

**MA Major Research Paper**

**Year 1, The Experiences of  
Syrian Refugees in Toronto:  
*Government-Assisted versus Privately Sponsored Refugees***

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*To Mama, Baba, Okhti and Akhooy, who have sacrificed a little bit of everything  
just so I can get to where I am today.*

*To the Syrian refugees in Toronto that I've met along this journey, you are the epitome of hope,  
who wakes up every morning to teach the rest of the world life!*

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In the Arab world, gratitude is a language onto itself, “May *Allah* bless the hands that give me this gift”; “Beauty is in the eyes that find me pretty”; “May *Allah* never deny your prayer”; and so on, an infinite string of prayerful appreciation. Coming from such a culture, I have always found a mere ‘thank you’ an insufficient expression that makes my voice sound miserly and ungrateful. I doubt that I will ever be able to convey my appreciation fully to the angels that have guided me along the way. They have motivated me, opened my eyes, and taught me lessons (both easy and hard), and have continued to support me in my journey.

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*Shukran Kteer Kteer!*

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## ABSTRACT

**Research Questions** – What are the most useful services and programs offered to Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival? In particular, how have these services differed in the way they offer support to government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees? How do integration trajectories differ between government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees within their first year of arrival?

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study utilizes qualitative interviewing strategies to address the research questions. I have adopted an inductive approach for this research where the theory was derived by gathering data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight government-assisted and seven privately sponsored Syrian refugees in Toronto a year following arrival. I used the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework and the social capital theory as key concepts when analyzing the data. My approach in this research was fueled by social justice and equity issues that emerged within my own life history as a female Palestinian immigrant in Canada. With that perspective in mind, the inception and design of this study was guided by feminist research. Interviews were analyzed for emergent categories and common themes.

**Findings** – The most useful services and programs offered to Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival were government agencies and community organizations. These services differed in the ways that they offered support to government assisted and privately sponsored refugees. Government assisted refugees often referred to individuals they have established connections with such as host volunteers or settlement workers when faced with challenges, as opposed to privately sponsored refugees who depended on their sponsor for access to a wide range of services and resources. Moreover, my findings illustrate that trust influences the building of bonding and bridging social capital and the way in which the host society responded to Syrian refugees' language challenges influenced their sense of social inclusion and/or social exclusion. Findings also suggest that the orientation session was found to be insufficient by most Syrian refugees as it did not cover the most useful information needed for their early integration period. In general, the integration trajectories of privately sponsored refugees are currently considered to be more positive than government assisted refugees as privately sponsored refugees have less language challenges post migration and have access to sponsors who sustain a social connection beyond the early months of resettlement.

**Research limitations/implications** – By investigating stories of Syrian refugees in Toronto, the study explores subjective views of refugee experiences in this unique and rarely examined group. A larger sample will increase the confidence of the study's findings and future studies should examine dynamics of these issues over time.

**Originality/value** – This paper presents insight onto the integration trajectories of Syrian refugees from their own perspectives in the short term and how trust and empathy can play a role in facilitating a sense of social inclusion and the building of bonding and bridging social capital. The study's qualitative approach enabled the examination of pre and post migration challenges experienced by Syrian refugees beyond those typically studied in this literature and led to unique recommendations that provide useful data for program and policy design.

**Keywords** – Refugee, Integration, Resettlement, Trust, Empathy, Social Inclusion, Social Exclusion, Bonding Social Capital, Bridging Social Capital, Orientation Session, Program and Policy Design, Qualitative Approach

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

The growing number of Syrian refugees admitted to Canada has necessitated additional research on the integration of refugees and the challenges they face during this process. Between the period of November 4, 2015 to January 29, 2017, there has been 40,081 Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017, a). Among them were 21,876 government-assisted refugees, 14,081 privately sponsored refugees and 3,931 blended visa-office referred refugees (Government of Canada, 2017, a). The Syrian refugee resettlement response was a stark contrast to past efforts and responses to previous refugee cohorts. “Canada’s combined intake of refugees across all categories and source countries exceeds 30,000 for the first time since 2006, and surpasses 40,000 for the first time since 1992, which marks only the fifth such occasion since 1979” (El-Assal, 2016, p. 10). The response was at all levels of government. The Ontario government in particular created a Syrian Refugee Resettlement Secretariat and worked closely in collaboration with the municipal and federal governments to ensure seamless, coordinated, and appropriate support for the refugees who arrived in Ontario (The Government of Ontario, 2015). In addition to the governments’ overwhelming response, private sponsorship played a huge role in the Syrian refugee response initiative. Twice as many government-assisted refugees were resettled through the private sponsorship program by non-profit organizations such as Lifeline Syria and many faith groups applied through churches, mosques, or synagogues.

While the response initiatives to the Syrian refugee crisis have been more than galvanizing for Canadians, integration is key to ensuring those who have fled conflict can successfully resettle and integrate into Canadian society. Over the last 40 years, Canada has been the only country in the world to offer both private and government sponsorship programs. This provides a

remarkable opportunity to examine the most effective aspects of resettlement support in refugee integration (Hynie and Hyndman, 2016). In response to the lack of research around the effectiveness of the various forms of sponsorship on the integration of refugees from refugees' perspectives, the goal of this paper is to evaluate which aspects of sponsorship programs provide the most successful integration experience for Syrian refugees in Toronto a year following arrival. This paper seeks to explore the following:

- What are the most useful services and programs offered to Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival?
- In particular, how have these services differed in the way they offer support to government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees?
- How do integration trajectories differ between government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees within their first year of arrival?

While I acknowledge that a plethora of factors influence the integration of refugees, a single analysis of each and every one would be impossible. For example, pre-migration experiences, religion, and gender all play a vital role in the integration of refugees but they cannot be fully explored in the confines of this paper. Moreover, I understand that the term 'refugee' encompasses a wide range of populations and the term 'integration' is broad and expansive. In this paper, I will be exploring integration from a social capital theory and social inclusion versus social exclusion framework. The social capital theory seeks to understand the ways in which refugees form notions of trust and networks with their friends, family, sponsor, government agencies, community organizations, the larger community, and the host society as a whole (Bourdieu, 1985; Paxton, 1999; Giddens 1990). In order to understand the integration of Syrian refugees in the short term, I combined the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework by Kennan, Lloyd, Qayyum, & Thompson (2011) with the social capital theory to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which refugees build capital, receive information in their new settings, and choose which information impacts their integration process. I will explain below the

significance of using the social capital theory and social inclusion versus social exclusion framework as key concepts in my study.

Current data suggests that measuring successful integration requires a longitudinal study in order to understand the effectiveness of programs. For example, continuously examining the same cohort of refugees for a duration of 10 or 15 years after they have landed in Canada. These findings are essential, however, I argue that research that examines the different experiences of refugees in the short term can also provide a strong depth of data that might be useful for policy and program design. For example, my focus on orientation sessions illustrated this type of usefulness. During the first month of arrival, Syrian refugees receive an orientation session that provides information on Canadian culture and lifestyle as well as compliance and everyday information on the overall Canadian system. This information may or may not be relevant and/or sufficient for Syrian refugees during their first month of arrival. Therefore, I will be exploring how this information has been used by government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees as well as how the different services have been effective during their first year of arrival.

In general, this qualitative approach aims to represent a preliminary inquiry toward exploring and comparing the different experiences that shape government-assisted and privately sponsored Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival. My findings are based on fifteen semi-structured interviews that I conducted with eight government-assisted refugees and seven privately sponsored Syrian refugees in Toronto. These interviews focused on open-ended discussions in order to understand how pre and post-migration conditions and various aspects of identity and settlement services influence refugees' integration trajectories a year following arrival. The experiences of the Syrian refugees that will be explored below may not be applicable to all refugees and therefore, it is vital to remember that there are a myriad of factors that play a role in



the resettlement process. However, these personal narratives do allow for a glimpse into a broader understanding of policy and program design.

I bring to this research my experience working with Syrian refugees in Toronto, Canada, primarily as a volunteer interpreting in English/Arabic at airports, interviews, dental appointments, non-profit organizations, and government facilities. In addition to volunteering, I have also worked as a research assistant to examine the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors on household food insecurity of Syrian refugees in Toronto. These invaluable learning opportunities afforded me the experience of interacting with Syrian refugees at different points of their integration in Toronto. In addition, my lived experience as an immigrant who came to Toronto, Canada from the Middle East provided me with vital insight into this research. It is this experience that prompted me to examine resettlement programs in Toronto and inspired me to look at the different services that are being offered to refugees.

This paper is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 begins with defining the term ‘refugee’ according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Canadian government, and academic perspectives. Then, it provides a synopsis of the Syrian refugee pledge in Canada and the difference between government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees.
- Chapter 2 examines the literature review on the term ‘integration’ according to the UNHCR and the Canadian government perspectives. It also examines the term ‘integration’ according to both the social capital theory and the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework.
- Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach for the research undertaken and provides insights into the sampling. It also outlines the results and findings, the common themes in analysis, and provides a summary of recommendations.
- Appendix A includes the qualitative interview guide used for this study.

## THE TERM ‘REFUGEE’

### *Legal Definition and Description*

Lang-Cox (2012) suggests that the term ‘refugee’ encompasses a large and diverse population. This is a significant point to highlight since each refugee is influenced and shaped in multifaceted ways by their experiences. Under the international definition, the United Nations General Assembly<sup>1</sup>, a refugee is:

As a result of ... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, and membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR, 2011, p. 18).

While each country has specific legislation determining who qualifies for refugee status, this international definition serves as a cornerstone for all designations. According to the *Convention*, after World War II, a refugee is someone who has traveled outside of the territory of state in order to escape a myriad of intolerable conditions. In addition, a refugee is someone who is fleeing conflict based on persecution of five officially recognized bases: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (Cooper, 1998). The *Convention* was entered into force on 22 April 1954, and it has been subject to only one amendment in the form of a 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which removed the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 *Convention* (UNHCR, 2011).

Canada is signatory to both the 1951 *Convention* and the 1967 *Protocol*. The Canadian government states that “the objectives of Canada’s refugee program are to save lives, offer

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on December 10, 1948 in an effort to prevent the atrocities from World War II from occurring again. Shortly after the Declaration, the organization established the 1951 *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which offers the following formal definition of a refugee under Section 1(A).

protection to the displaced and persecuted, meet Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees, and respond to international crises by providing assistance to those in need of resettlement" (The Government of Canada, 2016, b). In 2001, the *Immigration Protection and Refugee Act (IPRA)*, which replaced the *Immigration Act* of 1976, outlined several principles for refugee resettlement within Canada:

- (a) to recognize that the refugee program is in the first instance about saving lives and offering protection to the displaced and persecuted;
- (b) to fulfil Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and affirm Canada's commitment to international efforts to provide assistance to those in need of resettlement;
- (c) to grant, as a fundamental expression of Canada's humanitarian ideals, fair consideration to those who come to Canada claiming persecution;
- (d) to offer safe haven to persons with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, as well as those at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment;
- (e) to establish fair and efficient procedures that will maintain the integrity of the Canadian refugee protection system, while upholding Canada's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all human beings;
- (f) to support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada;
- (g) to protect the health and safety of Canadians and to maintain the security of Canadian society; and
- (h) to promote international justice and security by denying access to Canadian territory to persons, including refugee claimants, who are security risks or serious criminals (IPRA, s. 3, 2001).

Canada's own IPRA imports the language of the 1951 *Convention* and 1967 *Protocol*. Countries such as Canada that are signatories to the *Convention* and *Protocol* are obliged to protect refugees on their territory and treat them according to internationally recognized rules. The next section will focus on Canada's Syrian resettlement effort and the categories through which a refugee can be brought to Canada and offered resettlement services and programs.

