

Learning About Oneself: An Essential Process  
to Confront Social Media Propaganda Against the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

Nadia Naffi

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By: Nadia Naffi

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

Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Rosemary Reilly

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner  
Dr. Nadia Caidi

\_\_\_\_\_ External to Program  
Dr. André Gagné

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Saul Carliner

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Ayaz Naseem

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor (s)  
Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson

Approved by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Saul Carliner, Department Chair

December 18, 2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. André Roy, Dean of Faculty of Arts & Science

## ABSTRACT

### **Learning About Oneself: An Essential Process to Confront Social Media Propaganda Against the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees**

**Nadia Naffi, Ph.D.**

**Concordia University, 2017**

**Research Problem:** Public reaction to the 2015-2016 resettlement of Syrian refugees to Canada ranged from strong support to active resentment. This study explored some of those reactions: those of host society youth. It examined the process of this youth learning about themselves in the context of the social media propaganda about the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and investigated how the public opinion about the refugee resettlement affected their perception of their roles in the integration and inclusion of these newcomers.

#### **Research questions:**

1. How do youth construe online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis?
2. How do youth construe their role in the integration and the inclusion of refugees in a context where the image of refugees is deeply influenced by social media?
3. What knowledge and skills do youth develop when they engage in analyzing their thoughts and behaviours in regards to sensitive and controversial issues such as the refugee crisis and resettlement?
4. How could this knowledge and these skills facilitate their engagement in civic online reasoning and participatory politics?

**Methodology:** The researcher conducted more than 160 hours of qualitative in-depth interview

with 42 host society youth between 18 and 24 years old from North America, Europe and the Middle East. For the purpose of this thesis, only data collected from the Canadian participants was analyzed and shared. The participants were recruited through a snowball sampling. They were active on social media, supportive of the Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada, but deliberately acting as passive bystanders whenever they encountered online posts and interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis. Adapting four techniques from George Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly's self-characterization technique, Procter's Perceiver Element Grid, Kelly's Repertory Grid Test and Hinkle's laddering technique), data collection included three to four interviews with each participant. The interviews provided the participants with opportunities to delve into their own construct systems and to reflect on the genesis of their constructs.

### **Results and Conclusions:**

By reflecting on their own behaviours online, participants realized that they could control how social media influenced them, and shape the online image of the Syrian refugees in host countries. While their empathy towards refugees increased, participants identified factors that could lead to Islamophobia, racism and fear, and developed strategies to counterbalance them online. The process of learning about themselves was key to transform the participants from passive bystanders into active agents of change, ready to confront digital propaganda.

Civic educators, social workers, curriculum developers, policy makers and parents concerned with the takeover of social media by hate speech proponents can apply these findings and help youth withstand manipulation and fight racism, hate speech, radicalization, and cyberbullying through the *Get Ready to Act Against Social Media Propaganda* model generated by this study. The model includes five iterative stages: Question, analyze, design, prepare and evaluate.

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## **DEDICATION**

To all the youth who are denied the right to belong ...

To all the youth who strive to make everyone belong ...

Your voice matters. Don't ever doubt it ...

## **CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS**

The four manuscripts of this dissertation are co-authored with my supervisor Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson. As the lead author, I was the primary researcher and the responsible for designing interview tools, recruiting participants, collecting data, conducting analyses, and writing the manuscripts. We submitted three of the manuscripts to peer reviewed journals. Two were published and the third is under review. A 10000-word version of the fourth manuscript will be submitted to the journal of Constructivist Psychology shortly.



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## **General Introduction**

The spread of intolerant language and hate speech on transnational social media platforms is far from being contained, let alone stopped. Meanwhile, youth are increasingly exposed to transnational anti-immigrant anti-Muslim sentiments online and schools are yet to design effective programs to prepare their students to face digital propagandists.

In fact, young Canadians actively consume news and information through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Reddit (The Media Insight Project, 2015). Their digital devices are flooded with information that they actively seek out or they bump into it when socially interacting online with friends and family. Oftentimes, many youth find the process to filter this information and to judge its credibility challenging (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski, 2012), let alone to cease being reduced to debriefed manipulated bystanders with no influence over the issues that affect their lives.

This has to change. There is a need to engage youth in civic online reasoning and participatory politics (Kahne et al., 2016). They must be empowered and equipped to face racism, to withstand the online flux of disinformation, and to become agents of change, leaders in counterbalancing social media propaganda and manipulation.

Educators, especially civic educators, should prepare youth to engage in civic and political life in the digital age, to investigate, to dialogue, to give feedback, to circulate, to produce, and to mobilize content (Kahne et al., 2016). They must guide them in constructing knowledge and developing skills to carefully and collaboratively analyze issues, analyze the social context, and reflect on their own positionality when addressing public issues (Kahne et al., 2016). Youth also need to recognize the concerns, the emotions and the values that form the public attitudes towards refugees (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

In this study, I posit that not only should educators guide youth in developing the knowledge and skills mentioned previously, but also guide them in learning about themselves—the genesis of their thoughts and behaviours— as an essential process to confront digital media propaganda. For youth to withstand propaganda, whether coming from governmental parties with agendas or from radical extremists, and to engage in civic and political life, especially in this digital fake news alternative facts era, they need to identify where their political tolerance and intolerance are coming from. They need to recognize their construct systems that guide their thoughts and behaviours, which is often difficult to achieve, let alone to share (Burr, King, & Butt, 2014).

Therefore, this study adopted interviewing techniques that stem from the Personal Construct Psychology methodology to answer the following research questions:

1. How do youth construe online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis?
2. How do youth construe their role in the integration and the inclusion of refugees in a context where the image of refugees is deeply influenced by social media?
3. What knowledge and skills do youth develop when they engage in analyzing their thoughts and behaviours in regards to sensitive and controversial issues such as the refugee crisis and resettlement?
4. How could this knowledge and these skills facilitate their engagement in civic online reasoning and participatory politics?

From a Personal Construct Psychology perspective, online youth are viewed as knowing subjects, with experiences and construct systems that they use to construe the messages diffused online. Youth do not respond to messages as stimulus, they respond to their choice of

interpretations of these messages. Based on their construal or interpretations of these messages they anticipate events and behave accordingly.

This study provides concrete tools and strategies to be used by educators, civic educators and social workers to help youth understand themselves as a first step to cease being manipulated by the media and to become influential agents of change, ready to voice their concerns and ideas in the matters that affect their lives. Further, it provides solid application of these tools and the results they generate.

### **Context of the Study: The Digital Propaganda Against Syrian Refugees and the Unsuccessful Efforts to Curb It, in a Nutshell**

Consider this scenario: I hear a knock on my door. I check through the peephole. It is my neighbor, the Syrian terrorist. Well, I guess this refugee is probably a terrorist, she looks exactly like the terrorists we read so much about on social media. Should I open my door? Or should I just pretend I am not home? Let's say I do open my door, should I let this potential terrorist in my own safe home? Would I ever foresee any kind of relationship with her?

Consider this other scenario: I hear a knock on my door. I check through the peephole. It is my neighbor, the Syrian refugee. Well, I guess this person has been through kind of inhumane journey to finally get here in Canada, safe from the insane unstoppable war in Syria. Apparently, this war is forcing all these innocent people to flee and risk their lives in overcrowded unsafe boats we read so much about on social media. Should I open my door? Or should I just pretend I am not home? Let's say I do open my door, should I let this young refugee in my own safe home? Would I ever foresee any kind of relationship with her?

As of January 29, 2017, Canada has welcomed 40,081 Syrian refugees and its commitment to resettle more newcomers continues (Government of Canada, 2017a). This Syrian

Refugee Initiative, the refugee crisis and the circumstances and events surrounding the refugee resettlement are heavily discussed on transnational social media platforms. How host society members interpret and react to this shared online content has a significant influence on their readiness to welcome and include this new “Other”.

Through the Syrian Refugee Initiative, 38.35% of the refugees who resettled in Canada were privately sponsored, 52.42% received governmental support under the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program and 9.2 % had access to a blended sponsorship (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017). The assistance stopped a year after landing, however the process for refugees to become full-fledge self-sufficient and productive citizens is long term.

Many of the newcomer population are vulnerable, coming from a war zone. They transitioned from host countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey and were distributed upon their arrival between the Canadian territories and provinces. They require attention from all players, including the civil society (Government of Canada, 2017b). However, this civil society is continuously exposed to unsettling news attached to Syrian refugees. Terror attacks and sexual assaults are shacking the world and the Syrian refugee crisis and Islam are continuously and uncontrollably being scapegoated on online social networking platforms, which are increasingly developing ubiquitous influence on political events (Brady, Wills, Jost, Tucker, & Van Bavel, 2017).

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda and National Enlightenment once said: “The essence of propaganda consists in winning people over to an idea so sincerely, so vitally, that in the end they succumb to it utterly and can never escape from it” (Trueman, 2016). Was it the ingenuity of Goebbels in designing the best strategies to manipulate people or the failure of

his target audience to withstand his manipulation that led to the atrocities that occurred during Nazi Germany? Or was it possibly a mix of the two? The question remains.

According to the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1964), every communication includes an information source, a message, a transmitter, a receiver, a destination and a noise source. If we apply this communication model to online hate speech or social media propaganda we clearly identify the information sources as the propagandists, including extremist parties. They craft a simple, direct message such as “Muslims are terrorists” and transmit it through social media posts. The destination is the audience that the propagandists are focused on manipulating. This audience belongs to a whole spectrum, ranging from supporters of the idea being shared right through to an audience that is outraged by it. As long as this audience does not reply, its members remain passive consumers of propaganda and we remain in the limitations of this model, even though we are using powerful networking technologies that allow everyone to participate, such as Shirky (2008) suggests. The receiver is the construct system used by the destination—the audience—to decode the message and interpret it. The noise source includes the laws, acts, filtering and flagging strategies put in place to prevent the message from reaching the destination. So far, it seems that the sender of hate speech is unstoppable and the noise source lacks efficiency, since hate speech not only persists but also is on the rise.

**Insufficient attempts to curb hate speech.** Facebook and Google were accused of negligence and were required to commit to stop online hate and extremism (Hopkins, 2017). This mission seems to be almost impossible to this date. Despite Facebook’s enforced filtering and flagging rules to identify suspicious hate speech and terrorist threats, terrorists and extremists still find strategies to bypass these rules (Hopkins, 2017). Further, pinpointing hate speech on

Facebook could be challenging as the company's answer to "What does Facebook consider as hate speech?" is:

Content that attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or disease is not allowed. We do, however, allow clear attempts at humor or satire that might otherwise be considered a possible threat or attack. This includes content that many people may find to be in bad taste (example: jokes, stand-up comedy, popular song lyrics, etc.) (Facebook Help Center, n.d.)

Facebook's VP EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa region) Public Policy adds: "sometimes, there isn't a clear consensus — because the words themselves are ambiguous, the intent behind them is unknown or the context around them is unclear. Language also continues to evolve, and a word that was not a slur yesterday may become one today" (Allan, 2017).

On June 26, 2017, Twitter announced the "formation of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism" in collaboration with the giants Facebook, YouTube and Microsoft (Twitter Public Policy, 2017) on its blog. Their joint effort aimed to better respond to the "ever-evolving terrorist and extremist tactics" and to share best removal practices of and policies against terrorist or violent extremist content shared on their platforms.

Yet, social media continued to be exploited to spread terror, racism and intolerance and to perpetuate animosity towards Syrian refugees and Muslim immigrants. This led Germany, for instance, to enforce its "Network Enforcement Act" the NetzDG (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz) (Lomas, 2017), also known as the "Facebook Act" (Gesley, 2017), as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. While the initial social network sites targets of this law are Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, the law

will soon be applied to content shared on Reddit, Tumblr, Flickr, Vimeo, VK and Gab (Lomas, 2017).

The European Commission also announced in a press release on September 2017 a set of “guidelines and principles for online platforms to increase the proactive prevention, detection and removal of illegal content inciting hatred, violence and terrorism online” (European Commission, 2017). These guidelines include collaborating with “trusted flaggers”, investing in “automatic detection technologies”, establishing removal timeframes, and preventing the risk of over-removal or the re-appearance of previously removed content.

Meanwhile, in Canada, hate speech is addressed in the Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) as a Federal Law, with a latest updated version released on September 14, 2017 (Minister of Justice, 2017). This version states:

Public incitement of hatred:

319 (1) Everyone who, by communicating statements in any public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty of

(a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction. Willful promotion of hatred

(2) Everyone who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, willfully promotes hatred against any identifiable group is guilty of

(a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.



However, the applicability of this law to online hate speech is often time debatable and leading to conflicting conclusions (Media Smart, n.d.). Notably, the *Defenses* section from the code presents cases where the proponents of hate speech could be exempted. The section states:

Defenses:

(3) No person shall be convicted of an offence under sub-section (2)

(a) if he establishes that the statements communicated were true;

(b) if, in good faith, the person expressed or attempted to establish by an argument an opinion on a religious subject or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text;

(c) if the statements were relevant to any subject of public interest, the discussion of which was for the public benefit, and if on reasonable grounds he believed them to be true; or

(d) if, in good faith, he intended to point out, for the purpose of removal, matters producing or tending to produce feelings of hatred toward an identifiable group in Canada. (Minister of Justice, 2017)

Further, a thin line exists between hate speech and free speech. For instance, the Motion 103 (M-103), which condemns Islamophobia in Canada, and which was passed in the House of Commons by a vote of 201-91 on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, is accused of suppressing free speech (Furey, 2017). This explains why far-right groups are expressing themselves freely in Canada without yet concrete consequences. In fact, far-right activists and movements, now reaching more than 100 organized groups in Canada (Amarasingam & Scrivens, 2017; Gagné, 2017), are today more visible and connected online than ever. Their convergence around shared causes and

concerned was spurred by the Syrian refugee crisis, the attacks in Europe and North America and the election of Donald Trump (Amarasingam & Scrivens, 2017).

These far-right groups use social media and hate speech to forcefully broadcast a “collective vision of shared fears, values and ideologies” (Perry & Scrivens, 2016, p.58). This vision of fear was first reinforced after the attacks that happened in Europe. The Paris attacks on November 2015 significantly impacted how refugees were construed in the nationalist imaginary. The terrorism crisis and the refugee crisis became inseparable in the mind of many (Nail, 2016). This led to a concrete division between Canadians in regards to the Prime Minister Trudeau’s announcement to resettle 25000 Syrian refugees within a short time frame, a promise he made during the election campaign (Magder & Solyon, 2015) and kept when he took office. This division was explicitly expressed through a battle of petitions that recruited thousands of signatures and commentaries arguing for or against Syrian refugees (Magder & Solyon, 2015).

While many opposed the decision of Trudeau because they were worried about their safety and their families’, others were terrified that their culture would be overwritten by what they perceived as an invasive and violent religion. Another group questioned the urgency to support strangers while some Canadians, most particularly seniors, were in a pressing need for financial assistance. Trump’s success in winning the 2016 presidential elections deepened the fears and reinforced the negative image perceived by many Canadians of the refugees.

**Trump’s effect in the digital age.** Trump’s election in the US only deepened and normalized the rising of the anti-immigrant sentiment, which was witnessed both in the streets and on social media (Gagné, 2017). In the US, Trump successfully mobilized this sentiment for his political gain, while feeding a perceived economic insecurity, and exaggerated cultural and security threats and normalizing the alienation of immigrants, Muslims in particular (Cooper,

2017). In Canada the Trump effect led to an increase of 600% in the amount of intolerant or hate speech between November 2015 and November 2016, and the hashtags #banmuslims #sieghel #whitegenocide #whitepower were amongst the most used on the online social media platforms such as Twitter (Tomlinson, 2017).

Trump launched the era of “fake news”, a synonym of propaganda, during his first press conference as President-elect when he replied to CNN’s Jim Acosta with “You are fake news!” (Carson, 2017). While he labeled discourses that opposed his views or targeted him and his administration as fake news, Conway, his senior White House aide, justified a false statement shared by the White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer by calling it “alternative facts” (Swaine, 2017). She defined “alternative facts” as “additional facts and alternative information” (Nuzzi, 2017). The fake news and the alternative facts were feeding the digital propaganda against the refugees.

***Digital propaganda.*** In this digital age, propaganda uses all sorts of media to spread its messages. According to the Dune affect, those who control the media not only have access to the public opinion, but also potentially control it (Manzaria & Bruck, 1998). In fact, to spread fake news and emotionally persuade the masses, social media interaction and algorithms were exploited, and events were distorted (Carson, 2017). These algorithms act at a hidden, underlying level and “contribute to create an illusion of platform neutrality” (Milan, 2015, p.3). Milan (2015) adds, “the infrastructure [of social media platforms] dramatically configures people’s options and ends up steering collective action in problematic ways (...) Platforms matter, and matter more than activists like to believe” (p.8).

Gillespie (2012) explains:

These algorithms produce not barometric readings but hieroglyphs. At once so clear and so opaque, they beg to be read as reliable measures of the public mind, as signs of “us.”

But the shape of the “us” on offer is by no means transparent (para. 20).

Further, in the propaganda against Muslim refugees and immigrants, a moral-emotional language was used in online posts. Hashtags such as #banmuslims #sieghel #whitegenocide #whitepower were widely used on online giant social media platforms such as Twitter (Tomlinson, 2017). This kind of language often creates “moral contagious effect” and makes ideas viral within groups in “echo chambers” (Bradly et al., 2017, p.7313).

***Influence of Trump’s use of digital propaganda on public perception.*** Trump’s accusations misguided many people and led them to lose trust in media outlets, assuming that they were the source of fake news. In an attempt to sustain its customers’ trust, Facebook addressed this issue by modifying its trending feature. Its goal was to promote Facebook as a credible source of information (Associated Press, 2017). However, the loss of trust actually made many more receptive of distorted stories and susceptible of manipulation (Carson, 2017).

Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) state that the influence of fake news on people’s perceptions is still to be determined. For instance, they explain that there is no evidence that fake news played a role during the US presidential elections. However, the authors affirm that one should acknowledge that some stories are more influential than others. As example, they claim that the story of the endorsement of Donald Trump by the Pope might have influenced some voters’ positions (Appendix 3). Further, according to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, about 20% of the respondents affirmed that they rethought their views on certain political issues after being exposed to new ideas and viewpoints (Anderson, 2016). While many would

argue that one fifth is probably a negligible number, I argue that views, if adopted by engaged and determined activists, can have a snowball effect.

**Media representation as threat to inclusion.** The dissemination of fake news constitutes a real threat to the inclusion of refugees since the way refugees are portrayed in the media influences how they are construed by the public eye (Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison & Nicholson, 2013). When refugees are painted in a dehumanising ways, for instance as a group of unauthorized invaders reaching shores by boats, they are associated with threats to state, culture and security.

During the Trump electoral campaign, Donald Trump Jr depicted the Syrian refugee as a bowl of Skittles with a potential three poisonous Skittles (Appendix 4) and asked his Twitter audience: “If I had a bowl of skittles and I told you just three would kill you, would you take a handful? That’s our Syrian refugee problem” (Palazzo, 2016). While many were outraged by this inconsiderate representation of refugees, Trump Jr. succeeded in reaching a good portion of the public who needed this kind of concretisation of a potential threat to shift gears.

To be associated with a humanitarian crisis and challenge, the images of refugees should depict individual refugees with recognizable facial features. Bleiker et al. (2013) affirm that, “there will never be neutral ways of depicting refugees but greater awareness of the performative power of images ought to be integral to how mature democracies approach their difficult political and ethical responsibilities towards refugees” (p.414).

