

Professional perspectives: The educational experiences of Mexican refugee
claimant children in Montreal

Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

A Thesis
in the Department
of
Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of
Master of Arts (Education) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2014

© Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

Entitled: Professional perspectives: The educational experiences of Mexican refugee claimant children in Montreal

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Educational Studies)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

Arpi Hamalian Chair

Adeela Arshad-Ayaz Examiner

Ayaz Nassem Examiner

Ailie Cleghorn Supervisor

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean of Faculty

Date _____

Abstract

Professional perspectives: The educational experiences of Mexican refugee children in Montreal

Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

This thesis is based on the schooling experiences of Mexican elementary school refugee claimant children in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It gathers perspectives from professionals who support them through the refugee determination process, including three teachers, a social worker, and an immigration lawyer. From an educational standpoint, the research questions examine the adaptation process, the cultural and linguistic barriers affecting students' schooling experience, and the resources available to teachers. I interviewed participants at their workplace, allowing them to express their experiences of working with Mexican refugee claimant families and their children with specific reference to the children's schooling experiences and performance in school. The research shows that refugee claimant families are subject to severe amounts of stress due to their traumatic past and uncertain future. This affects all family members; children bring this stress to school, evidently affecting their performance and general involvement at school. All respondents suggest that the children's academic success depends on the family and the importance the family attaches to education. Teachers also believe that the lack of knowledge of the French language poses roadblocks for these children's learning. The recommendations stemming from this research include the need to create an umbrella organisation that would provide information directly to teachers regarding this specific population and the importance of Canadian professionals building trustworthy relationships with these families. This timely research can provide information to

policymakers, teachers, and other professionals involved with the refugee determination process, and future research, thus contributing to a healthier multicultural Quebec society.

Keywords: refugee claimants, Mexicans, Education For All (EFA), umbrella organisation, cultural deficit theory, Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate my thesis to my daughter, Maya. Although she is still very little and mastering walking, she is a tremendous source of strength, love, happiness, energy, and constant learning. I also dedicate this thesis to my father, Gerardo Gonzalez Jurado, who passed away just before I embarked on this journey; wherever he is, I know he is proud and happy. Lastly, I dedicate my thesis to my mother, Svetlana Bychkova, without her, many things would not have been possible, including the completion of my Master's degree.

I am extremely thankful for my thesis supervisor, Professor Ailie Cleghorn. She has shown a lot of understanding, patience, and interest and is a tremendous source of knowledge. Her support and unique experience has made this thesis possible, and I am very grateful for her guidance. I would also like to express my gratitude to the department of Education's faculty and staff members, who have all given me knowledge and have opened my eyes to the power of education within society.

Lastly, I would like to thank the participants of this research for their trust and their desire to make a contribution to the betterment of our Montreal society.

Table of Contents

Chapter One Introduction and Problem Statement	1
Chapter Two Previous Knowledge and Literature Review	7
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).....	9
Education For All (EFA)	11
Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) and Other Canadian and Quebec Government Resources	12
Academic Journals	15
Master’s and Doctoral Theses.....	19
Theoretical Considerations	21
Cultural deficit perspective.	22
Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs.	22
Conclusion	23
Chapter Three Research Question	25
Importance of this Study.....	25
Methodology.....	26
Organisation of the Data and Analysis	28
Limitations	29
Chapter Four Findings and Unexpected Occurrences	31
Participants.....	31
General Findings.....	32
Lengthy process.	33
Academic achievement attributed to families.....	34
Teachers lacking information.	34
Inconsistency and information at the Refugee Board.....	35
Involvement of Teachers, Parents, or Community Members in the Adaptation Process	35
Community transmitting wrongful information.....	36
Teachers lacking information.	37
Families attaching importance to schooling.	39
Cultural and Linguistic Barriers Affecting School Experience of Refugee Claimant Children.....	40
Stigmatization and isolation.....	41
Stress, fear, and uncertainty.....	41
Language.....	44
Socioeconomic status of the family and other factors.....	45
Trauma of Refugee Claimant Experience and Resources for Parents and Teachers	46
Stressful experience.	47

Legal resources	47
Resources for schools, teachers, and families.....	48
Unexpected Occurrences	51
Changes in the refugee determination process.....	51
Educational limitations.	52
Theoretical implications.....	53
Chapter Five Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions.....	55
Families.....	55
Stress.....	56
The French language.....	57
Teachers Missing Information	58
Lack of knowledge.....	58
Lacking resources and training	59
Building Trust.....	60
Recommendations.....	62
Creating an umbrella organisation.....	62
Further Research	67
Conclusion	69
References.....	71
Appendix A: IRB Country Report	75
Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire for Teachers and Other Professionals	82
Appendix C: Letter to Participants (English and French).....	84
Appendix D: Consent Form to Participate in Research	86

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs (modified from Harper and Guilbault (2008))	23
Table 1: Data categories based on type of participant and research question	29

Chapter One

Introduction and Problem Statement

This exploratory Master's thesis concentrates on the educational experience of refugee claimant children, as seen through the eyes of various professionals who encounter them: social workers, teachers and immigration lawyers. This specific population is vulnerable to falling behind in their schooling because they have to learn a new language, adapt to a new society, grieve past experiences, and heal from experienced traumas. The thesis will look into the lengthy refugee claimant determination process in Canada, more specifically in Montreal, Quebec. Canadian professionals who have closely been involved with refugee claimant families will trace back the difficulties and barriers that children have faced through their educational experience. This population can be seen as modern nomads who migrate to another country due to life-threatening conditions. Fortunate refugee claimants (i.e., refugees claimants that have been determined to be Convention refugees or persons in need of protection) can see their journey end in their new host country; however, for families whose refugee claimant status has not been accepted, the host country is only one step in a potentially endless journey. Their path can take them either to another country or back to their country of origin. This thesis interviews a social worker, an immigration lawyer and three teachers who recount their experiences of working with Mexican refugee claimant children aged six to twelve years old. The thesis asks if these children are falling through the seemingly

tight-knit net of global commitment, such as that provided through Education For All (EFA) guidelines.

Canada has signed the United Nations' Convention regarding refugees; it therefore "has an obligation to grant protection to Convention refugees and other persons in need of protection" (Immigration Refugee Board of Canada, 2006, p. 9). In fact, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) represents "Canada's largest independent administrative tribunal" (IRB, 2010a, para. 1). In Canada, regardless of the host province, the IRB is the only board that can decide whether or not a refugee claimant is accepted (immigration lawyer, personal communication, November 9, 2010); furthermore, to be a "Québec government-assisted refugee, [one's] status must have been previously recognized by the Government of Canada" (Immigration Quebec, 2010a, para. 1). According to one immigration lawyer, the role of the Province of Quebec is only to provide refugees with financial aid and legal aid (immigration lawyer, personal communication, November 9, 2010). During the refugee determination hearing, it is the IRB that decides which refugee claimants need protection, and can therefore apply for a permanent Canadian resident status, and which refugee claimants are not accepted as Convention refugees or persons in need of protection, and therefore whose applications for permanent residence will not be accepted. It is important to note that a refugee claimant who has not been accepted as a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection can apply for a "leave," meaning that there will be a judicial review in a federal court. This also extends their stay in the host country, while gambling with the uncertainty of receiving a positive response.

The IRB defines refugee as “a person who has had to flee his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution and has been given protection by the Government of Canada” (IRB, 2006, p. 6). This definition is taken from the larger Refugee Convention and Protocol drafted in Geneva in 1951 under the umbrella of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees, 2007), which outlines the distinction between a refugee and an immigrant (sometimes also referred to as an economic migrant). The latter person has left his or her country by choice in order to improve their future opportunities, whereas refugees flee their country in order to “save their lives or preserve their freedom” (UNHCR, n.d., para. 5). The international Convention provides rights to refugees that determine their legal status as well as guidelines for contracting states (i.e., the countries that welcome refugees onto their soil) for accepting them. Contracting states must respect the *non-refoulement* principle, where it will not “expel or return (“*refouler*”) a refugee, against his or her will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears persecution” (UNHCR, 2007, p.5).

Under Canadian policy, which mirrors the UNHCR’s Convention and Protocol, it therefore becomes primordial during the refugee determination hearing to prove that a refugee claimant is under threat in his or her own country in order to be accepted as a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection. If accepted as a Convention refugee, the person is given the opportunity to change their status to permanent resident. It is important to note that the IRB does not base its decision on how well a refugee has integrated into the host country (e.g., work, regular schooling for children). The refugee decision process “is relatively slow and backlogged” (Gallagher, 2003, p. 3); in fact,

depending on the type of refugee claim, the decision process can take an average of one year (IRB, 2010b), and even as many as 30 months (Keung, 2007) can elapse between a refugee claimant applying for protection and their hearing at the Board. In the meantime, refugee claimants are given social benefits and the legal right to work (Gallagher, 2003), while the children integrate into the Canadian society and, in the case of this study, Quebecois society. Learning French then becomes a requirement for adults and children if they wish to integrate into the Quebec host culture.

In 2005, it was estimated that there were 35,000 Convention refugees in Canada, representing 13.6% of the total immigration population (Dachyshyn, 2007). The aim of this thesis is to look primarily at Mexican refugees and their children in Canada, specifically in Quebec. The reason for focusing on this particular group is that between 2005 and 2009, they represented the largest group of refugee claimants (IRB, 2010c; see Appendix A), while their acceptance rate varied from 28% to 11% and dropped to 8% from November 2009 to March 2010 (IRB, 2010c).

These low acceptance figures affect Mexican children who are being schooled in Quebec as they undergo the lengthy waiting period for the refugee claimant determination hearing. These Spanish-speaking children are at risk of falling behind academically; in Quebec, these children typically start off in a *classe d'accueil*, where they can spend a year or more learning French before being integrated to a regular class. In the case of children whose family's refugee applications are not accepted, they face the risk of falling behind academically twice, especially after being schooled in French for as many as 30 months. For instance, when returning to Mexico or applying as a refugee claimant in another country where the schooling language is not French, their proficiency

in Spanish may have weakened, since the initial reading and writing instruction will have been in French. Then if they move, for example, to an English speaking province or country, they will not have obtained the necessary English language proficiency nor early literacy skills needed to fit into the new school system. It is important to note that children who are older (i.e., closer to the end of primary school) who are waiting with their families for the decision on their status may already have been lined up in the school system to be streamed towards vocational classes. This is because their difficulties in adapting to the language and culture of Quebec schooling are at times interpreted by school personnel as general learning problems. Children who are deemed likely to require vocational skills are placed in specialized classes called *cheminement continu* or *cheminement particulier* (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2006b). This program is for students who have seriously fallen behind in their schooling and who have been assessed for training for the labour market and not for higher education (MELS, 2006b). These students, who can be as young as twelve years old, present apparent learning problems, which can include language difficulties (Récit, 2007). In addition, the Commission Scolaire de Montréal and the Commission Scolaire des Samares target this program towards students who are behind in French and mathematics by three or more years (École secondaire de l'érablière, 2009; École secondaire Lucien-Pagé, n.d.). Refugee claimant students can be unduly vulnerable to being streamed into these vocational studies.

In the following pages of the thesis, I will retell the story of Mexican refugee claimants and their children using the voices of teachers from French elementary schools in Montreal who have had Mexican students in their classes; their voices will be heard in

order to trace back to the educational difficulties the children have faced. In addition, an immigration lawyer based in Montreal will provide his legal account, while a social worker from a refugee claimants' residence also based in Montreal will provide hers. These distinct points of view will help portray a clearer panorama of how refugees' geographical movements can affect refugee children's schooling and the longer-term effects of their refugee status. Inevitably, there is a legal component to the determination process for refugees, whereby rules are drawn by the Convention and decisions are made by the Board or the federal court. Education for refugee claimants is one part of refugee claimants' social adjustment and integration process. These are separate dimensions, as mentioned. The Board does not look at social integration; it looks at the legality of the claim, based on the claimant's report. This thesis looks at the legal component only to establish and understand the "refugee claimant" status as one aspect of the context of the children's experience.

Chapter Two

Previous Knowledge and Literature Review

This section builds on the previous chapter while providing information about my experience with refugee claimant school children. This is followed by a review of the literature and outlines my rationale for selecting this topic for my Master's thesis.

My personal experience as both a teacher and later on as a substitute teacher at a French public elementary school located in Montreal has sensitized me to the issue of the education of refugee claimant students; specifically, it is as a result of the significant number of Mexican refugee claimants that left the school during the 2009-2010 school year that my attention began to focus on this issue. These refugee claimants have either returned to Mexico or pursued their life in another country. For the remaining refugee claimants, it is either a matter of time before their stay elapses or, for the "luckier" ones, it becomes a process of adapting to their new host country. As indicated in the previous section, academically speaking, these transitions interrupt refugee claimant children's learning process and can sometimes result in the placement of these children in the lower academic achievement spectrum. If their family's refugee status is accepted, these lower academic results can create a history that eventually channels these children into the lower social strata of the society that has accepted them. This is known as tracking, where students are sorted into various ability groups (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2007), where on one hand "once formed, ability groups tend to remain as they are, contributing (rightly or

wrongly) over time to the child's definition of his or her own ability and sense of self" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2007, p. 117), while on the other hand "the schooling process – achievement testing, ability grouping, and tracking– reflects the schemes of interpretations structural needs of society" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2007, p. 40). Refugee claimant children are vulnerable to this phenomenon and its consequences can be felt throughout their adult lives.

In addition to my role as a teacher, due to the fact that I speak French, English, Spanish, and Russian fluently, I have also worked as a translator with an immigration lawyer who defends the rights of refugee claimants during their hearing at the Board. Apart from being a Commissioner for Oaths, my work involves translating refugee claimants' historical accounts and documents that support their stories. This has permitted me to understand the Refugee Convention and how it applies in the Canadian context. Moreover, I have the unique opportunity of witnessing refugee determination hearings, which are usually private and closed to the public (IRB, 2006). These experiences have given me the benefit of an insider / outsider view of the situation, given my knowledge of the Mexican culture and language, while growing up in Montreal, allowing me to take both an emic and etic stance in my study.