## UNDERSTANDING CANADA’S PLEDGE TO SYRIA

The Syrian resettlement effort proves to be Canada’s second largest cohort of refugees since the Indochinese arrivals in 1979-80 and the numbers could grow even larger as efforts extend into 2017 and beyond. Most Syrian refugees have been resettled in Canada under the categorizations of either government-assisted refugees (**GARs**) or privately sponsored refugees (**PSRs**). There are currently 21,876 Syrian GARs, 14,274 PSRs, and 3,931 Blended Visa office-Referred refugees (**BVORs**) that have arrived in Canada as of January 29, 2017 (The Government of Canada, 2017,a). This number is important to highlight since it has officially surpassed the second largest refugee cohort – the 37, 500 Hungarian refugees who arrived in Canada in 1956-57. Therefore, it is necessary to understand Canada’s pledge to Syria to gain a better perspective of the importance of integration to this unique refugee cohort. Syrian-Canadians now reside in new neighbourhoods and schools, and are changing their experience as well as their communities around them.

| <b>Highlights of Canadian Refugee Resettlement Post-Second World War</b>                     |   |
|--|---|
| 1956-57  | Canada accepts 37, 500 Hungarian refugees                                   |
| 1968-69  | Canada admits 10, 975 Czechoslovakian refugees                              |
| 1970-90  | Canada resettles about 20,000 Soviet Jews                                   |
| 1972   | Canada resettles about 7,000 Ugandan Asians                                 |
| 1973-74  | Canada resettles about 7,000 Chileans and Latin Americans                   |
| 1977-78  | Canada resettles almost 9,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Loatian boat people |
| 1979-80  | Canada resettles 60,000 Indochinese people                                  |
| 1990   | Canada admits 5,000 Bosnian Muslims   |
| 1999   | Canada accepts more than 7,000 Kosvars                                      |
| <i>Sources: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Canadian Council for Refugees.</i> |   |

### *Comparing GARs and PSRs*

GARs are people who have been resettled (or are in the process of resettling) from abroad and receive financial support from the federal government. Financial support includes meeting refugees at the airport or ports of entry, providing temporary accommodation, helping refugees

find permanent accommodation, offering basic household items, and providing a general orientation to life in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016,a). GARs are also offered free language-training classes in both French and English through federally and/or provincially funded programs (Government of Canada, 2016, a). Refugees are also eligible for the Interim Federal Health Program (**IFHP**) which provides limited temporary taxpayer-funded coverage of health care benefit (Government of Canada, 2016, a). Finally, they receive financial support that can also be used as a source of income for up to one year after arrival.

PSRs, on the other hand, are people who have been resettled (or are in the process of resettling) from abroad, but are financially supported by private sponsorship. The PSR program was originally launched in Canada in response to the Vietnamese refugee crisis in 1978 since popular pressure forced the Canadian government to sponsor more refugees and help them resettle through churches and non-profit organizations (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2009). Private sponsors are Canadians who agree to provide refugees with financial and social support as well as settlement assistance for up to a year after arrival or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient. Canada was the only country in the world to offer the PSR program until Australia adopted a similar model in 2013 (Kneebone, Hirsch, and Macklin, 2016). Canadians can sponsor refugees through Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) “which are groups that have signed agreements with the Government of Canada to sponsor refugees” (Government of Canada, 2017, b, p.1). These groups are generally large, well-established organizations such as non-profit organizations, churches, or community organizations that have a direct interest in the humanitarian cause. Findings suggest that PSRs usually benefit from this type of sponsorship as it provides more than financial support, but also community support and social networks. Another type of sponsorship includes the Group of Five Program which allows “any five (or

more) Canadian citizens or permanent residents to engage in refugee sponsorship” (Government of Canada, 2017, b). This group must demonstrate that they have the necessary financial means and ability to support PSRs for a year following arrival (Government of Canada, 2017, b).

Later in 2013, the BVOR came to fruition, which comprises of a combination of up to six months support from the GAR program and an additional (up to) six months support from the PSR program. In this program, refugees are also covered under the IFHP for one year and private sponsors can offer social support for up to one year (Government of Canada, 2017,c). Since this study did not have access to BVORs, this paper will seek to compare the ways in which GARs and PSRs have used the services and resources availed to them by government and community organizations, as well as their sponsor(s) and larger community.

The three main programs offered by the Canadian government provide potentially different opportunities and challenges for integration and resettlement in Canada. However, in order to understand what is meant by the term ‘integration’ and how is it defined, the next chapter will examine integration within the field of refugee resettlement.

## **CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW ON THE USE OF ‘INTEGRATION’**

In this chapter I provide several frameworks that have been employed in defining integration according to the UNHCR, government, and academic perspectives. I will also explore how refugee integration in Canada has been measured in the past, especially since the passage of the IPRA in 2001, and the outcomes for GARs and PSRs. In addition, I will explain how Kennan, et al. (2011) social inclusion versus social exclusion framework is necessary to further understand how information has been used by GARs and PSRs. As well, Bourdieu’s (1985) social capital theory is analyzed as a key concept to understand how refugees in the past have used social networks to build capital in the host society.

### ***United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees***

The UNHCR outlines guiding principles for host countries to positively facilitate refugee integration and create the most effective outcomes for all parties involved during the process. In *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, the UNHCR defines ‘integration’ as:

A mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one’s own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of diverse population (2002, p.12).

Refugees resettled in Canada are provided with ‘durable solutions’ to their protection needs, including legal status in their new host country. There are three broad types of durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third country resettlement. The UNHCR outlines the significance of integration in two of these durable solutions: local integration and third country resettlement.

Voluntary repatriation gives “the right to refugees to return to their country of origin” (UNHCR, n.d.) under international law. This repatriation should be voluntary as refugees can return to their country of origin at their own pace under conditions of safety and dignity, while treated with respect by the authorities (UNHCR, n.d.).

Local integration (which combines the legal, economic and sociocultural dimensions) is one of the objectives that call for providing a sense of belonging in the community and increased participation in the host country. This durable solution is strongly dependent on the host country’s resources and ability to host refugees (Jansen, 2008). This durable solution is necessary to the integration of Syrian refugees in Toronto as findings suggest that most GARs and PSRs depend on the services and resources offered to them by government and community organizations during their first year of arrival.

Third country resettlement, the second of the two durable solutions UNHCR describes, offers refugees permanent residence status and equal rights to their national counterparts. However, in order to be considered for resettlement, an applicant must be deemed to be a refugee by the UNHCR and upon assessment, resettlement must be identified as the only plausible durable solution to offer protection for a refugee whose “life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge” (UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2011, p.3). The third durable solution is considered necessary for facilitating a positive integration trajectory for Syrian refugees in Toronto. As the findings section will further explain, Syrian refugees constantly referred to the importance of having equal rights to their national counterparts in Canada as opposed to the lack of equal rights they experienced pre migration. For example, most GARs and PSRs emphasized that they received better means of support by the Canadian government and community organizations as opposed to the Syrian



government and governments during transition countries such as Turkey and Jordan. They also emphasized that they did not have basic rights such as the right to work or drive in transition countries which made their integration process that much more difficult. This will be further explained in the analysis section below.

The UNHCR as an international legislation relating to refugee resettlement and integration is important to address in order to gain a better perspective on the legislative framework that affects the experiences of refugees resettled in Canada. In addition, the three durable solutions outlined by the UNHCR are necessary to understand the international obligations that Canada must abide by to positively facilitate refugee integration.

### *The Government of Canada*

In contrast to the UNHCR, the Canadian Government defines the concept of integration within a perspective that lends itself necessary to understand the role that Canadian policies and legislation play in facilitating a successful integration process for refugees.

The Federal Government of Canada takes integration seriously as a policy goal. In its *2016-2017 Report on Plans and Priorities*, the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) lists its ‘Newcomer Settlement and Integration’ program as one of four programs where, “ultimately, the goal of integration is to encourage refugees to contribute to Canada’s economic, social, political and cultural development” (Government of Canada, 2016b, p. 3.1). To date, program spending of the program in 2016-2017 exceeds \$1 billion. The report contains the following description:

IRCC will continue to devote qualified resources in order to support the Government’s initiative to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees. The Department will also collaborate with partners to provide essential services and long-term support for the refugees’ successful resettlement and integration into Canada, both economically and socially. This will include full coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program (Government of Canada, 2016,b, p. 4).

Canada's integration strategy began to recognize integration as a mutual adjustment by both refugees and society in 2009 when it explicitly stated in the description of the 'Integration Program' the following:

Canada's approach to integration is one that encourages mutual accommodation and adjustment by both newcomers and the larger society. Newcomers' understanding of and respect for basic Canadian values, coupled with Canadians' understanding of and respect for the cultural diversity that newcomers bring to Canada, is fundamental to this approach. As well, the cooperation of government, stakeholders and other players, such as employers and volunteers, in providing newcomers with the support they need to realize the full benefits of immigration (CIC, 2010, a; Hyndman, 2011, p. 6).

While integration is not explicitly defined in Canadian legislation and policy, Yu et al. (2007) contend that "most scholars and policy makers in Canada and elsewhere agree with the UK Home Office's 2003 description of refugee 'integration' as a dynamic, multi-faceted two-way process which requires adaptation on the part of the refugees, but also the society of destination" (p. 17). While Canada encourages integration and expects refugees to accept Canadian values, the IPRA does not provide a clear definition of 'Canadian values' and 'integration'. However, it highlights a commitment to the resettlement of refugees by stating that 'Canada's humanitarian ideals' must be granted to refugees and 'fair and efficient procedures' in the Canadian refugee protection system must be maintained, all while upholding respect for human rights to individuals in society. This study's findings suggest that most GARs and PSRs highlight the positive treatment they have received by the Canadian government and community organizations during their year following arrival. Their statements represent this significant understanding and respect for Canadian culture. Therefore, in order for integration to occur, the host society needs to play a role in facilitating an "understanding of and respect for the cultural diversity that newcomers bring to Canada" (CIC, 2010, a; Hyndman, 2011, p. 6). Since this study focuses on refugees' integration experiences in the short term, Canadian values are not fully explored in the

confines of this paper. This paper argues that Syrian refugees have not developed a full understanding of Canadian values as they have only been in Toronto for a year. Therefore, this study outlines that future research needs to examine the ways in which the Canadian government defines Canadian values in policies and legislation and refugees' understanding of Canadian values to gain a better understanding of the Canadian integration approach according to the Government of Canada.

While I have examined the meaning of integration, the next section adds another dimension to the meaning. Present discourse concerning refugee experiences offer several lenses through which to view and define refugee integration. Some of these lenses include: resettlement styles, citizenship, social capital, social inclusion versus social exclusion as well as economic indicators. I will summarize selected academic perspectives that explore refugee integration in Canada from the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework and social capital theory as I consider these theoretical orientations as most relevant and necessary in understanding the integration trajectories of Syrian refugees a year following arrival. The section begins by outlining the emergence of integration in general and it will then include the contributions of Kennan et al. (2011) to the social inclusion and social exclusion framework as key concepts. Later, the section will include the contributions of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam to the social capital theory as well as contemporary critiques of their approaches. Insight into how the term has been employed in research by academics will be discussed and recommendations are then presented. This literature review concludes with a detailed explanation of how the lens of social capital and social inclusion/exclusion are employed in the research presented in this paper.

## *Literature Review*

While the concept of integration is widely known, “there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigration and refugee integration” (Castles, Jorac, Vasta & Vertovec, 2002, p. 114; van Tubergen, 2006). This contributes to a “great deal of disagreement about what constitutes integration, how one determines whether strategies for promoting integration are successful, or what the features of an integrated society are” (Atfield, Brahmhatt, & O’Toole, 2007, p.12).

Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) and Berry (2001) suggest that the frameworks for integration theory find its roots in anthropology. The literature on immigration suggests that adaptation means detachment from the culture of origin and increased participation in the host society (Ives 2007). However, Berry (1997) challenges this traditional approach in immigration research where he delineates four acculturation types: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. Berry (1997) suggests that assimilation, from the point of view of non-dominant groups, advocates the rejection of the culture of origin which hinders the process of resettlement, whereas separation, is when individuals hold on to their original cultures and avoid interaction with ‘others’. Unlike assimilation and separation, integration, requires a balance between one’s own culture of origin and the culture of the host country which is a two-way process between refugees and the larger society. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined. It is then inevitable to suggest that the integration approach is what is needed most for Syrian refugees in Canada as it entails a mutual adjustment on both the host society and refugees themselves. In order for integration to occur, Syrian refugees need the desire to have a sense of

belonging to the community and the larger host society all the while maintaining their cultural values, and the host society needs to make Syrian refugees feel included and part of the larger community while accepting their cultural values. The analysis and recommendations sections will further explain how this mutual adjustment can take place in practice.