A group of scholars at Ryerson University, members of the “Syria Project”, conducted a critical analysis of the Canadian media from September 2015 to April 2016 covering the resettlement of refugees (Tyyskä, Blower, DeBooer, Kawai, & Walcott, 2017). Their findings deduced that the Canadian media played a role in reinforcing the negative image of Syrian

refugees in the public eye. According to their analysis, the refugees were subject to “othering” by the media. They were stereotyped, criminalized (especially men) and perceived as passive, lacking agency, vulnerable, needy and a drain on government resources (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Syrian male refugees were viewed as security threats and Syrian female refugees as typical voiceless, oppressed and desperate Muslim women (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the Canadian government and public were depicted as humanitarian, generous, altruistic, reflecting what is considered to be superior Canadian values. The authors explain:

It is clear that the media engage in the process of “othering” Syrian refugees. In all of the media sources we analyzed, Canadian citizens, politicians, and other public actors speak on behalf of refugees and exemplify a “savior complex” that marginalizes Syrian refugees while offering a narrative of humanitarian and generous Canadians. Any racist or anti-Islamic acts such as an incident of pepper-spraying of refugees, are dismissed as uncharacteristic of Canadians (Tyyskä et al., 2017, p.7)

Nevertheless, it is important to note that efforts have been made by the Canadian government to share success stories of individual refugees on its website and on social media. These stories are about refugees who not only achieved a seamless integration into the Canadian society but also became productive and contributing members. Unfortunately, this did not make Canadians immune to the Canadian media’s and Trump’s effects, which led several to question Bloemraad’s (2012) claim of a Canadian exceptionalism (McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 2017).

**The Canadian Exceptionalism put in doubt.** The notion of *Canadian Exceptionalism* goes back to 2012, when professor Irene Bloemraad publishes an article entitled “Understanding Canadian exceptionalism in immigration and pluralism policy”, in which she affirms that two-

thirds of the Canadians supported immigration and multiculturalism and viewed them as key positive features in building the nation. Relying on a survey conducted in 2010, she states that these Canadians trusted the Canadian immigration policy including the points system adopted to select newcomers. She claims that the majority of Canadians believed that Canada was built on diversity and tolerance, and that immigration was beneficial to the economy of their country (Bloemraad, 2012). Further, the author affirms that attitudes against immigrants were unlikely to emerge within the Canadian society as she explains:

Because immigration and multiculturalism have become part of Canadian nation building and identity, a radical turn against migrants and diversity would necessitate a dramatic change in Canadian nationalism. In addition, unless established immigrant Canadians completely turn their backs on would-be migrants, the significant share of immigrants in the voting population will likely mitigate radical anti-immigrant politics (Bloemraad, 2012).

In 2017, the results of a study commissioned by the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC) suggest that “there is potential for intolerant, anti-immigrant, and anti-refugee sentiment to increase in Canada (...) and that Canadian attitudes are not, in fact, exceptionally pro-immigrant or racially enlightened” (McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 2017). This study, presented by Michael Donnelly during the MISC 22<sup>nd</sup> annual conference on the theme of immigration and multiculturalism, confirms that the Canadian society is not immune and could experience the same kind of hate that we observe in other countries. In fact, hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity went from 611 in 2014 to 641 in 2015, and by religion went from 429 in 2014 to 469 in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

Ratna Omidvar, a Canadian politician, an academic and a Senator of Canada representing Ontario noted during this same conference, “There’s a misconception about Canada being a multicultural country; we have failed (...) to drive immigration to small and medium sized cities. We have a multicultural urban Canada, and we have the rest of Canada” (Cooper, 2017, p.11)

The survey conducted by Donnelly, from January 18 to January 27, 2017, with 1,522 Canadians revealed that almost one third of Canadians would prefer a policy of discrimination against Muslims and in favor of whites. Another survey conducted around this period by Harell and Hinckley with 2400 respondents from Canada and the US uncovered that, when it came to Muslims, Canadians in general were more willing than their American counterparts to place limits on individual rights (Harell, 2017). 51% of the Canadian respondents agreed that “free speech is just not worth it if it means that we have to put up with the danger to society of extremist political views”. These respondent also agreed that what happens in mosques should be monitored. Further, 47% preferred to ban Muslim headscarf in public places.

**From the lens of group theories: Five factors used by negative propaganda to fuel the anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Muslim sentiment.** Drawing from theories about group behaviours, I identified five factors that seemed to be exploited by propagandists through social media to foster an overall anti-immigrant, anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiment in Canada. These factors are: *perceived dissimilarities, perceived threat, lack of contact, social categorization, and locus of control.*

***Perceived dissimilarities.*** Byrne’s (1971) claims through his *similarity-attraction hypothesis* that human beings are attracted to others whom they perceive similar. Rosenbaum (1986) argues that while it is yet to be confirmed that similarity leads to liking, dissimilarity does lead to repulsion. However, both researchers assert that the level of perceived similarities or



dissimilarities plays a fundamental role in the nature of relationships. Syrian refugees are continuously depicted as different and incompatible with the Canadian culture on social media, which explains why many Canadians would still reject them despite the Canadian multicultural identity. In fact, Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret (2006) discuss how the acculturation literature relies on the *similarity-attraction hypothesis* to explain why newcomers from dissimilar cultures are perceived less positively than those with similar backgrounds.

The “Us/Them” and “Ours/Theirs” dichotomies dominate discourses on physical characteristics, values, rights, behavior, identity, space and control (Amichai-Hamburger, Hasler, & Shani-Sherman, 2015; Dhamoon, 2013; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015). While social identity and social categorization theories explain that categorization is a normal psychological process essential to making sense of others’ behaviors and to planning appropriately our own (Dovidio et al., 2015; Trau, 2015), it is still considered an excluding act when associated to, inter alia, stereotyping, racism, identity labeling and model minority (Cui, 2015). Further, the dominance of a reductive vision or the majority/minorities divide posit a misleading opposition between an assumed homogeneous majority and heterogeneous minorities, which leads to unnoticed similarities between groups (Bouchard, 2011).

***Perceived threat.*** In addition to being perceived as different, being perceived as a threat could also explain why some Canadians argue against the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada. Stephan and Stephan (2000) affirm through their *integrated threat theory* (ITT) that people precipitate prejudice when they feel threatened by one of four kinds of threat: the *realistic threat*, the *symbolic threat*, the *intergroup anxiety* and the *negative stereotyping*.

The *realistic threat* occurs when one’s safety, well-being, health, or the political or economic environment one is living in is put at risk. Images of refugees as terrorists were

disseminated online. This led many Canadians to associate the terror attacks and sexual assaults that happened in Europe, and that they witnessed through social media, with the Syrian refugee crisis and to dread similar atrocity on their own soil.

The *symbolic threat* happens when one's morals, values, attitudes, beliefs or standards are jeopardized. Many far-right extremists spread online the idea that Canadians could risk being condemned to follow the Sharia law if Muslims are not stopped and excluded.

The *intergroup anxiety* involves and dictates the nature of relationships between groups. It is felt when an individual is in the presence of out-group members and is unsure or worried about how to behave towards them, dreading their reactions to his or her behaviour. Oskamp (2000) explains: "People feel personally threatened in intergroup interactions because they are concerned about negative outcomes for the self" (p.40). The more one anticipates negative reactions from the out-group members, the more prejudiced and biased he or she is towards them, which eventually leads to conflicts between groups. Canadians whose experience with refugees is limited to the posts they encounter online could dread being in the presence of a refugee.

The *negative stereotyping* occurs when in-group members are obstinate when it comes to what they believe are the characteristics of the out-group members and they base their anticipation of the out-group members' behaviours on these characteristics. The *integrated threat theory* (ITT) is particularly relevant to religious intolerance, public attitudes towards refugees, racial profiling and stereotyping. The majority group fears the weakening of its heritage and cultural and national identities and feels the urgency to protect them, thus reacts by being on the offensive (Bouchard, 2011; Zaami, 2015). Secularism, for instance, becomes synonym of safety (Dhamoon, 2013) despite the fact that requesting it negates one of the fundamental freedoms

recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If fear is not neutralized, it could paralyze whoever are experiencing it and leave them vulnerable to be exploited and manipulated by nationalist right, extremists and propagandists.

***Lack of contact.*** The feeling of being threatened could result from not knowing the “Other” or his or her intentions. Prejudice and negative attitudes held by some members of the Canadian society towards the Syrian refugees could be caused by a lack of contact and thus of knowledge about these refugees. The social media propaganda is cashing in on this lack of contact to spread the only truth it wants the public to know. Allport (1954) explains through his *contact hypothesis*, “prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by (...) contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals” (p.281).

The lack of contact prevents people from verifying and validating any hypothesis they may have about the “Other”. If they never meet this “Other” or engage in interactions with him or her, testing their assumptions and confirming or correcting their prejudgment based on concrete experiences would be improbable. Further, a lack of diversity in a network directly influences its members’ acceptance of multiculturalism and tolerance of hate speech (Harell, 2010). Harell (2010) claims that “young whites with more diverse networks are more likely to express a multicultural form of tolerance in Canada (...) and tolerating racist groups (...) becomes increasingly unlikely” (p.736).

***Social categorization.*** When contact is not an option, people socially categorize the others into different groups. This leads to an increased bias in favor to one’s own group and against all the others’. Categories such as *Muslim, refugee, Arab, immigrant, Canadian, Christian, terrorist, rapist, worthy, unworthy, us, and them* were emphasized on social media.

In order to rectify this situation, Gaertner and Dovidio (2005) hypothesize through their *common in-group identity model* that:

If members of different groups are induced to conceive of themselves as a single group rather than as two completely separate groups, attitudes toward former outgroup members will become more positive through the cognitive and motivational forces that result from in-group formation—a consequence that could increase the sense of connectedness across group lines (p.628).

In other words, negative feelings, behaviours and attitudes towards Syrian refugees should be expected if members from the Canadian society do not re-categorize themselves and the Syrian refugees using a superordinate category that includes both Canadians and refugees. Refugees would be denied “in-group-favoring biases” (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015, p.1524). This could lead to cases of *racialized habitus*, which exist within the racialized minority groups who strive to distinguish themselves from subgroups and to accentuate their association with the majority (Cui, 2015). Established Syrians or Muslims could dissociate themselves from Syrian refugees and highlight their similarities with Canadians.

Contrary to the *common in-group identity model*, Brown and Hewstone (2005) argue that intergroup relations are positive only if members from each group embrace their own characteristics and acknowledge the differences that exist between them and the others. The *mutual identity differentiation model*'s authors insist on the importance of maintaining individuals' identities when contact is established between members of different groups, as these traits are integral to what makes the individuals who they are, and what characterizes the group they belong to. By ignoring the differences, the spread of inclusion to other group members with whom no contact ever happens could become at risk.

In fact, Vertovic (2015) argues that a “local-national perception gap between how people view immigrants in their own community and immigration at the national level” had risen after the recent terror attacks and the online scapegoating of Muslims. People accept their neighbors the immigrants yet consider immigration as an impediment to the society. He explains this gap through evoking Anderson’s (1983) *imagined community*. People imagine the community of newcomers as Muslim invaders, colonizing the country, imposing the Sharia law and forcing the wear of the hijab (Vertovic, 2015). Two imagined communities are in constant conflict in the mind of many.

***Locus of control.*** In addition to an established contact, Canadians’ perception of locus of control could predict their level of hostility towards refugees. A recent study conducted in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom affirms that members from a host society who 1) feel less in control, either personally or as a society, and 2) attribute immigrants’ lack of integration to characteristics specific to newcomers, have higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiments (Harell, Saroka, & Iyengar, 2017).

In 2015, a “No immigration of 25000 refugees” petition was launched at Petition24.com to suspend the resettlement of the 25000 Syrian refugees. The petition succeeded in collecting more than 70k signatures. In 2016, a survey conducted by Angus Reid Institute (ARI) with 1507 Canadians stated that two-in-five respondents opposed the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada. In another survey conducted in 2017 also by ARI with 1508 Canadians, 41% of the respondents urged the government to stop taking more refugees and 40% disagreed with how the federal government handled the resettlement of Syrian refugees (Angus Reid Institute, 2017). Yet, Canada accepted 40.081 Syrian refugees since November 2015. The feeling of certain Canadians as if their voices were not heard was exploited on social media by many, especially

far-right extremists. This could explain the anti-refugee sentiments some Canadians expressed online.

### **The Structure of the Dissertation**

The body of this dissertation is presented in four manuscripts. The first manuscript analyses the Canadian host society as a system that needs to change to better include Syrian refugees. It highlights the significant role of the host society as a main variable in the resettlement of refugees through 1) discussing newcomer youth's integration barriers, 2) explaining how and why the inclusion and integration processes are interdependent, notably in the context of the resettlement of refugees and 3) identifying possible factors that put newcomer youth at risk of exclusion within the Canadian society, using Swanson's (2007) Performance Diagnostic Matrix (PDM).

The second manuscript argues the usefulness of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) as a framework to examine the integration and the inclusion of Syrian refugees in host societies. Using PCP places the members of the host societies in the position of knowing subjects who use their experiences and construct systems to anticipate their future in the context of the refugee crisis, and then behave accordingly.

The third manuscript details the four interview techniques I adapted from PCP, and used in a physically co-located and in an online approach, with 42 youth between 18 and 24 years-old from a variety of North American and European countries affected by the Syrian refugee influx. The purpose for using these techniques was to explore 1) how this youth construed online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis, 2) how they construed their role in the integration and inclusion of refugees, and 3) how they anticipated the influence of social media content on the resettlement of Syrian refugees in their countries.

The fourth manuscript presents and discusses the data I collected from 22 Canadians between 18 and 24 years old using the four techniques I described in the third manuscript. The results are two-fold: First the results reveal youth's understanding of their own constructions of the online discourse about the Syrian refugee crisis and of the role they play in shaping this discourse. Second they reveal the knowledge and the skills that youth develop when they engage in the process of learning about themselves. This could have a significant influence on the choice of instruments and strategies that social workers and professionals in the education field use when they create learning and training programs focused on fostering civic online reasoning and participatory politics.

The dissertation concludes with 1) the summary of the study with a synthesis of the answers to the four research questions, 2) a list of the challenges I had to address while conducting the study and the limitations of the study, 3) the contribution and pedagogical implications of the study, 4) an overview of the achieved dissemination of the methodology and results of the study, and 5) four proposed future directions.

The readers should take note that: First, I equally condemn all the terrorist attacks that occurred worldwide including the attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, India, Yemen, Somalia, Cameroon, Ukraine, Central African Republic, Philippines, Lebanon and other innocent countries and acknowledge their atrocities. However, for the purpose of this study, which focuses on the integration and inclusion of the Syrian refugees in Canada, only violent acts that occurred in Europe and in Canada were considered because of their high repercussion in the Canadian context. Second, for the purpose of this doctoral dissertation, only data collected from 22 Canadian youth was analyzed. The remaining data, collected from 20 youth from the UK, Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Greece, and

Lebanon, will be analyzed at a future stage and a comparison will be conducted between the different contexts to which the participants belonged at the time of the data collection.



## **Introduction to Manuscript 1**

A budget of \$678 million over six years was dedicated by the Government of Canada to facilitate the resettlement of 25000 Syrian refugees in Canada. *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* (IRCC) vowed to use this budget to provide essential services and long-term support to help these refugees resettle and integrate both economically and socially. Despite these plans, many landed immigrant youth, let alone refugees, face barriers to integrate into the Canadian society and labour market. Many are incapable of developing a sense of belonging or self-identifying as “Canadians” even after they are granted the Canadian citizenship. Consequently, it is essential to identify the body of literature that can inform research in this domain and to identify a framework for gathering data to improve the impact of interventions about the lived experiences of immigrants and refugees in times where global politics intervene in our daily lives.

In this conceptual manuscript, we first discuss the newcomer youth integration barriers. Second, we provide an overview of three core concepts: of exclusion, inclusion and integration in the context of resettlement. Third, we use Swanson’s (2007) Performance Diagnostic Matrix (PDM) to identify possible factors that put newcomer youth at risk of exclusion within the Canadian society.

## **Manuscript 1: The Inclusion and Integration of Syrian Refugee Youth in Canada from a Systems Perspective**

This manuscript was submitted to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation's (CRRF) Journal.

### **Introduction**

On the eve of the seventh anniversary of the Syrian war, close to five million people fled Syria to neighbouring countries. These countries have reached their capacities a long time ago and many Syrians are now in a limbo. Violence is rampant, infrastructure is collapsed, schools and hospitals are no longer usable for public services and children are not safe because of the escalating violence. According to UNHCR (2016), this is “the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time”

The Government of Canada dedicated a budget \$678 million over six years to facilitate the resettlement of the Syrian refugees in Canada (Report on Plans and Priorities 2016–2017, 2016). On the one hand, *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* (IRCC) vowed to use this budget to provide essential services and long-term support to help these refugees resettle and integrate in Canada both economically and socially (Report on Plans and Priorities 2016–2017, 2016), regardless of their country of departure, their background or their education level. On the other hand, the refugees are expected to actively engage in the process of integrating to society and to gradually become productive Canadian citizens. What has been overlooked thus far is that the host societies are also expected to change to include the refugees.

This article tackles the problem of the Syrian refugee crisis from a systems perspective. We begin by analysing the literature surrounding the barriers that newcomer youth face while getting integrated to host countries. Second, we provide an overview of three core concepts: social exclusion, social inclusion and social integration. Third, we argue that the integration and

inclusion processes are better understood through the lens of human performance technology and through a systems perspective. We then present the key questions that emerge from Swanson's (2007) Performance Diagnosis Matrix, which we used to ask questions about the intersections between performance variables and performance levels, in the context of the refugee settlement. The scientific contribution of this article is the identification of the matrix because it can be transferred to many scenarios that concern the integration and the inclusion of refugees in a systems theory approach.

### **Newcomer Youth Integration Barriers**

Many landed immigrants face barriers to integrate into the Canadian society and the Canadian labour market despite a wide variety of governmental plans and a considerable dedicated budget set to facilitate their settlement (Kustec, 2012; The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2013). Immigrant youth, defined by the United Nations (UN) as “[immigrant] persons between the ages of 15 and 24” (UNESCO, 2016), constitute one fourth of yearly newcomers (Statistics Canada, 2010), are the most at-risk group for unemployment in Canada. Indeed, in 2014 the unemployment rate of their Canadian-born counterparts was at 13.0 percent, but the unemployment rate of immigrant youth who lived in Canada for less than five years reached 19.5 percent, with a difference of 6.5 points (Statistics Canada, 2016). Even after ten years in Canada, this group was still less employed (15.8 percent) when compared to Canadian-born youth (13.0 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2016). The consequences of youth unemployment range from loss of skills and cognitive abilities, to discouragement, loss of self-esteem, intense mental agony (Sen, 2000), social exclusion (Oxoby, 2009) and higher rates of mortality due to illnesses and suicide (Sen, 2000). Unemployment

“feed[s] the politics of intolerance and racism” (p.21), “weaken[s] some social values” (Sen, 2000, p.22) and thus leads to the waste of productive power.

Unemployment results directly or indirectly from a variety of barriers faced by a significant number of newcomer youth (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Kayaalp, 2015; Munro et al., 2013; Policy Horizons Canada, 2013; The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2013). Their most common challenges exist in their quest for successful settlements (Jimeno et al., 2010), efficient and effective adaptation strategies (Berry et al., 2006) and a sense of belonging to the Canadian society (The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2013).