Combining my experiences with my involvement in the Master's program in Educational Studies, I am able to research a relatively untouched field: professionals' view on the primary educational experiences of transiting Mexican refugee claimants' children within Quebec. The subsequent section of this thesis examines previous studies and work that has been conducted on the topic, while noting certain gaps in the research. The literature review touches on the Convention from the UNHCR's perspective as well

as Canada's IRB, analyzes UNESCO's Education For All policies, and gathers information from academic journals as well as Master's and PhD dissertations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

This part of the review is divided into two parts, one being related to the Convention and Protocol concerning refugee status (UNHCR, 2007) and the other relating directly to "Education for All Persons of Concern to UNHCR" education strategy (UNHCR, 2009, p. 1). As stated in the previous chapter, the Protocol, which was established in 1951, drafts the international and legal status of refugee claimants. For the purpose of this study, only selected elements are taken from the Convention, in order to retain the focus on the educational issues as opposed to the legal issues. The Convention dictates the definition of "refugee" and provides guidelines for contracting States. The Convention defines a "refugee" as follows:

Owing to [a] well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, 2007, p. 14)

The Convention also establishes the circumstances when a person ceases to be a refugee. Broadly and most importantly, this includes, among other factors: when a person voluntarily returns to the country of nationality, when a person has several nationalities

and receives protection from one of them, or when the threatening circumstances cease to prevail in the person's country of nationality (UNHCR, 2007).

Within the fifty-six pages of the Convention, article 22 is devoted to the education of refugees within host countries; it is subdivided into two parts. The first part obliges contracting States to "accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education" (UNHCR, 2007, p. 26). The second part of the article deals with education other than elementary, where contracting States *should* provide access to education and also provide recognition of certificates (UNHCR, 2007).

The Education Strategy report (UNHCR, 2009) adopted by the UNHCR, describes its long-term vision as being the following:

To ensure the right to education for all people of concern to UNHCR by achieving universal primary education and creating increased opportunities for post-primary education (secondary, vocational training, non-formal and adult education) with special focus on girls, urban and protracted situations. (UNHCR, 2009, p. 4)

The report establishes goals in accordance with global commitments, such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), that were to be reached by 2012. Its objectives were to increase access and enrolment rates, while decreasing dropout rates and improving quality including teacher training (UNHCR, 2009).

Language barriers are outlined as a difficulty and an obstacle to learning. Within the document, the discourse surrounding education can be linked to the literacy myth (Gee, 1988; Olson, 1990; Street, 2003), where education is seen as the key for empowering populations and curing social ailments, and the basis for achieving other MDGs (UNHCR, 2009). Interestingly, the UNHCR promotes vocational education, which,

according to Gramsci (1971) and his take on hegemony, is an instrument to divide social classes and keep them divided, thereby promoting social inequalities instead of reducing socio-economic disparities within a given society.

Both United Nations agencies for refugees defend education as a fundamental right. However, they focus largely on refugees who are in emergency situations, displacement, refugee camps, or settlements; therefore, refugee claimants in Canada do not figure on their priority list and are not mentioned in their education strategy report.

Education For All (EFA)

UNHCR's educational strategy "is fully in line with international standards [...] of the *Education For All* strategy" (UNHCR, 2009, p. 5). This education strategy is a global commitment to provide quality, free, and compulsory basic education to all children, youth, and adults (UNESCO, n.d.). The project originated in 1990 and the objectives are to be met by 2015. It was launched by UNESCO, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, and the World Bank. Global monitoring reports related to this strategy are issued regularly and released in order to track world educational progress. The 2010 publication entitled *Reaching the Marginalized* (UNESCO, 2010) provides a disquieting panorama. According to the report, the world financial crisis has put education at risk, as a result of which "countries must develop more inclusive approaches linked to wider strategies for protecting vulnerable populations and overcoming inequality" (UNESCO, 2010, p. 15). UNESCO's definition of vulnerable populations and marginalized children encompasses refugees. However, within the context of Education for All (EFA), much

priority is given to developing world refugees while refugee claimants seeking asylum in developed countries are overlooked (UNESCO, 2010). This omission points to the fact that Mexican refugee claimants in Quebec are at risk of falling through the EFA gap. This gap provided the focal point for my Master's thesis.

Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) and Other Canadian and Quebec Government Resources

This section comprises a review of documentation provided by the IRB; Immigration Quebec; and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). The document entitled *Overview* (IRB, 2006) presents a distinction between Convention refugees and persons in need of protection. The former is defined using the Convention's words, while the latter includes people who are in "danger of torture, a risk to their life, or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment" (IRB, 2006, p. 9). However, the Board has carefully outlined guidelines of who belongs to this category, most importantly the "risk in question must exist throughout the country. The risk must be personal, it cannot be a risk faced generally by other people in or from the country" (IRB, 2006, p. 10).

The IRB does not provide any information with regard to education; however, the IRB remains the source for obtaining statistical data regarding refugee claims used for this thesis. This points to the fact that education for refugees is not the Board's responsibility. Moreover, through an electronic communication with the Board's Senior

Communications Advisor, Mr. Tremblay,¹ I inquired about education for refugee children. He answered with the following: “Je suis à la Commission de l’immigration et du statut de réfugié, c’est un tribunal administratif. Vos questions concernent surtout l’immigration du Québec” (translation: I am at the IRB, it is an administrative tribunal. Your questions concern Quebec Immigration above all) (Mr. Tremblay, personal communication, August 27, 2010).

Quebec Immigration has an official Quebec government website² that provides information to individuals who plan to immigrate to Quebec. This website includes a section on education that explains the education system from preschool to university. It provides general information regarding the length of schooling and the obligation for children over 6 years of age to attend school. Furthermore, it indicates that “since French is the official language of Québec, children of immigrants, regardless of their mother tongue, are usually required to attend a local establishment of the French school board until the end of secondary studies” (Immigration Quebec, 2010b, para. 2). Information on *classe d’accueil* or the difficulties that can be encountered due to language barriers are briefly mentioned on the “applying for admission to a school, college or university” webpage (Immigration Quebec, 2010c). This page states that measures are provided by MELS for non-francophone students and a link called “French learning support” is given. This link brings the user to a Quebec Government Service website,³ where all of the information is in French. It simply provides a description of the *classe d’accueil*, whom it targets, and how to apply. The Immigration Quebec website does state that “by helping

¹ The names of participants and professionals mentioned in this thesis have been given pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity.

² <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.html>

³ http://www.formulaire.gouv.qc.ca/cgi/affiche_doc.cgi?dossier=739&table=0

students to master the language of instruction, these measures ease and accelerate student integration into ordinary French classes. While these measures may vary depending on the school, each school is responsible for offering students the most appropriate support” (Immigration Quebec, 2010c, para. 3). Immigration Quebec therefore believes that this support is the school’s ultimate responsibility.

Turning to the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) and its website, there is a substantial difference in the amount of information communicated depending on whether the website is seen in French or English. On the main page of the English version, the website shows a document in nine languages entitled *Education in Quebec – an Overview* (Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2006a). It is a basic guide that targets foreigners and briefly explains the education system in the Province of Quebec. It informs readers that the language of instruction is French and the importance of this language in the province, stating: “French is the official language in Québec. For 83.1 per cent of the population, French is the language most spoken at home” (MELS, 2006a, p. 3). It also outlines provincial governmental responsibility over its educational system and explains how the system is organized (i.e., steps from pre-school to university) as well as the multiple venues leading to vocational training that are available as early as high school. According to this document, the government’s orientation and priorities in education include to “improve knowledge of languages; strengthen vocational and technical training” (MELS, 2006a, p. 9) amongst other priorities. Even when thoroughly browsing through the English website, there are no elements, articles, or links that suggest the *classe d’accueil* system or point to the language difficulties non-francophone students can experience. The French version of the

website allows readers to search for a specific topic. By typing “classe d’accueil,” articles related to classroom experiences appear. By typing “francisation,” a list of choices is provided; the most relevant one takes us to the “Communautés culturelles: accueil, integration et francisation” (Cultural communities: welcoming, integration and learning French). Within this page, information published by the Ministry of Education and school boards is available; however, they seem to target teachers and school boards. These guides and documents are written in French, therefore limiting access to this information. Clearly, MELS does not directly provide guiding support when it comes to education for refugee claimants.

Academic Journals

This section of the review first examines articles in academic journals related to refugees in Canada and their educational experience in the host country. Opoku-Dapaah (1992) observed and interviewed eighty Ghanaians refugees in the Toronto area in 1990. The author looked at the barriers they encountered in regards to socioeconomic mobility. According to the results, higher education is seen as an opportunity for upward mobility; however, it is also attached to considerable barriers. The main barriers include “their uncertain immigration status” (Opoku-Dapaah, 1992, p. 28) and the fact that higher education is seen by refugee aiding programs as a luxury rather than a necessity. At the time of the study, the education accessible to adult refugees was qualified as “extremely basic training [that] prepares refugees only for low-level jobs” (Opoku-Dapaah, 1992, p. 29). Most importantly, the author states that there is no policy on education for refugee claimants. The study’s limitations include the fact that it was published over twenty years

ago and its dated references. Also, it focuses on a different target population (adult refugees seeking higher education) than that of this study. However, the main recommendation is “the need for a national policy on refugee education,” which echoes the result of the analysis in the preceding part of my literature review.

In the same vein, Kanu (2008) investigated the “educational needs and barriers for diverse African refugee students” (p. 915) in Manitoba who were from 17 to 24 years of age and affected by war. The purpose of the study was to guide policymakers, teachers, and service providers by sensitizing them to the needs of this specific group. The author starts by stating that the rise in refugee applicants has not been followed by suitable educational and specialized support, which can lead to discrimination and “dramatic school dropout rates” (Kanu, 2008, p. 916). Embedded in acculturation theory, assimilation theory, and bio-ecological theory, Kanu (2008) highlights the importance of two factors that “affect refugee youth’s access to education and opportunity” (p. 921). These factors are an interaction between the bio-psychological predispositions of the individual and the immediate social environment. The main findings suggest improvements at the federal and provincial levels as well as at the school and family level by providing specialized programs and preparing and sensitizing teachers for their changing clientele.

Another study conducted by Kaprielian-Churchill (1996) summarizes the results of a larger study focusing on the educational needs and school performance of high school refugee students. More specifically, this study examines academic underachievers. The article also points to the fact that immigration is a federal responsibility, whereas education is a provincial one; education for refugees therefore falls in a gray zone. The

responsibility is indirectly passed down to school boards and teachers who may behave with varying degrees of concern for refugee claimant students. The recommendations are targeted towards teachers and emphasize need for the early assessment of refugee students and the sensitization of teachers to the effects of the unique experiences and traumas refugee students can go through. A major limitation to this study is that it only summarizes some recommendations that are part of a larger research project.

Around the same period, Cole (1998) published an article wherein she states that a quarter of refugees entering Canada are children under the age of twelve. This author has written several articles based around the same topic; the other articles will also be reviewed. The purpose of Cole's study was to "highlight key issues concerning immigrant and refugee children" (Cole, 1998, para. 9), emphasizing post-traumatic disorders, the transitional process, linguistic barriers, and biased testing that can ultimately stream refugee students to lower socioeconomic status, lower paying employment, and lower social strata. The researcher recommends multilateral partnerships extending beyond current teachers, social workers, and school psychologist consultation teams. Partnerships with external agencies, including ethnic organisations, as well as mental health professionals are suggested. Elsewhere Cole (2000) restates similar information found in the 1998 article as well as analyzes the success of the *Building Bridges* pilot program implemented in the Toronto metropolitan area. This program was a multidisciplinary collaboration, originally targeting and teaching refugee elementary school children about coping with stress and traumas previously experienced. Material was also created to inform principals, teachers, and caregivers. Unfortunately, it seems that this seemingly resourceful program is no longer offered. In a third article, Akamatsu

and Cole (2000) refer to refugees as nomads in that “families may have to travel to several different countries before one will allow them to stay on a permanent basis. It is not uncommon for education to be interrupted and language partially learned” (Akamatsu & Cole, 2000, p. 2). The importance of language acquisition and proficiency is directly correlated to refugee students’ academic achievement. The recommendations are similar to those in the 1998 article – the need for a collaboration of various professionals, community members, and parents. Although these studies provide valuable information concerning refugees in Canada, there are limitations. The main limitation is that the researchers’ interests are oriented toward psychological rather than the educational phenomena; however, their key points are important to increase understandings of the experiences of refugee children.

Fantino and Colak’s (2001) article outlines an important issue, stating that when it comes to immigration and identity, “the greatest threat to these children is not the stress of belonging to two cultures but the stress of belonging to none” (p. 589). The authors also outline that newcomers’ success is determined by services provided, including those through school and social and health services. They conclude by stating that a successful integration process is a shared responsibility between newcomers and Canadians and also advise professionals to be sensitive to cultural and historical differences.

A common relevant thread that tightly weaves these studies together is the absence of a governing organisation that equally guides and helps refugee claimants, school boards, and teachers. The responsibility seems to bounce from one agency to another, and even to the students themselves; only Immigration Quebec (2010c) states that it is the school’s responsibility. Without a guiding organisation, students, teachers,

and professionals are left on their own, without having the tools to act accordingly to provide and have access to adequate resources. It is important to research the present educational outcomes and difficulties faced by refugee children in order to justify the need for the development of such an organisation.

Master's and Doctoral Theses

This part will review one Master's thesis and two doctoral dissertations that I consulted on the topic of refugees' experiences in Canada, including their educational path. This section is followed by theoretical considerations.

The master thesis submitted by Kumassah (2008) looks at the positive and challenging experiences the participating refugees and immigrants have gone through. These include difficulties in training and education, securing employment, and dealing with discrimination and racism. On the positive side, the host country offers them peace of mind and freedom that they did not have prior to coming to Canada. The theoretical lens used is one of discrimination and racism, attributed to historical discrimination perpetuated through current times and leading to the racial deficit theory. The purpose of the study was to collect data on the experiences that can assist future refugee claimants and immigrant families, aid social workers in their practices, as well as provide recommendations to governmental policymakers. The findings suggest that the major barrier to adjustment is refugees' inability to communicate in one or both of Canada's official languages; this has tremendous repercussions in their social integration. Educational challenges are seen through the difficulty of having their previous credentials validated in Canada: "immigrants need to either upgrade their levels of education or

acquire or relearn new qualifications or new skills” (Kumassah, 2008, p. 4). There are several limitations to this study; the primary one being that education is only one element amongst other social difficulties and the focus of the study is on social integration from a social worker’s point of view.

Dachyshyn’s (2007) doctoral thesis aims at “problematizing, deconstructing, and reconceptualizing developmentally appropriate [early childhood] practice within the context of refugee resettlement” (preface). The researcher’s experience with multicultural groups and their diversified ways of raising children lead her to the pursuit of practices that are suitable in preschool settings. The relevance of the research also stems from the number of Convention refugees who settle in Canada each year; in 2005, it was 13.6% of total immigration.

Dachyshyn’s qualitative study took place in Edmonton, Alberta, where it mapped the life experiences of refugees to identify common traits and challenges. The research looked at the transition period and how preschool children’s learning is both mediated by parents and teachers.