Valtonen's (1988) research with Middle Eastern refugees in Finland, addresses integration as the "participation in all areas of the host society while maintaining a sense of ethno-cultural integrity" (p.42). Other academics suggest that relative to resettlement, integration is defined as the social, economic, and cultural participation in the host country while concurrently maintaining ties to the country of origin (Ives, 2007; Krahn et al., 2000; Valtonen, 1998).

Since this study focuses on the differences in which Syrian GARs and PSRs used available services and resources during their first year of arrival, integration is best analyzed from the perspective of both the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework and the social capital theory. On the one hand, the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework focuses on the way in which refugees receive information in their new settings and how they choose information that impact their integration process. While the social capital theory, on the other hand, examines how refugees build bonding and bridging social capital during their early integration period. In the analysis section below, I will further advance the idea that it is trust and empathy on the part of refugees and the host society that influence the building of social capital and the facilitation of social inclusion, which thereby expedites a successful integration trajectory for refugees in the host society. Therefore, government programs and community organizations need to constantly ensure that all actors (volunteer hosts, sponsors, language instructors, orientation providers, interpreters) are finding optimal ways to sustain trust and

empathy, in order to nourish the building of social capital and facilitate social inclusion for refugees in the host society.

### **Social Inclusion versus Social Exclusion as Key Concepts**

Social inclusion versus social exclusion represents the ways in which refugees receive information in their new settings and the choices they make to aid their integration process. In their study, Kennan et al. (2011) demonstrate that social exclusion is often the situation for those who lack access to information that is necessary to participate fully in society. In addition, information overload can create the potential of social exclusion – with so much information presented at once, refugees are unable to decipher what is the most vital to know. Refugees in the study perceived that there were “too many things to learn” (Kennan et al., 2011, p. 207), which added to this sense of information overload. In my study, the lack of information received during the orientation session was a factor that presented the potential of social exclusion for both GARs and PSRs in Toronto.

On the other hand, social inclusion suggests that refugees are participating fully in their new society. Kennan et al. (2011) found that refugees are most socially inclusive when they have a great understanding of compliance information and everyday information in society. Compliance information is “the information related to the instrumental and organizing discourses of society” (p. 204) whereas everyday information encompasses information pertaining to “education, employment, health, daily living, and the need to contact family and friends” (p. 204).

According to Kennan et al., (2011), one of the most critical needs for newly arrived refugees towards successful integration is the adequate dissemination of information. While the biggest factor contributing to social exclusion of refugees was continually language (Kennan et al., 2011). For example, in the post IPRA context, GARs are more likely to face language barriers

than PSRs, including low literacy levels in their original languages (Heibert & SHerrel, 2009). According to Janet Dench, Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, in the first years after arrival, PSRs, who often have advantageous family networks and higher levels of education, tend to fare better economically as they are not selected for their vulnerability like the GARs (MetroNews, 2016). GARs are typically selected based on humanitarian need, which will often present social and educational challenges and they tend to take longer to establish themselves. The findings in this study are applicable to the results mentioned above as every GAR interviewed (100%) perceived language as their main barrier post migration while some PSRs (43%) perceived language as the main barrier post migration (*see Table 2*). My findings suggest that because of this barrier, GARs found it difficult to roam around easily in Toronto, communicate with others, gain employment opportunities, or simply “be a part of the community” (#6GAR Hamza) and feel socially included.

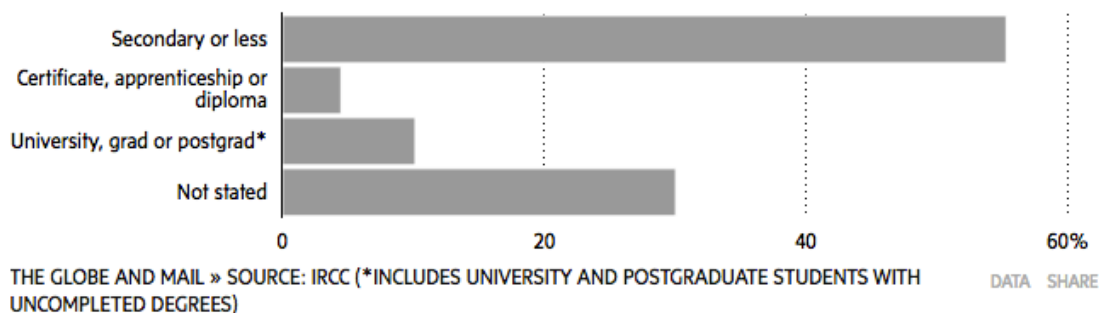
IRCC (2017) reports that of 30,228 Syrian refugees surveyed in Canada who have arrived after November 2015, there are 10,245 who speak English, 622 who speak French or both English and French, and 18,834 who speak neither. In particular, one in three Syrians can speak some English, most of them are PSRs, while more than 60% do not speak either official language — a fact that will pose perhaps the most difficult integration challenge (Friesen, 2017, p. 9). One can only imagine how difficult it must be for Syrian refugees who speak neither French nor English to understand compliance and everyday information and become socially included in society. This justifies the need for language training, interpretation and translation services across the country. Lifeline Syria is an example of a non-profit organization that successfully provides free and accessible interpretation and translation services by Arab students to Syrian refugees in Toronto. The services that are offered by non-profit organizations such as Lifeline

Syria play a role in the facilitation of integration for refugees. Most students who provide interpretation and translation services to Syrian refugees in Toronto were also Middle Eastern immigrants and/or refugees who understand the challenges faced by Syrian refugees pre and post migration. This is necessary as Syrian refugees who have experiences with people within the Canadian population who are empathetic to their challenges were later found to influence their sense of social inclusion.

Research conducted by the Globe and Mail in 2017 (*see Table 1*) illustrates that more than half of all refugees have completed high school or less and many have not stated their level of education. The graph also illustrates that about 7% of the Syrian refugees have a university degree. However, it is necessary to indicate that “almost half of the Syrian refugees are under 18 and are still too young to have attained much educationally as many of the children had their education interrupted by the conflict” (Friesen, 2017, p. 14).

## Education level

### How educated are Syrian refugees?



**Table 1**

This is in line with Canada’s previous refugee cohorts as Hyndman (2011) asserts: post IPRA, GARs arriving today have less education than those who arrived in the 1990s. In addition, “approximately 80% of recent (2002-2006) GAR landings had an education level of secondary school or less whereas this was the case for roughly 60% of landings during the 1990s” (CIC,



2010b: 2). This means that access to Canadian education for refugees is more important than ever and is key to refugees' successful integration.

While I did not employ educational achievement as an indicator during this study, findings suggest that 'language' was perceived as a challenge by GARs more than PSRs. However, in the findings section I will indicate that while 'language' was perceived as a challenge by GARs more than PSRs, both groups reflect on the ways in which the host society responds to their language challenges as the reason that effects the way in which they perceive their overall social inclusion versus social exclusion experience. Moreover, findings suggest that language trainers, sponsors, government facilitators and community organizations played a huge role in facilitating social inclusion and/or exclusion. For example, when PSRs had access to sponsors who exposed them to a wide range of services and resources, this ultimately made them 'feel comfortable' as they were practicing their language skills with their sponsor and 'felt part of the community' in their first year of arrival.

I feel that it is imperative to indicate that even pre IPRA context, in comparing the integration of Southeast Asian PSRs and GARs at the end of their first decade in Canada, Beiser (2003) found that sponsorship appeared to affect long-term integration outcomes. Based on integration indicators of employment, language fluency, and general health, Southeast Asian PSRs had a higher integration rate than GARs. Beiser (2003) suggests that private sponsors may have exposed refugees to a broader range of services than government settlement workers were able to. For example, sponsors helped refugees find their way to language training classes, helped them find schools for their children, and helped them find places to live (Beiser, 2003). Moreover, "sponsors act, as if they were the direct representatives of the new society, apart from providing material help, they ideally guide the refugees in their initial social and cultural

adjustment” (Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 139). This framework provides a great understanding of the factors that contribute to social inclusion and exclusion of refugees in society. In this study, findings suggest that GARs had more challenges than PSRs post migration, particularly with the English language. In this paper I argue that the ways in which the host society responds to refugees’ challenges and needs has a significant effect on their social inclusion and/or exclusion. This will be further explained in the analysis section below.

### **Social capital as a Key Concept**

Another framework for viewing refugee integration is based on the social capital theory. Although there was some use of the term “social capital” in the 1890s, there is broad consensus that its contemporary currency derives from work done by Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam during the 1980s and 1990s (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Bourdieu (1985), one of the first social theorists to discuss the ‘social capital’ concept, identifies capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). Bourdieu’s definition encompasses two elements: first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). The structures that produce and reproduce access to social capital are networks of connections (Foley & Edwards, 1999). Bourdieu recognized that people must work at maintaining their social capital; social networks are not a natural given, but must be constructed and maintained through “investment strategies oriented to the institutionalization of group relations, usable as a reliable source of other benefits” (Portes, 1998, pg. 4). The value of individual ties depends on the number of connections they can mobilize and the volume of different capitals possessed by each connection (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Paxton (1999),

in order for network ties to become social capital, a relationship must be formed between refugees and the host society based on trust. In this sense, Giddens (1990) makes the distinction between trust in specific individuals versus trust in abstract institutions or groups of people. Lamba and Krahn (2003) quote Giddens' explanation that "refugees would need to place trust not only in family and friends, but also in the abstract notion of Canada's humanitarian commitments and in the sponsorship and settlement services offered during the early phases of resettlement"(p. 338).

Nannestad, Lind Haase Svendsen, & Tinggaard Svendsen (2008) build on Giddens (1990) work and explicitly present the important factors of social capital which consist of bridging social capital and bonding social capital. These factors are crucial in the integration of non-western states immigrants into Western welfare states (Nannestad et al., 2008). Social capital in this sense is defined as "the ability to cooperate in a group for the purpose of achieving a collective good" (Nannestad et al., 2008, p. 56). Bridging capital consists of outward looking networks and spans diverse social groups. Community associations play an important role in facilitating both bonding and bridging capital among refugees (McMichael and Manderson 2004). On the other hand, bonding capital concerns inward looking networks and reinforces homogenous groups (Nannestad et. al, 2008; Putnam 2000).

Nannestad et al. (2008) suggests that while bridging and bonding social capital are both voluntary and self-enforcing, integration experience can be either negative or positive depending on the form of capital. According to Nannestad et al. (2008), bridging capital consists of the ties found among societies as a whole between communities, and individuals, and between individuals and outside communities. This capital is identified as "network cooperation that transcends group cleavages" (Nannestad et al. 2008, p. 610). In bridging capital, individuals

place trust in the ‘unknown’ unlike bonding capital, which involves trusting the ‘known’. On the other hand, bonding social capital can potentially form “superglued” groups with negative societal outcomes (Nannestad et al. 2008). Nannestad et al. (2008) find the successful mix between bridging and bonding social capital as a positive illustration of successful integration. This study’s findings did not showcase any evidence that ‘bonding social capital’ is mutually exclusive with ‘bridging social capital’. Most GARs and PSRs did not only depend on friends and family when faced with challenges in Canada, but also resorted to government and community organizations for support during their early integration period.

Family support has been identified as one way of establishing bridging and bonding social capital for refugees. This in turn helps form friendships, marital prospects, employment opportunities, education information, access to accommodations, and financial aid (Gold, 1993). Gold and Kibria (1993) found that social capital is formed resources “such as employment information and aid with translation, hospitals training, centres, transport, and resettlement and welfare agencies” (Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 338). In addition, Gold and Kibria (1993) found that refugees establish social capital through money and other resources from interconnected residential units pooled in order to cope with economic instabilities. Various forms of household labour such as child care, vehicle repair, and food preparation were also a part of the family network of aid received and given through social capital. This study’s findings suggest that trust influenced the building of bonding and bridging social capital for most PSRs and GARs. It is interesting to see how these services differed in the way they offer support to GARs and PSRs. While both GARs and PSRs had access to a wide range of social capital – friends, family, religious groups, community organizations and government agencies– PSRs depended mostly on their sponsor for access to services. The difference between PSRs and GARs is that most

sponsors exposed PSRs to a wide range of resources and services throughout the year while some GARs had access to government services only during the first months of resettlement.