Settlement barriers occur in processes such as finding adequate accommodation, learning Canada’s official languages, getting access to and understanding policies, rights and responsibilities related to their residency in Canada, adapting to the Canadian educational system (Jimeno et al., 2010; Policy Horizon Canada, 2013; Shakya, et al., 2010), detecting and interpreting the host’s communication system, signals and patterns (APA, 2012), and dealing with financial hardship (Policy Horizons Canada, 2013). In fact, Policy Horizons Canada (2013) states that 47 percent of immigrant youth live below the Canadian low-income cut-off. In addition to these hurdles, newcomer youth are pressured to fit rapidly in unfamiliar cultural and value systems (Jimeno et al., 2010), thus they struggle to assess the worth of maintaining their own cultural identity and customs and to compare it with the worth of inter-ethnic relationships they could seek with the larger society (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989).

While striving for the best adaptation strategy, some newcomer youth are economically and socially excluded (Kayaalp, 2015). They are at-risk of labour-market discrimination

(Kayaalp, 2015), name discrimination, underemployment (Royal Bank of Canada, 2011), linguicism, accent discrimination (Kayaalp, 2015) and ethnic discrimination (Paragg, 2015; Zaami, 2015). Many experience residential segregation (Zaami, 2015), xenophobia (Policy Horizon Canada, 2013), racism (Paragg, 2015; Shakya, et al., 2010), bigotry, bullying, negative stereotyping and stigmatization (Edge, Newbold, & McKeary, 2014; Jimeno et al., 2010) and homophobia (Munro et al., 2013). They also have to challenge veiled privilege such as White privilege (Lee, Sleeter, & Kumashiro, 2015) and the dominant discourse that asserts that Canadians are only white (Paragg, 2015).

The ramifications of maintaining such barriers are detrimental to the integration of newcomer youth, let alone the refugee youth, and threaten Canada's economic growth. Acculturation stress is one of the many mental health issues experienced by this vulnerable group (Berry, 2008). The consequences of youth exclusion vary between feelings of insecurity, depression, anxiety, loss, inferiority (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015), lack of confidence, low self-esteem (Shakya, et al., 2010), isolation and loneliness (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Shik, 2015). Excluded youth also exhibit behavioural problems such as indirect and direct violence, poor academic achievement, school dropouts (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009), delinquency (Sabia, Hickman & Bakley, 2014) drug abuse and hazardous and dangerous drinking (Hamilton, Noh & Adlaf, 2009; Shakya, et al., 2010).

Remedying this situation costs Canada “between \$72 and \$236 billion a year (equivalent of 6% to 20% of GDP) (...) [and] (...) lead[s] to a loss of shared talent, a decrease of skilled human capital, and an increase in social and justice spending” (Policy Horizons Canada, 2013, p.6). In addition, newcomer youth who suffer from the aforementioned issues are incapable of developing a sense of belonging or self-identifying as “Canadians” after they are granted the

Canadian citizenship (Kayaalp, 2015; Paragg, 2015). In the section that follows we present an overview of *exclusion*, *inclusion* and *integration*, which are the major expected outputs of the Canadian immigration and refugee systems.

### **Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion and Social Integration: An Overview**

The concepts of *inclusion* and the *exclusion* are often contrasted (Rawal, 2008) despite their interdependency. Joshi (2014) asserts that "all inclusions require exclusions" (p.227) because the logic applied and the conditions set to include individuals and groups are also used to exclude the rest. In other words, stating that certain individuals are included implies that there are others who are excluded (Joshi, 2014). However, O'Reilly (2005) claims that "the question of inclusion is best conceptualized as a sort of a sliding scale rather than as a binary function, so that *inclusion* and *exclusion* are the extreme poles of a continuum of relations of *inclusion/exclusion*" (p. 85). Individuals are positioned on any point of this scale depending on the variables used to evaluate their status in terms of social inclusion. In the paragraphs that follow, we present the body of literature that is concerned with the concepts of exclusion and of inclusion. We then discuss the nuances between *social inclusion* and *social integration* in the context of the Canadian immigration and refugee systems.

**Exclusion, inclusion and the thin line in-between.** "Les Exclus" or "The Excluded" was first coined in 1970 by Lenoir, Secrétaire d'État à l'Action Sociale of the French Government, to refer to "mentally and physically handicapped [individuals], suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other social 'misfits' (Sen, 2000, p.1). Since then, this term has expanded and was introduced into the social sciences to examine and analyse diverse and complex societies and their relationships with their inhabitants (Fangen, 2010).

Many define *social exclusion* as some sort of deprivation such as health or educational deprivation (O'Reilly, 2005), deprivation of operational political status (Sen, 2000), or deprivation of secure and beneficial relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Active acts of social exclusion also include denying the right to participate (Coombs, Nicholas & Pirkis, 2013), to have access (Joshi, 2014) and to make a choice (Baumgartner, & Burns, 2014; Trau, 2015), in addition to spatial segregation (Fangen, 2010), marginalization (Zaami, 2015), income, accent, racial or name discriminations (Kayaalp, 2015), to only mention a few.

The lack of access to job opportunities is also considered a form of deprivation which could lead to a status of poverty that goes beyond financial deprivation (Morgan, Burns, Fitzpatrick, Pinfold, & Priebe, 2007) and material deprivation. It prevents individuals from their right to “be able to appear in public without shame” (Sen, 2000, p.4) and results in an insufficient participation in mainstream social customs and activities (Morgan et al., 2007; Notley, 2009; Taylor, 2011), which often causes a social capital deprivation (Sen, 2000).

In contrast, *social inclusion* is defined as “full participation in all aspects of life” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011). Included individuals have “the opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of wellbeing that is considered normal in the society in which [they] live” (Wilson & Secker, 2015, p.52)

Upon reviewing the body of literature in the field of *social inclusion*, we identified eight conditions to *social inclusion*. First, the individual must have the opportunity and the right to participate (Baumgartner & Burns, 2014). Second, the individual must have the capability required to participate (Baumgartner & Burns., 2014), which is defined by Sen (2000) as the abilities to convert resources into valuable functionings. Third, the individual must have access

to the resources needed to participate (Wilson & Secker, 2015). Fourth, the individual must have a sense of agency and the will to participate (Coombs et al., 2013). Fifth, a correspondence should exist between the activity chosen by the individual, the activity that s/he is entitled to, and the individual's capability to participate in this specific activity (Baumgartner & Burns, 2014). Sixth, participation should be meaningful to and efficient for the individual (Joshi, 2014; Rawal, 2008). Seventh, individual's contribution should be acknowledged (The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2013). And eighth, the act of inclusion should be construed by both the individual and the including party as such. An individual can be both included and excluded (Wade, 2015), depending on who is doing the inclusion, in which contexts, according to which system, and for what reasons (Jönhill, 2012). Additionally, individuals may feel excluded despite the inclusiveness of an environment (Oxoby, 2009).

Fangen (2010) states "many authors argue that when analysing phenomena, such as exclusion, racism and humiliation, one must take into account how it is felt more than the intentions of those imposing it" (p.150). Along the same lines, Hartung, Sproesser and Renner (2015) distinguish *actual social inclusion* from *perceived social inclusion*, and Fangen (2010) distinguishes *feeling of exclusion* from *observable exclusion*. *Perceived inclusion* and *perceived exclusion* are determined by how individuals construe the behaviours, policies and environments around them (Oxoby, 2009).

*Social exclusion* and *social inclusion* are multidimensional (Jönhill, 2012; Kirpitchenko, & Mansouri, 2014; Morgan et al., 2007; O'Reilly, 2005; Rawal, 2008). They are physical, psychological, social, and occupational (Wilson & Secker, 2015). One can partake in more than one function system (Jönhill, 2012) and being part of one system is not conditional to being part



in another (Oxoby, 2009). In fact, individuals who find themselves excluded in one area of life often seek inclusion in other areas (Oxoby, 2009).

**Social inclusion versus social integration in the Canadian context.** Berry et al. (1989, 2006) use the term *integration* as one of the four acculturation scenarios they claim newcomers adapt. The four acculturation scenarios are *assimilation*, *separation*, *marginalization* and *integration*. *Assimilation* happens when newcomers exhibit little interest in maintaining their own culture and opt for the host's culture. *Separation* occurs when newcomers decide to preserve their own culture and avoid any interaction with the larger society. *Marginalization* happens when newcomers reject both own and host's cultures. *Integration* exists when newcomers maintain their culture while seeking involvement with the larger society. Along the same lines, upon navigating the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website, we find several references to the term *integration* to describe strategies that aim to assist newcomers in preserving their cultural identity while fitting in the Canadian society.

While the concept of *social inclusion* “is still in evolution” in the Canadian context (The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2013, p.6), it is used interchangeably with *social integration* in the Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website and publications. In parallel, to better reflect the reality of Canadian newcomers in Québec, the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion (MIDI), modified its name from Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC) a few years ago to include the term *inclusion*. Yet, the MICC uses the term *integration* when discussing the ministry's vision and interventions. Similarly, Citizenship and Immigration Canada uses exclusively the term *integration* in its mission. However, the Report on Plans and Priorities 2016–2017, prepared by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2016), uses the term *integration* when it refers to

newcomers' role and the term *inclusion* when it refers to the welcoming role and responsibility of the Canadian society. Upon analysing the said report, the term *inclusion* is used five times while the term *integration* is used forty-seven times, which could reflect the expectations that Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Canada as a whole have in regards to newcomers' responsibility to adjust.

A society that fosters the integration of newcomers strives to equip them with the necessary tools and resources to help them fit in the pre-existing structure, whereas an inclusive environment alters the structures and remove the barriers while celebrating diversity and focusing on the “mutually beneficial state for both the community and the individual” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009, p.12). Coombs et al. (2013) declare that: [social inclusion is] about each person taking part in society and having control over his or her own resources. It is also about a community that cares for its members, makes them feel welcome and is willing to adjust to fit their various needs. (p. 907)

In other words, integration happens when newcomers adjust and inclusion happens when the host society adjusts. In the context of the Syrian refugee settlement in Canada, Syrian refugees become integrated once they adjust to the Canadian culture and expectations and they become included once the Canadian society adjusts to accept them. Integration and inclusion are interdependent thus facilitating both is mandatory to the successful settlement of the Syrian refugees in Canada.

### **The Integration and the Inclusion Challenges of Syrian Refugees in Canada: A Performance Issue**

Given the context we described and given the literature surrounding the concepts of social inclusion, social exclusion and social integration, we posit that the Canadian immigration

and refugee system can be compared to systems that are complex in nature, open, and influenced by driving forces in their environment. These systems are composed of interrelated elements and sub-systems that are in continuous interaction, and share collective purposes and outputs. We also posit that two of the determinant factors in the settlement of the Syrian refugees in Canada are the capability of integration of Syrian refugee youth and the capability of inclusiveness of the Canadian host society. In order to identify the forces that are influencing the performance of both parties, we examine the Canadian immigration and refugee system as a whole from a systems perspective and conduct a performance diagnosis focusing on the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugee youth performance issues. For this purpose, we make a new application of Swanson's (2007) performance diagnosis matrix (PDM), which was originally used in human resource development to identify areas where performance can be improved.

**The Performance variables and levels of performance addressed in Swanson (2007)'s performance diagnostic matrix (PDM).** Swanson (2007) defines *performance* as “a valued productive output of a system” (p.27). If we juxtapose this definition to the resettlement of the Syrian refugees, then the integration and the inclusion of the Syrian refugee youth could be considered as one of the valued productive outputs of the Canadian immigration and refugee system. Further, Swanson (2007) defines *performance variable* as the “phenomenon that fundamentally contributes to systemic performance” (p.63). In the case of Syrian refugees, the *performance variables* might be the ones impacting the attainment of their integration and their inclusion.

A matrix that looks at performance variables in a systems approach at different levels might generate questions that we wouldn't otherwise think of. Swanson's matrix of questions allows human resource development and performance improvement professionals “to conduct a

performance diagnosis towards the goal of improving organization performance” (Swanson 1994, p.89). In Ruona and Lyford-Nojima ‘s (1997) perspective, there are two purposes to a performance diagnosis. First, it helps identify the gap between actual and desired performances. Second, it helps design interventions that will improve organization performance.

According to Swanson (2007), performance issues can exist in one or more of five performance variables:

- 1) mission/goals— the central purpose to which efforts are directed
- 2) system design— the plan that facilitates the interaction between the system’s interrelated elements
- 3) capacity— the possession of means, or tools needed to perform
- 4) motivation— the determination to reach the performance goal
- 5) expertise— the possession of specialized skills, or required knowledge to perform.

These variables are addressed at four levels. In the list that follows we juxtapose Swanson’s original levels to our renamed levels for the purpose of redesigning the matrix:

- A) organizational level, which is modified to national level for the purpose of our focus on landed Syrian refugee youth
- B) process level, modified to integration and inclusion process level
- C) team level modified to societal level
- D) individual *level*, modified to newcomer youth level.

With the objective of analysing the Canadian host society as a system that needs to change to better include Syrian refugees, we created a performance diagnosis matrix that allows inquiring into the system in all its dimensions. To do this, we adapted Swanson (2007)’s PDM, which allowed us to develop questions to address when examining the five performance

variables (mission/goal, system design, capacity, motivation, expertise) at the four levels (national, integration and inclusion process level, societal level, newcomer youth level). Let's examine which questions might emerge at the intersections of the performance variables and the four levels (see Table 1).

**Questions that emerge at the intersections of the performance variables and the four levels.**

Table 1. Questions at the intersections between performance levels and performance variables

Performance Variables (1-5) /Performance Levels (A-D)	A- National Level	B- Integration and Inclusion Process Level	C- Societal Level	D- Newcomers Youth Level
1- Mission/Goal	Does the mission/goal of the Canadian immigration and refugee system fit the reality of the economic, political, and cultural forces?	Do the process goals enable the Canadian immigration and refugee system to meet their and individual missions/goals?	Do the Canadian society goals provide congruence with the process and individual goals?	Are the professional and personal mission/goals of newcomers congruent with Canada's?
2- System Design	Does the Canadian immigration and refugee system, provide structure and policies supporting the integration and inclusion of the newcomers?	Are processes designed in such a way to work as a system?	Do the Canadian society dynamics function in such a way to facilitate the integration and inclusion of newcomers?	Do the newcomer clear obstacles that impede their integration or inclusion?

3- Capacity	Does the Canadian immigration and refugee system have the leadership, capital, and infrastructure to achieve its mission/goals?	Does the process have the capacity to perform (quantity, quality and timeliness)?	Does the Canadian society have the combined capacity to effectively and efficiently meet the integration and inclusion goals?	Do newcomers have the mental, physical, and emotional capacity to integrate and to become included?
4- Motivation	Do the policies, culture, and reward systems set by the Canadian immigration and refugee system support the integration and inclusion of the Syrian refugees?	Does the process provide information and human factors required to maintain it?	Does the Canadian society function in a respectful and supportive manner to the integration and inclusion of newcomers?	Do newcomers want to integrate and to become included no matter what?
5- Expertise	Does the Canadian immigration and refugee system establish and maintain selection and training policies and resources?	Does the process of developing expertise meet the changing demands of changing processes?	Does the Canadian society have the expertise to integrate and include newcomers?	Do newcomers have the knowledge and expertise to integrate and to become included?

Each of these intersections suggest research questions that require an extensive investigation in order to provide a full analysis of what has been done and what remains to be done in order to pose a system-wide evaluation of the integration and the inclusion of Syrian refugees in host societies. In the Canadian context we notice that some of the intersections have been better addressed than others, such as the national level mission and goal, system design and capacity.

For instance, when we look at the intersection A/1 between *National Level* and *Mission/Goal*, we recognize that one of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's central goals is to ensure a qualified workforce capable of performing in the evolving knowledge-based economy (Policy Horizon Canada, 2013). The overall slowing growth in the Canadian population, the retirement of a large number of baby boomers and the international competition for skilled workers are resulting in a local labour force shortage (Kustec, 2012; Policy Horizon Canada, 2013). Thus, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's mission is to establish Canada as a destination for innovation and opportunity, and to enhance Canada's social fabric in order to attract talent who would contribute to its prosperity (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Canada also wants to fulfil its "international legal obligations with respect to refugees" and to confirm Canada's humanitarian model and identity (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2016).

When we look at the intersection B/1 between *Integration and Inclusion Process Level* and *Mission/Goal*, we notice that the existence of *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)*, the *Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program* and the integration services are set to help achieve this goal. The question that remains is: how effective and efficient are these actions in the integration and inclusion of the refugees?

When we examine the intersection A/2 between *National Level* and *System Design*, we realize that with an estimate of \$1,464,667,008, around 5,570 full-time trained employees and close partnerships with provincial and territorial governments, educational institutions, immigrant-serving organizations, panel physicians, and a large number of national and international organizations, the Canadian immigration system operates based on well-defined and implemented policies and acts (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Through the

*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act*, the *Citizenship Act*, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Official Languages Act*, and the *Employment Equity Act*, among others, Canada is committed to supporting the social, cultural and economic integration of newcomers and to help them become fully-fledged productive citizens (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Additionally, a wide variety of programs are dedicated to fulfil Canada's commitment regarding the refugees. Examples of these programs are the *Refugee Protection Program*, the *Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program*, the *Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program*, the *Newcomer Settlement and Integration program*, the *Multiculturalism for Newcomers and All Canadians program*, the *Citizenship for Newcomers and All Canadians program*, *Citizenship and Immigration* and the integration services, to mention only few.

If we look at the intersection A/3 between *National Level* and *Capacity*, we recognize that the Government of Canada has set a budget of \$678 million over six years starting in 2015-2016 “to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis and aid in the resettlement of 25,000 Syrian refugees” (Budget 2016, 2016). Further, more than 40 additional dedicated staff have joined the visa offices in the Middle East to accelerate the processing of the applications. Between November 4th 2015 and August 1st 2016, the Government of Canada resettled to Canada a total of 30,275 government-supported and privately sponsored Syrian refugees, coming from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and other locations (#WelcomeRefugees: Canada resettles Syrian refugees, 2016). Several federal departments such as *Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)*, the *Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces (DND/CAF)*, *Global Affairs Canada (GAC)*, *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*, *Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)* and others work in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders to



facilitate the welcoming of the refugees. The government also strongly encourages and supports the communities dedicated to facilitate the settlement and the successful integration of the Syrian refugees into the Canadian society.

Much work has been done to engineer the arrival of Syrian refugees. However, with the benefit of hindsight on the refugee settlement situation that this matrix provides, we are disturbed by the fact that the intersections on the process level, the societal level and newcomer youth level have generally not received enough attention. This calls for research directions that will help bridge the gap between the public image that the government is conveying about welcoming Syrian refugees, and the local realities related to the integration and inclusion of these newcomers.

## **Conclusion**

Through a conceptual systemic analysis of the complexity surrounding the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees, this article speculates that the underpinnings of human performance technology can help understand the integration and inclusion processes at all levels of the system. The matrix we articulated constitutes a new framework that can be used as an action plan that can tackle a variety of studies and investigations. The purpose of this matrix is to ensure that every variable inside the immigration and refugee system and each level of the sub-systems are addressed. This suggests many research avenues that have not been considered yet and are required to develop a full understanding of the dynamics, the problematic, the challenges and the pitfalls of this humanitarian crisis. While it was developed in the Canadian context, the matrix we propose could be transferred to all countries that are currently experiencing an influx of Syrian refugees and need to deal with the effects and the remnants of the humanitarian crisis they escaped.