Throughout the results section, the researcher points out commonalities in their lived experience in the host country, including: “decreased socioeconomic status” (Dachyshyn, 2007, p. 69), lack of support from family and community, facing discrimination and racism, safeguarding culture and language, and “adapting to Canadian education system” (Dachyshyn, 2007, p. 102), amongst other elements. The researcher noted that parents’ desire for their children to have an education is a common theme. Parents feel that schooling in Canada provides their children with knowledge but does not transmit the values and respect that they believe are important.

The research conducted by Baffoe (2006) is a study based on English speaking teenage African refugees and immigrants settled in Montreal, Quebec. In the literature review, the author points out the fact that “current research studies reveal a seeming lack of research or studies focusing on the school adjustment problems of new immigrants and refugee youth in Canada” (Baffoe, 2006, p. 27). The theoretical framework used for the research is a critical anti-racist lens, defined as “an integrative educational and political, action-oriented strategy for institutional and systemic change for addressing issues of racism” (Baffoe, 2006, p. 67).

Baffoe’s research is phenomenological in type, where the researcher tries to understand the lived experiences of the participants. The findings show that according to the participants, there were many students who dropped out, lost interest in their education, and became unmotivated. The emerging leading themes of the results include racism, stereotyping, accents when speaking, culture shock, lack of programs and resources to assist new arrivals, devaluation of previous education, low teacher expectations, lack of understanding of the educational system, and a blind trust in teachers. It also concludes by saying that the educational system in Quebec, including the *classe d’accueil*, represents a loss of valuable time and also streams ethnic students into vocational schooling or sports. Recommendations include the development of programs that help new immigrants and refugees at the school board level in conjunction with cultural communities.

Theoretical Considerations

Stemming from these reviews, my study draws upon two theoretical frameworks: the cultural deficit model as well as Maslow's pyramid of needs.

Cultural deficit perspective.

The cultural deficit view can be defined as

a perspective that minority group members are different because their culture is deficient in important ways from the dominant majority group. The field of educational psychology has long been interested in understanding why racially different, non-White children perform differently in school, with an emphasis on academic underachievement.

(Song & Pyong, 2008, p. 216)

Based on this theoretical lens, this thesis tries to uncover whether a deficit view on the part of the teachers can contribute to the apparent underachievement of refugee claimant students and their streaming into vocational studies. Moreover, would the prevalence of a deficit view towards refugee claimants explain why coordinating organisations are missing that would help teachers, refugee families, and students through their academic path in the host country?

Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs.

The second theory referred to by participants to describe the needs of refugee claimant families in the host country is Maslow's theory of hierarchy of basic needs (Harper & Guilbault, 2008). Harper and Guilbault (2008) define this theory by stating "that all human beings, regardless of culture, have basic needs that can be arranged on a hierarchy according to prepotency or pressing drive for gratification" (p. 633).

These needs are grouped into seven levels, where the four bottom levels pertain to deficiency needs and the top three are identified as growth needs. This thesis refers to the group of deficiency needs, more specifically the first two needs: physiological needs and safety needs. Physiological needs relate “to the body’s need for food (hunger), water (thirst), air (oxygen), sleep (rest), and optimal temperature (comfort) in order to survive and maintain a state of physiological homeostatis or equilibrium” (Harper & Guilbault, 2008, p. 634). Safety needs “include needs for security; protection; stability; and freedom from harm, fear, or constant anxiety” (Harper & Guilbault, 2008, p. 634).

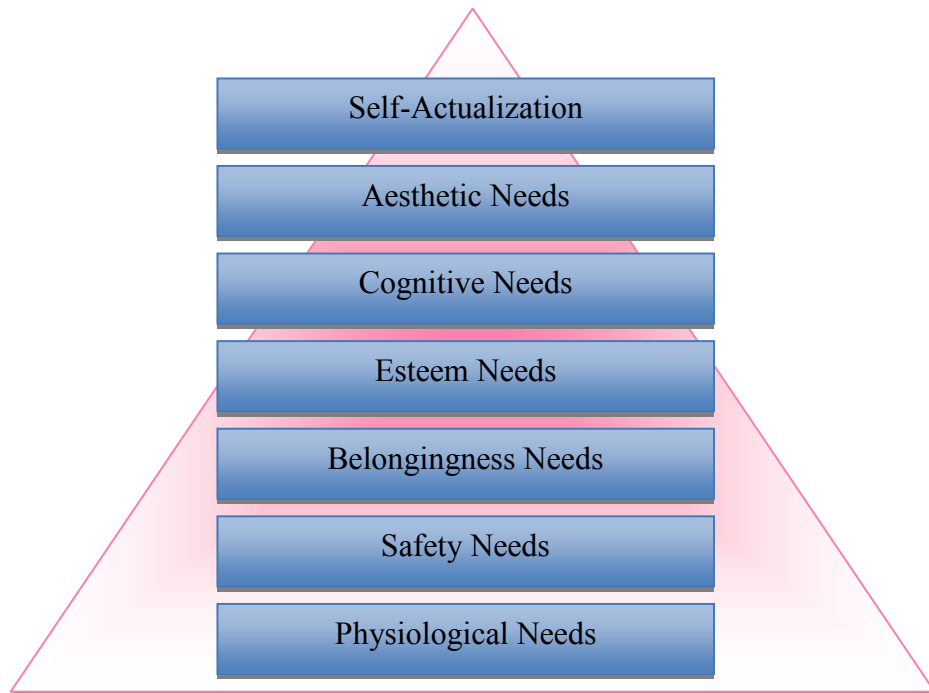


Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs (modified from Harper and Guilbault (2008))

Conclusion

Several facts emerge from this review of the literature: (1) There is a need for more research in this field in order to highlight the need for specific resources to guide refugee claimants' educational path in their host country. (2) Education for refugee claimants in "developed" countries seems to be beyond the responsibility of global movements such as EFA. (3) The Canadian and provincial governments seem to refrain from entering this field. (4) Clearly there are multiple barriers to refugee claimants' academic success.

Chapter Three

Research Question

As previously mentioned, this study analyses the view of several professionals on Mexican refugee claimants' families and the educational process of Mexican refugee claimant children while attending elementary schools in Quebec. The purpose is to assess how their educational needs are currently met and provide suggestions for improvement. The overriding concern relates to the academic achievement of Mexican refugee claimant children in the classroom. The following further questions stem from this:

1. To what extent are the teachers, parents, or community members involved in the adaptation process of refugee claimant students?
2. What cultural and linguistic barriers affect the school experience of refugee children?
3. To what extent is the refugee claimant experience traumatic and are there related resources available for parents and teachers?

Importance of this Study

Given the fact that there is no local or global governing organisation that guides and provides information on refugee claimant children's educational experience in Canada, the study will contribute to the limited knowledge available. Refugee claimant children might appear indistinguishable from immigrant children; however, because of the uniqueness of refugees' past experiences and their presence in Canada, there is an urgency to sensitize teachers about the special needs of this population and the ways they

can provide, as much as possible, equal educational opportunities to refugee claimant children. The research results can assist teachers in their educational approaches and interventions; once summarized, my intention is to provide information and resources for teachers, schoolboards refugee claimants and policymakers.

Methodology

In order to respond to each of the above research questions, this thesis used an ethnographic qualitative approach, which, according to Anderson (2004), places a strong emphasis on exploring phenomena within their natural setting; a tendency to work with data which is not pre-coded in terms of its analytic categories; investigating a small number of cases; and a form of analysis which emphasizes description and explanation rather than quantification and statistical analysis. (p. 121)

I used face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions with participants in their natural work settings, resulting in a descriptive analysis. The participants were Canadian professionals working closely with refugee claimants. This approach allowed participants to express themselves, communicating to the researcher their experiences in their own words. The interviews are conducted in either French or English, depending on which language the interviewee was most comfortable. The methodology involved fieldwork in Montreal, followed by a period of analytical reflection on the interview contents, leading to an interpretation of the results and a development of recommendations.

The participants included an immigration lawyer, a social worker, and three elementary school teachers. These specific individuals have a unique perspective on the

lives of Mexican refugee claimants. They can identify similarities that they have noticed, allowing the research to gather a general overview. The lawyer was selected because of his knowledge of the legal system and for his point of view on education for refugee claimants. The social worker has witnessed many emotional states refugee family claimants go through. The elementary school teachers offered a unique insight regarding their Mexican students' academic performance and emotional state. It was beyond the scope of this thesis and my time limitations to venture into interviews with refugee claimant children's parents or other family members.

The procedure used to gather data was to personally approach the participants. All participants had been made aware of the purpose of the study, the possible benefits of their involvement, and confidentiality issues (see Appendix C for letter to participants in English, French). Since the study involves people, there are ethical considerations; participants signed a consent form (see Appendix D). The interviews took place in the workplace of the teachers, the social worker, and the lawyer.

The material used involved a tape recorder and a notepad for personal note taking during the interview. Permission to tape the conversations was asked of the interviewees; they also had the freedom to stop or restart the recording whenever they wished. The researcher asked participants for permission to contact them later in order to ask for clarifications or further information if needed. Participants' confidentiality was assured.

The interviews were conducted in English or French. Given my fluency in both French and English, neither a translator nor an interpreter was required. In addition, having grown up in Montreal and previously lived in Mexico, as well as my experience

as a translator, allowed me to better understand cultural references and provide accurate translations.

During the interviews, I followed the outlined questionnaires prepared beforehand (see Appendix B). The questions were open-ended, allowing participants to freely express themselves. The questions were centered around the research questions; however, at the same time they allowed for additional topics or unexpected results to be raised during the interviews.

After completing the interviews, the first step was to transcribe and, when necessary, translate parts of the interviews. The sections of the interviews that were selected were those that directly related to the research questions. Data that did not relate to my questions were reserved for future reference, should it be needed. I became familiar with the data by carefully listening to the recordings several times, going through the notes and the transcripts, and marking themes that responded to the research questions. Subsequently, I was able to identify similarities and recurring themes in the responses of each interviewee, especially these related to factors that contribute to or thwart the academic experience of refugee claimant students.

Organisation of the Data and Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data occurred in repeated steps from the start. As the data were gathered, it was sorted and classified as outlined below. First of all, it was divided by categories based on the type of participant and according to the research questions.

Table 1: Data categories based on type of participant and research question

TEACHERS	SOCIAL WORKER	LAWYER
- Support that is available or used	-Type of help available to refugee families	- Consequences of current hearing process
-Positive and negative experiences in the classroom	-Perceived effects on refugees' education	- Perceived educational experience of Mexican refugee claimants
-Effect of the refugee status on schooling	- Suggestions for improvement	- Suggestions for changes in the refugee claimant determination process
- Suggestions for educational improvement		

The questions asked to participants can be summarized in the categories presented in Table 1. Once all of the information was gathered for each group of participants, it was combed for patterns that described the views of each group. Direct quotes and passages of the interview are included in the sections of the thesis that follow.

Limitations

The limitation of the study is that it only looks at one specific cultural group and the participants are based in Montreal. It is also important to note that refugee claimants from Mexico are not a homogenous group; for example, there are variations in socioeconomic background, skin color, and previous knowledge of French or English. Nonetheless, professional who work with refugee claimants can note similarities and

challenges they face in their host country. These can include ease of access to social services including those within schools, barriers in communicating with teachers, parents' efforts to help their children with schoolwork, and the help provided to refugee claimant parents from local organisations

Diversity in the classroom is increasing in Canada (Baffoe, 2006). It therefore becomes crucial for teachers to understand and honour differences. It also is fundamental to provide education that gives equal opportunity to all residents, regardless of skin colour, origin, religion, handicap, or any other factor.

Chapter Four

Findings and Unexpected Occurrences

This section narrates the content of the interviews conducted with the participants. A brief description of the participants is initially provided and the findings are presented as general outlines. The results are then explained, centered around the research questions, after which the unexpected findings are documented.

Participants

As stated in the methodology section, the participants were interviewed at their workplaces. All participants were chosen based on their close involvement with refugee claimants. The first interview was conducted with the lawyer, in his downtown Montreal office. One of his specializations is immigration law, and he has worked in this field for the past ten years. His knowledge and services include refugee claimant applications, work permits, study permits, and permanent resident and citizenship applications. He has a PhD in international law and also gives lectures at a local university. The social worker is part of an organisation called PRAIDA, which aids refugee claimants. It specialises in welcoming refugee claimants and facilitating their integration process. It also assists public and social organisations with its expertise in the matter (PRAIDA, 2009). For the past four years, this particular social worker has given these services at the Montreal YMCA residence, which “provides temporary housing to a diverse client base: refugee and asylum seekers who have recently arrived in Canada” (YMCA of Quebec, 2012,

para. 1). Refugee claimants can stay at this residence for one month, where they have access to information sessions that allow them to better integrate into Montreal society. The social worker intervenes in situations of crisis, when refugee claimants are psychologically troubled. Refugee claimants are offered individual intervention; group intervention; orientation; and referral for specific needs such as finding an apartment, finding a doctor for medical issues, transportation in the city, and filling out forms.

All of the three teachers interviewed work at the same public elementary school located in the borough of Saint Laurent, which is part of the city of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Their teaching experience ranges from 15 to 25 years, with a minimum of 15 years in the same school. This presents itself as an advantage in this study, as these teachers can narrate changes in clientele throughout the past decade. This particular school was chosen because 40% of its students were born in Quebec and only 3% of the parents were born in Quebec. Parents come from 50 different countries; 9% of the student body was born in Mexico; and Spanish is the second most spoken language outside of school, French being the first.

General Findings

The immigration lawyer accurately depicted the way in which the education situation for refugee claimants in Canada falls in a no man's land: "education is provincial and immigration is federal" (immigration lawyer, personal communication, February 7, 2012). These provincial and federal jurisdictions are distinct entities with different, unrelated mandates. This immediately crystalizes what was found in the literature review: a lack of a single governing organisation that facilitates a positive

transition for refugee claimant students and their families. PRAIDA facilitates their initial stay in their host country and has also included activities for refugee claimant families who are no longer living at the YMCA.

Lengthy process.

It can take up to four years for refugee claimants to become accepted as refugees and granted permanent residency. All respondents commented on the lengthy process. The lawyer mentioned that this lengthy period of time allows refugee claimant families to gather documents that will be needed to prove the real danger they are living in their country of origin. These documents are crucial in the determination process, as their content and authenticity are used to support the truthfulness of their claims and the dangers they face. The lawyer believes that “the [refugee determination] system is not bad by itself, [...] there are a lot of things that we shall improve in the system” (immigration lawyer, personal communication, February 7, 2012). He argues that this extensive waiting period provides sufficient time for refugee claimants to gather all the required documents that prove that their lives are in danger in their home country. These documents can include newspaper clippings, police reports, testimonials, photographs, and court records. Families often have to have these documents sent to them from their country of origin.

