smoothly and safely". People were to eat at certain times, clean up after themselves if they had muddy boots. Their children had to be under parental supervision inside and on the playground. People were not allowed to eat or drink or have guests in their rooms. Also, when the in-house refugees were not going to be present for lunch or dinner, they were to inform the administration. Though the intentions of the house administrators might not have been to "police" the refugees, the net effect of the various measures of control that were implemented was that refugees felt like they were being policed. In a conversation with one of the House refugees, she referred to the caretaker and Mr. G. as "the House police" because of their attitudes. These attitudes tied in with the fact that the operations coordinator felt he must be strict

and rigid. In an interview, Mr. G. said that people took advantage of the facilities and had no respect for the things that were offered to them. After years of working at the Reception House he said he had seen all sorts of people. He gave me an example of a truck the NGO owned for lending to (refugees) to move, and the refugees never filled it up with gas. They would even leave unwanted furniture in it. Ultimately Mr. G. was the one who was responsible and accountable for putting gas in it and taking care of it. He eventually got rid of the truck for these reasons. I also asked why it was so important to keep the doors locked. He explained that the door must be locked for the safety of resident refugees because there might be people who had rivalries from back home that might wish harm to the new arrivals. Also, for the same reason, Reception House staff and volunteers were not to give information about new arrivals or residents on the phone.

The significance of his comments again implied that when allowed the freedom to do so, refugees would either take advantage of the system, or make ill choices; thus the need to implement control measures was imperative for the smooth and safe functioning of the reception house. In another instance, Mr. G.'s belief that the Reception House would not function efficiently and effectively without the strict adherence to house rules and regulations was based on the premise that if people could take advantage of a situation they would. Around the house, the operations coordinator was the person who established and maintained the house policy. He would often have to deny residents their requests in order to maintain the perception of equality and fairness. For example, if a house resident refugee asked to keep the daily newspaper, the operations coordinator made it a point that nobody was allowed to keep it. It belonged to the Reception House

and it should be available to everybody to share. In much the same way, it was very important that the daily schedule ran according to a plan. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were to be served within the designated time period. Refugees were to return back to the Reception House by ten o'clock in the evening or they had to seek permission to return late before they left. The significance of these control measure lies in the belief that when allowed the freedom, refugees would make decisions that would hinder their resettlement. In many cases the refugees were perceived as people with low life skills. In the following example, the need to enforce the importance of smooth and safe functioning of the Reception House became obvious. During the initial two weeks of the fieldwork, there were many children in the house. So at the request of the service coordinator, I asked the operations coordinator, Mr. G. to allow us to bring some toys for the kids from a local children's charity. Mr. G. did not look pleased with my request but he agreed on two conditions; first, I had to promise to take responsibility to clean the toys. Second, I was also supposed to tell the kids that they must put the toys away after they finish with them. They were especially not to leave them lying around. Mr. G. followed up with a story about a health inspector who came to visit the Reception House and threw all their toys out because they were dirty and unhygienic. In addition to the rules about toys at the Reception House, there was also a video player in the playroom but Mr. G. had control over the children's videos and none of the residents knew these existed. Mr. G. considered these types of control measures essential to the effective and efficient operation of the Reception House. It is because of these tough control measures that he referred to himself as a 'tough guy'.

Although the safety and hygiene of children was very important, refugees themselves felt as though they were being controlled. The problem lay in the fact that these resettlement workers believed that these types of control are *needed* in order to maintain safe living conditions. But these measures seemed to serve the administrators needs more than the refugees. The net impact was that refugees were left feeling uncertain, fearful and having no control over their own lives.

In a similar manner, the Reception House administrators, which included the Chief Executive Officer, Resettlement Division Manager, the operations coordinator and the counselors, subtly discouraged people from interacting too much with members of their ethnic communities. Amongst Reception House refugees, it was perceived that ethnic community organizations functioned as a hindrance rather than an enabler in the job of facilitating initial resettlement. Because of the past experiences with particular community organizations, the Reception House administrators discretely discouraged much interaction with ethnic communities. For example, in the case of Laila and Abdul, before Mona said she would translate for her in the hospital, I suggested that Sally call an elderly lady from the Iraqi community who could provide support for Laila. Taking into consideration the importance of the presence of the mother (or mother figure) during first childbirth in Middle Eastern culture, Sally admitted that it would be a good idea but she had been avoiding encouraging community member's involvement with in-house refugees until after they moved out. Apparently, there had been issues in the past where ethnic community members made suggestions that were contrary to the suggestions made by the Reception House counselors. Also, when the counselors could not meet the

demands of the refugees, the community members wrote letters to CIC lobbying to cut funding to this NGO and the Reception House.