## **Introduction to Manuscript 2**

In this second manuscript, we discuss the usefulness of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) to examine the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees, who are facing an urgent humanitarian crisis. As Syrians are fleeing their country and seeking asylum in Europe and North America, online transnational conversations are bursting with debates between people who wish to accept them and people who reject them. We discuss how Kelly's (1955) PCP theory sheds light on the issues, through the lens of people's constructs. We consider the postulate and eleven corollaries and identify their applicability to possible constructs regarding the crisis. The reader should note that the language used in this article stems from Kelly's PCP and some of the terminology, such as "credulous listening" and "threat", is specific to Kelly's theory.

## **Manuscript 2: Personal Construct Psychology: A Framework to Analyze Youth Construal of Online Interactions About the Syrian Refugee Crisis**

Source: Naffi, N. & Davidson, A.-L. (2016). Examining the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees through the lens of personal construct psychology. *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 13, 200-209. Retrieved from: <http://www.pcp-net.org/journal/pctp16/naffi16.pdf>

### **Introduction**

Almost everybody has heard of the influx of Syrian refugees in North America and Europe through online interactions, including posts and comments in social media. These refugees face an urgent humanitarian situation: they can no longer live in their country. Once they arrive in their host societies, they face integration barriers and inclusion issues, making their situation worse. The problem facing Syrian refugees is complex beyond what the eye can see. The fact that they are settling imposes pressure on them to change in order to become integrated. What has been neglected so far in this whole situation is that the environment needs to change as well to include them.

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) provides “a framework that is simultaneously compassionate and accepting of alternative constructions of reality, and dispassionate in providing a set of methods for mapping and analyzing interpersonal problems and group polarizations” (Procter & Procter, 2008, pp.353-354). In this paper, we present George Kelly’s PCP as a lens to examine the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees. While both concepts might appear to be the same at first glance, they are significantly different: integration occurs when newcomers adjust; and inclusion occurs when the host society adjusts. In an ideal situation, both groups need to engage in change.

We expose how Kelly's PCP can help identify the core issues to address regarding the settlement of Syrian refugees. Using PCP places the individual in the position of a knowing subject who uses his/her experiences and construct systems to anticipate the future. This is the fundamental assumption of this paper and we are cautioning the reader that we base our reasoning on Kelly's fundamental postulate and the underlying corollaries.

### **Kelly's PCP Applied to Syrian Refugees' Settlement**

“The aim of personal constructs, put at its most pious, is liberation through understanding.”

(Bannister & Fransella, 1971, p.201)

Originating from George Kelly's experience in psychotherapeutic practice, and detailed in his two volumes of 'The Psychology of Personal Constructs' (1955), Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) is a “theory of human personality, a therapeutic approach and a research methodology” (Brown & Chiesa, 1990, p.411) that aims to help individuals develop an understanding of their own understanding (Bannister & Fransella, 1971) and reconstrue their lives (Kelly, 1955). In 1955, PCP rejected the historic dichotomy between cognition and emotion, and positioned individuals at the helm of their behaviors, views and attitudes in response to events they encountered (Björklund, 2008), as opposed to a role, defined by influential currents in psychology, as passive victims of their past, their ego, their unconsciousness, their needs, external stimuli, reinforcements or their quest for pleasure.

According to Kelly, we do not respond to a stimulus, we respond to our interpretation or construal of a stimulus. For instance, while many debate the influence of media on the everyday choices we make, Kelly would have argued that we control how the media affect us through our construal of its messages, and not the other way around. Similarly, we can apply this logic to

how the construct systems that we use control our interpretation of online interactions about Syrian refugees, which influences our processes.

In the sections that follow, we start by presenting the overarching view of [wo]man-the-scientist — the basis of PCP. Second, we discuss PCP’s fundamental postulate and eleven corollaries, and we apply them to the context of the Syrian refugees’ settlement. Last, we examine how PCP explains the concept of change, central to the integration and the inclusion of Syrian refugees in new environments.

**[Wo]Man-The-Scientist.** Kelly acknowledges the existence of a ‘reality’ outside the individual, but asserts that contact with this reality will never be interpretation-free (Bannister & Fransella, 1971). In order for any element in the world to be significant, it has to be construed by a person (Kelly, 1955; Procter, 1978). Kelly explains that we, similar to scientists, have theories of our reality. We hypothesize what will happen and then we test our predictions or anticipations through the behaviors we adopt, similar to scientists engaged in experimentations (Boeree, 2006).

Through the lens of PCP, our hypotheses are generated from ‘constructs’ —patterns or templates that are “at once perceptual, emotional, concerned with action, narrative and, of course, personal” (Procter, 2009, p.1). We create constructs based on our interpretation of ‘elements’ —a thing, an event, an instance of occurrence, a situation, a person, a feeling, or any entity we have contact with —and then we use constructs to perceive and understand the world in an attempt to anticipate events and control them (Kelly, 1955). Further, constructs have “trans-contextual identities” (Hinkle, 1965, 2010, p.10); their meaning depends on their context.

Kelly (1969) argues that “all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement” (p.94)— which he called constructive alternativism— and that our

behavior is our strategy of inquiry (Bannister & Fransella, 1971; Chiari & Nuzzo, 2003) about ourselves, other people and the world we live in (Bannister, 2003). We validate our constructs by using the feedback we receive to improve our understanding of our reality and confirm or modify our initial theory.

In Kelly's perspective, prediction and validation are two very distinct and interdependent concepts. As Kelly (1991) states, "to predict is to construe movement or trend among surrounding events" (p.86). These predictions are specific to situations as "the particular movement construed is always a construct tailor-made for a particular situation (...)" (p.86). However, the predictions are also shaped by the convergence of relevant constructs: "time, the movement construct, and the coordinate readings of the hypothetical event". Once a prediction is constituted, Kelly explains that validation occurs when we "see whether any event falls smack on this imaginary point so as to fulfil all of its presupposed conditions." (Kelly 1991, p.86)

For instance, a large number of citizens from host societies predict that if Syrian refugees enter their countries, they will consume the tax payers' money, abuse all the services offered to them and impose their own culture. Consequently, they express their frustration online. Let us call this group *Host Society First* (HSF).

HSF perceives an 'if-then' relationship between the refugees' arrival and the ramifications HSF will have to endure. However, this is more than a one-to-one relationship between the arrival of refugees and the influence it will have on the HSF's lives. To predict the ramifications, HSF has to construe a variety of events, namely the refugees' cultural background, the situation that led them to flee their homes, the value they place on the opportunity they have to live in host countries, their expectations from the host countries' government and society, and their understanding of their responsibilities towards the host society. HSF will also have to

consider their previous experiences with refugees, namely the circumstances which surrounded previous influxes of refugees, the ramifications they engendered, and the conflicting online discourses and interactions that attempted to explain and analyze the Syrian refugees' crisis.

In a perspective that resembles Kelly's, we argue that from these events HSF will abstract a trend or a 'construct' – "a way in which some things are construed as being alike and yet different from others" (Kelly, 1991, p.74)— and will use it to reach negative forecasts or positive expectations. 'Canadian identity/ Canadians first', 'supportive/antagonist', 'refugee/terrorist', and 'assets to the Canadian economy/abusers of tax payers' money' are examples of constructs we elicited from opinions shared online in petitions launched to support or object the settlement of Syrian refugees. Such constructs are found in a wide array of online petitions, notably the "Stop resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada" petition

(<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/>).

HSF's construct will be validated or invalidated based on whether its predictions take place or not.

Kelly (1991) explains, "validation represents the compatibility (subjectively construed) between one's prediction and the outcome he observes. Invalidation represents incompatibility (subjectively construed) between one's prediction and the outcome he observes" (p.110). In order to validate its prediction, HSF must interact with Syrian refugees or observe their behavior. However, these refugees are people too, and they will act based on the theories and predictions they establish about the host society, and they will look for validation through observing the host society's behavior. This leads us to what Kelly calls a 'spiraliform' model (ibid., p.66)— "our construction system subsumes the construction systems of others and theirs, in part, subsume

ours.” (ibid., p.67) We will discuss the ‘spiraliform’ model further in the ‘Sociality Corollary’ section.

Kelly recognizes an epistemological issue that lies in our capacity to evaluate adequately our knowledge when our knowledge originates from our subjective construal of the world (Adams-Webber, 1989). In response to this problem Kelly suggests to use the constructs’ predictive efficiency as criterion for evaluating their adequacy. In other words, our construal is adequate if it successfully serves as a useful axis of reference for determining our future behaviors and for reviewing previous ones (Ibid.).

**The Syrian refugees’ settlement through the lens of Kelly’s fundamental postulate and eleven corollaries.** In this section we illustrate the fundamental postulate of Personal Construct Psychology and its eleven corollaries using examples from current events related to the settlement of the Syrian refugees in host countries such as Canada.

Through his fundamental postulate, “a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events” (Kelly, 1991, p.32), Kelly assumes that our processes —thoughts, feelings and behaviors— operate in a structured manner and are determined by our predictions of the future. Seen through the lens of this postulate, members of the host society who demonstrate racialized habitus and anticipate real or symbolic threats from the Syrian refugees will feel frustrated and assertively oppose their settlement. Conversely, Syrian refugees who anticipate exclusion from their Canadian counterparts might choose to avoid them, distance themselves, or worse, create a self-fulfilling prophecy by adopting a stereotypical behavior that validates unfounded mistrust expressed by the host society (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2015).



*Construction corollary: “A person anticipates events by construing their replications”* (Kelly, 1991, p.35). We interpret events and their replications, identify their characteristics, similarities and contrasts and determine recurring patterns or templates that we call ‘constructs’ and use to predict future events. Consider the recent terrorist attacks on Paris and Brussels and the sexual assaults in Cologne. Many members of the online transnational environments predict similar calamities in other parts of the world where refugees have resettled, and claim that host societies’ female youth could be at risk of being raped by Muslim refugees.

In the “Stop Settling 25000 Syrian Refugees in Canada” petition, one supporter expresses his concern about Muslims by warning other Canadians that what has happened in Europe will automatically come to Canada: “Please look to Europe, the mass murders, mass rapes that are being committed by Muslims every day. (...) Canadians, especially women, will not be safe to walk the street alone without fear of being harassed or raped. We've seen this happening already. Please wake up Canada before it's too late.” (<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/>)

In contrast, other members look back on the atrocities that the Jews endured in the 1930s during the rise of Hitler in Germany, and the refusal of the Canadian government to admit Jewish refugees in the country, which cost many lives. They compare these atrocities to the events in Syria, and anticipate similar consequences to Syrian refugees if they are refused entry to Canada or other host countries. A supporter to the “Petition in Favor of Welcoming Syrian Refugees to Canada” writes: “Those who instigated the Paris attack were mainly residents of Europe, not refugees. We have yet to get over the shame of turning away Jewish refugees out of fear of German spies” (<https://www.change.org/p/petition-in-favour-of-welcoming-syrian-refugees-to-canada/c/336691058>)

***Individuality corollary: “Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events” (Kelly, 1991, p.38).*** We all live in the same world yet our personal interpretation of its events makes this world unique to each one of us (Brown & Chiesa,1990). Bannister (2003) observes “this central idea offers its own explanation for the mysterious but everyday fact that people respond to the same situation in very different ways” (p.34). While most Canadian citizens followed the same online updates on the unfortunate Paris attacks and Cologne assaults, two camps emerged: ‘an against settlement camp’ and a ‘for settlement camp’. Members of the former group construed these atrocities as accurate representations of the Syrian refugees’ and the Muslim immigrants’ intentions. Members of the latter group however, construed these acts as similarly targeting refugees and Muslims, and considered this population as victim.

***Organization corollary: “Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs” (Kelly, 1991, p.39).*** Constructs are personal, and their orders, arrangements and implications, the links between them, and when and how they are used are also personal (Kelly, 1955). They constitute a system in which some are deemed central and, in most cases, fall under personal values (Jankowicz, 2001; Kelly, 1955), some subsume others and are dubbed ‘superordinal’, and others are subsumed by another and thus become subordinal. Hinkle (1965) adds that “with the exception of the constructs at the top and bottom of a hierarchy, all other constructs are both superordinate and subordinate” (p.8). For instance, most Canadian citizens use a construct such as ‘European/Arab’ when dealing with newcomers. After the Paris attacks, many users of online transnational environments adopted more central constructs such as ‘Canadian’s warmth or empathy/Canadians first’ to voice their opinion and anticipation in regards to the arrival of the Syrian refugees. Others used superordinal constructs such as

‘humane/inhumane’. The order of their construct in the system influenced the nature of the anticipations they shared online.

***Dichotomy corollary: “A person’s construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs” (Kelly, 1991, p.41).*** Constructs are bipolar (Kelly, 1955). The likeness or emergent pole represents the way in which the elements are perceived similar in a specific aspect. The contrasting pole or the implicit pole represents the way in which elements are perceived different in regards to the same aspect. The dichotomy is personal, which prevents some from accessing the thinking of others. For instance, the conventional opposite of ‘unsafe’ is ‘safe’ however, for many Quebecois the opposite of ‘unsafe’ is ‘secular’ (Dhamoon, 2013).

***Choice corollary: “A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system” (Kelly, 1991, p.45).*** We are constantly choosing between the alternatives we set for our constructs, and we lean towards the direction that increases the total meaning of our life (Hinkle, 1965). Our decision aims to better help us anticipate events, elaborate our construction system and influence our behavior. Consider this quote from “Stop Settling 25000 Syrian Refugees in Canada” petition: “I want to help the Syrian people, but I don’t want my family get blown up. I really want to believe that these are all good people, but then again I don’t want my family blown up. So call me a selfish pussy, I still don’t want my family getting hurt” (<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/>).

Through the expression of such concerns, this person chooses the security of his family over saving Syrian refugees who are associated to terrorist attacks. Through the choices we make we strive to control our future. Kelly explains that our choices could arise from our goal to protect ourselves from potential harm. In accordance with his line of thought, when the host society

chooses the terrorist pole instead of the refugee pole, they could be acting in a perspective of self-protection.

**Range Corollary:** *“A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only” (Kelly, 1991, p.48).* A construct is limited to specific events (Jankowicz, 2001). For instance, when arguing about the right for Syrian refugees to receive governmental support, the construct ‘good for the economy/ wasting tax money’ can be applied to comments shared online. One supporter who signed the “Stop settling 25000 Syrian Refugees in Canada” petition shared the following comment: “I am a hard working Canadian woman and have always contributed and paid more than my fair share of taxes. Every year at tax time the government tells me I haven't paid enough and takes more. When I see this type of spending it frustrates me immensely. I do feel for these people, but I also believe that we can do other things to help”

(<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/>).

Another supporter signed the “I Welcome Refugees” petition and shared: “I work with numerous people who have come here fleeing their war torn homes and have made Canada their new home. They contribute to our economy and become members of our communities. Stop the hate”

(<https://www.change.org/p/i-welcome-refugees/c/336780922>). When referring to the range

corollary, any productive Canadian citizen would find it absurd to apply the ‘good for the economy/wasting tax money’ construct to his/her right to receive governmental support.

**Experience Corollary:** *“A person’s construction system varies as he successively construes the replication of events” (Kelly, 1991, p.50).* Bannister and Fransella (1971) explain: “Kelly repeatedly pointed out that we can have ten experiences if we reconstrue each time, or else have one experience repeated ten times if we fail to reconstrue” (p.114). In other words, in order to describe an occurrence as an ‘experience’, elements of the occurrence should be

construed and used to either validate an anticipation or review it. The experience we get modifies our personal construct system. Prejudiced individuals fall under the category of those who neglect the construal of events and opt for pre-emptive constructs (Fransella, 2003). For instance, for some, Muslims are extremists and cannot be other than extremists, regardless how many varied contacts they may have had with any of them.

***Modulation corollary: “The variation in a person’s construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variants lie” (Kelly, 1991, p.54).*** A construct is permeable if it can embrace new elements. For example, host societies who are convinced that Syrian refugee settlement is a threat to the security of their countries would not consider a construct such as *personal relationship/professional relationship* when discussing potential future relationships with these newcomers. One user expressed his refusal to any kind of relationship through sharing this comment: “No Syrian rapists and terrorists in Canada! Stop this madness now!”

[\(http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/\)](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/790/431/152/stop-settling-25000-syrian-refugees-in-canada/).

Once host societies encounter Syrian refugees, their predictions are put to the test and the construct that they assumed impermeable could become permeable and becomes applicable to newcomers. Conversely, Syrian refugees who read such comments and interpret them as excluding would anticipate minimal relationship with the host society and keep their distance. Their construct *personal relationship/professional relationship* could be permeable to members of the host society who are publically and actively engaged in the settlement of newcomers but would be impermeable to the remaining members of the host society. Once the Syrian refugees meet their counterparts from the host society in classrooms or work environments and witness

some welcoming behaviours, their anticipation is revisited and the assumed impermeable construct becomes permeable and includes host society members from these contexts.

***Fragmentation corollary: “A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems, which are inferentially incompatible with each other” (Kelly, 1991, p.58).*** In this corollary Kelly states that inconsistency between personal construct sub-systems is tolerated (Bannister, & Fransella, 1971), which explains the inconsistency between the different roles we play in life (Boeree, 2006). A refugee youth could adapt to his/her host society peers’ culture when he/she is with them, dresses like them, listens and dances to their music and enjoys their activities. He/she could play a different role when he/she is with his/her parents. He/she respects his/her parents’ culture and acts based on their expectations. The role he/she plays depends on the context he/she is in. This could be alarming to an observer, but according to the youth, it could be a strategy to be included in both environments. His/her peripheral constructs could be incompatible yet he/she maintains his/her core constructs or values consistently.

***Commonality corollary: “To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience, which is similar to that employed by another, his processes are psychologically similar to those of the other person” (Kelly, 1991, p.63).*** Individuals are considered similar if they share the same constructs—they construe their experiences in the same way (Kelly, 1955). As a result, there is a big chance they feel, think or behave similarly, belong to a same cultural group and perceive similarly what is expected from them. However, being part of the same cultural group does not necessitate or imply that members share all the constructs of that culture. A typical example would be the frequent misconception of Arabs by many members of host societies who assume that all Arabs share exactly the same constructs and that these constructs are set in stone. Furthermore, we do not necessarily belong to only one culture (Scheer, 2003).

Hyphenated identity (Aarhus Universitet, 2014) is an example of individuals who share constructs with different cultural groups.

***Sociality corollary: “To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another he may play a role in a social process involving the other person” (Kelly, 1991, p.66).*** Successful social processes and interactions are not conditioned on commonality. They require construing how others construe. Kelly explains, “the person who is to play a constructive role in a social process with another person need not so much construe things as the other person does as he must effectively construe the other person’s outlook” (p.66). In Stojnov (2003)’s words:

Understanding all those voices we disagree with means understanding them from the point of view of those who are articulating them. Construing them from their own perspective, as an alternative to our own. Measuring them with their own original yardstick, not with ours. Judging them at their own price, including all the genuine anxieties, threats and guilt, not our own affordances. Rallying all voices different from our own—and that takes some understanding (p.197)

By recognizing others’ construal and how they anticipate events, we identify the role that others expect from us and adjust our behavior accordingly. For example, if refugees subsume the constructs of those posting offensive comments online in regards to refugees, their behavior and their role in the host country context would probably differ from the behavior and role of those who read these comments using solely their own constructs system.

In fact, cross-cultural construing is presently paramount in the contemporary global connected world. It impacts, inter alia, tourism, international relations, business and mostly the successful integration and inclusion of immigrants (Burr, Giliberto, & Butt, 2014). Kelly (1955),

Scheer (2003) and Burr et al. (2014) state that social alienation happens when groups lack access to each other, which leads to a lack of understanding of how others construe events and thus considering them different and strange.