While post-IPRA Canada has aimed to resettle refugees in one community to “create ready-made support systems for arriving refugees” (Labman, 2007, p. 42), Kenyan, Afghan, Burmese, Acehnese, and Indonesian refugees – who were all GARs resettled between 2003-2004 – lacked the social capital to which a more settled community would have access. As Brunner et al. (2010) found, “successful integration was enigmatic for the Acehnese on several fronts, including official language acquisition and employment after the economic recession in 2008” (Hyndman, 2011, p. 21). In an effort to measure refugee integration qualitatively among the Acehnese, researchers asked: “with whom do you spend time daily or often?” Of all refugee respondents, 47 per cent reported that they spend time with ‘co-ethnic friends’; 26 per cent mentioned ‘family outside household’; 21 per cent said ‘Other Canadian friends’; and another 21 per cent mentioned neighbours (Brunner et al., 2010; Hyndman, 2011). In my study, both GARs and PSRs who maintain regular contacts with their co-national and ethnic groups also have more contacts with outer-groups and organizations. Contact with religious groups is also significantly linked with contact with outer-groups and organizations for some GARs and PSRs. Moreover, both GARs and PSRs placed trust in the ‘known’ and the ‘unknown’ and thereby formed bonding and bridging social capital. However, PSRs depended mostly on their sponsor for ready-made supports during their first year of arrival.

Sponsors are valuable network ties, offering refugees a means to escape from their former country and provide essential services and support in the early stages of resettlement. Refugees find financial assistance the greatest benefit that results from sponsorship (Indra 1993; Dorais, Pilon-Le & Nguyen, 1987). In addition, sponsors provide refugees with household and other

material goods, access to language training, and employment opportunities (Indra, 1993). By bringing refugees into mainstream public spaces such as workplaces or schools, sponsors (and host volunteers) help refugees become familiar with daily routines and cultural values in their new home. Pugliesi and Shook (1998) found that compared to women, men (particularly employed men) reported interacting less frequently with family and friends. In turn, women draw on more diverse sources of support. This study did not focus on the role of gender and age on the integration trajectories of refugees, however this study emphasizes that more research needs to examine the effects of gender and age on the integration trajectories of refugees to understand how women, men, and children draw on different supports during their first year of arrival.

In their study, Lamba & Krahn (2003) surveyed refugees in Canada during 1992-1997; 72 per cent of refugees were GARs whereas 25 per cent were PSRs. When they were interviewed in 1998, 35 per cent of the total sample remained connected with their network ties. These findings suggest that if refugees were linked with either a private sponsor or host volunteer upon arrival, a majority found these network ties useful enough to maintain them beyond the initial stages of resettlement. My study highlights that in the same way private sponsors become valuable network ties for some PSRs, GARs have access to host-matching programs coordinated by refugee service-providing agencies that are designed to aid refugees in the first years of resettlement. Moreover, host volunteers can help secure employment or accommodation and interaction with a host volunteer can also provide refugees with opportunities to practice and refine their English-language skills and to increase the range of knowledge and other skills required to interact successfully in mainstream society.

Lamba and Krahn's (2003) study concludes that refugee service providers need to take note of the range of ties that refugees choose to draw on during resettlement. In particular, the

network ties such as family and friends, host-volunteers, sponsors, religious groups and community organizations can be used to make policies and programs that place greater emphasis on ensuring that refugees are matched with individuals that form bonding and bridging social capital when migrating to Canada. Finally, “refugee service providers should also be aware of the varying sources of support relied on by women and men, and by young and older refugees, and should develop their programs of assistance accordingly” (Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 358). The value of ease of access to forms of social capital varies by age and gender. Such characteristics differ in the ways they integrate into mainstream society and to pursue new educational, occupational, and residential opportunities.

This comprehensive portrait of successful refugee integration provides an understanding of the multi-faceted and complex perspectives of integration and the different experiences of PSRs and GARs post IPRA. With this understanding, the methods used to delve deeper into resettlement integration of Syrian refugees in Toronto will be the focus of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

This study utilizes qualitative interviewing strategies to address the research questions:

- What are the most useful services and programs offered to Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival?
- In particular, how have these services differed in the way they offer support to government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees?
- How do integration trajectories differ between government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees within their first year of arrival?

Choosing to a qualitative methodology is important and appropriate for at least two reasons:

First, qualitative studies allow for in-depth examinations of participants' subjective perceptions or "lived experience" (Cassell and Symon, 1994, p.5). I consider this highly significant for the study since little research thus far has explored the integration experiences of refugees from their own perspective. This narrower focus of the target population can lead to a greater understanding of the actual experience of refugees and how they utilize information and build social capital during their early integration period. Second, "qualitative methods are well suited in contexts where cultural differences play an important role because such studies frequently deal with subtle and hidden nuances that are difficult to capture through other methodologies" (Hakak et al., 2012, p. 162; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Implementing this method was highly effective for the study since Syrian refugees interviewed often provided emotional expressions in their responses which gave further context to their lived experiences that could have been more difficult to capture through other methodologies.

I have adopted an inductive approach for this research where the theory was derived by gathering data on Syrian refugees in Toronto. The sequence of steps taken through an inductive approach begins not by coming up with the theory to be tested, but by gathering or examining data relevant to the phenomenon being investigated (Bryman et al., 2012). The inductive method of doing the field research and then developing theories and concepts from it is most useful when



investigating research where little developed theory exists that addresses the subjective experiences of such individuals. This is often associated with an interpretivist view by the researcher which maintains the ideology “that people act on the basis of the meaning that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others” (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 9). My approach in this research was fueled by social justice and equity issues that emerged within my own life history as a female Palestinian immigrant in Canada. With that perspective in mind, the inception and design of this study was guided by feminist research that are outlined by Harding and Norberg. Harding and Norberg (2005) highlight the crucial component of the power the researcher holds to define and theorize what is considered a problematic situation and who is in need of ‘help’ or ‘saving’. Even with the best intentions in mind, this implicit power held by the researcher leads to the possible re-categorization of groups/individuals and presents the data through the researchers’ perspective. With the goal of not restructuring ‘refugees’ and ‘integration’, I have chosen to discuss the nuanced experiences of Syrian refugees who have migrated to Toronto, understanding that not all experiences are equal. I acknowledge that social construction is a process of meaning making which categorizes and homogenizes groups of people, such as ‘refugees’ and marginalized individuals, and serves to position those perceived to belong to those groups to the periphery of dominant culture. Such views influenced the research design carried out in the study.

### ***Data Collection***

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight government-assisted and seven privately sponsored Syrian refugees in Toronto a year following arrival. I was able to gain access to these participants in my capacity as a research assistant in a broader Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project by the University of

Saskatchewan and Ryerson University. This project focused on food insecurity among the recently arriving Syrian refugee community in Canada. The goal of this project was to assess the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors on household food security of Syrian refugees during this critical early integration period. I participated in this project through agreement with its principal investigator, Dr. Hassan Vatanparast. The field managers in this study were able to recruit participants by contacting government and community organizations that have been responsible for the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Toronto. The field managers gained access to participants at numerous community organizations and I was able to interview thirty Syrian refugees at three locations: the Arab Community Centre of Toronto, Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, and the Afghan Women's Organization. At the end of conducting my interviews for the SSHRC project, I was able to recruit participants by asking them if they were interested in participating in my own study. At this point, I had already built a rapport with the participants and informed them of my background as a newcomer to Canada which I believe promoted an open environment where power relations were diminished and trust was established.

Out of the thirty interviews that I conducted for the SSHRC project, I was able to conduct interviews with eighteen Syrian refugees who have expressed interest and voluntarily participated in being a part of my study— seven of them were privately sponsored and eleven were government-assisted. However, only fifteen Syrian refugees were included in this study (eight government-assisted and seven privately sponsored) since three government-assisted refugees have been in Toronto for less than a year which is out of the scope of this study. I informed each participant about the nature of my research project and further explained that each interview will be conducted in Arabic and then transcribed to English. I have advised

participants that the process is voluntarily, that they can choose to exit the interview at anytime, and that their answers will remain confidential. I let each participant know that they can receive a copy of the results at the end of my research.

Since little developed research exists that addresses the subjective experiences of refugees, I conducted face-to-face interviews in order to best capture and explore the participants' perceived experiences. I have adopted a feminist approach to this research in order to be able to connect to participants on a different level. Oakley (1981) has asserted that feminist interviewing is characterized by openness, engagement, intimacy and self-disclosure. I let the participants know when I was switching the topic, and paused to give the interviewee an opportunity to reflect and amplify an answer when needed. I also took notes about where the interview took place, how the interview went, and any other avenue of interests that came to mind while conducting the interviews. I used this approach in order to allow participants to feel comfortable and open to answering all of the questions. The interview guide (*see Appendix A*) included questions that address the main research questions in a language that is comprehensible and familiar to those being studied. I strayed away from leading questions, and conducted the interview in a quiet place.

### ***Data Analysis***

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim in English and I stripped the transcribed interviews of their identifying information (i.e., names, addresses, phone numbers) in order to ensure anonymity. The stripped interviews were then renamed by a number and a different name and uploaded into the NVivo program. After reading through the first round of interviews in NVivo, I decided to work with the data in Microsoft Word instead as it allowed for more flexibility throughout the coding process. A Word document was created for each participant.

The first step I took was separating the interviews by government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees. The first time I read a transcribed interview I commenced with a process of pre-coding and preliminary jottings (Saldana, 2013). I highlighted phrases or words that stood out to me as significant. When a participant was expressing something that appeared to be significant and could not be captured by simply highlighting a few words I used the ‘INSERT COMMENT’ function of MS Word to write notes. These notes proved to be invaluable as they often prompted my memory when I was analyzing the data post coding. For example, if in one of the participant’s interviews I wrote a note regarding the discrimination challenges they faced pre migration, I stayed alert for any discussion of any similar challenges post migration and the effects of the outcome in the rest of the interview.

Once all of the transcribed interviews were read, I began pre-coding, and what Saldana (2013) describes as the first cycle of coding and descriptively coded the data. Words such as “language”, “challenge”, “trust”, “access”, “information”, were noted in the margins. Once all of the data was descriptively coded, I constructed new Word documents to match the words and short phrases in the first cycle of coding. I then used the concepts identified in the previous stage in order to develop themes. A total of four themes were singled-out and ultimately classified. The themes from each interview were then saved on a separate Word document. The themes are described in more detail in the results and analysis section.

After the first cycle of coding was complete I had a keen sense that there were many larger connections that were not captured by the original codes. Therefore, I took another step to capture these connections by double coding each Word document. I then added a chart to illustrate the participants’ responses for closed-ended questions such as those who have received or did not receive an orientation session upon arrival, whether they found it was relevant,

somewhat relevant, or irrelevant, and whether they found it was sufficient or insufficient. I then referred to this chart to analyze for similarities and/or differences between GARs and PSRs.

During this phase of coding, constant comparisons were made between the files to ensure that coding was occurring uniformly.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **Similar Pre-Migration Challenges among GARs and PSRs**

Several pre-migration challenges appeared repeatedly in the interviews. For example, some of the most common and more highly emphasized by the interviews were: war and political conflict, and the negative effects including health and employment issues, lack of support from previous governments, and discrimination in Syria and transition areas. These challenges were similar among GARs and PSRs given that both groups have the same background and have escaped from the same political conflict. Nonetheless, while each GAR and PSR had unique experiences and challenges, a common overall challenge identified was related to the same barrier – the instability and insecurity attributed to living through war and political conflict.

#### ***War and Political Conflict***

The fifteen PSRs and GARs agreed that political conflict in Syria was the main barrier pre-migration. For example, when asked: “Do you have any stories you would like to share about this period in your life?” One PSR interviewee stated:

**#10PSR Basma:** ‘[...] when we left our house after the bombing... This night was horrifying. We used to live in a family-owned building. We used to stay in the lobby to avoid the bombing. We then took a car... 12 people in one car just to flee and cross the borders... It took us an hour and a half to cross a distance that usually takes 10 minutes....It was like dooms day’.