On the other hand, families feel that this length of time is stressful since it clouds their future with the chronic uncertainty of whether their application will be accepted or whether they will be sent back to their country of origin. This is a particularly stressful period for families, filled with uncertainty about their future. The social worker regarded the lengthy process as inhumane. Refugee claimants do not have a set date as to when

they might have to leave the country. Teachers have had students who had to leave part way through the school year, inevitably interrupting the students' mastery of whatever was being taught at the time.

Academic achievement attributed to families.

There was a common recognition by all respondents that refugee students' academic achievement depends on the family and the importance they attribute to education. For example, if a student was successful academically in Mexico, the student is more likely to be successful in Montreal. However, as the social worker and the teachers pointed out, refugee claimant families are under significant stress and are often simply trying to survive. When living in survival mode, as Robert (one of the teachers) mentioned, families are often trying to satisfy their most basic needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs (Harper & Guilbault, 2008), education is not part of primary needs. The social worker also characterized refugee claimants' lives as living in fear and emphasized that this fear is passed onto the children. The teachers also made a similar observation in their classrooms, indicating that the stress is passed down from parents to children and that children bring it to school. Another teacher, Nicole, mentioned that a student told her that he was feeling stressed because of the family's upcoming hearing at the Board. This shows that the amount of stress families undergo in their host country has an impact on their children's psychological and emotional state and mental disposition for learning, thus possibly affecting their academic achievement.

Teachers lacking information.

The three teachers interviewed in this study were unaware of their students' status as refugee claimant unless they were informed by the student or their families. They also

have limited knowledge of the refugee claimant process, with the information they have often coming from hearsay. For example, the teachers all mentioned various events in their students' country of origin relating to the country's internal conflicts and lack of stability. From their personal observations, the teachers note that throughout the years, there have been waves of refugee students coming from Asia, Latin America, and Africa, they associate these waves to a country's internal conflict.

Inconsistency and information at the Refugee Board.

The lawyer also pointed out that one of the current problems is that a file can be treated differently by different Board members, thus affecting the outcome. For example, some Board members might be sensitive to women, while others are not; so a Board member's beliefs can affect a refugee claimant's outcome. Board members are provided with information about each country, giving them insight into a country's current situation. In addition, with the lengthy refugee claimant process (that can take up to four years), the conditions of the country of origin can shift and be determined to be a safer place than at the time the family left.

These general findings set the base for the following section, wherein I consider the data through the perspective of the research questions.

Involvement of Teachers, Parents, or Community Members in the Adaptation Process

According to all respondents, the pivotal point in the adaptation process is the importance that the family attributes to schooling. This section looks deeper into this matter as well as discusses elements pertaining to the question.

Community transmitting wrongful information.

Refugee claimant families are part of a larger refugee community. This community has been found to be a source of inaccurate or wrongful information. The social worker mentioned that some refugee claimant families avoided seeking medical assistance because of rumours that the Board would not grant refugee seekers asylum due to the cost of their medical treatment to the Canadian government. She says that “a lot of people did not go and ask for health services, like they would be very sick and they would not go to the hospital, because a lot of people will say that if you go to the hospital they will get rid of you because you will cost too much at the hospital” (social worker, personal interview, February 14, 2012). The lawyer has also observed from his own clients that the community can misinform refugee claimants through spreading rumours, for example, that refugee students are not permitted to study past a certain age. In fact, refugee claimants are allowed to study for free up to the age of 18, after which, if they want to go to university, they are required to pay foreign student tuition. The lawyer finds that his clients are not always well informed, regarding, for example, equivalences of their previous studies. When asked, he provides them with information about schooling, going outside his mandate as an immigration lawyer.

The social worker also identified two types of fear among refugees: real fear and imaginary fear due to the fact of simply not knowing what resources and rights they have. Refugee claimants have the right to be well informed. For the social worker, the question

remains as to how to reach to them, how to make links and build trust, and how to provide opportunities for them to speak about their fear. This includes building a trustworthy relationship, where refugee claimants will feel that Canadian professionals are there to help and guide them in the process with accurate information. In addition, social workers and others need to know how to reach out to refugee claimant children and how to provide a safe place for children to express what they are feeling and what they are experiencing. The social worker believes that these children will show their distress in school. She feels that teachers are not well informed or trained to understand the sources of refugee claimant students' poor school performance at school. As a result, teachers tend to blame the parents. This is discussed in the following sections.

Teachers lacking information.

Teachers are unaware of their students' status as refugee claimants in Canada; they only find out if they reach out to the family or the child. They are also unaware of the refugee claimants' process at the Board. Being unaware of these factors makes it harder for teachers to properly identify the reasons for students' seeming lack of interest in school and in turn provide them with the support they need. When teachers do get involved it is often when families seek their help. Teachers can provide assistance in many ways, such as writing letters regarding students' adaptation, providing them with resources within the school (such as psychological help), listening to their stories, or helping them cope with their uncertain future. For example, Robert, a fourth grade elementary teacher, has filled out documents that were sent to him by a psychologist outside the school. The document was regarding a student whose status was that of a refugee claimant, and Robert had to provide information regarding this particular student.

In addition, through witnessing certain behaviours, teachers can assume that a specific student is or has been a refugee claimant. Robert recalls having two Mexican students in his class whose family simply disappeared, taking their children and leaving all of their belongings behind without informing the school. A Mexican student in Nicole's sixth grade class also left because their family was not accepted as refugee claimants; the student left at about the mid-point of the school year and returned to Mexico. The teacher was made aware of the student's departure, and the class organized a farewell party for the student. Agnès, a fourth grade teacher, stated that the previous school year a Mexican student had also left her class during the school year. She claimed that there have been many Mexican families in the school and many who had been required to return to Mexico. For example, last year she recalled that three Mexican families had to leave Canada because they were being sent back to Mexico. For some unknown reason, in Robert's experience, as well as that of another teacher in the same school, it was almost exclusively Mexican students who left during the school year. They suspect that these students are refugee claimants but have no way of knowing for sure unless the parents or student informs them.

It is clear that the teachers are not sure how to work with students who are refugee claimants. Teachers lack solid information about what the families need to do to prove their refugee claimant status and are not aware of the families' experiences before coming to Canada. The information the teachers receive comes by word-of-mouth as well as through the occasional student assignment in which a student will reveal something of his or her past. Uncertain about his role in these students' lives, Robert prefers to focus on the present, on what he can do, rather than on the past, over which he has no control

and even less concrete knowledge. Each teacher has his or her own way of getting involved; as one teacher pointed it out, it really depends on the teacher's sensitivity and care and there is no standard procedure. In sum, teachers are involved inasmuch as they want to get involved and inasmuch as the student or family involves them.

Families attaching importance to schooling.

All respondents agree that the barriers that can be perceived in the schooling experience and the adaptation process depend on how families deal with their refugee claimant status. For example, the lawyer says that some families tell their children that they will continue living in Montreal for a long period of time. He believes that in this case, children will want to perform well in school as they will treat the experience as the last schooling system they have to go through. On the other hand, some parents will say that they are staying in Montreal temporarily, which in turns affects the involvement that children will have with their schooling. The lawyer strongly feels that most of the adaption process and school performance depends on the family's approach to the situation. Moreover, according to what he is told from his clients, most students are doing well and parents want to use this successful schooling integration during their hearing at the Board. Unfortunately, this is not a factor that is considered when applying as a refugee claimant. The lawyer has no follow-up with his clients once they are not accepted to know how the family and their children reintegrate into their home country. This is an area for further research.

The social worker also firmly believes that students who were doing well in their home country are more likely to keep performing well in Montreal. She believes that it depends on the importance the family attributes to education, for example, she states,

“families that are surviving [...] where education and school grades are not the main issue [...] it will affect” suggesting that it will affect their school performance. In addition, not knowing if or when they will have to leave the country creates a state of panic. This feeling of panic overtakes all other aspects of their lives, including schooling. According to the social worker, this panic is transmitted to children, which affects their level of concentration required for their studies. It will in turn affect their involvement with their peers and the effort they will put into learning.

Overall, the professional individuals that I interviewed who deal with refugee claimant students believe that the adaption process depends on the family and how they deal with their feelings of fear, panic, and uncertainty about their future. This is a heavy burden for families since there is no “umbrella” organisation to provide relief and support as the families go through this process, regardless of the outcome.

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers Affecting School Experience of Refugee Claimant Children

The professional individuals who took part in this study have identified several cultural and linguistic barriers that affect refugee claimants’ schooling experience. Apart from the refugee claimant children’s status as such and the uncertainty this imposes on the lives of their families, a major obstacle stems from the need to learn the French language in order to be able to succeed in the education system in Quebec. A family’s socioeconomic background may present a barrier if economic hardship prevails and if this is coupled with a poor educational experience prior to coming to Quebec.

Stigmatization and isolation.

When labelled as refugee claimants, people do not have same rights as landed immigrants or Canadian citizens; according to the social worker, this can make them feel invisible. Furthermore, the social worker claimed that, “we have this occidental way of saying I need help, I have a problem, but in a lot of cultures you don’t say I need help” (social worker, personal communication, February 14, 2012). Moreover, as previously mentioned, she reported that refugee claimants are also afraid of asking for help as they do not know if it will be used against them during their hearing. The lawyer mentioned that the barriers depend on the family’s relationship with the wider community. Some refugee claimant groups stay amongst themselves, thus avoiding contact with French or English speaking people. They do not get involved or visit various parts of Montreal that might help them feel more at home, even if temporarily.

Stress, fear, and uncertainty.

All three teachers who were participants in this study saw the plight of refugee claimant students in similar terms. The refugee claimant status brings its share of stress, fear, and uncertainty. All three teachers have identified this as a strong barrier to refugee claimant students’ performance in school. Robert observed that these students are not in the best environment for learning due to the family’s lack of security: “La sécurité familiale ça joue pour beaucoup” (The family’s safety counts for a lot) (Robert, personal communication, January 20, 2012). He believes that the most important factors for students to succeed are their security and sense of wellbeing. Robert’s comments are in line with Maslow’s pyramid of basic needs (Harper & Guilbault, 2008), whereby basic needs (e.g., eating well and sleeping adequately) have to be satisfied in order for students

to be successfully involved in schooling. The comments of Agnès, another teacher, also reminds one of Maslow's work in that she believes that these parents are in a state of survival, therefore surviving takes over other aspects of their lives: "il est plus important de survivre que de faire attention à l'école" (it is more important to survive than to pay attention in school) (Agnès, personal communication, March 4, 2012). The families' priority is to find work, to have a roof over their heads, and to have food and clothing; therefore school becomes the last of their priorities.

In addition, Agnès believes that the refugee claimant families' fear of being sent back to their home country in itself creates a barrier. Her position was that it is completely unacceptable that the government permits families to stay here three years and then sends them back: "on ne laisse pas les gens s'installer pendant trois ans et puis leur dire après, non vous ne pouvez plus rester [...] le délai est beaucoup trop grand" (we cannot allow people to settle for three years and then tell them after, no you cannot stay [...] the delay is too large) (Agnès, personal communication March 4, 2012). Agnès felt that it was understandable that the families tended not to adapt; in the face of chronic uncertainty there was little point in getting involved in issues outside of the families' immediate concerns. Agnes says that the Mexican student she had in her classroom the previous year had a very poor academic performance. According to her, students' academic success or failure depends on the family. For example, the teacher had parents that were traumatized and were scared of the possibility that they would be to be killed. She believes that parents' involvement has a lot to do with children's performance.

Another teacher, Nicole, noticed that in contrast to refugee claimant parents, families who immigrate to Canada or Quebec often do so in order to offer a better life for their children. When that is the case, schooling becomes a priority.

With regard to the refugee claimant families, Nicole's viewpoint resembles that of Robert and Agnès. She noticed that the families are worried, referring to a specific family that is receiving psychological help from the school as well as from services outside the school. In another case, she noticed that the parents' stress is passed down to the student; the student told her how he feels "écoutez Madame Nicole, là j'ai de la misère à me concentrer, je n'écoute pas bien parce que là on va à l'immigration" (listen Mrs. Nicole, I have trouble concentrating, I am not listening well because soon we'll have to go to immigration) (Nicole, personal communication, March 4, 2012). She reported during the interview that she explained to him that she understands his stress and that he has no power over the outcome. She said she could see how stress is passed down from the parents, as the atmosphere in the home must be stressful. She does believe that regardless of the stress caused by the uncertainty of their status, they should not neglect other aspects of their lives.

Agnès also raises a similar observation: she believed, and Robert concurred, that their uncertain status in Canada rendered the parents nervous and they were likely to transmit that to their children: "ils transmettent tout à leur enfants, qu'on le veuille ou non, c'est tout transféré et l'enfant va être craintif lui-même" (they transmit everything to their children, whether they want it or not, it is all transmitted and the child will become fearful as well) (Agnès, personal communication, March 4, 2012). Agnès noted that if the parents are psychologically stable, they will behave as if life has permanence: "si le

parent est stable, même s'il est réfugié ça ne fait rien, il va faire comme si il était là tout le temps" (if the parent is stable, even if he or she is a refugee it does not matter, he or she will act as if they were here all the time) (Agnès, personal communication, March 4, 2012).

Language.

The need for the refugee students to learn French in order to be successful in French schools was cited by each of the teachers as an important roadblock in the students' chances for success in school. All three teachers said that their Mexican students have little mastery of French. Robert saw how this affects their performance in subject areas such as math. For example, he mentioned that nowadays mathematics reflects life scenarios, where students need to have a good knowledge of society in Quebec in order to understand mathematical questions. In addition, Robert mentioned the individual variation that is normal in students' ability to acquire a second language. Some students have learning difficulties in general, while others may be confused by differences in pronunciation of the same letter in French and Spanish (e.g., the letter u). This being said, Robert feels that their path to success in school should not be full of obstacles and that all students should have the possibility of going to university, even those with learning disabilities. He feels strongly that it is wrong to predict a student's eventual success in education based on their test results they get in elementary school while they are under extremely difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, Robert mentions that Mexican parents are not as proficient in helping their children with homework as French speaking parents; both Robert and Nicole mention that the exclusive focus on French language is detrimental to the students' progress.