However, challenges exist when we engage in construing others' constructs. For example, in an attempt to construe the host society's behavior, refugees anticipate what the host society will do. They also anticipate what the host society thinks they, refugees, will do. Refugees further anticipate what the host society thinks they expect the host society will do. In addition, refugees anticipate what the host society thinks refugees expect the host society to predict that refugees will do. And so on! (adapted from Kelly, 1991, p.66). They become lost in loops of anticipations. Kelly calls this occurrence the 'Spiraliform model'.

According to Bannister and Fransella (1971), a personal construct system is "the person's guide to living. It is the repository of what he has learned, a statement of his intents, the values whereby he lives and the banner under which he fights" (p.27) and, although the system undergoes ongoing validation, any change in a construct is often resisted and prompts feelings of threat, fear, anxiety, guilt, aggressiveness and hostility. In the section that follows, we will discuss Kelly's constructive alternativism, how personal construct psychology defines change and some of the different emotions that it could cause, and illustrate them using the context of Syrian refugees' inclusion and integration.

**Constructive alternativism, change, threat, anxiety, guilt, aggressiveness and hostility.** Constructs have a variety of aspects. Some are pre-emptive e.g. Muslims cause trouble, and they only cause trouble. Some are constellatory e.g. most Syrian refugees are Muslims so they definitely cause trouble. Others are prepositional e.g. some of the Muslims are extremist so, with the group of Syrian refugees entering host countries, some extremists could be included, but



it is not a definite certainty. Further, constructs could be comprehensive, incidental, core, peripheral, situational, tight, loose, superficial, or vague (Kelly, 1955) However, despite their different aspects, all constructs should be considered subject to revision or replacement (Kelly, 1955; McWilliams, 2003).

Kelly's 'constructive alternativism' liberates us from being victims of our circumstances or our biography. It asserts that, in our quest for a better understanding of the world, we have the right to our own construal of it and to construe the same world differently on separate occasions. Yet, we resist change and dread its impact on our personal construct system. A change necessitates a reconstruction of the meaning one places on the world and "in order to reach reconstruction, we often have to pass through a road to hell. The period in which we do this travelling is psychological transition" (Stojnov, 2003, p.196). This transition is attended with a variety of emotions (Bannister, 2003).

We feel threatened when we become aware of a forthcoming change in one of our core constructs (Fransella, 2003). Religious beliefs or a position towards a cultural group are examples of core constructs that, when challenged by others, could force the individual to revisit her fundamentals, and cause a feeling of threat.

We are anxious when we are "caught with our constructs down", namely when we realize that our personal construct system cannot be applied to the event we are witnessing and thus we are unable to use it to interpret the event or anticipate its occurrence (Adams-Webber, 1989). In other words, when an event lies outside the range of convenience of one's construct system, uncertainty prevails. It triggers a feeling of anxiety that prompts us to modify our construct system in order to make our experiences predictable. The attack on Paris left many puzzled because what happened was not included in their construct system.

Guilt is experienced when we do something that does not fit or respect our core concepts and makes us feel stranger to ourselves. Bannister (2013) explains:

Core constructs are those which govern a person's maintenance processes, they are those constructs in terms of which identity is established, the self is pictured and understood. (...) The guilt is experienced not because one has defied and upset social taboos but because you have misread yourself (pp.71-72)

Members of the host society who hold some forms of racism within their constructs, might feel guilty helping Syrian refugees integrate within their context. It might be against their identity and what they expect from themselves. Conversely, members of the host society who believe that helping is a fundamental component of their identity might feel guilty to oppose the settlement of Syrian refugees who are fleeing the atrocities of war.

Kelly focuses on the aggression that happens within ourselves, when we actively experiment to validate our constructs and when we explore to widen their range (Bannister & Fransella, 1971). An aggressive refugee would actively engage in interactions with his/her host society counterparts, analyze their constructs, compare them with his/her own and choose what helps him/her best understand his/her world. While Kelly associates aggression with commitment, risk taking and inquiring about the unknown (Bannister, 2003), he considers hostility as the ultimate self-preservation act, where we insist on maintaining our construct system intact, despite the occurrences that highlight its failure. We are terrified from falling into a chaos so we keep on insisting that our constructs are valid until we find an alternative way to view and interpret an event. Members of the host society would rather bully refugees into behaving violently in order to confirm their anticipations instead of admitting that many of these refugees are here in good faith, yearning for a sense of belonging and willing to play their part in

helping the host country reach its economic prosperity. Kelly states that hostility often indicates resistance (Fransella, 2003).

McWilliams (2003) explains: “In science and in life we must find ways of dealing effectively with our passionate commitment to our beliefs and to the realization that we must hold these beliefs tentatively and revise or replace them when circumstances warrant. Unfortunately, we do not always behave as ideal scientists” (p.76). He continues: “Because we desire certainty we tend to certify our constructions as objective representations of the universe, forgetting that we have invented them” (p.78).

McWilliams (2003) confirms Hinkle’s (1965) statement that superordinate constructs are the most difficult to change. When the host society expects refugees to change, to adapt and to integrate, they are asking them to revisit their core constructs, to change many aspects of their life, including their social identity, as prerequisite to their inclusion. Similarly, when refugees expect the host society to include them, they are asking them to plunge into a serious reconstruction of their core constructs. Resistance, consolidation of identity or constriction should be expected from both parties. Brophy, Fransella, and Reed (2003) confirm that no change should be asked from any group before an understanding of their construct system is established.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have exposed how Kelly’s Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) can be useful to understand the dynamics about how members from a host society construe their relationship to Syrian refugees and how Syrian refugees construe their integration process with the host society. We argued that PCP can be a useful theory to understand construction systems with regards to refugees.

One might think simply that society needs to reflect and be more inclusive, or that Syrian refugees need to adapt to get integrated. However, everything we have stated points to the idea that both need to change, that change is difficult, and that the construction systems need to be revealed. Once the construction systems are revealed, the host societies and the Syrian refugees need to allow their superordinate constructs to be permeable to new elements based on new experiences in order for both parties to change and accept the other.

Such disclosures might help practitioners to better intervene with regards to Syrian refugees' issues and might inform policy makers about the issues surrounding how a host society construes the potential presence of newcomers and how refugees might construe their own presence in a host society. Everything suggests that all parties have a lot of work to do on their constructs and that working on these constructs might help change how we act in the Syrian refugee crisis context.

### **Introduction to Manuscript 3**

It is often difficult for youth to recognize and share their construct systems let alone to discuss how these systems guide their thoughts and behaviours. The purpose of this methodological manuscript is two-fold: Firstly, it aims to present and detail four interview techniques we adapted from Personal Construct Psychology, to use in a physically co-located or in an online approach, with 42 youth between 18 and 24 years old from a variety of North American, European and Middle Eastern countries affected by the Syrian refugee influx. Secondly it presents a five-step approach to data analysis, with the aim to develop an in-depth understanding of their construct systems. Our objective was to explore how this youth construed online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis and how they anticipated the influence of social media content on the resettlement of Syrian refugees in host countries.

### **Manuscript 3: Engaging Host Society Youth in Exploring How They Construe the Influence of Social Media on the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees**

Source: Naffi, N. & Davidson, A.-L. (2017). Engaging Host Society Youth in Exploring How They Construe the Influence of Social Media on the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees. *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 14, 116-128. Retrieved from: <http://www.pcp-net.org/journal/pctp17/naffi17.pdf>

#### **Introduction**

Since the eruption of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, thousands of Syrian refugees have been crossing the doorsteps of neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan and other less neighboring countries, such as Greece, Germany and Canada. Citizens of the host countries, including youth, are expected by their respective governments to greet the refugees with open arms. In fact, youth are on the frontline during the whole process. They are the ones who are expected to welcome the Syrian refugee youth in their homes, their schools, their work environments and in their lives. Within our youth, some support the settlement of the Syrian refugees in our country, others strongly oppose it and many are still undecided or unsure about the position to take, but almost everyone has access to online posts and interactions. In fact, youth, known to be among the world's most engaged Internet users, are most probably concocting an initial general image of these newcomers and what to expect from them, relying solely on their interpretation of the plethora of information they find online.

During the dreadful November 2015 Paris attacks [1], youth had access to online transnational environments where tragic stories were shared, feelings of despair were broadcast, and fears were intensified. This led to a wide variety of responses. Cologne's sexual assaults [2] and the Brussels terror attacks [3] engendered similar reactions. The Internet in general and

social media in particular facilitated the dissemination of racism and of intolerance (Perry & Scrivens, 2016).

Research on youth and social media claims that youth are influenced by the plethora of messages shared online (Wohn, Ellison, Khan, Fewins-Bliss, & Gray, 2013; Spears & Postmes, 2015). They are viewed as victims whose thoughts and behaviours are easily triggered and manipulated by exterior online forces. From a Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) perspective, online youth are viewed as knowing subjects, with experiences and construct systems that they use to construe the messages diffused online. Youth do not respond to messages as stimuli. Instead, they respond to their choice of interpretations of these messages and anticipate events and behave accordingly.

Consider this scenario. A host youth encounters an online post such as:

Islam is a primitive violent religion practiced by the scum of the Earth. Europe is being invaded by force, and we bring them over, house and feed them willingly. The cowards should go back and fight for their own country

Let us assume that the construct he/she uses to interpret this post is *violent/victim*. If he/she chooses the *violent* pole of the construct and interprets the post as a confirmation of Syrian refugees' status as *violent* invaders of the host country, he/she would dread their arrival and strive to keep them out or to exclude them once they enter his/her environment. However, if he/she chooses the opposite pole of the construct and considers the Syrian refugees as *victims* of such outrageous ignorant comments, he/she might predict that the newcomers would be devastated by the harsh words and he/she would do his/her best to make the Syrian refugees feel welcomed.

It is often difficult for youth to recognize and share their construct systems (Burr, King, & Butt, 2014), let alone to discuss how their construct systems guide their thoughts and behaviours. Therefore, in this methodological article we present a selection of interview techniques that were designed by Kelly and other proponents of PCP. We modified these techniques to use in interviews with 42 youth between 18 and 24 years old from a variety of host societies. We wanted to explore how this youth construed online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis and how they anticipated the role played by these interactions in the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the host countries.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In this section, we will present our adaptations of four interview techniques that stem from PCP: Kelly's self-characterization technique, Procter's Perceiver Element Grid, Kelly's Repertory Grid Test and Hinkle's laddering technique. These adaptations helped us to explore how youth from host societies construed online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis and how they anticipated the role played by these interactions in the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees in host countries.

**Kelly's self-characterization technique.** The *self-characterization technique* is an application of the 'credulous approach' as defined by Kelly (1955), which falls under the *Sociality Corollary*. This technique allows the researcher to relate to the participants through discovering the construct system they use in a particular context to evaluate a specific event. We asked the participants to write their character sketch following these very specific instructions:

I want you to write a character sketch of [name of participant], just as if [s]he were the principal character in a play where [name of participant] encounters online posts related to the Syrian refugee crisis. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knew [her]him



very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone ever really could know [her]him. Be sure to write it in the third person. For example, start out by saying, ‘[name of participant] is... and write the comment or post that [name of participant] would share online if [name of participant] was to react to the Syrian refugee crisis or to express [her]his opinion (adapted from Kelly, 1991, p.241)

Kelly (1991) explains that “the phrasing of this request has gone through a great number of revisions” (p.241) and that every term was chosen carefully and purposefully. The term *character sketch* frees the participants from following specific structures and allows them to describe themselves through their own construct system. Using the third person distances the participants from having the impression that they are writing a confession, and encourages them to conceptualize themselves from an external perspective. Kelly uses the term *intimately* to communicate that an in-depth portrayal is expected, and the term *sympathetically* to emphasize the importance that the participants accept themselves as they are, and disregard what they are not or what they think they ought to be. The term *friend* is employed to give the participants the feeling that they are in a safe environment. The phrase *perhaps better than anyone ever really could know [her]him* is far from being a good syntax yet it serves “to free certain literalistic clients from feeling that they must write the sketch as some actual, known person would write it” (Ibid., p.242). In other words, this sentence aims to discourage participants from recalling a specific individual from their circle and writing the sketch based on what they perceive would be his/her objective version. Kelly intentionally omits any suggestion of an outline to preserve the participants’ spontaneity and to respect their own outline (Kelly, 1991). This aims to help the researcher see how the participants structure their world, identify their role in this world and place themselves on the spectrum of the constructs they use (Kelly, 1991).

We added two requests to Kelly's original instructions. First, we added the context of online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis because we were interested in discovering how the participants described their role within this specific context. Second we requested a comment from the participants, which we used as element of evaluation during the repertory grid test.

**Procter's perceiver element grid (PEG).** Procter's Perceiver Element Grid (PEG) stems from Kelly's Sociality Corollary, and Procter's relationality corollary. It maps the construing of an individual in situations, amongst groups or in one's internal world and answers the question: "How do people themselves (...) in everyday situations, construe patterns of relationship?" (Procter, 2014, p.246).


We used the *PEG* to examine how youth perceived themselves and others, namely how they saw themselves, how they saw others, how they thought others saw them and how they thought others saw themselves in the context of online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis. That is, we addressed how participants construed the online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis and how they anticipated others' construing of these interactions. We also investigated how participants construed the role that these online interactions play in defining the nature of the relationships between the host society youth and the Syrian refugees. This technique allowed us to address the specific question: How do host society youth construe patterns of relationships in situations involving online transnational interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis?

Our adaptation of the Perceiver Element Grid (PEG) consisted of three stages. In the first stage we showed the participants a number of screen captures of posts and comments on posts we retrieved from Facebook after the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks and the sexual assaults

in Cologne (Appendix 5). When selecting the posts, we tried to reach equilibrium between posts expressing positions against the Syrian refugees and those supporting them. We asked the participants to go through the posts and think of the ones they would pay attention to online. Once participants made their selection, we asked them to explain their choices.


In the second stage, we asked the participants to answer the questions from the adapted version of the PEG. These questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Adapted Version of the Perceiver Element Grid (PEG)

	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Members of the Online Host Society Youth</b>	<b>Syrian Refugees</b>
<b>Participant</b>	How do you construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think members of the online host society youth construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think Syrian refugees construe/interpret the content of these posts?
<b>Members of the Online Host Society Youth</b>	How do you think members of the online host society youth think that you construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think members of the online host society youth think their own group construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think members of the online host society youth think Syrian refugees construe/interpret the content of these posts?
<b>Syrian Refugees</b>	How do you think Syrian refugees think that you construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think Syrian refugees think members of the online host society youth construe/interpret the content of these posts?	How do you think Syrian refugees think their own group construe/interpret the content of these posts?

In the third stage, we asked the participants to answer the questions presented in Table 3 in an attempt to explore the relationship they believed existed between online interactions and the offline integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees.

Table 3: The Perceiver Element Grid (PEG)

	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Members of the Online Host Society Youth</b>	<b>Syrian Refugees</b>
<b>Participant</b>	How would you behave if you happen to meet a Syrian refugee for the first time ever in your classroom after you have read these posts and comments?	How do you think members of the online host society youth who never encountered a Syrian refugee before but have read all these posts and comments would behave when they first meet a Syrian refugee in their classrooms?	How do you think Syrian refugees who never encountered a host society youth before but have read all these posts and comments would behave when they first meet a [host country] youth in their classrooms?

**Kelly’s repertory grid test (RGT).** The *Repertory Grid Test (RGT)* is a diagnostic and research tool that captures “a snapshot of the representation of a person’s construct system” (Caputi, 2016, p.89), and makes the “tacit explicit” (Jankowicz, 2004, p.62). The qualitative and quantitative data that it generates (Björklund, 2008) emerge completely from the participants’ mental map, uncontaminated by the researcher’s construct system (Jankowicz, 2004), and make this technique one of the first mixed methods approaches in psychology (Winter, 2015). Bell (2003) explains: “Kelly’s Fundamental Postulate says that a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events. That underpins the repertory grid. The *ways* are the constructs of a repertory grid, and the *events* are the elements.” (p.95)

The Repertory Grid Test (RGT) requires three overarching steps. The first step is to specify the elements, which could, for example, be concrete situations, problems, events, or people. The second step is to elicit the constructs, normally through the triadic elicitation technique. The third step is to rate the elements on the constructs to identify the

element/construct interaction. In the completed matrix of numbers, the researcher identifies how the participant think through their constructs and what the participants think through the ratings of the elements on the constructs (Jankowicz, 2004).

***Selection of elements.*** For the purpose of revealing the construct systems that host society youth use to construe the messages disseminated online about the Syrian refugee crisis, we retrieved 280 comments from online petitions arguing for or against Syrian refugees’ settlement in Canada. The selection of these comments was based on social inclusion and social exclusion factors discussed in the literature. Examples of these factors were: *unmet expectations*, *perception of real or symbolic threat*, and *us/them or ours/theirs* constructs. We then pilot tested these comments with three youth between 16 and 20 years old. We asked the youth to categorize these comments and explain the rationale behind their categorization. We also asked them to choose a few comments that would be representative of the categories. From the youth’s selections, we retained 34 comments that we used as elements when conducting the RGT with participants in our study (Appendix 6).

We shared the 34 comments with the 42 participants of this study and asked them to choose 8 comments that would stand out to them if they were online, regardless of whether they agreed with the content of the comments. The aim was to work with comments that would be relevant to the participant, not imposed by the researcher. Examples of these comments are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Examples of Comments Used as Elements in the Repertory Grid Tests

The Canada I grew up in and love is an inclusive country. How we treat the least of these is a measure of who we are	I'm not against helping the unfortunate. These Muslims are like the plague. Treat them as such.	Islam is not compatible with the Western way of life
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I'm Canadian and helping is what we do!!	No Syrian rapists and terrorists in Canada! Stop this madness now!	Canada is so naïve
We are full...close the borders to immigrants	After the recent events in Cologne I have completely switched from supporting the refugee causes	CANADIANS FIRST - MUSLIMS NEVER
Diversity is not a strength; it is a weakness. Diversity just got over a hundred people murdered in Paris, and you want to flood our country with the same group of people. If I'm standing in my door and 25000 rattle snakes are coming towards me, do I let them in because you say not all rattle snakes are dangerous. At least 1000 of those rattlesnakes are peaceful and will not bite me? If you let in the 25000 rattle snakes, you will get bitten. It is better to close the door to protect yourself and your family.	If ONE Canadian is attacked by a 'refugee' or if ONE Canadian loses a job to one of them then it is ONE too many. It's time we put our Nation first. I want my tax dollars to feed our homeless and support our veterans, not these foreign nationals who share nothing with us - linguistically or culturally. The people who built this country would be ashamed of our misguided attempts to create some multicultural utopia, which exists only in the minds of leftist elites.	I am a hard working Canadian woman and have always contributed and paid more than my fair share of taxes. Every year at tax time the government tells me I haven't paid enough and takes more. When I see this type of spending it frustrates me immensely. I do feel for these people, but I also believe that we can do other things to help. Our homeless, our senior citizens, our natives are living in horrible conditions and are crying for help and their own government has forgotten about them

**Triadic elicitation.** Each participant selected their own set of eight comments. Then, we asked the participants: ‘In what important way are two of them alike but different from the third?’ (Kelly, 1991, p.152). The immediate perceived answer constituted the emergent pole of the construct and its opposite constituted the implicit pole (Fransella, 2003a). We encouraged the participants to elaborate on their choices. After a few random groupings, we asked the participants to purposefully choose triads from the eight elements to find new similarities between two elements as opposed to the third. We reminded the participants that they were expected to elicit new constructs and that similarities between two elements could be in any form or way they could imagine, even if they thought the similarities only made sense to them. Our goal was to have access to their individual distinctive construct system. This process was repeated until the participants started repeating the same constructs. This was an indicator that the participants reached a saturation of constructs.