Another GAR interviewee mentioned the unpredictability he faces daily living through political conflict:

**#2GAR Anis:** ‘[...] I was security checked daily at the station; I had to stop and show my ID. Every one or two days someone was beaten in front of me, in this situation you feel that one day it will be your turn. This could happen for a reason or no reason at all... they say, “come with us”... and you do not know why.’

While this study did not focus on the ‘push and pull factors’ (Parkins, 2010) of Syrian refugees in Toronto, the analysis revealed that the civil war in Syria provides an example of the ‘push’ factors for many Syrian refugees. Push factors are those that force refugees to migrate to avoid extreme risks in the home country. On the other hand, pull factors are those from a host society that attract refugees to leave their home for another, such as stability and security. According to most Syrian refugees in this study, Canada has pull factors that are necessary in a society such as ‘democracy’ and ‘coexistence’. Other push factors discussed by Syrian refugees include health and employment issues as well as discrimination and the lack of government support in their home country. This study suggests that future research can examine the push and pull factors of refugees from a social capital perspective in order to understand how this might influence the building of bonding and bridging social capital by GARs and PSRs in the host society.

### *Lack of Government Support*

Most Syrian refugees mentioned that the lack of government support in Syria was a barrier. For example, according to some GARs, “there were some supports but they were weak in Syria and Jordan” (#2 GAR Anis) and “there were no supports from organizations and governments in Syria” (#4 GAR Fuad). In addition, when refugees were seeking help in transition areas such as Turkey and Jordan, they did not receive any supports.

Support in this sense, was described as ‘medical treatment and care’ as well as ‘rights’ and ‘funding’ or ‘source of income’ by many Syrian Refugees. For example, one GAR interviewee stated:

**#4GAR Fuad:** ‘[...] We saw that there is no treatment in Syria. We stayed about two years in the village. There was no studying, no help, nothing. It was a difficult situation. I saw my daughter growing up, so we decided to leave to Turkey and get government help to treat her. We came to Turkey to treat her, we wish we didn’t, we didn’t get any benefit there.’

Other PSR respondents referred to the same lack of support received in transition areas. For example, the respondent below highlights the lack of support that transition areas provided compared to the Canadian government which in her opinion is considered necessary to ‘give you the initial push’ during the early integration period:

**#10PSR Basma:** ‘[...] Ghana is very poor.... The people are very kind but the country can’t really give you that much. They don’t give you citizenship no matter how long you stay. There is also no reliable source of income. There is no strong state that can support you. Here the government is strong and the economy can support you and give you the initial push.’

Most PSRs mentioned that the lack of government support during their transition periods was a significant barrier. They also emphasized that “there was no democracy or rule of law” (#15GAR Kamal), consequently, the integration challenge was much more difficult for Syrians during transition periods. For example, most PSRs expressed how Lebanese citizens in Lebanon did provide “some support but the authorities did not care” (#15GAR Kamal). They also mentioned that they “did not have the right to work and could not get a driving license” (#11PSR Malik) in other transition areas, since they did not have permanent residency in other Arab countries such as Jordan and Dubai where it was against the law for refugees to drive and work.

Still, the Syrian refugees that I interviewed did not mention the lack of support they faced post-migration. In fact, when asked about the organizations that assisted them as a newcomer to Canada and how helpful these organizations and services have been, some Syrian refugees stated that certain services by government and community organizations could be improved.

However, most of them emphasized that they received better means of support by the Canadian government and community organizations as opposed to previous governments. For example, interviewees stated:

**#1GAR Ahmad:** ‘People here treat each other better than the Syrians and the Turkish. They treat us better...They respect us... They want to help get things done. I feel the system overall here is much better.’

**#11PSR Malik:** ‘What we wanted was a real place to settle, a safe country where we can start over, the right to study, the right to learn, a permanent residency. Thank god coming to Canada became an opportunity and this was our dream and God made it possible. Thank God.’

These statements highlight the positive experiences of Syrian refugees in Toronto a year following arrival. When refugees highlight how they are treated better in Canada than transition countries, they are representing refugees’ understanding of and respect for Canadian culture (CIC, 2010, a; Hyndman, 2011, p. 6). Therefore, in order for integration to occur, the host society needs to play a role in facilitating an “understanding of and respect for the cultural diversity that newcomers bring to Canada” (CIC, 2010, a; Hyndman, 2011, p. 6), which is the cornerstone of Canada’s integration approach. As mentioned in the literature review, integration requires a mutual accommodation and adjustment by both refugees and the larger society. Therefore, integration will not occur for Syrian refugees in Toronto unless the host society plays a role in sustaining trust beyond the initial stages of resettlement. This will be further explained in the analysis section.

In general, Canada’s commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the IPRA seems to align with this approach. However, as mentioned above, Canadian values or culture are vague terms that can be loosely defined by the IPRA and refugees, and therefore this study cannot fully explore integration beyond this definition. Nevertheless, what is most significant to point out in this section is that both PSRs and GARs highlighted their positive experience through receiving better means of support by the Canadian government post migration as opposed to governments pre migration. However, most GARs and PSRs mentioned that certain services by government



and community organizations could be improved such as the orientation sessions facilitated by government providers that were found to be insufficient as they lacked useful information for their early integration period. The recommendations section will further explain that both PSRs and GARs must have access to a provider upon arrival in Canada that will explain information adequately and focus on information that is useful during the first month of resettlement.

### ***Discrimination***

Some GARs and PSRs mentioned that they were discriminated against in Syria and transition areas. For example, some GARs experienced discrimination in Syria because they were Kurdish and did not have any rights in Syria as minorities. Other GARs mentioned the discrimination they faced during transition areas and the effects this had on their life. For example, one GAR respondent stated:

**#2GAR Anis:** ‘For barriers in Jordan, being a Syrian you do not have any rights, there was discrimination. When a Jordanian knows that you are a Syrian, your right might be lost and no one would defend you in addition to the high cost of living. Jordanians exploit Syrians. All of those were the main barriers...I used to work between 12 to 13 hours a day just to secure the basic needs of life.’

The discrimination against Syrian refugees was a main barrier during transition periods for many Syrian refugees– this made them feel vulnerable and weak. What is most interesting is that the term ‘discrimination’ was not used by both GARs and PSRs when describing their challenges post-migration in Canada. In addition, most PSRs and GARs discussed their views of Canadian values and the ‘respect’ they have received by Canadians during their early integration period.

When asked about the challenges faced post-migration to Canada, interviewees stated:

**#5GAR Farid:** ‘The people here are respectful. They don’t make you feel that... They don’t discriminate. You can do whatever you want to do.’

**#10PSR Basma:** ‘Lifestyle in Canada is very different. But I learned that if I don’t respect the other... No matter how different they are– their religious or intellectual affiliation. I learned that to each their own. In the same way they respect my beliefs I should also respect their beliefs. To each their own.’

It is important to remember that Syrian refugees are only reflecting on their experience a year following arrival. Perhaps, respondents did not mention discrimination because they have not experienced it in the same way that they have previously, because they did not want to disclose it, or simply because they do not feel they are being discriminated against at all. Needless to say, this data suggests that research needs to examine the ways in which Syrian refugees identify ‘discrimination’ in order to gain a better understanding of the ways in which they experience discrimination pre and post migration.

In general, the pre migration challenges mentioned above represent the shift in supports that refugees had received pre and post migration. Therefore, the pre migration challenges such as war and political conflict as well as the lack of government support and discrimination are significant to address in order to effectively understand how this might impact their integration trajectories post migration. There are many perceptions embedded within the term ‘refugee’ which can discourage refugees from being independent when fleeing conflict and resettling in the host society. It is up to the federal, provincial, and municipal governments as well as the individuals and institutions that provide resettlement support services to address this in policy and legislation. In the past, “government personnel, service providers, and researchers have all been guilty of reducing groups of refugees to a single category (e.g. Hungarian refugees) and in so doing they ignore their distinctive life histories, reasons for escape, and personal goals and needs” (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995; Lamba & Krahn, 2003, p. 336). Governments need to educate the host society on the refugee cohort’s pre migration challenges before resettling them to Canada. The host society will therefore be better prepared and educated which will clear out the structural barriers and normative socially constructed expectations of refugees. Future research needs to examine how this can be addressed in policy and legislation as education is simply not

enough. Without a full understanding of refugees' pre migration challenges, Syrian refugees can have significant negative societal consequences such as the outcomes of assimilation, separation, or marginalization. This framework of inquiry is highly significant for the successful integration of refugees and thereby provides policy-makers and program providers with a much better understanding of the relational context in which refugees reconstruct their lives in Canada.

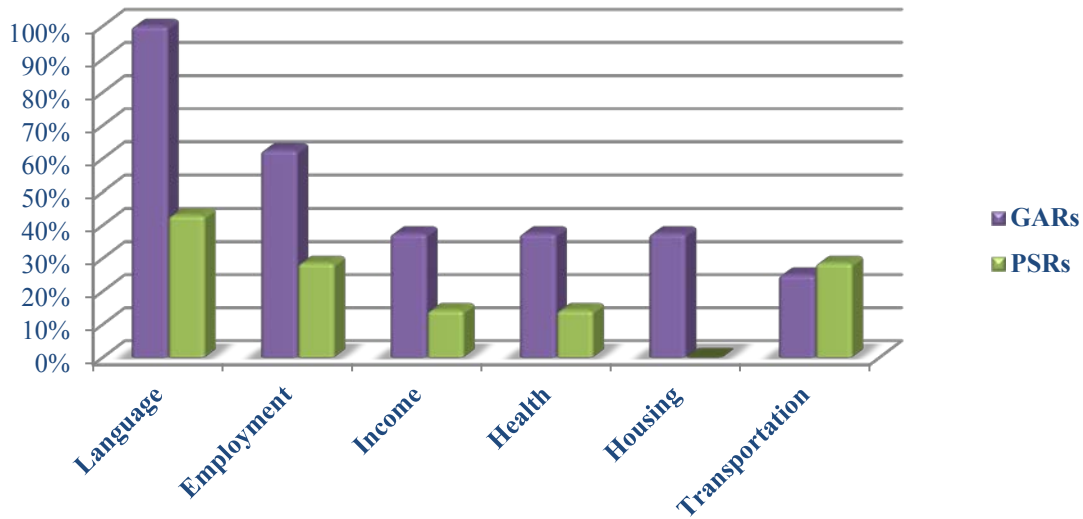
## **ANALYSIS**

### **I) The Differences between GARs and PSRs Post Migration**

The social inclusion versus social exclusion framework provides a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to social inclusion and exclusion of refugees in society. In this study, findings suggest that GARs had more challenges than PSRs post migration, particularly with the English language. As the graph below illustrates, language is perceived as the main challenge by GARs post migration (*see Table 2*). The graph also demonstrates that GARs are facing more challenges than PSRs in regards to employment, income, health and housing. However, transportation is perceived as a challenge slightly more by PSRs (28.5%) compared to GARs (25%). It is also significant to indicate that PSRs did not perceive housing as a challenge post migration. Future research needs to examine the housing challenges of GARs compared to PSRs post migration, as housing, just like education and healthcare is a basic need that plays a role in refugees' integration experience. This also needs to be addressed to mitigate the different degrees of challenges faced by different groups. It is recommended that government policy makers ensure that policies relating to refugee resettlement provide consistent services and programs that are equitable and accessible for all refugees. In general, this data suggests that more research is needed to examine the different challenges perceived by GARs and PSRs post migration to gain

an understanding of the ways in which these challenges affect the integration outcomes of different groups in the long term.

## CHALLENGES POST MIGRATION



**Table 2**

While ‘language’ was perceived as a challenge by GARs more than PSRs, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that education achievement has proven to vary considerably among GARs and PSRs. That is, PSRs tend to have higher levels of education and fare better economically as they are not selected for their vulnerability like the GARs (MetroNews, 2016). This pre-selection process can have a direct effect on the language challenges of GARs and PSRs post migration. However, the section below will indicate that while ‘language’ was perceived as a challenge by GARs more than PSRs, both groups reflect on the ways in which the host society responds to their language challenges as the reason that effects the way in which they perceive their overall social inclusion versus social exclusion experience.