The Reception House counselors did not necessarily implement these control measures on the refugees without any reason. Although their justification of the control measures were based on the image that refugees needed to be protected, sometimes even from themselves. The attitudes of CIC towards the refugees were also influenced by the way in which the refugees were perceived. In one situation, Sisay told me about instances when young single females would arrive at the Reception House from the Sudanese, Iraqi and Afghani communities, and all the young single men (and some married) would show up at the Reception House to greet the new arrivals. The Reception House administrators perceived the control measures as a necessary deterrence for scandals at the House.

The control measures implemented at the Reception House were not only practiced by the Reception House administrators, but also CIC used various financial control measures in their policies pertaining to government sponsored refugees. For example, in a semi yearly meeting between CIC staff and Reception House staff, one of the main concerns was refugees' monthly bill payments. Since the refugees were provided with the bare minimum money to survive and to send some back home, many refugees had landed into financial troubles. To this, a government worker very seriously suggested that the Reception House counselors set up each refugees' accounts so that the payments would be automatically debited. Regardless of the fact that the bills would be paid off,

the control measures suggested completely denied the refugee control over their own life. Ironically, rather than developing self-supporting citizens, CIC's policies would work to deny agency and empowerment. Ultimately, this suggestion was not accepted but its significance remains in the extent to which a settlement worker was contemplating going too control a refugee's personal spending.

In other attempts to control, there were series of checks and balances implemented by CIC for the government sponsored refugees to adhere to. For example, refugees were to inform CIC through their Reception House counselors about changes in family composition and employment status. Government sponsored refugees were generally not allowed to travel or return freely to their country of origin while on assistance. In one case, Ziggy's clients, a grandmother, her daughter and the grandson wanted to return to the former Yugoslavia after months of unhappiness in Canada. In a meeting with CIC, Ziggy and the clients, Ziggy took a strong approach to convincing the clients that their return to Yugoslavia would not be beneficial to them. In his forceful manner, he told the two women that first they would have to pay back all the money that the Canadian government lent to them, that is to say, all travel loans and expenses paid for since their arrival in Canada. In addition, they would be revoking their status in Canada and in turn, losing their chance to ever come to Canada again. He told them to stay for another few months, until their sponsorship was over and then they could decide what they wanted to do. Needless to say, after taking these points into consideration, the women changed their mind and decided to stay. Interestingly, Ziggy was praised endlessly for his convincing manner.

In another situation, a former Afghani client came to the office to request permission to see their CIC counselor. He needed to seek permission to return to Pakistan temporarily to see his dying mother. This gentleman was accompanied by his thirteen-year old son who translated for his father. The son spoke Farsi, English and a bit of Urdu while the father spoke Farsi and a bit of Urdu. Apparently his mother was back in Pakistan and she was very sick. He said that he needed to go and see her before she died. His counselor, Daoud, an Afghani counselor, explained to him that traveling as a government sponsored refugee was not easy. First he had to obtain an emergency travel document form his country of origin. In addition, he would need a visa to travel to Pakistan. After all that was in place, then he needed to seek permission from his CIC counselor to travel while on assistance. However, if he did manage to arrange all of these criteria, then his family would not be paid for his portion of the assistance until after he returned to Canada. Moreover, there was no guarantee that he would be allowed to re-enter the country with just an Immigration Record of Landing document (IMM 1000). Although the gentleman had come to arrange an appointment with his CIC counselor, the Reception House counselor convinced him that it would be practically impossible to put everything in order before he left.

In terms of Ziggy's interpretation of his role at the reception house, he also thought that there was a certain attitude that must be maintained especially because refugees need to be made independent. "Nobody did anything for them in their countries, why do they expect so much from the government…Believe me that if they [refugees] think you will

do it for them, they won't do it themselves." Ziggy thought that by speaking truthfully and upfront, refugees would want to run to get a job and become financially independent. He thought that by "shaking people up a bit, they would realize that the government has done them a favour"

The aforementioned examples provided explicit illustrations of the ways in which government sponsored refugees are subjected to various control measures and structural constraints meant to protect the refugee. Behind the moral pretence of the protection of the refugees, there is a particular image of what a refugee should be and how he or she should conduct him/herself. This image was embedded into the policies of CIC regarding refugee resettlement and in the practices and attitudes of the Reception House staff. The image of refugeeness, on the one hand perceived the refugee as weak, vulnerable and helpless and poor and thus morally and socially worthy of assistance. On the other hand, the refugee was deemed untrustworthy, manipulative, and "too smart", thus perceived as fraudulent and abusing the system.