**Rating of elements on constructs.** Once the triadic elicitation was completed, we asked the participants to rate each element on a 5-point scale on each construct, and to explain the reason for their rating.

Table 5: Example of Rep Grid Matrix

<b>Emergent Pole</b>	<b>Comment A</b>	<b>Comment B</b>	<b>Comment C</b>	<b>My Comment</b>	<b>Implicit Pole</b>
Threat	5	4	5	2	Trust
Family First	4	3	4	1	Humanity
Us/Ours	4	4	3	2	Them/Theirs
1	←————→				5

**Hinkle’s laddering technique.** The laddering technique, adapted from Hinkle’s (1965) “hierarchical technique for eliciting the superordinate constructs of the preferred self-hierarchy”, allowed the participants to articulate their abstract values and beliefs. It also helped them and the researchers to understand the reasons behind the construct system the participants used when they encountered online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis. Our application of this technique, was conducted as follows:

1. After completing the triadic elicitation, reaching a construct saturation and rating elements on constructs, we asked the participants to choose one of the constructs they elicited –i.e. the one that they considered the most important when examining online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis.
2. We then asked the participants to indicate which side of the construct dimension was clearly descriptive of the kind of comment they preferred to share about the Syrian refugee crisis (Adapted from Hinkle, 1965, 2010, p.14).
3. Next, we asked the participants the reason why they preferred one side of a construct over the other. Through their explanation, the participants generated a new superordinate construct. We wrote this new construct with both its poles.
4. We then asked the participant the same question about this new construct. This process continued until reaching the top of the hierarchy, to the most abstract level of construing.

Figure 1 presents a step-by-step description of the laddering of a construct to explain the technique, and an example of an application of this technique using inclusion/exclusion as the initial construct.



Steps	Laddering Technique	
...	<i>And so on until reaching the top of the hierarchy</i>	
11	Because...	Z1 Implicit Pole
10	<i>Why? Why is Y2 important? What are the advantages of Y2? Or being Y2?</i>	
9		Y2 Emergent Pole
8	<i>Which side of this construct do you prefer?</i>	
7	Construct Y is the first superordinate of Construct X	Y1 Implicit Pole ↔ Construct Y (Y1/Y2) ↔ Y2 Emergent Pole
6	<i>Whereas ....? As oppose to...</i>	
5	Because...	Y1 Implicit Pole
4	<i>Why? Why is X1 important? What are the advantages of X1? Or being X1?</i>	
3		X1 Implicit Pole
2	<i>Which side of this construct do you prefer?</i>	
1		X1 Implicit Pole ↔ Construct X (X1/X2) ↔ X2 Emergent Pole

Steps	An Example of the Laddering of the Inclusion/Exclusion Construct	
...	<i>And so on until reaching the top of the hierarchy</i>	
11	Because when people care about us we feel that we are safe with them.	Safe Implicit Pole
10	<i>Why? Why is the feeling of care important?</i>	
9		Feeling of Care Emergent Pole
8	<i>Which side of this construct do you prefer?</i>	
7	Whereas inclusion makes people feel that others care about them.	Pain Implicit Pole ↔ Pain/Feeling of Care ↔ Feeling of Care Emergent Pole
6	<i>Whereas ....? As oppose to...</i>	
5	Because exclusion hurts. Excluded people are in pain.	Pain Implicit Pole
4	<i>Why? Why is inclusion important?</i>	
3		Inclusion Implicit Pole
2	<i>Which side of this construct do you prefer?</i>	
1		Inclusion Implicit Pole ↔ Inclusion/Exclusion ↔ Exclusion Emergent Pole

Figure 1. A step by step laddering of a construct

This technique allows the researcher to investigate ordinal relations between constructs. With the “why” questions the construct is laddered up (Jankowicz, 2004). The participants elaborate on an existing construct to reach more general variants or superordinate constructs (Björklund, 2008; Jankowicz, 2004). Fransella (2003a) confirms that “it is in the process of laddering that one gets nearest to that experience of being almost a part of the other person” (p.112).

The selected construct was laddered up two more times, but with two different questions. The first question was: “Which side of the construct dimension is clearly descriptive of the kind of comment you guess host society youth from the ‘against camp’ prefer to share about the Syrian refugee crisis?” The second question was: “Which side of the construct dimension is

clearly descriptive of the kind of comment you guess host society youth from the ‘for camp’ prefer to share about the Syrian refugee crisis?” The purpose of the repetitions with these questions was to encourage the participants to make an attempt at guessing others’ construct systems and an attempt to subsume them.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data obtained through this interview process, we suggest using a five-step approach to data analysis: 1) open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2001); 2) self-characterization analysis (Kelly, 1955); 3) interpersonal construing analysis (Procter, 2014); 4) interview process analysis (Jankovicz, 2004) and 5) the classification system for personal constructs (Feixas, Geldschläger, & Neimeyer, 2002). The paragraphs below outline how we suggest using each approach and their purpose.

Once the interview data is transcribed and validated by the participants, one gets immersed in the data to obtain a broad picture. This can be done through an open coding exercise following the approach outlined by Strauss and Corbin (2001). Each interview should be read and codes should be attributed loosely, collapsed into categories and then themes that reveal the broad picture.

The next step is to analyze the self-characterizations texts by following the eight phases suggested by Kelly (1955). These phases included: 1) “Observation of sequence and transition” 2) “Observation of organization” (p.247), 3) “Reflection against context” (p.248), 4) “Collation of terms” (p.248), 5) “Analysis of contextual areas invoked by the protocol” (p.250), 6) “Thematic analysis” (p. 251), 7) “Dimensional analysis (p.252) and 8) Professional subsuming of personal constructs” (p.254). The purpose of this step is to obtain a thorough understanding

about how the participant construes himself or herself with regards to the complex issue of online interactions about Syrian refugees.

The third step is guided by Procter's (2014, 2016) discussion on the relationality corollary and the levels of interpersonal construing. The researcher analyzes how participants construe relationships within the context of online interactions about the Syrian refugees at the monadic level, at the dyadic level and at the triadic level. At the monadic level we examine how the participants construe social media interactions, how they construe Syrian refugees and how they construe other local youth. At the dyadic level we look at how the participants construe the relationships between what happens online and another group of youth. At the triadic level we examine how participants construe the relationships between what happens online and two other groups of youth.

Fourth, we suggest proceeding to the analysis of the qualitative data emerging from the RGTs. Jankowicz (2004) states: "The process by which the information is obtained is informative in itself" (p.77), stressing the importance of exploring what is shared during the elicitation of constructs and then the ratings in the matrix. He lists a wide variety of questions that we reflected on when reviewing the construct analysis interviews. An adaptation of some of the questions is:

- How did the participants respond to the comments? Which ones did they choose? Why?
- Which constructs did he/she use to describe the authors of the comments?
- Which constructs required more thought than others?
- Which additional constructs did the participant add to the ones elicited during the triadic elicitation?

- How much time did the rating procedure take? Which ratings required more thought than others?
- What was the participant's explanation for the reason why certain elements fell outside the range of convenience of some of the constructs?
- Were there any emotions (such as anger, sadness, disappointment etc.) involved in the process of eliciting the constructs or rating the elements?
- What comments did the participant make during the procedure?

Last, we suggest following Feixas, Geldschläger and Neimeyer's (2002) Classification System for Personal Constructs (CSPC) and explore the eight areas proposed by the classification system. The areas are: 1) moral; 2) emotional; 3) relational; 4) personal; 5) intellectual/operational; 6) values/interests; 7) existential, and 8) descriptors. We suggest using the CSPC after all the constructs that emerge from the different interviews where participants discussed their positions, behaviours or thoughts and their anticipations of others' construct systems have been aggregated.

### **Required Interviewing Skills When Using Methods Derived from Personal Construct Psychology**

To successfully conduct an inquiry about youth's perceptions of inclusion and about the construct systems they use to construe online content about the Syrian refugee crisis using methods derived from PCP, we strived to subsume the participants' construing, to suspend our own personal values, to listen 'credulously', to be reflexive, and to be verbally skilled as described by Kelly (1955), Bannister (2003), Fransella (2003b), Scheer (2003) and Jankowicz (2004). We also took account of "culture-dictated constructs" as suggested by Kelly (1991, p.307).

Personal construct researchers aim to see the world with the eyes of their participants without ignoring their own construct systems. Researchers should acknowledge that their constructs may be different from those of their participants. The role of the researcher is to come to understand the personal construct system of the participants, without feeling the need to adopt it. By the same token, researchers need to suspend their own values that could act as filters and intervene in their understanding of their participants' construal systems, and take at face value what they hear during the interviews. Our own experiences with the Syrian population and with war in the Middle East were very different. The participants also had varied experiences different from ours, which we acknowledged during the interviews.

Adopting a 'credulous' attitude is central to the PCP methodology. It means accepting the participants and their words, regardless of the researchers' opinion (Jankowicz, 2004). Researchers must listen with care and empathy to what their participants have to say, to their contradictions and to their silences, and ask causal probing questions when more details are needed to reach a better understanding of the participants' perspective (Yorke, 1989). As researchers, we had to put aside our position in regards to the settlement of Syrian refugees and accept the participants' arguments and listen carefully to what they had to share.

Reflexivity is another concept central to PCP. Bannister (2003) explains that reflexivity in Kelly's thinking implies that "there are not two languages, two psychologies, one for [the participants] and one for [the researcher]; there is one psychology for all of us" (p.37). The fundamentals of construct theory identically apply to both the researchers and their participants, which explains how challenging it was for us, as researchers, to suspend our constructs while listening to our participants. For instance, after conducting a number of interviews and listening to some youth answering our questions we realized that we started approaching our meetings

with certain anticipations of what the next participants would share with us. We had to make sure we equally paid attention to the reactions and answers that we expected and the ones that were particular to each participants.

Since commonality is not required between the researchers and their participants, the meaning that participants associate with the words they use may differ from the one usually adopted by the researchers. Adams-Webber (1989) asserts that a researcher should give his/her participants' words the meaning they give them, not the meaning he/she usually finds in the dictionary. Being verbally skilled in PCP means having the ability to *speak* the participants' language and to understand their culturally specific usage of the words (Scheer, 2003). Scheer (2003) asserts that actions such as paying attention to culture-dictated constructs and taking these constructs into consideration are not considered stereotyping acts. They are essential to understanding the genesis of the participants' way of viewing the world. In order to understand what our participants meant with some key words, constructs or concepts, we made sure to ask them to explain what they meant and to illustrate with examples.

In addition to the aforementioned requirements, the researchers should be aware of the social desirability effect and that their objectives as researchers may differ from the objectives of their participants or their readers, and their analysis and interpretation of the data is part of how they view the world. Thus, we acknowledge that our readers "will [always] construe [their] construing of [our] interviewee's construing!" (Jankowicz, 2004, p.76).

### **Participants' Feedback on the Instruments**

Many participants stated that the questions came as a surprise, which, according to them, made the interviews a valuable learning experience. They felt less in control of their answers and more prompted to share what they considered to be unexpected thoughts. One participant said: "I

feel it is really interesting because it looks pretty straightforward, you know, do this and that, but it has a secret meaning at the end. I was technically fooled, but finally I think it is really really good”. Another participant said: “Some questions surprised me, I was Oh! Ok! I need a second to think about this”. Along the same lines, one participant shared:

I was going in blind. I was not sure what to expect or what to do, or in which direction to go. Sometimes when you have a study you see where it is going and surpass it. This [PCP techniques] takes you out of that because you have no idea what to say next, which is cool. And you kind of discover something. You don't take it there. It goes by itself.

The participant also observed that they were challenged to engage in reflections they would not usually consider. This allowed them to discover aspects of themselves of which they were unaware. One participant questioned her own position:

The questions helped me understand myself better in those situations. I felt that sometimes I was contradicting myself because I say to myself yes of course we need to welcome the refugees, but at the same time our country is already suffering so I have to contradict this idea. You have to seek what is best for your country.

A second participant remarked:

I liked the third one [the repertory grid] because it was a really good way of seeing things about myself which I didn't consciously really know but just kind of looking at the details and then look at the big picture you learn a lot which I haven't really thought about but I did think it was accurate at the end.

A third participant shared:

They are challenging, but in a good way. You made us think further into situations sometimes. I am like yeah this is how I think, but I do not know why. It was hard

sometimes to go further into it. Sometimes, when I was asked why, I realized that what I said was not actually what I thought.

Another example was:

I really liked the interviews. It challenges the conviction. I come with a mindset. Then when you have to perceive others, you disconnect from yourself and try to understand the other. It really helped me because I stopped only focusing on myself and I started seeing the other. I would have never done this by myself, to try to think how others thought about the online content.

Lastly, the tools we used not only intrigued the participants, but also motivated them to persevere and to dig deeper to find the answers. Some examples of what participants shared were:

It is obviously challenging, but in a good sense because I would have obviously given up much earlier when I had no ideas. So I was pushed to find ideas. But when I did it, it was good because after that when I was reviewing them they made sense. It was clearly my perception of things.

and

It was cool to use the comments as elements. Sometimes it was hard when I had to choose the elements. It challenges the thinking so that was good. Challenging to think new ways and to do stuff that we don't usually do and when I thought that I couldn't find more I was telling myself yes you can do it.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we presented our adaptation of four interview techniques derived from Personal Construct Psychology to study how youth from host societies construe online comments



about the Syrian refugee crisis. These constructs are important because they can influence youth's behaviors towards refugees. While we cannot pinpoint which of the four interview technique was more effective, we designed the four instruments to allow the participants to build a chain of explanations, to express their thoughts, and to revise them. All participants claimed they have learned a lot from this process of externalization. When used together, these four techniques provide an in-depth interviewing design to extract implicit thoughts about a sensitive and political issue. As such, this is a methodological contribution to study youth construals of the Syrian refugee crisis comments on social media.

We also shared a synopsis of the reactions we collected from the youth we interviewed about the instruments we used to demonstrate the power of the process we designed to collect data. Most participants revealed that going through the interviews helped them understand their own thinking and made them realize that they needed to be more mindful of the reasons behind the reactions shared online before, construing an image of the Syrian refugees. Going through the interview process and engaging in such deep reflections involved a learning experience about one's own implicit perceptions and thinking processes.

The interview process also allowed participants to make a decision about the role they would choose to play in the context of the refugees' settlement. In such a rapid-pace society, where youth tend to write online comments based on how they think others will perceive them (Jones, 2015), the interview process we outlined in our study provided them with tools to think and reflect based on their own conjectures, rather than on their peers' reactions.

In retrospect, our pilot test suggests that this type of interview protocol, based on PCP principles, is a powerful learning tool that can allow youth from host societies to engage in critical thinking and to learn to live with the one they perceive as being "the other". More studies

are necessary to identify the base of knowledge that we can extract from such methodologies and to verify the pedagogical soundness of such methodologies for learning about “the other”.

### **Endnotes**

Note: The endnotes were requested by the journal editors.

[1] Paris terror attacks. In a 33-minutes period of time, eight explosions occurred in Paris, killing 130 people and wounding 352 (Some were casualties of the explosions, others resulted from the shootings). Paris attacks started at 09:20 PM on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 with an explosion outside of the Stade de France, a sports stadium in Saint-Denis, during a soccer match between France and Germany. The French president François Hollande was present at the game and was safely evacuated with hundreds of other spectators. The explosion was followed by two others at 09:30pm and at 09:53pm near the Stadium. At 09:25 pm, gunmen armed with assault rifles attacked people gathered at Le Petit Cambodge restaurant and Le Carillon Bar in the 10<sup>th</sup> district of Paris. At 09:32 pm, a shooting occurred in the 11<sup>th</sup> district of Paris at the Café Bonne Bière. At 09:36 pm another attack happened at the restaurant La Belle Équipe, followed by two more at 09:40 pm: one by a suicide bomber who blew himself up inside the Comptoir Voltaire restaurant in the 11<sup>th</sup> district and another by three gunmen who opened fire on the audience attending the Eagles of Death Metal performance at the Bataclan concert hall.

[2] Cologne sexual assaults. During the 2016 New Year’s Eve celebrations, Germany witnessed unprecedented mass sexual assaults in seven of its cities: Hamburg, Bielefeld, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Cologne. Cologne had the highest number of reported assaults with 1529 victims. Women, surrounded in groups of 30 or 40 in front of Cologne’s Central station, were groped, robbed, sexually assaulted or raped. While the 153 male suspects of the Cologne crimes were mostly from Morocco or Algeria, the anger shared on social media

turned the focus towards the huge Syrian refugee influx in Germany and the hashtag #Rapefugees was launched.

[3] Brussels terror attacks. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 two bombs were detonated at 07:58 am at opposite ends of the check-in area of Zaventem airport in Brussels, Belgium. An hour later, a blast occurred at the Maelbeek metro station in Brussels' city centre. Thirty-five people were killed including the three bombers and 340 were injured. While ISIS claimed responsibility for the Paris and Brussels attacks, a Syrian passport was discovered near one of the suicide bombers in Paris and helped in triggering questions about whether the Syrian refugee crisis was a "Trojan Horse" plot, as Donald Trump formulated it, to get terrorists into European and American countries.

## **Introduction to Manuscript 4**

The first manuscript shared in this dissertation discussed the integration and the inclusion of the Syrian refugee youth in Canada from a system perspective and argued the urgency to consider the host society youth as key players in achieving the resettlement of refugees. The second proposed to use the Personal Construct theory as a framework to analyze host society youth's construal of online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis. The third manuscript presented in details the methodology we used to engage host society youth in exploring how they construe the influence of social media on the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

In the fourth manuscript we present and analyze the data we collected from more than 100 hours of in-depth interviews with Canadian youth between 18 and 24 years old. During the interviews, which we detailed in the third manuscript, we strived to understand how youth construed their role in the integration and the inclusion of refugees in a context where the image of refugees was deeply influenced by social media, and to identify the knowledge and skills they developed in the process of understanding themselves.

**Manuscript 4: From Briefed Bystanders to Influential Agents of Change in the Era of Social Media Propaganda and Fake News: Learning to Disrupt the Discourses Around Syrian Refugees Through Learning About Oneself**

A 10000-word version of this manuscript will be submitted to the journal of Constructivist Psychology. Examples of quotes will be removed.

**Introduction**

Canadians are expected to embrace the *Canadian Exceptionalism* and welcome Syrian refugees in an era of alternative facts, fake news, and hate speech. In the current context, this is challenging for many Canadians who are led to believe that they have an either-or choice to make between being exceptional or being safe. Since the online discourse around Syrian refugees is mainly orchestrated to spread fear amongst potential and existing welcoming communities, a counterpropaganda led by agents of change is of utmost importance to counterbalance the negative influence and allow host societies to make informed choices. With 84% of young Canadians actively using Facebook (Statista, 2017), the world's most popular social network (Hut, 2017), and joining its community of 2 billion users (Constine, 2017), Canadian youth, once equipped and empowered, could be our best candidates to lead this change.