The social exclusion framework by Kennan et al. (2011) highlights that the biggest factor contributing to social exclusion of refugees was continuously language. This was evident in my

interviews among GARs as each GAR that was interviewed perceived ‘language’ as the main barrier post migration. Therefore, GARs found it difficult to explore easily in Toronto, communicate with others, gain employment opportunities, or simply ‘become a part of the community’ and feel socially included. For example, one GAR interviewee stated:

**#6GAR Hamza:** ‘Mostly, the language is the biggest barrier, and the length of time for funding is not sufficient. We are funded for a year by the government, this is not enough for a person who did not study English previously to learn the language and be ready to become part of the community or find a job.’

Access to ongoing language services for more than a year is clearly a significant factor for GARs in order to gain employment opportunities and become part of the host society. Findings from this study also suggest that respondents feel socially excluded when the Canadian population responds to their language challenges in a negative way. For example, when asked “how do you overcome difficulties when you are unable to communicate?” One interviewee stated:

**#4GAR Fuad:** ‘I use signs the most. Sometimes I get angry that I do not know the language. Like today, something happened at school frustrated me a lot. The teacher asked a question, and I said that I took my son to the doctor and then had a cup of tea. Instead of saying tea in English, I said *shai* (tea in Arabic). She started laughing. I felt frustrated and felt how hard that was.’

This study suggests that the factors that contribute to social exclusion are not only about the lack of access to information and language training in Canada, but also the ways in which the host society can respond to the challenges of refugees post migration. This data suggests that the lack of access to people who understand refugees’ challenges post migration may ultimately lead to social exclusion. The fact that most GARs are receiving language training may facilitate a positive integration trajectory; however, experiences with people within the Canadian population who understand and are made aware of language barriers of refugees can further bolster social inclusion. I will recommend below some directions in present policy to address this further.

### *‘The first thing needed to integrate is to know the language’*

While some PSRs (43%) perceived language as their main barrier (*see Table 2*), most of those PSRs emphasized that language can have a negative effect on their employment opportunities and integration in the host society. For example, one interviewee stated:

**#15PSR Kamal:** ‘Frankly speaking I do not have any social barriers. We were not alienated; we did not feel that we are different. Canada has a huge mix of cultures. Socially, I do not face any issues. Honestly, sometimes I feel I am the one who has issues, which is how to integrate in the community. The first thing needed to integrate is to know the language or you will not be able to communicate. In Syria, there is a huge neglect to educate or communicate the English language even on a post-secondary level; everything is taught in Arabic, and not a single term in English. If there were any courses to be taught in English, the teachers’ English level and the level of communicating were very weak. My main concern here is the language.’

Similarly to most GARs and some PSRs, the respondent above has a great understanding of the main factor that can contribute to his social exclusion. Language is considered to be a significant barrier to integration, which can further impact refugees’ understanding of compliance and everyday information in Canada (Kennan et al., 2011). However, the same respondent also explains that the way in which the host society responds to his challenge has changed the way he views his challenges post migration:

**I:** ‘so the main issue for you is integration?’

**#15PSR Kamal:** ‘The community accepts my level of English. Nobody gets annoyed. I visited Europe. In some countries, people get aggravated if you do not speak their language. But not in Canada, everyone tells me “it’s okay”, “it’s no problem”. When I apologize to people and say: “sorry my language is not good”, they say: “you are good I can understand what you want”. This is encouraging and psychologically makes me feel comfortable. So I cannot say I have challenges.’

While this PSR believes that in order to be able to integrate he needs English-language training, it is important to point out that when people in the host society are empathetic to his challenge, this PSR does not perceive language as a challenge anymore. Thus, this data suggests that the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework needs to emphasize the role that the host society plays in refugees’ integration trajectories. This highlights the importance of understanding the experiences of refugees from their own perspective. Moreover, the ways in

which the host society reacts to refugees' challenges and needs can have a significant effect on their social inclusion and/or exclusion. It is therefore necessary to ensure that sponsors, host volunteers, and language trainers are facilitating an inclusive environment that can further promote a positive integration trajectory for both PSRs and GARs, especially when refugees are interacting with them the most during their early integration period. It will later be discussed how this empathy can be felt in access to language training and orientation sessions through the recruitment of post-secondary students that can facilitate these services.

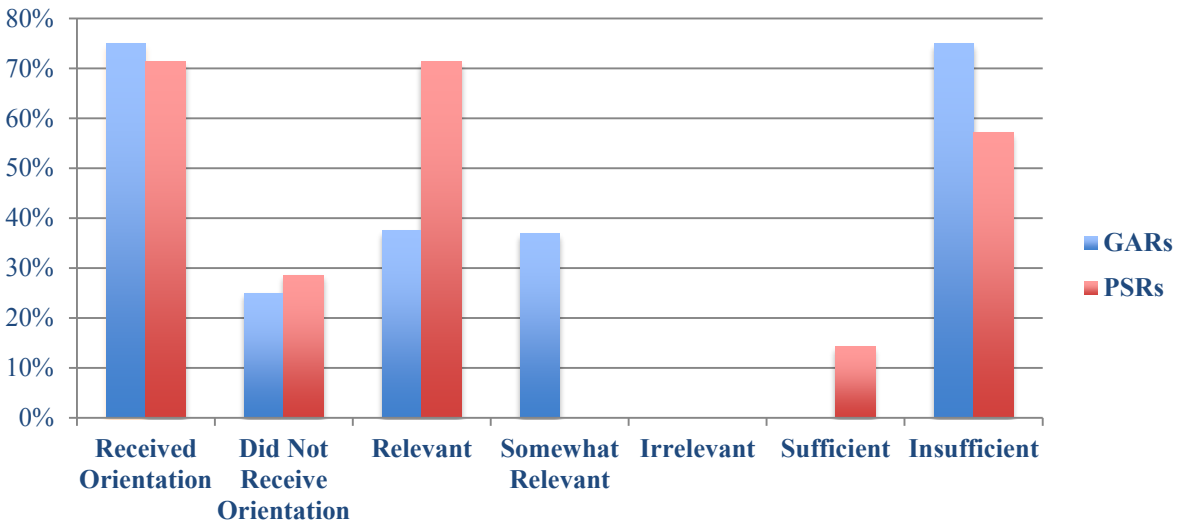
## **II) Lack of Information**

I also examine how information has been used by GARs and PSRs during their first year of resettlement; in particular, how Syrian refugees used the information through the orientation session they received prior to migration or during the first month of arrival. This orientation session provides information on Canadian culture and lifestyle, compliance and everyday information on the overall Canadian system, and the supports that refugees need to rely on during their early integration period. Findings suggest that lack of information was an emerging key theme of social inclusion and social exclusion. This will be further explained below.

### ***'They should talk more about.... Stuff that matter during the first month'***

Data suggests that most PSRs and GARs found that orientation sessions were insufficient during their first month of resettlement because of lack of information. As the graph below illustrates, 75% of GARs and 57% of PSRs found the orientation session they received was insufficient (*see Table 3*). While neither GARs nor PSRs found the orientation session completely irrelevant, findings suggest that all PSRs who have received an orientation session (74%) found it was relevant while out of the 75% of GARs who have received an orientation session; 38% of GARs found it was relevant, and 37% found it was somewhat relevant.

## ORIENTATION SESSION



**Table 3**

Findings suggest that most GARs found that the information they received did not cover the most useful information needed for their early integration period. For example, when asked: “how would you assess the relevance of information during the orientation session after settling in Canada?”, according to some GARs:

**#3 GAR Diala:** ‘Some information is irrelevant. They made us feel nervous about some stuff here and when we arrived we found out that things are better than what they told us. Some are relevant.’

**#4GAR Fuad:** ‘It is relevant, but they were exaggerating– a lot of exaggeration. They gave us not so useful information like: “Don’t yell at your child”.’

These sentiments reoccurred throughout the interviews mostly by GARs. This is problematic given that orientation sessions are supposed to facilitate an understanding of Canadian culture and lifestyle, the overall system, and the supports that refugees need to rely on during their early integration period. Most PSRs and GARs found that the information provided was insufficient and that orientation facilitators should have covered a wider range of information that was more relevant or valuable during the first month of resettlement. For example, respondents stated:

**#11 PSR Malik:** ‘They should talk more about finding housing, medical insurance, health cards, they didn’t talk about that... stuff that matter during the first month.’



**#15PSR Kamal:** ‘After moving, you will need to drive a car where you should know all the driving rules and how to register the kids in schools’.

**#3GAR Diala:** ‘Halal groceries’ locations, some food products are not available everywhere and we do not find all of our needs... Transportation, since we are a big family, using public transit is not easy. The distance between places, for example, some places are five minutes away by car while by bus it takes 15 to 30 minutes.’

It is important to note that respondents have received orientation sessions at different times, locations, and countries by different providers either prior to migration or a month upon arrival. This study suggests that both PSRs and GARs need to have access to a provider upon arrival in Canada that will explain information adequately and focus on information that is useful during the first month of resettlement. This would allow for more consistency in the information that is being relayed by providers and used by refugees in the host society.

It is necessary to gain refugees’ perspectives and insights on the way they use information during the first year of arrival so that they do not remain neglected during the process of integration. According to an internal government case study into the Iraqi resettlement program in Canada between 2009-2014, data illustrates that the different characteristics of Iraqi refugees made it difficult to provide the right support (MetroNews, 2016). In addition to receiving the right support, refugees received little information about what to expect upon arrival and thereby struggled to find affordable housing on government financial assistance that did not cover the high cost of living in urban centres (MetroNews, 2016). Therefore, when refugees are neglected during the process of integration, particularly, in their first year of arrival, they can have negative integration outcomes. It will later be discussed how policy makers and community organizations can do their part to disseminate necessary information in an accessible way to achieve social inclusion.

Simich (2003) argues that refugees remain neglected partners in the process and that this neglect results in ineffective institutional responses not only in settlement, but also in social and

health services for refugees (Suarez-Orozco, 1997; Watters, 2001). In principle, “refugee resettlement countries believe that refugees should participate in planning their own resettlement and social integration, and that the role of the society and service providers is to facilitate that integration” (European Council on Refugees and Exile, 2002; Simich, 2003, p. 155). In the context of immigration and refugee resettlement studies, as well as planning and policy analysis, “remarkably little attention has been given to understanding the experiences and priorities from refugees’ own perspectives (Simich, 2003, p. 155). This misconception results from a tendency to view refugees as an issue for society rather than as the active individuals they often are (Muecke, 1992). Therefore, Simich (2003) argues that we should place a greater emphasis on identifying refugees’ needs and different experiences to enhance their integration experience. This will require deliberately striving to include refugees’ perspectives to those of other stakeholders in the process at the initial point of arrival. Furthermore, the pre-migration challenges of refugees need to be considered by providers when facilitating orientation sessions as they may have a significant effect on the way they can grasp and understand all of the information presented to them, which can thereby create the potential of social exclusion. With so much information presented at once, refugees may be unable to decipher what is the most vital to know (Kennan et al., 2011). In addition, the information presented by orientation providers must be sufficient and must cover a wide range of information that is necessary during the first month of resettlement. Therefore, there should be a significant focus on the most useful information for refugees during the early stage of resettlement in order to facilitate a positive integration trajectory for both GARs and PSRs.

### **III) Trusting the Known & the Unknown → Bonding & Bridging Social Capital**

The social capital theory was employed to better understand the ways in which GARs and PSRs access resources and services differently. The literature on bridging and bonding social capital (i.e. Cattle 2005; Putnam 2000) argues that contact with predominantly bonding capital such as co-ethnic, national or religious groups and noncontact with bridging social capital such as out-groups is harmful to integration and can lead to further social fragmentation (Cameron 2011; Putnam 2000). The bonding and bridging social capital as key concepts were used to examine how refugees form and employ network ties and trust in sponsor(s), family, friends, co-ethnic groups, national or religious groups, government and community organizations and the larger host society as a whole.