During teacher and parents meetings, Agnès found it hard to communicate with the Mexican parents. Students often become the interpreters between parents and teachers. Agnès also believes that language plays an important role in students' performance. Nicole knows that parents who cannot speak the language cannot help their children much, apart from giving their children the space and time to study. She also mentions that parents' lack of involvement and the fact that they do not speak French affect students. Nicole also believes that it is harder for Mexican families to help their children with schoolwork, as they do not speak the language, unlike parents coming from countries where they already speak French, such as Morocco or Algeria. She understands that many parents do speak English, especially the ones who come from Sri Lanka or India. She also noticed that parents who speak English are more reluctant to learn French. According to her, in order to improve their schooling achievement, she believes that parents should learn French, get involved, and be able to review their children's homework and studies. For example, multiplication tables are the same whether in French or Spanish. The common thread amongst all participating teachers is the need to learn French.

Socioeconomic status of the family and other factors.

Two teachers, Robert and Agnès, identified the family's socioeconomic status, including the parents' level of education, as influencing the experience of refugee claimant children at school. Some parents were seen as simply not knowing how to help their children with schoolwork while cultural differences in childrearing and an apparent lack of discipline in the home were also noted. In some cases, Robert felt that school success was not highly valued by some families.

Agnès mentioned the general ethos or culture of the school, with particular reference to the role of the school principal. She reported that with a change in principals at her school, there was less direction for teachers in their dealings with refugee claimant students and their parents. With less support from the principal's office, it became even more of a responsibility for the teachers to help the students.

In sum, language (i.e., learning French) constitutes the main roadblock for refugee claimant students to succeed in school. Their opportunity to master French is impeded by many factors as cited above: a sense of impermanence, stress in the home; lack of understanding of their situation on the part of some teachers; and lack of special, government subsidized support for refugee claimant families. Under these circumstances, refugee claimant students can hardly be expected to focus on their studies as they would if their future in Quebec was secured. Families and their values have also been identified as a factor that can affect children's schooling experience. Parents who have always valued education will continue to encourage their children to succeed regardless if their stay in Canada is temporary.

Trauma of Refugee Claimant Experience and Resources for Parents and Teachers

This study's professional respondents noted that the refugee claimant process reveals to be a stressful experience lived differently from one family or individual to another. The interviews with teachers reported earlier nevertheless revealed some common elements: few if any resources exist for teachers to help refugee claimant students, teachers experience difficulty communicating with parents, and evidence of stress exists among refugee claimant students.

Stressful experience.

The social worker interviewed believes that all the people that arrive at the YMCA reception centre are in crisis; however, the way they deal with this agonising situation varies. They all left their countries, families, houses, employment; some have been kidnapped, raped, and lived through horrid experiences. Once they are here, they face the possibility of freedom and safety; however, their emotional state is shaken. PRAIDA helps them rebuild themselves as individuals, which inevitably involves a reshaping of their identity. According to the social worker, sooner or later, regardless of their healthy defences, they all go through a very difficult time, falling into depression and experiencing a state of distress and heightened levels of stress. For some, she says that the depressive state can last a short period of time and for some it is longer, while they reassess their choice of coming to Montreal. Unfortunately, they do not ask for help easily as they do not know where to go and fear that if they do get help the information will be used against them. The social worker finds that refugee claimants have trouble trusting the resources that are available; refugee claimants can also have lost trust in humanity, so it becomes difficult for them to build trust with them.

Legal resources.

From a legal standpoint, the resources available are work permits and access to legal aid. Refugee claimants are legally allowed to work in Canada, permitting them to settle temporarily in their host country. This is unlike other countries, such as the United Kingdom, where refugee claimants cannot become an active member of society, as they cannot legally work. The lawyer who contributed information to this thesis reported that clients also have access to legal aid, enabling them to be represented free of charge by a

lawyer at the Immigration and Refugee Board. In addition, he says the delays are an “opportunity to organize the file with our clients to get documents to prove that they are in danger or we can try at least” (immigration lawyer, personal communication, February 7, 2012). The lawyer can use personal and general documentation, such as newspaper reports, to support refugee claimants’ stories. Refugee Board members also have information on the general situation of each country in the world. Some Board members have been exposed to the culture of other countries by having previously lived there; such first-hand experience can affect their decision regarding accepting or not accepting the applications of certain refugee claimants.

Resources for schools, teachers, and families.

An important finding of this study relates to how little information teachers are given or have access to about refugee claimant students. Similarly, resources available to refugee claimant families appear to be minimal or at least are not very accessible.

The social worker reported that there is a lack of resources to help families cope with their stressful lives and to integrate as much as possible, given the uncertain result of their claims. As mentioned earlier, PRAIDA, although given the mandate to help at the level of the school, does not have the personnel or the financial support to be effective. As the social work explained, PRAIDA works “to sensitize and educate our fellow workers, but we don’t have the time, the tools or energy to go to schools and provide tools for the teachers to make better evaluations about those children” (social worker, personal communication, February 14, 2012). The social worker specified that, to her knowledge, there are no resources for consultants, for example, those that would help them work with teachers to sensitize them about refugee claimants and their children.

From a teacher's standpoint, Robert mentions that he has resources available for children who have severe problems. For these students, the school provides a therapist, a special needs educator, a speech therapist, and a social worker. All of these professionals are involved with the student and the family and can inform the teacher. However, these services are provided mainly for the most difficult cases and are not targeted towards refugee claimant students, who may be overlooked. For these students, the teacher is their main contact and it becomes the teacher's responsibility to help them.

In addition to in-school resources for extreme cases, the school board does provide a broad range of services to teachers and parents, most of which are not likely to be used by refugee claimant families because they are offered in French. Robert also reported that the CLSC offers some help to parents and that the school has several extra-curricular activities for parents on Saturdays, including French courses. It is not known to what extent refugee claimant families avail themselves of or even know about such resources.

The general lack of knowledge that teachers have about refugee claimant students was evident from what Nicole had to say during the interview. She said that while she is not told which students are Canadian residents, she can determine their status by their date of arrival; for example if they have only been in Canada for a couple of years, they are most likely not residents as the process takes more than two years. She does not have an official document that tells her what the family's status is in Canada. She makes her own deductions based on the parents and children's schooling and will sometimes ask the parents when she meets them. She states that she does not have resources to help her. The school provides other services, like the ones mentioned by Robert, but no resources about

how to cope with students who are refugee claimants. She guesses that outside of the school there are resources available for refugee claimants, but she did not know where to refer parents for help.

Agnès reported that she “suspects” that she currently has one refugee claimant student in her classroom, but considering the fact that she is not informed about their status, she cannot be certain “on n’a aucune idée [de leur statut], on ne nous informe pas” (We have no clue [about their status], we are not informed) (Agnès, personal communication, March 4, 2012). She mainly finds out about students’ past when parents decide to tell her about their experiences; it is rare that she finds out from the students themselves. Agnès reaches out to parents as much as possible. On occasion, she has been provided with personal information about an abusive relationship, for instance, “alors oui il y a certains [parents] qui ont besoin de se confier, alors oui il y en a certain que je connais tout, vraiment tout, ils racontent” (so yes there are some [parents] who need to confide, so then yes there are some that I know everything, really everything, they talk) (Agnès, personal communication, March 4, 2012). In these instances, Agnès offers whatever help she can.

Agnès also reported that there are no resources that help or guide her on how to approach students who are refugee claimants. According to her, the school boards have become too large and schools are left on their own. Previously, with smaller school boards, the school boards would help teachers. She recalls during the 80s and up until the 90s, she received training and was supplied with books explaining cultural values from people across the world, which helped teachers to act appropriately. She believes that these books and training helped her. Currently, it is not like that and believes that

teachers can make major mistakes with their students if they do not know about their values and culture. Luckily, she has experience with students and parents from various countries. Teachers have clearly stated that direct resources are not available to them that would help them understand the mindset of a refugee claimant and how this status can have a negative impact on students' performance. The social worker confirmed that there is no organisation that sensitizes teachers about refugee claimants' past and current experiences. Both the lawyer and the social worker mentioned that resources such as working permits and legal aid are available to them. However, it becomes difficult to reach the refugee claimant families outside of 'official' appointments and thus to build a relationship with them.

Unexpected Occurrences

While completing the research for this thesis, changes occurred in the refugee determination process. Other unexpected findings are related to refugee claimants and higher education, as well as the theoretical implications set out in this thesis.

Changes in the refugee determination process.

From the start of this thesis in 2012 to the present, events have evolved to alter the refugee determination process in Canada. The lawyer and the social worker were aware that a change was going to happen but unaware of when it would occur. This change took effect on December 15, 2012. The new refugee determination process has an impact on the process and the duration of refugee claimants' stay in Canada.

According to the Immigration and Refugee Board, the change affects claims that are made on and after December 15, 2012 (IRB, 2013). For claims done after this date,

refugee claimants have their hearing done at the Refugee Protection Division, which is a division of the IRB. A significant change in the process is its duration where “asylum claimants will receive a hearing within 60 days after their claim is referred to the IRB. In contrast claimants currently wait, on average close to 600 days to receive a hearing” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, para 4). In addition, refugee claimants can now only stay up to a year on Canadian soil. With this new process, there is less time for refugee claimants to gather their documents; on the other hand, the change is positive in that they can no longer be kept waiting for years.

The social worker believes that the new law is not there to help refugee claimants. She feels that it will make the process faster but will be treating refugee claimants as robots rather than humans. She feels that the real changes that need to be made are with the commissioners, who need to be better informed about the situations in the various home countries and need to not stigmatize refugee claimants due to their country of origin. For example, she explains that while some Mexicans do make up stories, the stories of other Mexicans are true. Based on some false claims, commissioners should not simply assume that all Mexican cases are false and based on lies.

Educational limitations.

A significant educational problem for refugee claimants is when they turn 18 years of age, as the lawyer mentioned, education is not free any longer. If they would like to pursue further studies, it comes at their own expense and for university education they have to pay international student fees (immigration lawyer, personal communication, February 7, 2012). The social worker also argues that having access to education becomes more difficult for high school students and teenagers, especially since, once they

turn 18 years old, access to free education is no longer offered. They face problems when they want to go to CEGEP or university; either they cannot afford the tuition or it is uncertain whether they can finish the degree before they are sent back to their country of origin if they are not accepted as refugee claimants.

Theoretical implications.

An additional unexpected finding was that teachers appear to subconsciously take a cultural deficit view towards the refugee claimant learners that was set out earlier in this research. There is a discrepancy in teachers' responses when asked about the future education of refugee claimant students in their class. This could point to the fact that teachers appear to have low expectations for Mexican students; however, to a certain extent, this could also be based on teachers' knowledge of the reality of the students' situation and the barriers they face. To what extent the teachers' attitudes are a function of holding deficit views is difficult to assess; however, the frequency with which the "blame" for students' difficulties in school are placed on "the family" and family values suggests a cultural deficit mindset.

The following examples show that the teachers hold generalized low expectations of the refugee claimant students, as a group. When teachers are asked directly what type of schooling they would recommend for their Mexican refugee claimants, they all agree that they can achieve whatever they set themselves to achieve (as if to say, if they do not do well it is their own "fault"). At the same time, the teachers report that these specific students perform poorly and tend to blame the families. Nicole specifically mentioned that she believes that these students' academic achievement is based on their capabilities as well as their interests and passion. She encourages them to go to school and to value

the pleasure of learning. Agnès believes that refugee claimants have as many possibilities to succeed academically (e.g., through a technical degree or a university degree) as any other student, clearly not acknowledging the peculiar situation that these students are in. She insists on the fact that she truly believes that each student can succeed. Robert also has shown the same view, mentioning that universities have adapted themselves to students with special needs. However, interestingly, all teachers have mentioned that the Mexican students in their classes perform poorly academically. Robert even says that their culture is more based on *la fiesta*, meaning the party, rather than school.

The change in the refugee determination process will have an impact on refugee claimants who have sought asylum after December 15, 2012. Their experiences as refugee claimants will differ from the experience of previous claimants, as they will not be given the chance to integrate into Canadian society as fully as previous refugee claimants. Regardless of the change in the system, their lived experiences and traumas still remain and can continue to affect them psychologically on a daily basis in all aspects of their lives, even after being accepted as refugee claimants. Teachers will therefore still need to be sensitive to their students' previous lives in order to understand the reasons behind their stress and sometimes the possibility of their underachievement.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The testimonies of all the participants clearly point to the belief that family values are the primary determinant in ensuring a positive schooling experience. However, refugee claimant families go through unique circumstances that can affect their wellbeing and plunge their lives into stressful, anxious, and fearful experiences, affecting all members of the family in all facets of their lives. The outcome of academic success or failure of refugee claimant students depends primarily on the family since so few resources outside the family are available. Secondly, it also depends on the teachers who cross their paths, and the involvement, caring, and understanding that instructors provide to their students. This section discusses research findings and provides recommendations, drawing from the cultural deficit theoretical lens, as well as tying findings to the literature review.

Families

As previously mentioned all respondents indicated that students' schooling success depends on their families and the importance and space the families give to their children's education and studying time. As the lawyer mentioned, if students were academically successful in their home country, they are more likely to be successful in their host country.

Stress.

A new element becomes present in refugee claimant families. Not only do they face an uncertain future, but they also have to cope with an adaptation process. This element has been qualified as causing extreme stress and fear (which is spread down to all family members), whereby survival becomes the centre of attention. Teachers have witnessed their students' families being focused on survival (e.g., ensuring they have sufficient food, shelter, and clothing) and education does not fit into this category. The social worker indicated that regardless of what coping mechanisms refugee claimants have, they are all affected in varying degrees by their current situations. According to the social worker, "putting life in standby for three years" (social worker, personal communication, February 14, 2012) can create stress and a sense of panic, which can take over all other aspects of their lives, including their children's education. This sense of panic is also passed down to their children. This information would point to the fact that children's schooling is affected in various ways by their parents' experience of stress.

The Mexican students of the participating teachers were mostly poor performers; however, according to the lawyer, his clients would tell him their children were doing well in school. Teachers have first-hand insight into refugee claimant students' school performance; however, lower results do not mean that students have not adapted to their host country. This discrepancy in describing students' results can be explained by the fact that parents want to prove to the Board that their children have successfully integrated into Montreal society (although this is not a requirement for claiming a refugee status).

The French language.

Teachers have also attributed lower performance of refugee claimant students with the language barrier. In Quebec, a successful primary schooling experience predominantly comes from mastering the French language, as previously mentioned, all other school subjects stem from the knowledge of this language. Nicole, the sixth grade teacher, states that parents need to learn French. When families know French, it is easier for them to help their children with their schoolwork. However, scepticism remains over this issue, as it would take time for parents to master a foreign language before being able to help their children with their homework. One might ask why parents would make the effort in light of the uncertainty they face in regards to whether they will be able to stay in Canada. Unlike economic immigrants, who have decided to settle in Canada for good and who are more likely to have studied French before arriving to Quebec, refugee claimants' knowledge of the French language does not contribute to their acceptance or refusal by the Board. Apart from the language factor, parents must also give the space and time for their children to complete their schoolwork. As one teacher pointed out, he believes that Latin American values are rather focused on *la fiesta* (partying).