**Youth versus news on social media.** With almost 20 million social network users in Canada (Statista, 2017), the majority of Canadians are following the development of the Syrian refugee crisis and the dreadful terrorists' events through social media. A mere 6% of Canadians are unconcerned with the crisis (Angus Reid Institute, 2017), but 28% of Canadians are attentive to news reporting the crisis and actively discussing the topic, and 65% are at least exposed to the media coverage or scanning the headlines shared online (Angus Reid Institute, 2017). In other

words, almost 94 % of online Canadians, including Canadian youth, are exposed to the propaganda campaign spread against the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

This propaganda feeds and is partially being fed by far-right extremists and is used to vindicate behaviours against Muslim immigrants and refugees. On January 29, 2017, the 27 years old Quebecois Alexandre Bissonnette shot and killed six Muslim men in a mosque in the Sainte-Foy neighborhood of Quebec City. Reports claim that Bissonnette was a fan of Marine Le Pen (Gagné, 2017), a French anti-Muslim anti-refugee politician whom he never met but followed on social media. Following the events, far-right activist groups, namely Pediga, La Meute, Storm Alliance and the Three Percent, came out and openly expressed their anti-Muslim position. According to an article posted on Vice, the Three Percent group is “armed, ready for war on Canadian soil, and experts say they are dangerous” (Lamoureux, 2017).

Contrarily to previous discourses that posit Millennials as passive consumers of news with little and incidental exposure to world events, a thorough study conducted by the Media Insight Project (2015) affirms that youth between the age of 18 and 24 are “anything but “newsless”, passive, or civically uninterested (...). [They] consume news and information in strikingly different ways than previous generations, (...) their paths to discovery are more nuanced and varied than some may have imagined”, and social media plays a large role in their news consumption. Their main social media platforms to access news are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Reddit, and most of the youth make sure to stay up to date with what is going on in the world (The Media Insight Project, 2015).

In fact, youth’s digital devices are flooded with information. Whether they get their news from actively seeking out information or from simply bumping into it when socially interacting

online with friends and family, youth need to filter this information and judge its credibility (Thoms, 2016), especially in this fake news alternative facts era.

***Choice of breaking news stories.*** The news shared online undergoes two filtering processes before it is read by Canadian youth (Thoms, 2016). First, social media platform's algorithms as well as youth's network of friends and family aggregate perceived important and interesting breaking news. Second, Canadian youth filter news to read from the aggregated content and decide whether to undertake a superficial glance at the headlines or to investigate the stories more thoroughly (Thoms, 2016). Their decisions are based on a number of criteria such as the source of the news and the quality and the corroboration of the story. Youth's interest in the topic, their past experience, their personal logic, their energy and motivation levels and time are also influential factors (Thoms, 2016).

***Civic online reasoning.*** The Stanford History Education group (2016) defines *civic online reasoning* as the "ability to judge the credibility of information" (p.4) that social media users find on different platforms. The group conducted an 18-month study with students from six universities to evaluate young people's *civic online reasoning* and concluded that:

[Youth] may be able to flit between Facebook and Twitter while simultaneously uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to evaluating information that flows through social media channels, they are easily duped (Stanford History Education group, 2016, p.4)

In fact, many youth admit that judging the credibility of the information they encounter on social media is challenging (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski, 2012). Thoms (2016) shares similar results, notably that Canadian youth are inclined to believe stories shared

on social media. However she also notices that these youth are skeptical when the information sounds unbelievable, of poor quality or when they cannot cross verify it from multiple resources.

In fact, Thoms' (2016) participants followed a pattern when exploring news. They started by glimpsing at trending topics or articles posted or shared by their network of friends or family and then sought more information about the topics through a google search. They relied on what they perceived as trusted mainstream news sites, a strategy stemming from the literacy skills they developed through their public school curriculums (Thoms, 2016). Who shares the news and the identity of the sharer also plays an influential role in deciding what to trust and thus to read (The Media Insight Project, 2016). Further, Canadian youth who are exposed to racial and ethnic diversity distinguish between types of online speech they consider offensive and are less tolerant of racist speech (Harell, 2010).

***Participatory politics.*** Kahne, Hodgin, and Eidman-Aadahl (2016) define *participatory politics* as “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern” (p.2). Their definition stems from Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel's (2009) investigation of the potential of applying *participatory culture* for civic engagement. In the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, participatory political acts could include youth's efforts to reshape the image of Syrian refugees shared on social media and to disrupt the propaganda tailored towards impeding their resettlement. Through participatory political acts, which are practiced online, youth can reach large audiences, mobilize networks, shape agendas, voice their views to political leaders, circulate political information and disseminate content they creatively produce such as blog entries, images, videos and more (Cohen et al., 2012).



Movements such as the DREAMer, the #BlackLivesMatter, the Maple Spring, the #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, and the numerous vigils in response to the 2017 Quebec shooting could illude observers into believing that youth, in general, are highly engaged in participatory political acts and are using social media to induce political or social changes. While many youth embrace the culture of sharing and are taking advantage of the social media affordances to engage in participatory politics, “substantial portions of youth are far less likely than others to have voice and influence” (Cohen et al., 2012, p.xi).

Youth oftentimes see or experience direct or indirect racial discrimination online (Steeves, 2014), or witness unproductive, uncivil or disturbing Facebook discussions among people holding divergent views (Kahne, Hodgins, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). When this happens, many youth become reluctant to share their perspective online by fear of backlash or negative consequences (Kahne et al., 2016). They remain “*power users* (frequent users)”, instead of “*powerful users* (influential users)” (Kahne et al., 2016, p.24).

While factors to ensure engagement are yet to be determined, Cohen et al. (2012) observe that youth who are engaged in nonpolitical interest-driven online activities such as socializing and gaming are prone to engage in participatory politics. Cohen et al. (2012) state, “engagement in interest-driven activity is the single largest predictor of those we considered when determining whether someone would engage in participatory political activity” (p.17). In fact, these activities develop participatory skills, norms and networks that could be transferred to the political realm (Jenkins et al., 2009). The feeling of dissatisfaction, alienation or being ignored by traditional political institutions also drive youth to benefit from the unprecedented means of expression and action offered by social media (Cohen et al., 2012).

Participatory politics and offline political activities are not mutually exclusive. When they both exist, they complement each other. Further, youth who engage in participatory politics are more likely to consider engaging in institutional politics (Cohen et al., 2012).

**Gap in the civic education curriculum.** In order for Canadian youth to cease being briefed bystanders and start playing their role as influential agents of change in this era of social media and fake news, educators, especially civic educators, should help “prepare youth for important forms of engagement in civic and political life in the digital age, including investigation, dialogue and feedback, circulation, production, and mobilization” (Kahne et al., 2016, p.14). Youth need to develop civic online reasoning, stand up to propaganda, identify ways to leverage the power of social media and have “greater control, voice and influence over issues that matter most in their lives” (Kahne et al., 2016, p.38).

To withstand all forms of propaganda, research suggests that awareness is the best prevention (Jowett & O’Donnell 2012). Awareness starts by acknowledging the existence of propaganda then analysing the propaganda campaign to predict how it could shape beliefs (Manzaria & Bruck, 1998). To analyze a propaganda campaign, nine questions should be investigated: 1) what is the purpose of the campaign? 2) in which context is the campaign happening? 3) who is/are the propagandist(s)? 4) how is the propaganda organized? 5) who is the targeted public? 6) which media tools and strategies are employed? 7) how does the public react to the different strategies? 8) are there any signs of a counterpropaganda? and 9) what is the effect of this propaganda? (Jowett & O’Donnell 2012; Manzaria & Bruck, 1998).

Further, Kahne et al. (2016) suggest that civic educators should develop competencies to help their students to 1) effectively search for information and analyze its credibility, 2) use multiple digital tools and platforms to ensure high-quality investigations, and 3) exploit social

networks in their quest for information. In addition to the ability to recognize propagandist behaviours and to judge the credibility of shared information, youth should be able to participate in shaping online discourses (Kahne et al., 2016). They need to be able to 1) frame the information and create stories, 3) express their perspective with respect and civility in a digital format while using persuasive strategies, 4) engage in conversations with people with diverse standpoints while being aware of the risks of backlash and cyberbullying, 5) circulate multimedia using digital tools, platforms, and social networks, 6) go public and invest in expanding their online audience that would serve as a vehicle to spread their viewpoints, and 7) anticipate and thus design the footprint and the digital afterlife that will generate from their civic and political activities (Kahne et al., 2016).

Moreover, civic educators should equip youth to be able to 1) organize and mobilize others for a cause, 2) build support, and 3) anticipate possible or unexpected outcomes and plan adequate responses (Kahne et al., 2016). While youth are active on social media, many are ill-informed about how to strategically select the digital media tools and platforms to serve their goal, or “to craft persuasive messages that will reach a targeted audience” (Kahne et al., 2016, p.11). These competencies should also be addressed in the curriculum.

Despite the importance of the topic, Canadian school curricula initiatives remain conservative. For example, the Québec Educational Program identifies “Vivre-ensemble et citoyenneté” as one of the general educational domain. While the description of the domain remains generic, the main objective is to bring the student to participate to the democratic life of the classroom or the school and to develop an open attitude about the world and diversity. One of the development axes is about establishing a peace culture, which includes concepts such as

recognizing international conflicts, applying the principles with regards to the equality of rights and understanding the negative consequences of stereotypes and discrimination.

This is closely linked to the courses on “Éthique et culture religieuse” that are offered both at the elementary and secondary levels in Québec, which has been the subject of controversies in the popular media. This subject is taught one hour per week on average and includes reflecting on ethical questions, knowing the differences between different religions and their meaning and being able to enter in a dialogue with people who have different religious beliefs.

In Ontario, the Social Sciences and Humanities grades 9 to 12 curriculum dictates the content of domains such as Equity Studies, General Social Sciences and World Religions. While all students must take .5 credits in Civics in Grade 10, Social Sciences and Humanities is an elective course from a group of courses that only certain students take. This is far from being enough to prepare youth for the current social context of multiculturalism, diversity or to withstand propaganda or engage in participatory politics.

At the other end of the spectrum, several Canadian organizations have prepared de-radicalization programs (for those who have been radicalized and need an intervention to reject violent ideology), anti-radicalization programs (for those on either end of the hate dichotomy) and counter-radicalization programs (prevention programs targeted at everybody in the anticipation that anyone can become radicalized).

The Montreal Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV) published a document titled *Strengthening Our Resilience to Agents of Radicalization and their Rhetoric* (2016 a), which explains what makes it appealing to follow a person who uses radicalized thinking. One key recommendation to protect oneself is, “use your critical judgment

and beware of simplistic, black-and-white rhetoric (that views everything as either good or bad) regarding social issues and complex international events” (p.11).

In their *Information Kit for School Personnel on Radicalization Leading to Violence in Schools: A Better Understanding for a Better response* (2016 b) the CPRLV list several approaches to help prevent radicalization from happening in schools. These include knowledge of radicalization leading to violence, offering safe spaces and moments to discuss societal issues, encouraging diversified activities, developing critical thinking and building better resilience strategies. More specifically, the CPRLV encourages educators to develop students’ media and information literacy to help them recognize the dangers of social media and to build students’ resilience to hate speech and to indoctrination or manipulation strategies (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, 2016)

In addition, the CPRLV offers training sessions for school personnel that discuss 1) the characteristics of different types of violent radicalization, 2) the process of radicalization, 3) the strategies to respond and manage sensitive and heated classroom situations, and 4) inclusiveness tools which could prevent radicalization. However, this training program does not cover strategies to develop students’ civic online reasoning when it comes to well organized propagandas with political agendas nor to develop their resilience to manipulation. Further, the counter-radicalization programs are not really designed to be implemented widely with youth who are not at-risk of becoming radicalized. All youth who vicariously witness the terrorist attacks through social media or are exposed to the propaganda that follows the attacks are part of the conversation about Islamophobia and the inclusion of newcomers, notably Muslim refugees, regardless of where they stand on the spectrum.

Kahne et al. (2016) affirm, “in the digital age, as before, youth must learn to carefully analyze issues, understand the social context, and reflect on their own positionality” (p. 27) in order for them “to work collectively to identify, learn about, discuss with others, and address public issues” (p. 4). Civic educators need to move beyond asking youth to deconstruct social media news and propagandist messages and start encouraging them to uncover the logic of their deconstruction so they understand the genesis of their reasoning. Educators should avoid asking students to go on missions on social media platforms and simulate online interactions which oftentimes lead students to feel “like a regular assignment written for the teacher” (Kahne et al., 2016, p.19).

For youth to withstand propaganda, whether coming from governmental parties with agendas or from radical extremists, and to engage in civic and political life in the digital age, they need to understand where their political tolerance and intolerance are coming from. Further, in order for any Canadian to play an active role in the inclusion of refugees, they need to understand the concerns, the emotions and the values that generate the public attitudes towards refugees (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

Thus, in a context where schools are yet to establish a curriculum that transforms students from debriefed bystanders, at risk of being manipulated by media, to critical citizens, agents of change, this study focused on engaging youth in in-depth discussions about how they construed 1) the online discourse surrounding the settlement of Syrian refugees, and 2) their role as Canadian citizens, active users of social media, in the resettlement of refugees. The goal of the study was to bring out what youth learn, the skills they develop and the trigger for change they experience through the process of understanding oneself, in a complex context.

## **Methodology**

To conduct our study, we recruited twenty-two Canadians between 18 and 24 years old through a snowball purposeful sampling using Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Twelve participants came from a diverse environment. Ten came from small exclusively white Canadian towns, but got immersed in a diverse environment when they left their home town and joined a university in one of Canada's big cities. The participants were active on social media, supportive of the Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada, but deliberately acting as bystanders whenever they encountered online posts and interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis.

We engaged participants in four in-depth interviews to help them 1) explore how they construed online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis and 2) how they construed their own role in the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugees in Canada. Readers should note that we focused on interactions that occurred on social media right after the dreadful terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015), Brussels (March 2016), Nice (July 2016), Berlin (December 2016), and Quebec (January 2017) and the sexual assaults in Cologne (New Year's Eve 2016).

We designed these interviews through adapting four techniques that stemmed from George Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology (1955, 1991). These techniques were: Kelly's self-characterization technique, Procter's Perceiver Element Grid (Procter, 2014), Kelly's Repertory Grid Test (Kelly, 1955, 1991) and Hinkle's laddering technique (Hinkle, 1965). The third manuscript of this dissertation presents a thorough description of the techniques. The demographic and validation questions are presented in appendix 7.

We adopted Personal Construct Psychology (PCP), a "theory of human personality, a therapeutic approach and a research methodology" (Brown & Chiesa, 1990, p.411), as a theoretical framework to our study. Through PCP, we helped young participants to develop an

understanding of their own understanding of online interactions surrounding the topic of the Syrian refugee resettlement and to construe their own online participation in this topic. During the interviews, participants delved into their own construct system and reflected on the genesis of their constructs.

According to Bannister and Fransella (1971), a personal construct system is “the person’s guide to living. It is the repository of what he[she] has learned, a statement of his[her] intents, the values whereby he[she] lives and the banner under which he[she] fights” (p.27). The process of discovering and acknowledging their own construct systems let alone construing others’ construing was very exigent. However, experiencing this process was an eye opening for all participants and triggered their agency.

The interview data was transcribed and validated by participants then analyzed following the approach outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). We began by getting immersed in the data before we engaged in open coding exercise. Open coding is “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.101). We identified similar phrases, patterns, relationships between concepts or themes and we grouped those with similar properties. We isolated the patterns and processes as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and we ordered and reordered the categories until saturation, as suggested by Creswell (2008). We then proceeded to layering the themes by identifying levels they fit in. In the following section, we summarize the results based on the determined themes and we interpret the findings while recurring to the existing body of literature. Since we conducted the interviews in three languages, when expressions are not easily translated, we paraphrase to remain true to the statement.



## **Discussion and Findings**

Kelly (1955, 1991) posits that one's thoughts, feelings and behaviors operate in a structured manner and are determined by one's predictions of the future. These predications generate from tailor-made construct systems that one develops through one's own experiences of events. Research on youth and on social media depict youth as victims, easily manipulated by media. Through the lens of Personal Construct Psychology, we posit that youth are not victims. They could control how social media influence their thoughts, feelings and behaviours once they identify their construct systems and thus understand themselves. Bannister & Fransella (1971) explain, "the aim of personal constructs, put at its most pious, is liberation through understanding." (p.201). In the sections that follow we present what participants learned about themselves during the interviews, the skills they developed and the factors they identified that could trigger their active participation.

**Knowledge of oneself.** As participants went through the interviews, they experienced several "aha" moments. First, they realized that their choice of the information and the news to read was not random. Second, they recognized how social media depicted Syrian refugees. Third, they recognized the image they unconsciously construed of the anti-refugee anti-Muslim groups who posted on social media. Fourth, participants realized that they could identify potential factors that led to the anti-refugee anti-Muslim sentiments. Fifth, they uncovered the reasons why they opted for the bystander stance when they encountered posts and arguments about the Syrian refugee crisis.

*First, participants filter online posts about the Syrian refugee crisis before reading them.* In line with Thoms' (2016) results, participants admitted to adopt a set of criteria to select the content they read on social media. Some of these criteria were identified by Thoms (2016)

such as the source of the news, the quality and the corroboration of the story, the participants' interest in the topic, their past experience, their personal logic, their energy and motivation levels and time. Our study revealed an additional number of criteria. These criteria were: the length of the post, the stance expressed in the post, the arguments used to justify the stance, the tone of the post, and the personal reactions the post triggers. In the section that follows we present the overall filtering criteria described by the participants.

When participants were asked to describe the online posts and comments that caught their attention about the Syrian refugee crisis, they shared a variety of criteria ranging from the length of the posts to the power of the content to consolidate participants' position. These criteria are: the identity and posting behaviours of authors, the content being shared, the arguments leading the statement, the familiarity of the participants with the arguments, the tone projected by the post, the quality of the resources used to back up the arguments, the media used, the concerns shared through the post, and the personal reaction triggered by the post influenced the participants' reading selection.

Most participants avoided long posts. For them shorter posts where authors conveyed a strong message with only few meaningful words had more merit and effect than longer ones. The identity of the authors, whether they were friends or not, their posting behaviours and the media used were also selection filters as one participant stated:

I probably won't click on something that is pages and pages. I would click more on pictures, videos, interactive. Something to watch. Something casual. Who is sharing is another filter. If it is shared by a Facebook friend, this is also a factor. If it is shared by someone who shared everything that they ever saw, I probably won't read it because it would be simply something else that they shared.

Participants not only stopped to read statements they resonated with but also posts that made no sense to them. They were intrigued by posts that shared views they disagreed with, incorrect and shocking information, arguments promoting fear, controversial or upsetting titles, or unsound calls for action. In response to a billboard displayed in Finland and representing three refugees raping a white female (Appendix 8), one participant said: “I stopped at the billboard picture in Finland. I was shocked that this is an actual billboard somewhere.”

A post contrasting two pictures of women before and after the arrival of refugees, insinuating that refugees were rapists (Appendix 9) triggered a following response from one participant: “I am a lot bothered because I want to know what these images mean, that hashtag [#Rapefugees] is making me angry. I don’t understand what they want to say here.”

They also stopped when posts or comments shared an explanation they agreed with or evoked points they heard often from people in their network: “Because this is exactly how I feel”, “because I actually had a conversation with my family about this. My grandma is from Whales and everybody immigrated from somewhere, so this comment reminded me of that”, “I would stop because I hear that so much from people, this is one of the common things that I see”.

Most participants felt drawn to positive posts. One said, “I feel that I enjoy learning about the people that we helped, it makes me feel that we made the good choice”, another said, “I think I read a little bit of it all but I just prefer not to read the negative (...) my network is a positive network, I am always going back to my network because it is much safer there”.