In the following examples I will illustrate the ways in which the image of 'refugeeness' sometimes clashed with the appearance of refugees who arrived at the reception house. It prescribed that "real refugee" should also look poor, weak vulnerable and helpless. Often at the reception house refugees who were well-dressed and well-spoken, were also looked upon with suspicion. Through indirect references to their material wealth, the counselors questioned the merits of the refugees that had been accepted to Canada, implying that they were not poor enough. For example, as in other

countries, in the Middle East, the Sudan and Afghanistan, gold had special significance as a status symbol and method of beautification. In one case, after a few months of being in Canada, a Sudanese family came to the Reception House wearing thick gold chains and earrings. Counselors noticed this and made references to it. In one case, a counselor made reference to young Iraqi client's sneakers, insinuating that "one months cheque must have gone to pay for the sneakers". In other instances, counselors questioned how people could save money to buy a car so quickly after their assistance had ended. In another situation, another young Iraqi man would come to the reception house during the day always chatting on the cell phone. One day he showed up with two cell phones. Counselors, aiming to question how this client could afford the luxury of two cell phones, made sarcastic references to the young man in many conversations that followed. Some counselors would compare their own financial situations with the refugees remarking on how "they have more money for luxuries then we do". The overall attitudes of the counselors towards the explicit signs of refugeeness insinuate the moral judgements that reinforce stereotypical images of what a refugee should look like. Poor vulnerable and helpless refugees often were perceived as "real refugees" while those refugees with overt signs of material wealth created suspicion in the minds of the counselors.

While the visual image of refugeeness depicted the refugee as a poor person, the conduct of a refugee was also an indicator of one's refugeeness. Appropriate social and moral conduct also validates a refugee's credibility as a refugee. In the absence of appropriate conduct, as with the lack of appearance of refugeeness, the refugee was

looked upon with suspicion and judgement. Their credibility as bonafide refugees was questioned and they were deemed untrustworthy. At the reception house, some of the governmental and non-governmental settlement workers would judge refugees in this way. For example, in many cases, some government settlement workers would frown upon the refugee who would call or come to inquire about a discrepancy in a cheque or a misallocation of resources. At the very best, their response would be slow and apathetic. At the very worst, they would insinuate that the refugees were trying to take advantage of the system.

Reception House resettlement workers also questioned the validity of refugees based on their perception of how a "real refugee" should conduct himself. One day in casual conversations, counselors began to recount stories of some of the experiences they had with "untrustworthy refugees". Everyone began to relate experiences they had had with some clients. One counselor told us about the time when Immigration found out that his client was not actually married to the woman he claimed to be his wife and 'their' child was not their child either. The child actually turned out to be the youngest sibling of the woman who was supposed to be his wife. Actually, this woman had been "picked up" from the refugee camp. The client did not know where his 'real' wife and children were at the time. Later, he had found out the location of his 'real wife and kids' and wanted to proceed to bring them here to Canada. But to do so would mean he would have to divulge that the woman he had brought with him was not actually his wife. He eventually did do this and was being charged with fraud by CIC. In another case, a counselor told us about a refugee claimant woman with a child who, during the client

intake, had said that she was here in Canada because her husband was abusive to her back in Africa. Because her husband and father of the child was a policeman, she was not offered any protection from him by her government and thus she was afraid for her life. Although she was a claimant waiting for her hearing, she stayed at the Reception House because she had no where else to go. The counselor said that the same woman had told another counselor a totally different story. She told this other counselor that her husband was in Toronto and that he would be joining them soon. In another situation, the landed document issued by Canada Immigration had someone else's picture on it other than the holder's. Unquestionably, the refugee holding the document passed through various Canada Immigration Centre both abroad and in Canada before arriving at the Reception House. The administrators ended up reporting the person to the authorities.

Interestingly, the counselors also perceived the refugees as people taking advantage of the system even though most of the counselors had been refugees themselves at one point in their lives. It may be noted that I was not condoning nor condemning the actions of these refugees, there was no benefit in placing a moral value on these actions. To do so would in turn to have silenced the refugees and their actions, denying them of the agency that they have shown. Rather, my purpose was to reveal that behind the hegemonic discourse that the counselors themselves believed, lay a morally charged image of what it meant to be a refugee and how one should conduct oneself.