Giddens (1990) and Paxton (1999) indicate that in order for network ties to become social capital, refugees would need to place ‘trust’ not only in family, friends, co-ethnic, national and religious groups, but also in government agencies, community organizations, and the larger community as a whole. In the literature, trust has been defined as “the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community” (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 1). In this sense, bonding and bridging social capital arises from the prevalence of trust in society and can be embodied in friends, family, government and community organizations, co-ethnic, national and religious groups, the larger community and in all the other groups in between.

The term “trust” is used to analyze how GARs and PSRs build social capital by placing trust in the ‘known’ (bonding social capital such as family, friends, co-ethnic groups, national or religious groups) and placing trust in the ‘unknown’ (bridging social capital such as government

and community organizations and the larger host society as a whole). This study shows that both GARs and PSRs who maintain regular contacts with their co-national and ethnic groups also have more contacts with outer-groups and organizations. Contact with religious groups is also significantly linked with contact with outer-groups and organizations for some GARs and PSRs. This will be further explained below.

### *‘Depending on the difficulty of the situation’*

The data did not showcase any evidence that ‘bonding capital’ is mutually exclusive with ‘bridging capital’. For example, most GARs did not only depend on friends and family when faced with challenges in Canada, but also resorted to government agencies and community organizations for support during their early integration period. In fact, when GARs discussed the most useful services to them, they referred to community and government organizations as well as religious groups such as Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, Syrian Active Volunteers Canada, COSTI Immigrant Services, churches and mosques.

However, my findings suggest that some GARs who have established a connection with people from government and community organizations motivated them to refer to the source more often when faced with challenges. For example, some GARs discussed that they turned to friends, a mosque, or an individual that they know in a government agency that provides support.

According to one GAR interviewee:

**#2GAR Anis:** ‘Depending on the difficulty of the situation, I may ask a friend where to find a certain item, however if it is a legal issue, I refer to Polycultural where there is a settlement worker who helps us a lot, her name is sister Ameena. If it is related to religion, I refer to Isna mosque.’

In this sense, some GARs are placing trust not only in family and friends, but also in the abstract notion of Canada’s humanitarian commitments and in the settlement services offered during the early phases of resettlement (Giddens, 1990; Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 338). When GARs resort to not only friends and family during difficult times, but also to government agencies, they

are forming network ties that ‘transcend group cleavages’ (Nannestad et al. 2008). These network ties are considered both bonding and bridging social capital where GARs are not only ‘trusting the known’ but also the ‘unknown’ by depending on community associations and government agencies for access to resources and information. Therefore, trust is an essential component of bonding and bridging social capital and this mutual adjustment on the part of refugees and the host society cannot be facilitated without it. This is found to be crucial to the building of social capital and the facilitation of social inclusion for Syrian refugees in Toronto.

The positive links between different types of contact provide compelling evidence against the argument that refugees and ethnic minority communities are ‘inward looking’ and only ‘invest’ in bonding social capital. Had there been some degree of bonding capital preventing the formation of bridging capital, one would expect a significant negative link between contacts with friends and family, and contacts with other groups and organizations.

***‘They provided anything I need to make me feel comfortable’***

In addition, findings suggest that in the same way private sponsors became valuable network ties for most PSRs, some GARs have access to host-matching programs coordinated by refugee service-providing agencies that are designed to aid refugees in the first years of resettlement (Lamba and Krahn, 2003). For example, some GARs created a positive relationship with Canadians who have volunteered to help them through a church. These Canadians exposed GARs to both bonding and bridging social capital. For example, one GAR interviewee stated:

**#6GAR Hamza:** ‘A group from the Church who are Canadian of course... They have an agreement with the government. I am one of the people who did not face any problem. They connect with me all the time and provided all the conveniences. They provided anything I need to make me feel comfortable; I don’t feel any difference between here and there (Syria)’.

**I:** ‘So what are the services that the church gave you?’

**#6GAR Hamza:** ‘Sending letters to the government, getting my health card, permanent resident card, address, opening a bank account and library account, signing me in this school, they took me shopping, they took me to entertainment places, to make the kids happy.’

I: ‘Did you feel that these services and organizations are beneficial?’

**#6GAR Hamza:** ‘Very much. I didn’t feel a difference...in Lebanon I thought I was going to a country I did not know anything about; I did not know how people will treat me... Like if they will treat me in a good manner. But this group, the church, they made me feel better than I felt in the Arab countries during transition period, although I don’t understand what they say, and we use Google translate sometimes, but they made me feel very comfortable.’

There is evidence that demonstrates that some GARs formed bonding social capital and placed trust in the known but have also formed bridging social capital and placed trust in the unknown even when language was a challenge. Perhaps, it is not about having access to services that will be utilized by refugees to help with their integration process, but whether they can place trust in the known and the unknown in order to have exposure to a wider range of services and information and feel included in society.

These findings suggest that if refugees were linked with either a private sponsor or host volunteer upon arrival, a majority found these network ties useful enough to maintain them beyond the initial stages of resettlement. Moreover, host volunteers can provide refugees with opportunities to practice and refine their English-language skills and interaction with a host volunteer can also increase the range of knowledge and other skills required to interact successfully in the host society.

### ***‘They did not abandon us’***

Trust was found to be a crucial component of bonding and bridging social capital for most PSRs and some GARs. While both GARs and PSRs had access to a wide range of social capital (friends, family, religious groups, community organizations and government agencies), PSRs depended mostly on their sponsors for access to services. One of differences between PSRs and GARs is that most sponsors exposed PSRs to a wide range of resources and services throughout the year, while some GARs had access to government services only during the first months of

resettlement. However, GARs who have formed bonding and bridging capital were exposed to a wide range of services and resources similarly to PSRs.

When asked “which non-profit organizations and governmental services helped you in Canada?” Most PSRs explained they are ‘dependent on the sponsors’; that the sponsors provided them with household and other material goods, access to language training, and financial support. For example, some respondents mentioned:

**#15PSR Kamal:** ‘Our private sponsors paid the rent for one year and are responsible for our living expenses. They made a budget for our living expenses and asked us to provide a monthly expenses report to make sure that the budget they allocated is sufficient... One of the things that changed is the rent budget. The rent was high, so they increased the rent budget and did not abandon us.’

**#10PSR Basma:** ‘No one helped me to be honest. We were dependent on the sponsors’.

**#11PSR Malik:** ‘As I told you my sponsor is providing me with everything, money for food and place to sleep plus the child benefit’.

**#14PSR Suha:** ‘The sponsor takes care of us’.

Financial support was found to be the greatest benefit that results from sponsorship in my study. However, most PSRs also mentioned that sponsors are also valuable network ties, offering them a means to provide essential services and support in the early stages of resettlement. By bringing refugees into mainstream public spaces such as workplaces or schools, sponsors just like host volunteers helped refugees become familiar with daily routines and cultural values such as diversity and multiculturalism in their new home.

### *‘Where is the quality that I can trust? Did you try it?’*

Although not all of the participants had access to both bridging and bonding social capital, it should be noted that when some PSRs depended on bonding social capital only, it did not seem to lead to a negative outcome. This was a very interesting point of view as not all participants have relied on bonding social capital only during their early stage of resettlement. For example, when facing challenges, this PSR connects with Syrian friends and family on social media:

**#13PSR Samira:** ‘I ask my Syrian friends.... “Where is the quality that I can trust? Did you try it?” We have a group, us Syrians in Canada on Facebook and Whatsapp so anybody who has questions messages in the group, and others reply, like almost 50 women in Canada are in the group’.

**I:** ‘Nice. Who started this group?’

**#13PSR Samira:** ‘First, it was a small group, they started introducing themselves, some who have been in Canada for five years, two years, two months, so everytime there is someone new, they thank the group for adding them, they say “I’ve been here for this long” and we get to know each other.... [...] Even the ones who are learning how to get the GI, we ask “what did you find difficult? What are some of the questions? How do I apply? What are some of the best schools for children? The schools that are Muslim or Public? What do you suggest I do?” Every woman writes her own experience.’

The above example illustrates that the value of ease of access to forms of social capital varies by gender and that bonding social capital can perhaps lead to positive outcomes which differs from arguments made by some academics such as Nannestad et al. (2008). It is important to point out that this PSR mentioned that this group includes 50 women and not men. Perhaps, this demonstrates that most women place trust in the known during resettlement as opposed to the unknown. It is clear then that characteristics play a role in the ways refugees integrate into mainstream society. This study did not focus on the role of gender and age on the integration trajectories of refugees. However, future research should consider how men and women draw on different sources of support during resettlement. This information will be useful for refugee service providers to learn about of the varying sources of support relied on by women and men and could better assist program planning (Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 358).

### ***‘I ask them for help too because they are a government trusted source’***

What is also interesting is that one PSR depended equally on existing friends and family in Toronto, and government organizations for support, because of the perception that government was a trusted source. The interviewee stated:

**#15PSR Kamal:** ‘The Afghan organization helps us.... And Isna Mosque, we went there twice only. However, Polycultural, I ask them for help too because they are a government trusted source other than when someone speaks about their own experience. So for government related issues, this is a government source.... It is very important to me that the source is trusted like Polycultural because I know how accurate information is. Someone may tell you about their experience, but it could not be the right or legal thing to do. That’s why I refer to the organization.’



Trust in this study influenced the building of social capital which confirms the idea that having access to trust— whether it is a government organization, host volunteer, sponsor, family or friend— can lead to positive integration trajectory as it sustains that relationship beyond the initial stages of resettlement. Empathy in this study also influenced the trajectory of social inclusion where both GARs and PSRs reflected on the importance of having people that understand their language challenges in order to ‘feel comfortable’ and part of the community. Therefore, government programs and community organizations need to constantly ensure that actors (volunteer hosts, sponsors, language instructors, orientation providers, interpreters) are finding the optimal way to sustain trust and empathy, to nourish the building of social capital and facilitate social inclusion for refugees in the host society. These findings also suggest that the language challenges faced by GARs compared to PSRs post migration need to be further examined through the social inclusion and social capital frameworks in order to mitigate the different degree of challenges faced by GARs compared to PSRs post migration.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Heightened public awareness of a particular refugee movement and their pre migration challenges is necessary to ensure a positive integration trajectory on the part of the host society. This can be done through educational sessions, exhibitions, workshops, and collaborative projects across municipal, provincial and national governments, as well as support for local and central initiatives that focus on the integration of refugees.
- The pre-migration challenges of refugees need to be considered by providers when facilitating orientation sessions as they may have a significant effect on the way refugees can grasp and understand all of the information presented to them, which can thereby create the potential risk for social exclusion. Therefore, policy makers and community organizations must do their part to disseminate necessary information in an accessible way to achieve social inclusion. Both PSRs and GARs must have access to a provider upon arrival in Canada that will explain information adequately and focus on information that is useful during the first month of resettlement. This would allow for more consistency in the information being relayed by providers and used by refugees in the host society. In order to achieve this, I recommend, that Middle Eastern students who have the lived experience and knowledge on refugee resettlement facilitate the orientation

session. There are many post-secondary students who are currently researching refugee studies and have an expansive knowledge on the integration of refugees. These students have also migrated to Canada and understand the pre and post migration challenges of refugees. Therefore, governments can take advantage of the knowledge and expertise that are present in these institutions. This in turn can be beneficial for governments, as it does not require enormous allocation of public spending. Governments can simply provide incentives for students to encourage them to facilitate these sessions such as internship programs. This has proven to be successful by non-profit organizations such as Lifeline Syria who recruit students to provide interpretation and translation services to Syrian refugees in Toronto. As a volunteer at Lifeline Syria, I have witnessed first hand how these services can facilitate a sense of social inclusion. The government should mirror the design of these programs and services to further implement their orientation sessions successfully.