All of these elements (family values, level of stress, coping mechanisms, as well as knowledge of the French language) are seen as variables that affect students' successful schooling experience. Teachers directly attribute these elements to the family. Blaming parents for children's weaker performance is a practice that has been established over time and still persists nowadays: "historically, students, families, inefficiency in schools, and cultural difference have been identified as the sources for failure. In different ways, each of these explanations points to the mismatch between certain groups

of students and their schools” (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001 p. 535). Using parents as an excuse for their children’s poor performance partly removes the responsibility from the educational system, from the school, and from the teacher. Instead, the inadequate parents are at fault and it becomes “not entirely clear how schools could improve parents” (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 536). In the past, solutions were proposed such as sending these students to boarding schools or simply to try to convert the students into embracing the host culture “in the hope that some of their acquired learning would rub off at home” (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 536). The second practice is present in the school where all three teachers work. The school’s current education project includes allowing the student to take ownership of the Quebec society’s cultural landmarks; allowing the student to participate in activities related to Quebec culture. Apart from blaming the families, the results of the study have also found other issues related to children’s performance, which are discussed in the following sections.

Teachers Missing Information

Teachers are left in the dark in regards to which students are refugee claimants as well as resources that could be available to help them. Teachers are unaware of the existent tools or referrals that could be passed on to refugee claimant families.

Lack of knowledge.

Teachers are unaware of what the refugee claimant process requires and how it works unless they look into it out of their own personal interest. For example, Agnès, the fourth grade teacher, believes that one of the students in her class is part of a refugee claimant family based on some information she put together from various sources. In this

case, the child's mother came to Montreal on her own and was pregnant at the time, in the hope that the father would join them later. Agnès believes that part of the family's strategy to become Canadian residents is to have a child born in Canada. She also believes that they came here in order to receive services for their handicapped child. During the interview with this teacher, I was able to inform her that for refugee claimants, having a child born in Canada does not impact the Board's decision about their application. This simply shows that teachers are not properly informed about Canadian immigration procedures. In addition, according to this teacher, the family also shares her belief. It is recommended that school boards and schools be provided with pamphlets explaining the immigration procedures.

Lacking resources and training.

Teachers are not given any specific guidelines or resources to help them support refugee claimant students. Having training or resources to help them can be very important, especially when it comes to aiding students who have lived through war or other traumatizing life events. On one hand, not knowing the status of their students can help ensure that teachers keep an equal and non-discriminatory approach. On the other hand, elementary classroom teachers develop strong relationships with their students, whereby the school, classmates, and the teachers become important figures that can shape students' lives.

Elementary school teachers deal with their students on a daily basis throughout a whole school year, allowing a meaningful relationship to flourish during the year. From this point of view, knowing their students' pasts can help teachers understand their students' current performances, general interests, involvement and behaviour.

Teachers do have support inside the school, where a team of professional (including psychological help) can follow students' development; however, these services are only available for students who have severe problems. According to Robert, refugee claimant students who have gone through his classroom were not heavy dysfunctional cases that would be admitted to such personalized support. Teachers are therefore left on their own to find ways to approach students who either show lower results or post-traumatic behaviour.

Building Trust

The issue remains that teachers are left on their own to use whatever tools they might have received during their training or have accumulated through their teaching experience. The teachers interviewed mentioned that they gathered information from their students' personal lives either through their students or sometimes from the parents as well. In order for students to open up to the teacher, a trusting relationship needs to be built. Agnès suggested that she would find it interesting to know about students' school performance in their country of origin, as this would give her a clearer picture about their previous academic performance. Building a trustworthy relationship with parents can help teachers obtain such information; in turn, with such knowledge, future research could measure how schooling performance is affected by involvement in the refugee claimant system.

Trust was also an element that was clearly brought up by the social worker. She firmly believes that a trusting relationship needs to be built with this specific clientele. Their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences might make refugee claimants reluctant

to trust any Canadian figures out of fear of not being accepted at the Board or simply because of having lost trust in humanity after having lived atrocities, as mentioned by the social worker.

The aim of all professionals who are involved with refugee claimant families becomes building trust. Lawyers, social workers, and teachers need to show that they can be trusted and that they are allies who can provide support during the refugee claimant process. Building trust is a two-way relationship, whereby refugee claimant families must sense that they can trust the various professional figures who they come across during their stay in their host country. In addition, refugee claimants must clearly understand that the trusting relationships they build will not affect their hearing at the Board, as the Board only looks into the details that surround their life-threatening experiences in their home country.

The lawyer, the social worker, and one of the teachers mentioned that some refugee claimants stay within a community comprised of members having a similar status in Canada and coming from the same home country. As the social worker noted, wrongful information can be spread in the community, such as the idea that going to get medical treatment when it is required could be a reason for not being accepted as a refugee claimant. It therefore becomes difficult for professionals to penetrate such closed circles that can spread wrongful information and tamper any trusting relationship that might be built with Canadian professionals. It becomes a personal rapport that either does or does not build between refugee claimants and Canadian professionals. Clearly, there is a need for a resourceful organisation to help refugee claimants during their stay.

Recommendations

As the literature review pointed out, there are multiple barriers that hinder refugee claimants' educational success. One of them is a missing umbrella organisation that cares for refugee claimants' educational path in the developed host country. While immigration is a federal issue, education is a provincial issue; therefore, education for refugee claimants becomes the responsibility of the teacher, the students, and their families. The participating teachers were not provided with tools from their school boards; as a result, their intervention process becomes personal, using whatever tools they have gathered throughout their teaching career.

Creating an umbrella organisation.

As a recommendation, following the social worker's suggestions, either a local organisation can be given the mandate to go to schools and speak with teachers or a new umbrella organisation can be created. In either case, the role of the organisation would encompass going to school boards or to schools directly and providing workshops to help teachers identify students who could present behavioural consequences due to their traumatic past and students who are simply surviving while living with high amounts of stress and uncertainty. Moreover, information provided would include the refugee claimant process, untangling myths, and surfacing actual facts. Despite the fact that immigration and refugee claimant processes are beyond teachers' scope, a focus on these issues is essential as it would help clear beliefs such as those expressed in the previous section by one teacher, who believed that having a child in Canada would impact the decision of the Refugee Board. Teachers should be provided with additional sources and

tools, so that they know where to turn for more information and help; similarly, parents should be provided with access to resources so that they can get more help when required.

This service could also be more specialized and target families coming from specific countries. Information could include the recent history of a country, for example, genocides, wars, frequent kidnappings, and life-threatening conditions. This could resemble the information the Board has on each country, which helps Board members to make their decision regarding refugee claimants.

Providing such information to teachers could sensitize them and help them intervene in these specific cases in more adequate ways that would ultimately benefit refugee claimant students. These workshops could also allow teachers to share their experiences with other teachers and learn from one another. For example, Robert, the fourth grade teacher, mentioned that he gives a map of the neighbourhood to all of his new students. He highlights points of interests, such as second hand clothing shops, library, grocery shops, CLSCs, and medical centres, for his student and their families. This information, which is passed on to parents, could also contain additional resources targeted specifically for refugee claimant families or recent immigrants. Such resources could include PRAIDA, CASA CAFI (a not for profit organisation for immigrant families), la petite maison de la misericorde (a resource for single mothers), as well as the information and referral centre of greater Montreal (which freely provides community resources available on the island of Montreal for anyone in need). Therefore, by becoming a school practice, the resource Robert offers to his students could be expanded in both the amount of information provided as well as the reach.

These tools can also help bridge the trust gap, in that teachers will have access to accurate information regarding the refugee determination process and have the capacity to refer parents to adequate resources. This could help parents feel that there is a Canadian community to which they can turn to for help. Also, by doing so, it can, on one hand, reduce refugee claimants' isolation and, on the other hand, also provide them with accurate information and break myths held within communities.

In addition, the aim of this service would be to also uncover prejudices teachers might have about certain cultures. In the findings, teachers all agreed that they believed that their students, regardless of their background, have the same future academic possibilities and capabilities. However, when they spoke about the Mexican students in their class, they all mentioned that they were poor performers and that their values did not seem to stress the importance of education. These statements are contradictory, referring to this minority group through a cultural deficit theoretical lens that "asserts that racial/ethnic minority groups do not achieve as well as their White majority peers in school and life because their family culture is dysfunctional and lacking important characteristics compared to the White American culture" (Song & Pyon, 2008, p. 216). This can be applicable in the White French Canadian society, where the interviewed teachers were aware that there is a cultural gap between school and the cultures of the families of refugee students.

Students' poor performance has also been attributed to their parents' lack of knowledge of the French language, including communicating with their children in Spanish instead of French. These perceptions represent symptoms of a potentially partially hidden cultural deficit theory approach amongst teachers. For example, the

cultural deficit model “suggests that cultural patterns of marginalized groups are essentially inferior and predispose students within those groups to poor academic performance” (Rendon, Jalomo, & Amaury, 2000, p. 141). Teachers clearly did not agree with such a statement when they were asked about the future academic success of the refugee claimant students in their class. The difference in opinion seems to be in regards to their current performance and their future opportunities. However, their current performance could stream them into vocational schooling or push them towards quitting school. This could potentially keep future generations of refugee claimants in a lower social strata.

The proposed workshops could help teachers dismantle stereotypical beliefs regarding minority groups instead of projecting them onto their students. This could also remove some of the burden families face regarding their children’s education and school performance, whereby students’ schooling experience would be recognized as dependent on the student, the family, the teachers and schools, and the proposed community organisation.

Regardless of the changes in the refugee determination process that have recently taken place, refugees claimants will still be arriving to Canada and seeking asylum and, once accepted, their children will engage in Quebec’s educational system. Therefore, this is a recurrent issue that needs to be addressed in order to provide equal academic possibilities to all students, regardless of if they belong to the dominant or a minority group. There will also most probably be new waves of incoming refugee claimants arriving from a given country depending on on-going wars; social-political stability; or natural disasters, such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. For example, Robert noted that

since he has been teaching at the school where he currently teaches, he has witnessed many waves of students from different countries. For example, there used to be a lot of students from Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and El Salvador and Mexican students came later. Nicole also noticed a similar trend over the past fifteen years. Currently, more of her students come more from African countries, such as Cameroun, Tanzania, Congo, and the Ivory Coast. Agnès is well aware of these changes in the student population, stating “ça dépend du trouble politique du pays” (it depends on the political conflict of a country) (Agnès, March 4, 2012). She also mentioned that, currently, more students are coming from Africa. The reality is that refugee claimant families and accepted refugee claimants are part of Canadian society and will continue to take part in the society, therefore their education needs to be addressed.

The findings of the current thesis highlight the fact that a favourable schooling experience for refugee claimant students currently depends on their families and the priority they accord to education because no other societal organization accepts the responsibility or offers adequate support to the families. According to this study’s professional respondents, refugee claimant families tend to be more focused on survival and coping with their uncertain future than on their children’s education. Refugee claimant families might feel isolated from Canadian society as they do not feel that they can rely on those they have had to deal with during the refugee claimant process.

Teachers also lack information regarding their students’ current status. They are unaware of the refugee claimant determination process, including tools that could assist them with students experiencing stress due to their past and present situation. There are no specific resources available for teachers. The creation of an umbrella organisation or

the addition of a new mandate to existing organisations, as proposed above, would fill the gap left behind by the boundaries set by Immigration Canada, the Quebec Ministry of Education, and world organisations, such as UNESCO, UNHCR, EFA, and UNFPA, that mainly encourage EFA in developing countries. This umbrella organisation would provide information to teachers as well as resources for them, all of which could also be passed on to the families. The mandate of this umbrella organisation would be to instruct teachers about students who are refugee claimants, including their unique characteristics and the consequences of having lived traumatic experiences.

Further Research

The conducted research is a preliminary study that opens up new investigations. The following are leads that would help gather a fuller picture of the needed changes to education for refugee claimants in the city of Montreal.

This research project focused on refugee claimants' experiences as witnessed through the eyes of three teachers, a lawyer, and a social worker. Further research should include testimonies of refugee claimant families and their children so that their experiences are told through their voices. This would provide additional information to the research and would help in the preparation of the recommended workshops. It would also be relevant to correlate the findings between professionals and refugee claimants. For example, do the families feel that their children's education depends on the importance they give to education or does it depend on the school?

Additional recommended research would be to get a broader outlook on the full effects of the refugee claimant process, more specifically, those related to people who

have returned to their country of origin. Further research would include seeing how this process affected their children's schooling reintegration. For instance, did these students have to relearn Spanish? Did they have difficulties in other school subjects? What happens to students who started their primary education in Montreal? This would require more extensive research, including a follow-up with the families after their return to their home country.

Further research would also be needed in order to see how the changes made to the refugee claimant process affect schooling experience of refugee claimants who have sought asylum after December 15, 2012. Research would be needed in order to explore how the new process affects children and their schooling. Once they are accepted, they are no longer stigmatized with the refugee claimant label; however, their lived traumas and adaptation process still remains. It would be necessary to see how the new process affects refugee claimants in order to provide better tools to help teachers and families.

Another aspect would be to look into how the refugee claimant process affects older students, such as high school or even CEGEP students who are below the legal age. According to the lawyer and the social worker, these students are more likely to have negative schooling experiences, especially because once they turn 18, their tuition costs are no longer covered by the government.

It would also be interesting to conduct further research to determine if teachers are subconsciously imbedded within a cultural deficit approach. As previously noted, when asked directly, all teachers agreed that refugee claimant students have equal academic opportunities as their counterparts; however, teachers also mentioned that Mexican

students are weak performers. A subconscious cultural deficit theoretical model could explain this discrepancy. Further research would help establish this uncertainty.

The recommended further research includes interviewing refugee claimant families and their children as well as refugee claimants who have returned to their home country, including refugee claimants who will go through the new refugee determination system and older refugee claimant students. In addition, it would also be helpful to further explore the attitudes that teachers hold towards refugee claimant students. Given awareness that these students are in their classes, do the teachers view them differently than students who have immigrated and settled in Quebec?