In addition to the implication that refugees should act and behave in a certain way, at the reception house, underlying feelings of suspicion and distrust prevailed. Refugees

that benefited from the system were perceived as 'so-called refugees' knew how to manipulate the system to their advantage. In the following instance, a refugee claimant while staying at the reception house had been interviewed by a local television station about the extenuating circumstances of his situation. His wife was nine-months pregnant and they had fled their country by paying a 'coyote' who eventually stole their money. He had been assisted in finding permanent accommodation and he had moved out of the Reception House but he had promised to come and pay his outstanding rent when he received a cheque from social assistance. One day, he came to the Reception House to pay his bill. When he actually took out his money, he asked the counselor if he could pay $50 less and leave the balance until next month. (even though he had the money in hand). The counselor answered that it was up to him if he did not have the money. He paid his rent leaving the remaining $50 for the next month. He then asked for a receipt of the amount he had paid. On his way out he noticed that there were some posters that had been taken off the wall because there were some renovations being done at the Reception House. The gentleman noticed the nice posters lying on the floor and he asked, "Can I have that poster? Or I can pay you for it". The counselor then told him that it was his personal poster and it was not for sale. When the client left, one counselor turned to the other counselor and said, "Can you believe that guy?...he is too smart!". The conversation continued and the counselors were discussing how some people really knew how to manipulate the system to work for them. First, the fact that the refugee had offered to pay for the poster and not for the full sum of his overdue rent was perceived as cunning. Second, these refugees were positioned in contradiction to 'real refugees' who could barely stand up for themselves. In this particular case, the refugee claimant was

deemed 'too smart' by the counselors because he had previously brought media attention to his case. By getting an interview on the television, public support for his case soared and people were dropping off donations, specifying that the donations were to be given to the "pregnant refugee on TV". Counselors perceived these actions as manipulative because the refugees they dealt with on a daily basis were in the same situation and there was limited public and media interest. Again, the relevance lay in the fact that the "refugeeness" of the claimant was questioned because he was able to provoke public and media interest in the story. He was able to do something about his predicament. In the counselor's eyes, his know-how in "making the system work for him" deteriorated the authenticity of his refugee claim.

An implicit moral judgment that refugees need to be "controlled" because they were dishonest, untrustworthy, "too smart" prevailed. On the other end of the spectrum, refugees who were weak and vulnerable and in need of protection were worthy of assistance. Refugees that had lied or wore nice clothes were not considered credible refugees. While people who seemed helpless and vulnerable were deemed worthy of assistance and bonafide refugees. In the following example, many of the important issues such as housing, family reunification, perceptions of refugee are illustrated in the story of Salim, a thirty-two year old man from Afghanistan.

4.11 "I Thought the Bad Times Would Be Over..."

As I entered the office, a sober-looking man was sitting with Sally and talking in a low voice. His dark hair was unruly like he had been in the wind and he seemed immensely

sad. He was looking down and it seemed like he was crying. I left the room to help with clients with the move and when I came back, Sally and the gentleman were standing outside the emergency exit. He had his head in his hands. She looked as though she was trying to console him. Suddenly, he ran away from the building. She called out his name but he did not even stop to look. Sally came running inside and asked me to get my coat and follow the man. She instructed me to go behind him and to take him home. I was not to let him be alone. So, I ran keys in hand. I caught up to him with my car but he was not ready to come with me. After a bit of coercing, he got into the car. I promised him I would not speak and I did not speak until we got to his home. I asked him if I could come in to talk. He said yes. I followed him into his small apartment on the second floor of an old building. Much to my surprise his wife and child were home. They lived in a bachelor apartment. In order to separate the living space from the sleeping space they had hung up a white sheet. We sat silently on the sofa until his wife came out from behind the sheet. She was a thin pale woman in her thirties. She half-smiled at me but it could not hide the sadness in her eyes. She went about her business almost as if I had not even entered the room. Their nine-month old son was playing quietly on the floor. Salim held his head in his hands for a few minutes and then he started talking. He was from Afghanistan. They had been here since February. He fled Afghanistan after the Taliban had killed his father. They had threatened him too. He fled to Turkmenistan. His mother, wife, sisters and daughter were all left behind. The harassment began. The Taliban attacked his wife and sisters. He did not give me the details but I could see that he was in a lot of pain. He called his family to Turkmenistan and from there he sent his mother, sisters and daughter to Pakistan. Now he was here