- In addition, an orientation session that can facilitate an understanding of Canadian lifestyle and culture as well as resettlement services offered during the first year needs to be mandatory for all GARs and PSRs during the first month of resettlement. This study also suggests that government facilitated follow-up orientation sessions need to be done throughout the first year of arrival at different intervals, perhaps once every three months, to assist refugees in understanding information more accurately and ensuring that there would not be any disconnect between GARs and government agencies a month following arrival. These follow-up orientation sessions will also generate more concrete data for further planning processes relating to resettlement and integration.
- Future research needs to examine the language challenges faced by GARs compared to PSRs post migration in order to mitigate the different degree of challenges faced by different groups post migration. Educational achievement needs to be included as an indicator in order to understand how this influences the language challenges of GARs compared to PSRs. If GARs are in fact less educated and thereby experience more language challenges, then GARs need to have access to free language-training services for more than a year.
- This study also suggests that language classes received by GARs during the first year of arrival need to be further examined. It is unclear whether these classes facilitate conversation classes, not just classroom settings, but social settings where language skills are practiced within a Canadian context. Such research can offer an insight into the ways in which language services can be enhanced and become more effective for GARs which thereby eliminates the need for access to language training for more than a year.
- A balanced of bonding social capital with other members of ethnic community and bridging social capital with the greater community was found to bolster social inclusion of refugees in the host society. Therefore, social connectedness and the fostering of meaningful relationships among refugees and host communities should be facilitated and encouraged. The federal government needs to provide incentives for the host society to increase access to host volunteer programs for GARs. Since PSRs are linked with a private sponsor upon arrival, a majority found these network ties useful enough to

maintain them beyond the initial stages of resettlement. This study suggests the enhancement of current refugee mentorship programs through more allocation of funding by the federal government; GARs can be matched with a settlement worker upon arrival and provided individual guidance for a year following arrival. This will facilitate the same social connectedness that PSRs have with their sponsors.

- Government programs and community organizations need to constantly ensure that actors (volunteer hosts, sponsors, language instructors, orientation providers, interpreters) are finding the optimal way to sustain trust and empathy, in order to nourish the building of social capital and social inclusion for refugees in the host society. Ensuring that these actors at points of entry are facilitating an inclusive environment will promote a positive integration trajectory for both GARs and PSRs. As mentioned above, students who have the lived experience and knowledge on refugee resettlement in post secondary schools can facilitate orientation sessions and language training classes, or provide interpretation services to refugees. This will thereby create the potential increase in social inclusion.
- Future research needs to examine how men, women, and children draw on different sources of support during resettlement. This information will be useful for refugee service providers that can develop their programs of assistance accordingly.

## CONCLUSION

My aim for this study was to address the experiences of Syrian refugees in Toronto a year following arrival through the social capital theory and the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework. The findings indicate that the most useful services and programs offered to Syrian refugees during their first year of arrival were government agencies and community organizations such as Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, Syrian Active Volunteers Canada, COSTI Immigrant Services, churches and mosques. These services differed in the ways that they offered support to GARs and PSRs. GARs often referred to individuals they have established connections with such as host volunteers or settlement workers when faced with challenges, as opposed to PSRs who depended on their sponsor for access to a wide range of services and resources. Moreover, my findings illustrate that trust influences the building of bonding and bridging social capital and the way in which the host society responded to Syrian refugees' language challenges influenced their sense of social inclusion and/or social exclusion.

The orientation session provided prior to migration or upon arrival to both GARs and PSRs was found to be insufficient and somewhat irrelevant since it did not provide Syrian refugees the most useful information needed for their early integration period. Since the orientation session was provided at different times, locations, and countries by different providers, the information relayed was also found to be inconsistent. This was found to play a role in increasing the potential of social exclusion as opposed to social inclusion. The pre migration challenges of Syrian refugees need to be considered by providers when facilitating orientation sessions as they may have a significant effect on the way refugees can grasp and understand all of the information presented to them. This contends the social inclusion versus social exclusion framework as the pre migration challenges were not considered by Kennan et al. (2011). Therefore, this framework must consider the unique experiences of each refugee cohort, as it is more than ‘language’ challenges that affect their sense of social inclusion and/or exclusion.

For social inclusion to occur, it was recommended that both GARs and PSRS must have access to a provider upon arrival in Canada (as opposed to pre migration) that will explain information adequately and focus on information that is useful during the first month of resettlement. Therefore, the integration trajectories of PSRs are currently considered to be more positive than GARs as PSRs have less language challenges post migration and have access to sponsors who sustain a social connection beyond the early months of resettlement. This demonstrates the need for social connectedness and the fostering of meaningful relationships among all refugees in the host society. It is inevitable to suggest that a more in depth study on the implications of trust on the part of refugees and the host society is needed to understand how the Government of Canada can ensure that those who have fled conflict can not only successfully resettle, but also integrate into Canadian society.

In order to focus on the interests and needs of refugee newcomers as primary factors rather than the question of provision of adequate services for GARs, integration requires a shifting of frame of thought, as it is more essential to society that short term budget considerations. Canada is unique with its integration approach and its sponsorship program represents an aspect of civic participation rather than voluntary beneficence. Moreover, an agenda for sharing represents an invitation for joined participation to assist in the integration of GARs rather than a statement for services rendered. It signifies a challenge: one to which Canada as an innovator in sponsorship can and should aspire. It is within reach.

My analysis is simple: Trust and empathy delivered by government services and programs will translate into successful integration. Commitment on part of the refugees and the host society is both needed. Integration must prevail in not only lauding inclusion accomplishments, but also humbly acknowledging areas of failure. Potential leaders, governments, community organizations, and the public are looking for an honest, credible effort to achieve a diverse and inclusive society. Personally, I would like the opportunity to prove that my integration experience is one that can be achieved by many – Palestinians, Syrians, and others.

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## APPENDIX A: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW: REFUGEE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Screening questions for the Respondent

#### 1. What is your date of entrance to Canada (Year/month)

(Note to Data Collector: if after January 2016 thank them for their time and find another respondent that fits criteria)

ما هو تاريخ دخولك كندا (السنه و الشهر)

#### 2. What is your immigration status in Canada

- A) Permanent resident or refugee
- B) Asylum seeker or other

(Note to data collector: if the answer is A proceed with the interview, if B, thank them for their term and find another respondent that fits the criteria)

ما هو وضعك القانوني في كندا؟

مقيم دائم او لاجيء  
مقدم علي طلب لجوء أو أي أجابه أخرى

#### 3. Please indicate which category you have been accepted in Canada:

- A) Government-assisted refugee
- B) Privately Sponsored refugee
- C) Blended-visa officer refugee

\*\*\*

Introduction: I first would like to thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. If there are questions that you are not comfortable answering or that you do not know how to answer that is okay. And, if you have any questions for me, please feel free to ask at any time. Let's get started.

المقدمه. اولاً اود ان اشكرك لاتاحة الفرصه للتحدث اليك اليوم. لا توجد مشكله اذا وجدت ايه اسئله لا تشعر بالارتياح بالاجابه عنها او لا تعلم اجابتها. اذا لديك ايه اسئله فلا تتردد بسؤالي عنها. لنبدأ الاسئله:

### Questions

#### I. Views, opinions and experiences about your social environment prior to migration to Canada.

1. What are some challenges that you faced in your environment prior to moving to Canada in Syria?
  - Barriers?
  - Supports?
  - Probe: Do you have a story that you can share?

ماهي التحديات التي واجهتك في بيئتك المحيطة بك في سوريا قبل مجيئك الى كندا ؟

- العوائق
- المشجعات(الدعم)

□ سوال للاسترسال: هل لديك قصة تريد ان تشاركها

2. What are some challenges that you faced in your environment prior to moving to Canada during transition (camps, transit countries)?
- Barriers?
  - Supports?
  - Probe: Do you have a story you can share?

ماهي بعض التحديات التي واجهتك في بيئتك المحيطة بك قبل قدومك الى كندا خلال انتقالك ( مخيمات, بلد العبور )

□ العوائق

□ المشجعات (الدعم)

□ سوال للاسترسال: هل لديك قصة تريد ان تشاركها

## II. Views, opinions and experiences about your environment after migration to Canada.

رؤيتك ، آراؤك، وخبرتك حول البيئة المحيطة بك بعد قدومك الى كندا

3. What are some challenges/barriers that you face in your current social and natural environments?
- Prompts: medical events, unexpected family situation, loss of job, problems with housing, etc.

ما هي الصعوبات ، المعيقات التي واجهتها في البيئة الاجتماعي و المناخي الحاليه المحيطة بك؟ مثلا: مشاكل صحيه،مشاكل عائليه، مشاكل مع السكن، حدث عائلي غير متوقع، فقد عمل، الخ

4. What are some things that you (usually) do when facing challenges? Who helps you? How do you overcome such challenges?
- Prompts: Family, friends, religious affiliation, sponsor, social programs or food aid.

( اذا وجدت بعض الصعوبات، يمكنك السؤال عن....) ماهي بعض الامور التي (عاده) تقوم بها لمواجهة هذه المشاكل؟ و من يساعدك مثلا: العائله، الاصدقاء، الانتماء الديني، برامج اجتماعيه او مساعده غذائيه

5. In your opinion, do you see any change in your role or your husband or children's role after moving to Canada?

في رأيك، هل ترى ايه تغيرات في دورك في العائله او دور زوجك او الاولاد بعد انتقالكم الى كندا؟

6. Are you receiving any supports?

- Social environments
- Food environments

هل تتلقى ايه مساعدات؟

○ (جهات) اجتماعيه

○ (جهات) غذائيه مثل بنك الطعام

### III. Services and Resources

#### الخدمات و المصادر

7. Have you received any orientation sessions about moving to Canada prior to your arrival?  
A) Yes  
B) No

- هل تلقيت ايه دوره توجيهيه حول الاقامه في كندا قبل واصلك؟  
لا  نعم

- If yes, please identify the provider of orientation sessions and shortly describe what you have learned from it?

- اذا كانت الاجابه ب نعم, الرجاء التعريف بمقدم هذه الدوره التوجيهيه و تقديم وصف مختصر لما تعلمته منها؟

8. If you have received an orientation prior to your arrival to Canada, how would you assess the relevance of information after settling in Canada?  
A) Relevant  
B) Somewhat Relevant  
C) Irrelevant

اذا تلقيت محاضره توجيهيه قبل انتقالك الى كندا, كيف تقدر اهميه المعلومات بعد استقرارك في كندا؟  
لا  لها صلته بالموضوع  
لا  لها صلته إلى حد ما  
لا  علاقه لها بالموضوع

9. After settling in Canada, do you think the orientation provided prior to your arrival was sufficient or insufficient for your early integration period? If insufficient, what kind of information should have been covered/available in the orientation?

بعد استقرارك في كندا, هل تعتقد ان الدوره التوجيهيه التي قدمت اليك قبل وصولك كندا كافيه؟ اذا كانت الاجابه ب لا, ماهي برأيك المعلومات التي يجب ان يتم تغطيتها او توفرها في المحاضره التوجيهيه؟

10. Is there anything in particular that you have had difficulty with since moving to Canada?

هل واجهتك صعوبه بشئ معين منذ انتقالك الى كندا؟

### IV. There are several community-based organizations, NGOs and Canadian government services assisting Syrian refugees with the settlement process in Canada.

المجتمعيه و الغير حكوميه و خدمات حكوميه كنديه لمساعده اللاجئين السوريين في استقرارهم في كندا يوجد العديد من المنظمات

11. Could you tell me what are the organizations that assisted you as a newcomer to Canada?
12. Could you tell me which resources and services provided by organizations in the community have your family has used in Canada since moving here?
13. How helpful have these organizations and services been?
14. What could they do better or differently regarding the resources or services that would have been useful for you as a newcomer to Canada?

هل من الممكن ان تخبرني عن المنظمات التي ساعدتك كقادم جديد الى كندا  
هل من الممكن ان تخبرني عن المصادر و الخدمات التي زودتك بها هذه المنظمات في الحي والتي استخدمتها عائلتك منذ انتقالك الى كندا  
كم هذه المنظمات و الخدمات مفيدة؟  
هل تعلم بوجود بنك الطعام؟  
هل تتلقى ايه خدمات لدعمك من بنك الطعام ؟  
ماذا يمكن ان تقدم هذه المصادر و الخدمات بشكل افضل او مختلف بحيث تكون مفيدة لك كقادم جديد الى كندا؟ (بشكل عام و بما يتعلق  
بالحصول على الغذاء)

**V. These are all the questions I have for you. Thank you for participating.**

15. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

هذه هي كل الاسئلة. هل لديك اي شئ اخر تريد اضافته ؟

16. Do you feel I have missed any concerns that should have been part of our conversation?

هل تشعر أنني قد غاب عن أي مخاوف التي ينبغي أن تكون جزءا من حديثنا؟