Conclusion

The current research is based on the schooling experiences of Mexican elementary school refugee claimant students, as witnessed by several professional individuals who encounter refugee claimant families and students in the course of their professional lives. It encompasses voices from actors who support these students through their transitions and adjustment process. These include teachers, a social worker, and an immigration lawyer. The literature review has identified a need for an umbrella organisation that gives support to parents and teachers. This qualitative study interviewed the participants in their workplace as they shared their experiences and thoughts about Mexican refugee claimant families and their children and specifically about their schooling experience and performance. The current research has shown that the education of refugee claimant children, and their success in the host country, depends on their families, including their values and the emphasis they place on education. It seems that the responsibility for the

children's success lies upon their families; however, the families undergo severe stress in their host country due to the adaptation process and their uncertain future. Teachers have qualified that parents are in a survival mode, where other aspects of their lives, including their children's education, tend to be neglected.

The primary recommendation stemming from the current research is the need to create an umbrella organisation, or for an existing organisation to add a mandate, that would provide information directly to teachers regarding this specific population. These workshops and information sessions could be done at school boards or even at the schools themselves, where teachers would learn about the refugee claimant determination process, behavioral consequences of living traumatic experiences, and information on other countries and their social-political situations. In addition, teachers would be provided with resources for their own usage or that they could pass along to the families. This research can provide timely information to policymakers, teachers, and current and future refugee status seekers. Also, more generally, this research can guide the path to a healthier multicultural society in Quebec.

References

- Akamatsu, C.T. & Cole E. (2000). Meeting the psychoeducational needs of deaf immigrant and refugee children. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 15(1), 1-18
- Anderson, G. (2004). *Fundamentals of educational research*. London: Falmer.
- Baffoe, M. (2006). *Navigating two worlds: Culture and cultural adaptation of immigrant and refugee youth in a Quebec (Canadian) educational context*. (Unpublished dissertation). McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
- Barakett, J. & Cleghorn, A. (2007). *Sociology of education: An introductory view from Canada* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Prentice Hall.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Making Canada's asylum system faster and fairer. New asylum system comes into force December 15, 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2012/2012-11-30.asp>
- Cole, E. (1998). Immigration and refugee children: challenges and opportunities for education and mental health services. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 14(1), 36-50.
- Cole, E. (2000). Supporting refugee and immigration children: Building bridges programme of the international children's institute in Canada and overseas. *Refuge*, 18(6), 41-44.
- Dachyshyn, D. M. (2007). *Refugee families with preschool children: Transition to life in Canada*. (Unpublished dissertation). University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.
- Deschenes, S., Cuban, L., & Tyack, D. (2001). Mismatch: Historical perspectives on schools and students who don't fit them. *Teachers College Record*, 103(4), 525-547.
- École secondaire de l'érable, (2009). *Cheminement continu*. Retrieved from <http://recit.cssamares.qc.ca/erabliere/spip.php?rubrique161>
- École secondaire Lucien-Pagé, (n.d.). *Formation générale adaptée (ancien cheminement continu)*. Retrieved from <http://www2.csdm.qc.ca/LPage/sds/cours/fga.htm>
- Fantino A.M & Colak A. (2001). Refugee children in Canada: Searching for identity. *Child Welfare*, 53(5), 587-596.
- Gallagher, S. (2003). Canada's dysfunctional refugee determination system: Canadian asylum policy from a comparative perspective. *Public Policy Sources* 78.

- Gee, J. (1988). The legacies of literacy: From Plato to Freire through Harvey Graff. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(2), 195-212.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *On education. In selections from the prison notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- Harper, F. D., & Guilbault, M. (2008). Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs. In N. J. Salkind & K. Rasmussen (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 633-639). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Immigration Quebec (2010a). *Refugee and other clientele: Being selected by Quebec*. Retrieved from <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/immigrate-settle/refugees-other/refugee-selected/selection.html>
- Immigration Quebec (2010b). *Finding out about education in Quebec*. Retrieved from <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/education/finding-education/index.html>
- Immigration Quebec (2010c). *Applying for admission to a school, college or university*. Retrieved from <http://www.immigrationquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/education/applying-admission/index.html>
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), (2006). *An overview*. Retrieved from http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/publications/oveape/Documents/overview_e.pdf
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), (2010a). *About the Board*. Retrieved from <http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/abau/Pages/Index.aspx>
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), (2010b). *Frequently asked questions: how long does it take to get a decision on a refugee protection claim*. Retrieved from <http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/abau/faq/Pages/index.Aspx#rpdfaq2>
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), (2013). *Refugee claims: Claimants*. Retrieved from <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/eng/port/refasi/cladem/pages/index.aspx>
- Kanu, Y. (2008). Educational needs and barriers for African refugee students in Manitoba. *Canadian journal of education*, 31 (4), 915-940.
- Kaprielian-Churchill, I. (1996). Refugees and education in Canadian schools. *International Review of Education*, 42(4), 349-365.
- Keung, N. (2007, August 5). Mexican refugee request skyrocket. *The Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/News/article/243329>
- Kumassah, G.H.K. (2008). *Giving voice to African immigrants and refugees: Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrants in the city of Regina*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Regina, Regina, Canada.

- Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). (2006a). *Education in Québec: An overview*. Gouvernement du Québec. Retrieved from http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/antérieur/educqceng.pdf
- Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). (2006b). *Classe ordinaire et cheminement particulier de formation temporaire: Analyse du cheminement scolaire des élèves en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage à leur arrivée au secondaire*. Retrieved from http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/Stat/recherche/doc06/EDAA_brochure_470990.pdf
- Olson, D.R. (1990). Mythologizing literacy. In S.P. Norris & L.M. Phillips, *Foundations of literacy Policy in Canada*, (pp. 15-22). Calgary: Detselig.
- Opoku-Dapaah, E. (1992). Barriers to educational pursuits of refugee claimants in Canada: The case of Ghanaians. *Refuge*, 12(3), 27-31.
- PRAIDA, (2009). *Service sociaux, services de santé*. Retrieved on September 18 2012 from http://www.cssdelamontagne.qc.ca/fileadmin/csss_dlm/soins_et_services/Depliant_PRAIDA_mai_2009.pdf
- Récit, (2007). *Service national du RÉCIT en adaptation scolaire: déficience langagière*. Retrieved on Nov 15, 2010 from <http://recit.qc.ca/recitadaptscol/spip.php?article 59>
- Rendon, L.I, Jalomo, E.E., Amaury, N. (2000). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority students' retention in higher education. In J.M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student puzzle* (pp.126-156). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Song, S. Y. & Pyon, S. M. (2008). Cultural Deficit Model. In N. J. Salkind & K. Rasmussen (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology*, (Vol. 1, pp. 216-217) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Street, B. (2003). What's 'new' in new literacy studies: Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues In Education*, 5(2), 118-121.
- United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (n.d.). *Refugees: Flowing across borders*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>
- United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2007). *Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugee*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>
- United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2009). *Education Strategy: Education for all persons of concern to UNHCR*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/taxis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4af7e71d9&query=education>

UNESCO, (n.d.). *Education: About Education For All*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/>

UNESCO, (2010). *EFA global monitoring reports: Reaching the marginalized*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/>

YMCA of Quebec (2013). *Residence*. Retrieved from <http://www.ymcaquebec.org/en/community/residence/>

Appendix A: IRB Country Report



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada
**Refugee Protection
Division**

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada
**Section de la protection
des réfugiés**

COUNTRY REPORT

October to December 2009 & Year to Date 2009

RAPPORT PAR PAYS

octobre à décembre 2009 & depuis le début de l'année 2009

Disclaimer: Only data on the first country of persecution is gathered. The information is captured as entered in the tracking system.
Décharge de responsabilité : Seul, le premier pays de persécution est compté.
L'information reflète les données telles quelles sont dans le système de prise de données.

Appendix A continued

**Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National**

1989	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Somalia	2,144	923	25	1	7	956	97%	1,188
Sri Lanka	1,956	1,015	44	0	3	1,061	96%	895
Lebanon	1,782	792	103	8	17	920	86%	862
El Salvador	974	369	70	6	4	449	82%	525
Iran	946	427	33	5	1	466	92%	480
China	559	128	41	1	3	173	74%	386
Czech Republic	328	124	36	0	2	162	77%	166
Poland	320	115	37	2	8	162	71%	158
Guatemala	249	94	13	1	1	109	86%	140
Nicaragua	231	45	17	0	0	62	73%	169
Total	9,489	4,032	419	24	46	4,520	89%	4,969

1990	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	3,800	2,362	265	19	20	2,666	89%	2,029
Somalia	2,944	2,364	176	10	14	2,564	92%	1,568
China	2,484	480	565	13	11	1,069	45%	1,801
El Salvador	1,942	943	246	22	8	1,219	77%	1,248
Lebanon	1,889	1,402	339	32	18	1,789	78%	962
Bulgaria	1,806	241	228	10	5	484	50%	1,339
Iran	1,780	1,112	108	23	10	1,253	89%	1,007
Pakistan	471	269	29	5	1	304	88%	287
Guatemala	392	209	52	9	4	274	76%	258
Ghana	257	47	35	1	3	86	55%	291
Total	17,765	9,429	2,043	144	94	11,708	81%	10,790

1991	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	3,823	4,472	149	41	57	4,719	95%	1,133
Somalia	3,663	3,686	296	48	13	4,042	91%	1,189
Lebanon	1,776	1,837	293	39	52	2,221	83%	517
China	1,775	554	2,012	31	25	2,622	21%	954
Iran	1,699	1,880	189	65	48	2,182	86%	524
USSR	1,432	432	177	8	13	630	69%	876
El Salvador	1,346	1,376	421	88	45	1,930	71%	664
Ghana	1,099	232	289	19	45	585	40%	805
Bulgaria	890	539	1,117	45	40	1,740	31%	489
Romania	815	410	211	14	15	650	63%	353
Total	18,318	15,418	5,154	398	353	21,321	72%	7,504

1992	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	5,785	4,845	297	22	84	5,248	92%	1,670
Somalia	3,411	3,385	247	54	15	3,701	91%	899
Pakistan	1,574	573	345	41	25	984	58%	996
Iran	1,352	924	224	35	35	1,218	76%	658
China	1,325	296	1,151	19	35	1,501	20%	778
Lebanon	1,112	455	438	23	42	958	47%	671
El Salvador	1,058	351	690	69	41	1,151	30%	571
USSR	925	715	560	44	81	1,400	51%	401
India	874	138	383	23	37	581	24%	709
Yugoslavia	827	242	117	21	22	402	60%	589
Total	18,243	11,924	4,452	351	417	17,144	70%	7,942

Appendix A continued

**Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National**

1993	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	5,156	3,755	983	104	120	4,962	76%	1,864
Somalia	3,346	2,211	106	99	30	2,446	90%	1,799
Israel	1,981	158	733	91	213	1,195	13%	1,338
India	1,794	226	660	145	102	1,133	20%	1,370
Iran	1,628	822	339	70	56	1,287	64%	999
Pakistan	1,195	384	757	262	116	1,519	25%	672
Russia	1,005	414	277	33	72	796	52%	554
USSR	986	294	508	87	151	1,040	28%	347
Bangladesh	965	287	276	62	32	657	44%	720
China	886	179	733	59	37	1,008	18%	656
Total	18,942	8,730	5,372	1,012	929	16,043	54%	10,319

1994	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,714	2,877	357	76	76	3,386	85%	1,192
Somalia	2,098	2,419	86	113	37	2,655	91%	1,242
Iran	1,499	984	216	56	36	1,292	76%	1,206
India	1,197	515	469	196	132	1,312	39%	1,255
Bangladesh	767	504	184	63	25	776	65%	711
Israel	753	378	515	47	55	995	38%	1,096
Pakistan	731	435	250	114	45	844	52%	559
Algeria	708	288	62	32	14	396	73%	535
China	605	310	327	94	26	757	41%	504
Afghanistan	558	370	33	36	17	456	81%	342
Total	11,630	9,080	2,499	827	463	12,869	71%	8,642

1995	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,407	1,540	253	47	54	1,894	81%	1,705
Iran	1,947	878	204	95	47	1,224	72%	1,929
Somalia	1,684	1,227	36	103	18	1,384	89%	1,542
Chile	1,495	24	19	19	20	82	29%	1,501
India	1,321	500	269	210	98	1,077	46%	1,499
Israel	1,229	118	310	56	45	529	22%	1,796
Venezuela	1,089	139	80	48	38	305	46%	1,222
Pakistan	1,030	338	109	116	44	607	56%	982
Bangladesh	911	454	92	53	29	628	72%	994
Algeria	790	442	102	49	12	605	73%	720
Total	13,903	5,660	1,474	796	405	8,335	68%	13,890

1996	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,945	1,724	366	70	58	2,218	78%	2,432
Chile	2,828	37	1,111	467	449	2,064	2%	2,265
Iran	1,722	1,145	444	120	87	1,796	64%	1,855
India	1,348	408	486	350	92	1,336	31%	1,511
Israel	1,260	102	854	182	115	1,253	8%	1,803
Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)	1,129	304	100	34	12	450	68%	1,208
Pakistan	1,095	350	182	213	60	805	43%	1,272
Somalia	962	889	209	176	17	1,291	69%	1,213
Mexico	946	105	80	113	49	347	30%	1,168
China	926	154	203	377	21	755	20%	901
Total	15,161	5,218	4,035	2,102	960	12,315	42%	15,628

Appendix A continued

Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National

1997	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,706	1,851	579	114	61	2,605	71%	2,533
Czech Republic	1,230	22	2	25	268	317	7%	1,071
Iran	1,206	1,075	417	103	72	1,667	64%	1,394
India	1,174	301	560	207	107	1,175	26%	1,510
Pakistan	1,060	334	372	241	67	1,014	33%	1,318
Mexico	924	156	314	204	158	832	19%	1,260
Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)	920	441	208	34	27	710	62%	1,418
China	897	199	259	381	39	878	23%	920
Algeria	859	484	128	70	45	727	67%	916
Somalia	679	802	225	160	21	1,208	66%	684
Total	11,655	5,665	3,064	1,539	865	11,133	51%	13,024

1998	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,645	2,180	553	140	58	2,931	74%	2,247
Pakistan	1,616	554	440	235	75	1,304	42%	1,630
China	1,417	288	382	654	73	1,397	21%	940
Mexico	1,160	294	550	154	183	1,181	25%	1,239
India	1,143	434	756	250	92	1,532	28%	1,121
Hungary	982	153	64	100	83	400	38%	896
Iran	889	911	289	119	53	1,372	66%	911
Algeria	819	799	283	81	35	1,198	67%	537
Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)	739	696	443	69	57	1,265	55%	892
Russia	669	252	274	72	90	688	37%	616
Total	12,079	6,561	4,034	1,874	799	13,268	49%	11,029