with his wife and his son but his daughter had been left behind. "Am I supposed to forget her?" he asked. "I cannot…" I asked him why he left his daughter there. At the mere mention of his daughter, he began to cry again. After a few minutes of silence, he said, "I thought all the bad times would be over once we came to Canada. But my wife is pregnant and look at this room, look how we live…". It was a very small room. There was only room for a small love seat and a table for two people. The kitchen was up against one wall as in many bachelor apartments. It was very hot even though it was a cool autumn day outside. He said that it was so hot that they could not breath at night, when they opened the window, then they were too cold. It was stifling. His wife was making soup on the stove and the smell and the humidity from the boiling pot of liquid made it worse. Suddenly, the phone rang. It was Sally. She informed Salim that she had spoken with the settlement officer about his case. They would like to set up a meeting in order to make the appropriate applications for the daughter to join her family here in Canada. In addition, she would like to go with him to make an application for subsidized housing. He thanked her for her concern and initiatives. I sat for a while playing with the small child. The wife did not utter a word the whole time I was in the apartment. The air was thick with melancholy and remorse. I got up to excuse myself and before I left I uttered some niceties that I was sure fell on deaf ears. When I went back to the reception house, in regards to Salim, Sally said to me " Now these are the people that really need our help".

In conclusion, I have attempted to depict life at the Reception House with all the complexities of interaction and resettlement. In doing so, I have drawn out how both

Reception House counselors and clients were in a situation where they interpreted and negotiated their positions in the Reception House becoming active agents in the navigation of their own lives. Their interactions were influenced not only by the constraints placed on them by structure between CIC as the funders, the NGO through the Reception House and the refugees as clients, but also by the personal insecurities and ambivalences both on the part of the Reception House counselors and the clients.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Media images and commonplace representations of refugeeness have powerful and profound implications on the lives of refugees. By drawing on my ethnographical account of refugee reception and resettlement at a Reception House in a Canadian city, I have attempted to highlight the implications of these images on the exercise of agency by those defined as refugees. What I have found is that government sponsored refugees find innovative ways to empower themselves in spite of the structural constraints imposed on them by a system designed to monitor, manage and control them. Ironically, the exercise of agency by refugees often has negative ramifications for the refugee. According to the stereotypical image of a refugee, authenticity is derived from helplessness, vulnerability and poverty. To exercise agency is to risk being perceived as untrustworthy, manipulative and not credible. The Reception House becomes an arena for negotiation and agency.

Yet, when refugees do not exercise agency, they can often be perceived as an undue burden on the system. In part, the perspective that refugees are overly dependent can be accounted for by the remnants of the old ministry of Canada Employment and Immigration. Despite contrary opinion, most refugees wish to become resettled and independent as soon as possible because most often, refugees are laden with guilt and responsibility for those family members left behind. Governmental and non-governmental resettlement staff perceive the contrary and their attitudes and sometimes

their actions towards the refugees reflect those perceptions. Ironically, these attitudes can function to discourage refugees and in some cases, bring down their morale.

These interactions are further complicated by the ambiguous position of the Reception House counselors, many of whom have been refugees themselves. Personality differences, personal experiences and insecurities, ambition, and struggles with their own resettlement are some of the issues that effected the way Reception House counselors interact with refugees. Often, they are caught between CIC and the refugee clients whose resettlement they were hired to facilitate. The ambiguousness of the Reception House counselors loyalties were often interpreted by refugees as apathy, disinterest or suspicion. Here, the trust and rapport deemed appropriate for effective resettlement is lost and consequently, resettlement is slowed if not hindered rather than facilitated.

The contradictions of resettlement at the Reception House mirror the contradictions of selection of refugees overseas. Although the public perceives it as such, the Canadian refugee program is not purely humanitarian in its objectives. Social, political and economic interests are at the forefront of refugee selection. Those deemed suitable and adaptable for Canadian society in fact are not the most needy, vulnerable and helpless refugees. Canadian officials prefer those refugees who have the potential and the capacity to eventually make a net contribution the Canadian economy. Yet, once on Canadian soil, refugees who show initiative and agency are perceived as untrustworthy, manipulative and undeserving and perhaps even, not credible refugees.

The net effect of these contradictions of refugee resettlement is not only that they hinder the overall resettlement process for many refugees, they also work to homogenize a diverse group of people who experience exile and displacement in very different ways. Bureaucratic organizations of human intervention have also contributed to this phenomenon by portraying the refugee as a problem which not only needs to be controlled but also functions to threaten the national order of things. Stereotypical images and representations of refugeeness only work to reinforce the power of the international refugee system of which the Reception House is also a part.

In fact, in refugee scholarship we as authors must return to the initial premise which differentiates refugees from immigrants. The so-called forcedness of the refugee context implies helplessness and victimization which devoid the refugee of history and identity. It also lays the foundation upon which the image of refugeeness is built. Anthropological works focusing on innovation and agency can portray refugees in a different light.

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