1999	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Sri Lanka	2,923	2,369	556	88	78	3,091	77%	2,079
China	2,448	594	425	710	33	1,762	34%	1,626
Pakistan	2,334	965	627	243	78	1,913	50%	2,051
Hungary	1,579	74	378	146	352	950	8%	1,525
India	1,345	298	617	169	97	1,181	25%	1,285
Mexico	1,174	293	670	177	211	1,351	22%	1,062
Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)	888	663	322	65	18	1,068	62%	712
Russia	863	348	278	49	60	735	47%	744
Iran	794	668	198	51	30	947	71%	758
Colombia	621	154	105	23	30	312	49%	549
Total	14,969	6,426	4,176	1,721	987	13,310	48%	12,391

2000	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Pakistan	3,084	1,627	707	225	96	2,655	61%	2,480
Sri Lanka	2,827	2,098	468	61	82	2,709	77%	2,197
Hungary	1,927	333	793	131	333	1,590	21%	1,862
China	1,855	1,029	851	331	43	2,254	46%	1,227
Argentina	1,453	67	333	65	92	557	12%	1,333
India	1,354	375	690	212	65	1,342	28%	1,297
Mexico	1,317	322	550	144	209	1,225	26%	1,154
Colombia	1,069	460	154	16	55	685	67%	933
Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)	993	677	187	34	11	909	74%	796
Turkey	869	353	102	32	22	509	69%	731
Total	16,748	7,341	4,835	1,251	1,008	14,435	51%	14,010

Appendix A continued

Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National

2001	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Hungary	3,849	215	579	166	829	1,789	12%	3,922
Pakistan	3,195	1,743	616	266	82	2,707	64%	2,968
Sri Lanka	3,010	1,550	483	45	85	2,163	72%	3,044
Zimbabwe	2,642	123	86	16	36	261	47%	2,551
China	2,414	942	383	387	30	1,742	54%	1,899
Colombia	1,846	745	130	17	55	947	79%	1,832
Turkey	1,758	494	145	36	38	713	69%	1,776
Mexico	1,649	239	600	100	228	1,167	20%	1,636
Argentina	1,458	59	1,185	105	152	1,501	4%	1,290
India	1,295	377	558	308	71	1,314	29%	1,278
Total	23,116	6,487	4,765	1,446	1,606	14,304	45%	22,196

2002	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Pakistan	3,869	1,267	823	137	123	2,350	54%	4,487
China	2,862	1,205	497	430	36	2,168	56%	2,593
Colombia	2,713	1,098	207	22	104	1,431	77%	3,114
Mexico	2,344	292	506	150	294	1,242	24%	2,738
Sri Lanka	1,794	1,964	475	50	58	2,547	77%	2,291
Costa Rica	1,662	27	233	202	149	611	4%	1,696
India	1,319	315	527	332	64	1,238	25%	1,359
Turkey	1,157	582	352	23	115	1,072	54%	1,861
Hungary	1,144	249	886	307	862	2,304	11%	2,762
Peru	1,069	153	262	25	51	491	31%	1,294
Total	19,933	7,152	4,768	1,678	1,856	15,454	46%	24,195

2003	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Pakistan	4,272	1,635	1,852	377	238	4,102	40%	4,657
Mexico	2,557	608	975	276	390	2,249	27%	3,046
Colombia	2,152	2,065	310	48	109	2,532	82%	2,734
Costa Rica	1,848	37	1,479	488	204	2,208	2%	1,336
China	1,842	1,367	501	310	64	2,242	61%	2,193
Sri Lanka	1,300	1,720	540	73	32	2,365	73%	1,226
India	1,137	396	698	236	48	1,378	29%	1,118
Bangladesh	721	314	174	21	19	528	59%	737
Nigeria	657	402	326	77	49	854	47%	1,101
Guyana	649	111	445	65	42	663	17%	906
Total	17,135	8,655	7,300	1,971	1,195	19,121	45%	19,054

2004	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Colombia	3,654	2,611	416	22	199	3,248	80%	3,140
Mexico	2,916	679	1,355	243	449	2,726	25%	3,236
China	1,988	1,246	670	408	77	2,401	52%	1,780
Sri Lanka	1,139	937	493	21	22	1,473	64%	892
India	1,080	342	635	231	54	1,262	27%	936
Pakistan	1,010	1,320	2,061	202	152	3,735	35%	1,932
Costa Rica	705	63	1,305	259	98	1,725	4%	316
Peru	598	378	456	53	38	925	41%	588
Nigeria	593	507	443	42	26	1,018	50%	676
Israel	446	133	351	33	59	576	23%	464
Total	14,129	8,216	8,185	1,514	1,174	19,089	43%	13,960

Appendix A continued

**Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National**

2005	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Mexico	3,550	700	2,239	225	472	3,636	19%	3,150
China	1,818	822	665	184	40	1,711	48%	1,887
Colombia	1,473	2,560	550	27	91	3,228	79%	1,385
Sri Lanka	901	492	209	14	22	737	67%	1,056
India	850	267	585	194	47	1,093	24%	693
Pakistan	753	687	789	90	114	1,680	41%	1,005
Zimbabwe	686	100	23	2	4	129	78%	631
Nigeria	589	328	400	44	19	791	41%	474
Saint Vincent	418	99	152	18	3	272	36%	352
Haiti	378	111	68	4	6	189	59%	319
Total	11,416	6,166	5,680	802	818	13,466	46%	10,952

2006	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Mexico	4,955	932	1,696	153	516	3,297	28%	4,808
China	1,644	763	591	134	54	1,542	49%	1,989
Colombia	1,372	1,083	240	24	63	1,410	77%	1,347
Sri Lanka	919	667	204	11	27	909	73%	1,066
Haiti	771	210	166	3	17	396	53%	694
India	768	236	262	151	33	682	35%	779
Nigeria	693	188	237	13	33	471	40%	696
Pakistan	656	443	454	18	47	962	46%	699
Zimbabwe	587	455	218	4	21	698	65%	520
Israel	509	45	148	11	46	250	18%	541
Total	12,874	5,022	4,216	522	857	10,617	47%	13,139

2007	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Mexico	7,078	386	2,143	275	857	3,661	11%	8,225
Haiti	3,790	131	75	18	37	261	50%	4,223
Colombia	2,644	739	144	20	46	949	78%	3,042
China	1,485	731	324	41	39	1,135	64%	2,339
USA	881	9	112	16	74	211	4%	1,014
Sri Lanka	814	703	62	14	20	799	88%	1,081
Nigeria	764	132	126	10	32	300	44%	1,160
India	554	44	196	83	32	355	12%	978
Israel	391	32	101	9	48	190	17%	742
Saint Vincent	356	45	96	11	15	167	27%	503
Total	18,757	2,952	3,379	497	1,200	8,028	37%	23,307

2008	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Mexico	8,111	603	3,388	356	1,354	5,701	11%	10,635
Haiti	4,916	319	361	18	88	786	41%	8,353
Colombia	3,148	1,232	198	15	114	1,559	79%	4,631
China	1,725	601	286	42	54	983	61%	3,081
USA	1,007	4	211	16	98	329	1%	1,692
Sri Lanka	1,000	995	27	20	23	1,065	93%	1,016
Czech Republic	858	84	5	11	96	196	43%	751
Nigeria	766	213	134	11	32	390	55%	1,536
El Salvador	583	96	71	4	14	185	52%	791
India	555	104	182	99	35	420	25%	1,113
Total	22,669	4,251	4,863	592	1,908	11,614	37%	33,599

Appendix A continued

**Top 10 Source Countries Ranked by Referrals - From 1989 to present
National**

2009	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Mexico	9,309	516	3,395	422	1,759	6,092	8%	13,852
Hungary	2,430	3	5	55	206	269	1%	2,420
Colombia	2,306	2,443	661	29	95	3,228	76%	3,709
Czech Republic	2,206	93	76	32	728	929	10%	2,028
Haiti	1,591	1,050	1,263	37	126	2,476	42%	7,468
China	1,585	992	543	92	90	1,717	58%	2,949
Sri Lanka	827	986	60	12	29	1,087	91%	756
Nigeria	762	440	147	29	48	664	66%	1,634
Saint Vincent	650	129	146	26	23	324	40%	1,068
El Salvador	530	63	114	13	26	216	29%	1,105
Total	22,196	6,715	6,410	747	3,130	17,002	39%	36,989

2010 (Jan - Mar)	Referred	Accepted	Negative	Abandoned	With/Other	Finalized	% Accepted	Pending
Hungary	781	1	7	27	139	174	1%	3,027
China	435	238	166	30	29	463	51%	2,921
Haiti	425	561	467	15	47	1,090	51%	6,803
Mexico	400	108	843	84	391	1,426	8%	12,826
Colombia	372	420	265	8	21	714	59%	3,367
Saint Vincent	217	39	48	2	14	103	38%	1,182
Nigeria	183	154	68	10	12	244	63%	1,573
Sri Lanka	166	183	26	1	4	214	86%	708
India	132	36	59	10	8	113	32%	1,056
Saint Lucia	130	14	19	4	3	40	35%	687
Total	3,241	1,754	1,968	191	668	4,581	38%	34,150

Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire for Teachers and Other Professionals

Interview question for teachers:

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. Have you noticed changes in the students' cultural background?
3. Do you have students that are refugees or former refugees?
4. How are you informed about their status in Canada?
5. Do you know their stories before coming to Canada?
6. In the past three years, have you had students that were Mexican refugees?
7. Did you have students that have left Canada because of their status?
8. How did they perform (i.e. understanding, grades, follow the curricula)?
9. What you think influences their academic success or failure? (status, language, culture, parents' involvement?)
10. What type of future schooling would you recommend them? (vocational, university)
11. How did you communicate with their families?
12. Where there cultural barriers?
13. What resources do you have for facilitating the education of refugee families?
14. What would you suggest for improving their academic success?

Interview questions for lawyer:

1. Is the refugee determination process in Canada effective?
2. Do you believe that being a refugee can affect student's educational achievements?
3. What recommendations would you make to improve the process and would have a positive impact on academic results?

APPENDIX B continued

Sample questions for teachers and other professionals

Interview question for social workers and community leader:

1. How are you involved with refugees?
2. Describe the first experiences of refugees that arrive to Montreal?
3. What are their reactions?
4. Do you think that the uncertainty of staying in Canada (their status) affects elementary school children's academic involvement?
5. Do you think that the uncertainty of staying in Canada (their status) affects elementary school children's academic achievement?
6. What would you suggest for improving their academic success?

Appendix C: Letter to Participants (English and French)

Montreal, XXXX, 2012

Dear Madam, Sir,

My name is Nina Gonzalez Bychkova and I am a graduate student in Educational Studies at Concordia University in Montreal. As part of my Master's diploma requirement, I need to conduct research in order to write my thesis. This will enable me to satisfy the criteria for obtaining the degree. My research supervisor is Professor Ailie Cleghorn, in the Education Department at Concordia University.

My research interests involve the integration and the educational evolution of Mexican children attending elementary school in Quebec. More specifically, children whose current status is refugee or have previously had this status. I try to understand their path, challenges, educational difficulties or facilities. The goal of this research is to envision their experiences; these will be told through their own words and also through the voices of the different contributors that have crossed their path in Quebec. These include teachers, social worker, a community leader and a lawyer. The analysis of their stories will enable to make recommendations that can improve academic and social opportunities of refugees in the host country.

As a person that has participated in the life of refugees, your contribution to this study is precious. This study will be able to contribute to the development of appropriate educational measures for refugee children. Your participation consists of a face to face interview where you will express your opinions. Please note that your participation is on a voluntary basis, and your identity will remain anonymous and confidential, a pseudonym can be used unless you choose to reveal your identity. The results will be published for academic purposes. Would you wish to participate in the study, your consent is necessary. Please sign the consent form and return at the latest one week after having received the present letter.

Thanking you in advance,

Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

APPENDIX C

Montréal, le XXX, 2012

Madame, Monsieur,

Mon nom est Nina Gonzalez Bychkova et je suis une étudiante de 2^{ème} cycle en Science de l'Éducation à l'Université Concordia à Montréal. Dans le cadre du déroulement de mes études en Maîtrise, je dois mener des recherches et rédiger un mémoire. Ainsi les exigences pour l'obtention du diplôme seront satisfaites. Mon travail de recherche est dirigé par la Professeure Ailie Cleghorn, Faculté d'Éducation à l'Université Concordia.

Mes intérêts de recherches portent sur l'intégration et l'évolution éducative des enfants provenant du Mexique et ayant actuellement ou auparavant eu le statut de réfugié. Plus spécifiquement, je cherche à comprendre leurs parcours, leurs défis et leurs difficultés ou facilités scolaires. Le but de cette recherche est de pouvoir concevoir leurs expériences qui seront racontées par leurs mots ainsi que ceux des multiples intervenants qu'ils croisent pendant leurs séjours au Québec. L'analyse de leurs épreuves permettra de faire des recommandations pour améliorer leurs opportunités académiques et sociales dans le pays d'accueil.

En tant qu'intervenant(e) auprès des enfants et des réfugiés, votre participation à cette étude est précieuse et pourra contribuer au développement des approches éducatives appropriées pour les enfants réfugiés. La participation consiste en une entrevue face à face où vous aurez à exprimer vos points de vue. Veuillez noter que votre participation est sur une base volontaire. Les données seront publiées pour des raisons académiques, votre identité restera anonyme et confidentielle, un pseudonyme peut être utilisé, et si vous le souhaitez votre identité peut être dévoilée. Si vous désirez participer, votre consentement est nécessaire, il suffit de signer la feuille de consentement et me la remettre au plus tard une semaine après réception de la présente lettre.

En vous remerciant d'avance, recevez Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs,

Nina Gonzalez Bychkova

Appendix D: Consent Form to Participate in Research

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Nina Gonzalez Bychkova of the Educational Studies Department of Concordia University, she can be reached by telephone (514) 747-7226 or by email at: allonina@hotmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to provide my point of view and experience about education for refugee children in Montreal.

B. PROCEDURE

The research requires you to answer questions and should not take more than two hours. The interview will be recorded with an audio-tape recorder, which can be stopped at any moment if you wish to do so. The interviewer will also take notes on a notepad during the interview.

If you are parent, the interview will take place in a public place (for example a library, at Concordia University), you can decide where you feel most comfortable. Be assured that your identity is completely confidential, and another name will be given to you in the research report. This will ensure that your identity will not be revealed.

If you are a professional (teacher, social worker, lawyer), the interview will be held at your workplace. As a professional, you can decide if you want your identity to be revealed or if you prefer having a pseudonym.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

There is no risk involved, however, if at any point of the interview you do not feel comfortable, you can stop the interview. Please note that your valuable participation can help future refugees, teachers and policy makers.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand that the researcher is not in a position to influence the outcome of my application to the Immigration and Refugee Board.

I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity).

I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 x7481 or by email at areid@cor.concordia.ca