However, what really interested them were posts supported by reliable sources, and lived experiences. They looked for posts that shared supportive initiatives (Appendix 10), or presented arguments and sound concerns (Appendix 11). They expressed hope when young adults actively

engaged in demonstrating unity in an attempt to change public perceptions, and empathy when what was expressed online was a concern they might have:

I would be curious. This is a valid concern. I can understand why people feel hate, I pay taxes as a Canadian. I understand there is a concern of how this is going to affect my day to day, where my taxes are going, how is this taking away from homeless people. I am curious about what is actually happening. I would click and see what people are thinking. Where are the refugees getting their money from? I would like to have an answer for that.

Despite the efforts of many to read positive posts, being exposed to negative posts was inevitable. Participants believed that in general media opted to report negative events, thus their exposure to more negative news and comments than positive ones. In some cases, this unsupportive content triggered personal reactions in participants. One Muslim participant felt personally attacked by the online accusations:

I feel like this is an attack on my own, I am not a refugee, I am not in the same boat, but I feel that they are attacking my identity as a Canadian. It makes me angry because it feels directed at me. I existed successfully seamlessly in the Canadian culture and the Canadian society for 24 years now, and I am not one and alone, I have many friends, so why all of a sudden when few things happen in the name of Islam all the good that has happened is just negated. It feels unfair, especially knowing how hard my parents worked, knowing how much they put in making us part of the Canadian society, it feels like you are negating all the hard work of so many families.

When participants reflected on the reasons why they were attracted to certain posts and not to other they realized that despite the fact that they had never deliberately chosen to click on a post, or to skip it, they did have instinctual filtering processes that they adopted online. By

identifying these criteria, participants also recognized the kind of information they allowed themselves to have access to. They acknowledged the fact that a first filtering was happening through algorithms used by social media, however these algorithms, in many cases, were based on the participants' own patterns of behaviours and preferences. In other words, participants were not passive receivers of information. They had some sort of control even if this control was unconscious.

By identifying the criteria that they used to select the content to read, they also identified the content they were dismissing, why they were dismissing it and what to do to reach it. Further, participants identified their biases, the content that triggered their emotional reactions, how they dealt with it and how it was affecting their construal of the refugees and other Canadians.

***Second, participants recognize the image of Syrian refugees the public is led to believe by the media.*** Participants' observation on the online discourses about the Syrian refugee crisis were consistent with media critics and researchers' findings. The media in general (Perry & Scrivens, 2016) and the Canadian media in particular (Tyyskä et al., 2017) propagated a negative image of the Syrian refugees. According to the participants, refugees are dehumanized on social media, they are considered as problems to deal with instead of human beings fleeing life-threatening events. They are viewed as uneducated, coming with large families, and most probably future burden on host society tax payers. They are accused of "having ruined their own country and now coming to ruin ours".

One participant responded emotionally:

Some are overly negative and paint everyone with one brush. Some describe Islam as a nationality on its own and somehow that "Islam" and "Canadian" don't coexist. The religion and the nationality are very interchangeable for them. There is no much meat in

their arguments. No moral objections, just throw everything that is happening in the world on the shoulders of refugees.

Another participant described the discourse shared online: “The messages shared on social media are clear. Refugees will invade our country and they will not change. They will change us instead. Islam is a bad idea completely. Muslim newcomers are savages.”

Through identifying the image depicted by the media of the refugees and of Islam, and the very specific characteristics that were highlighted, exaggerated or even faked, participants pinpointed the elements and the arguments that needed to be featured to counterbalance the negative image. They also reflected on the effect of this image on Syrian refugees’ motivation to integrate and the level of confidence and trust these newcomers would have in the Canadian society to include them.

One participant shared an observation about the difference between how hate and love comments affected refugees. He said that hate was much easier to remember than love and affected us more since “it was harder to deal with”. Another participant said, “one negative post will stick with refugees longer than a hundred positive posts just because you will immediately feel attacked and defenseless.”

In fact, participants considered the negative image shared online a fundamental barrier to the integration of Syrian refugees. They explained that Syrian refugees who meet a Canadian for the first time would worry whether this person wants to help them or wishes they would stay in the war zone, even if this would lead to their death.

***Third, participants construct an image of the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians (ASRC) based on social media content and behaviours.*** While most research focus on assessing the impact of the media on how Syrian refugees are perceived by the public (Bleiker, et al., 2013;

Nail, 2016, Perry & Scrivens, 2016; Tyyskä et al., 2017), in our study we examined the impact of this same propaganda on how our participants perceived the anti-Syrian refugee anti-Muslim public. In fact, the media and the propagandists who invested many efforts to disfigure the Syrian refugees were being construed as well.

Most participants construed negative posts as coming from people who were self-centered, only concerned with their own safety, uncaring about refugees or their problems, “going out of their way to make [refugees] feel unwelcome” while expecting them to show gratitude for being received in Canada. They viewed the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians (ASRC) who shared unsupportive posts to be close-minded, “who [thought] that their opinion [was] the only right opinion”, “unwilling to hear any opinion other than theirs”, with “certain internal biases” difficult to unlearn, and an “us versus them mentality”. They also viewed the ASRC as “comfortable with their life style and uncomfortable with the idea of change.”

ASRC were also considered as privileged Canadians, ignorant of the complexity of fleeing a war zone. They were described as islamophobic, “bluntly racist, painting everybody with one brush”, easily influenced by propaganda and willingly attentive to negative posts. One participant said: “They are listening to everything that is going on in the media that is negative and I think that you can choose to listen to negative or positive and I think these people chose to listen to the negative media (...) They believe the propaganda that spreads a generalized hate towards Muslims and looks at them as if they all bring some sort of problems”.

Some participants construed the ASRC as white men from an older age. One participant said, “I do think of these people as just like small town white old men, that is my first image of these people, who had a lot of time to go on the Internet and spread hate. Their ideas are

engraved in them for so long.” They also viewed them as acting with superiority, using comments that implied that Canadians were superior to Middle Eastern people.

Participants construed ASRC’s behaviours online as judgemental, as one participant described, “some are not against refugees as much as they are against Islam itself as they judge Muslim people, they think Muslims are source of problem”. They also found them exaggerating, “pushing towards more a very exaggerated view of the problem”, and generalizing, as the behaviours reflected “a generalized hate towards Muslims”.

As participants were reflecting on the labels they gave the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians (ASRC), they started developing empathy towards ASRC. They realized that the ASRC might have potential legitimate concerns that needed to be acknowledged and specific factors that forged their beliefs, regardless whether participants agreed with these concerns and believes or not. For instance, one participant said:

I have studied that sometimes when there are large families that come to Canada they don’t integrate because they all stick together and create how nowadays we have little Italy and Chinatown. People in the past came and they did not integrate much so they created all little communities, which is not necessarily a bad thing but it is a legitimate concern.

The participants suddenly realized that their labeling or categorizing behavior was in some way very similar to the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians’ behaviour that stereotyped Syrian refugees and the supporters of the resettlement. They confessed that they were self-centered, concerned of being the right Canadian, respecting the Canadian humanitarian reputation and identity, and worrying about how guilty they would feel if they did not help people in need. They also admitted that they were close-minded when it came to understanding the anti-Syrian refugee



Canadians' (ASRC) perspectives. They automatically labeled them with racism, intolerance and ignorance without trying to be in their shoes. Participants also admitted that they had certain internal biases as they preferred to read positive media and had an "us versus them" mentality towards both refugees and the ASRC.

*Fourth, participants identify factors that potentially influence attitudes towards refugees.* Around the mid of the interviewing process, participants started developing empathy towards the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians and tried to understand the roots of their position and behaviours. Participants' reflections and identifications were in line with our application of the theories of groups on the context of the Syrian refugee crisis where we discussed the potential effect of *perceived dissimilarities, perceived threat, lack of contact, social categorization*, and locus of control. However, the participants presented them under four factors that they considered central to explain and understand anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, excluding behaviours. These factors were the *small town effect, social media influence, education, and family and peer pressure*.

*Small town effect.* While some participants portrayed ASRC as conservative Christians, uneducated politically, many argued that those coming from small towns lacked contact with thus knowledge about immigrants, Muslims or refugees. They argued that the *small town effect* could explain excluding posts and behaviours. Some comments from participants were:

I think some people are afraid of what Islam means. Some things are not totally untrue. Religious people often do believe that their ways are God's ways. Religious people share this same belief but if this person is a Christian person, people don't have this anger towards what this person is saying. They won't have that anger because they are exposed to Christianity more often.

I tend to say that these people are people who never met Muslims, or maybe have but they do not know that they were Muslims. People who grew up without a lot of diversity, in smaller towns where there weren't exposed to other cultures, I guess they could be persuaded to see anything else as negative.

I feel that they are people who are from not diverse societies or communities in Canada, remote communities, because diversity tends to center in big cities. I would say remote communities who don't have exposure other than the media, the media being their focal source of all things pertaining to this topic.

I am aware that there are a lot of racist people in my university, like there are a lot of ignorant people partially because, this will sound kind of mean, but the majority of the student body are from tiny towns in Ontario, completely white, I am not saying that all white people living in small towns are racists but to some degree yes.

*Social media influence.* While Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) state that the influence of fake news on people's perceptions is still to be determined, participants believed that social media affected attitudes towards refugees, notably Muslims. This is in accordance with McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (2017) and Harell 's (2017) findings.

Participants observed that people who had little to no contact with refugees and Muslims were even more apt to be influenced by social media, especially that social media, according to them, was a main source of information about the Syrian refugee crisis. They added that being exposed to news about the Syrian refugee crisis was almost unavoidable as most of the time this news happened to pop up on their news feed.

Participants were not as oblivious to social media propaganda as we could have expected based on previous research. When it came to examining propagandists' usage of social media as

a main propaganda strategy, some participants discussed the power of hashtags and their omnipresence in every aspect of their lives, which according to them were very tied to social media. One participant explained:

For political campaigns, one of the biggest avenues to reach population is social media. It is no longer going from city to city, it's just a very different reach to everyday people and we use it so much more prevalently that it became our source of news, our source of everything. It is the one most prevalent in our lives. You wake up, you check your phone. You don't read the newspaper anymore.

Other participants noticed:

It is literally the age of Muslims as the scapegoat. Every period in history had a group. Today is Muslims' turn. It seems so harsh now, maybe it is the media but scapegoating is so much more personal. Because it is in your face no matter where you go.

People who are against are probably people who are fed by the media again and again saying Muslim terrorist Muslim terrorist, brainwashed into thinking that whoever the terrorist is, he is a Muslim and nothing else. So I think these people are either ill-informed or brainwashed by the media, which is very unfortunate.

Participants remarked that the strategy to use social media as a vehicle to propagandist messages was exploited in particular by far-right extremists to spread fear and by politicians to advocate for their ideas and to gain votes. They added that social media had such a strong effect on people because many took the information shared online at face value, believing it was credible, and then carrying it on in their day to day life when they were not even on social media.

*Educational gap.* Interestingly, participants valued the role of education in defying the fear escalated on social media. One participant observed: “They are simply scared. People are so afraid of terrorism. The opposite I almost want to say education. Because if you knew anything about Islam I don’t think you will have that fear.”

Participants identified the discussions that were missing from their classrooms. For them, it was essential that schools addressed questions such as:

- How to analyze and become critical of social media?
- How to have an informed opinion?
- How to select reliable and trustworthy sources of information?
- How to read online posts and comments?
- What is happening in the world?
- What is Islam?
- How to deal with racism?
- How to deal with one’s own racism?
- How to identify different perspectives?
- How to present arguments related to a sensitive topic such as the resettlement of Syrian refugees, while acknowledging that others’ arguments are legitimate too?
- How to develop one’s voice? How to create spaces where one can be heard?
- How to stop judging and develop empathy?
- How to stand up for one’s beliefs even if they are not compatible with own family’s or friends’?
- How to make others consider one’s viewpoints?
- How to make one’s voice matter? How to become an influencer?

Many of these questions are in line with competencies and practices identified by Kahne et al. (2016) and need to be part of the civic education curriculum to foster participatory politics. Examples of these practices are investigation, dialogue, circulation, and mobilization.

Participants felt that many of the ASRC comments demonstrated a lack of skills for checking for the reliability of sources before posting. They believed that most ASRC were too quick to repost without carefully examining the source of the content, uncaring about the impact of these posts on how refugees were viewed and looking to trigger reactions and likes.

Many of the participants shared that one of their main concerns was to ensure they only read news from reliable sources and shared valid information. They considered social media to be “filled with misinformation” that easily circulates between users. To remedy this situation, they often “check multiple people’s posts and comments”, “try to look for some reliable sources more than Facebook posts” and “make [their] own research before [they] form an opinion about something”. One participant explained, “now it is so normal and so easy to add information online and people are not always aware of what is real and what isn’t”. Another said, “I want to avoid looking like an idiot, looking uneducated on the topic because then people are going to question my legibility”.

Participants’ practices were in line with Thoms’ (2016) findings, however the author stated that her study could not be generalized given the qualitative approach she adopted and the small sample she had. This explains why while the participants in our study demonstrated some civic online reasoning, they noticed that other Canadians still needed to be taught how to assess the information they accessed online.

Another observation made by most of the participants was that it appeared as if many ASRC did not research the topic of the Syrian refugee crisis before posting or reposting on social

media. According to them, one should not only be critical of media content but also be open-minded, with a positive mindset, “trying to understand what is going on in the world” and “putting some research in [the topic] before making a post”, which the ASRC did not. Some participants explained, “if you do not experience certain things you do not have the understanding, so you need to challenge yourself and you need to educate yourself”, and “by being well-educated, you get the reason that motivates you to help others. By being ignorant, you will not help anyone.”

Participants also noticed that many social media users could be lost in interpreting the mixed messages shared online and proposed that “someone should teach everyone how to read these posts”. Further, they expressed their need to identify their biases and racist thoughts, to develop empathy towards people whom they perceived as racist and to find ways to help them explore other perspectives.

Going through the interviews did not quite help the participants to answer the questions that emerged, however it gave both the participants and the researchers directions to follow. Gaps were identified and discussed. This process confirmed the everlasting need to address these gaps and to modify our curriculum in order to bridge them, as per Kahne et al. (2016). This is of utmost urgency, especially in the context of the inclusion and the integration of Syrian refugees.

*Family and peer pressure.* Participants considered that, in addition to the *small town effect*, the *social media influence* and the *educational gap* in our curriculum, *family upbringing* and *peer pressure* were two influential factors and affected youth’s stance on the refugee resettlement.

On the one hand, some participants noted that anti-Syrian refugee Canadians’ (ASRC) behaviours could result from concerns to please others from their network, such as parents or

peers. Worrying of losing the financial or emotional support of ones' family or of being excluded from one's peers group would force some youth to conceal their stance and adopt their family's or their peers' in public contexts. Some participants explained: "I talked to some people and to them it is more their family, because of the family believes, so they don't have the choice, if their family have really negative opinion about it they would be afraid to go against their family in it", "I think it is because of their background, brought up in a household that is racist. As opposed to a normal family", "people repeat what their family or friends say", "I think it depends on the family and community again, I think a lot of people are going to jump on the bandwagon of whatever people around them are supporting", "they are afraid because maybe they would be nervous that their friends get mad or angry or unwilling to accept their new reaction", and "maybe because they think that something happening across the world is not worth losing their friends".

On the other hand, participants valued the influence of their own family and network on their decision to support the Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada. One participant commented, "I often have to remind myself that I am very privileged that I have parents who, in my opinion, are very progressive and open minded and taught me about racism and all of this stuff." Another participant explained:

My grandparents are pretty much racist but my parents were mature enough to decide to form their own opinion and they decided to raise their kids to form their own opinions. My dad is accepting but my mom is so open to other people. My parents travelled a lot and met different cultures. They always reminded me not to judge a book by its cover.

One Muslim participant even noted that her presence within her group of friends shaped how they viewed Muslims and accepted them:

I do have a supportive community; I think having me in their lives meant having different perspectives sometimes on these things. I am very thankful for it now. I did not expect this growing up but I feel that maybe it has some effect on them, knowing that somebody was Muslim and was different, they don't buy into the propaganda that is shared on social media so quickly.

Participants noted that one could move from a small town, become aware of the social media influence and do own research on the topic, however contradicting one's family or friends was the real challenge. It required serious courage and a strong belief in the case one was advocating for.

*Fifth, participants' online passiveness results from perceived barriers online.* Kahne et al. (2016) claimed that many youth avoided sharing their perspective online by fear of backlash or negative consequences. Witnessing or being victim to direct or indirect racial discrimination online (Steeves, 2014), or being frequently exposed to unproductive, uncivil or disturbing Facebook discussions among people holding divergent views (Kahne, et al., 2016) hold back youth from having a voice on social media. The results of our study are in line with the findings of previous research, however because of the specificity of the topic, we were able to pinpoint additional reasons why participants opted a bystander role in the online discussions about the Syrian refugee crisis.

The majority of the participants were reluctant to respond to posts or comments they disagreed with or even to share content about the refugee crisis for a number of reasons. Some of



these reasons were their belief that users had the right to express their opinions, their discomfort to publically argue with family, friends or members from their close network, or their lack of knowledge about the Syrian refugee crisis, as they explained, “sometimes I don’t have enough information or knowledge to back up my arguments, to make a strong enough point”, “I know what I read on news which is not good information, so I do not know much that is reliable”.

In addition to the mentioned reasons, three main barriers were shared by most participants and prevented them from having a voice, let alone an influence online. First, they felt hopeless online, faced with individuals whom they described as inflexible, uneducated, ignorant and close-minded. Some of the participants’ comments were: “I truly tried... it just feels like it is hopeless so I just block them out”, “some language that is used makes you feel that no matter what you say you won’t be able to change this person’s opinion”, “a long comment battle with somebody... you would just end up in being more frustrated”, “I feel so helpless. I feel as if I am hitting a wall after a certain point. The people are not willing to having their opinions changed or even have a discussion with you to help you change your opinion”, and:

I don’t personally like to get into online arguments and debates, I find them useless. Often times the people you are debating with are not educated enough to want to change their mind or be willing to be open enough to hear someone else’s opinion. So, it won’t end positively. This is why I won’t lose my time to do that but I do realize that not doing it could sometimes feel as if you’re just kind of being weak not defending the things that you believe in, I don’t know. It has mixed feelings about it.

Second, participants were concerned with confrontations. The participants remarked that those who supported the arrival of the Syrian refugees were attacked on social media, which

made many, including themselves, unenthusiastic to voice their opinion. This is how they explained it:

People say comments all the time that are actually racist, even if they are said in very subtle ways. You feel so guilty when you just let it slide, later on in the day. At least I do. I always feel guilty about it but then if you are very upfront about it and you say you can't say that, that's racist, they will automatically get very defensive and won't listen to you. And, if it is with a friend, then it's really awkward and there is a lot of tension. Most people want to avoid that.

When I encounter a post that I feel is misguided or mean, I spend days mulling over how to respond only to decide I do not want to be confrontational online. In that sense I am rather passive, and instead compensate by being more vocal in person.

Third, participants felt that their voice was lost amongst the voices that campaigned against the resettlement of refugees in Canada, as one participant pointed out:

It is social media; your voice is lost amongst so many. Your voice isn't heard, the bigger voice just attacks and it's like I want to do something about your opinion but I can't because I can't talk to you about it.

**Developed skills: Critical thinking and empathy.** As participants went through each of the four interviews, they gradually moved from providing predictable surface answers to actively seeking to understand their own understanding. They started questioning their own answers, reflecting on their own behaviours online, trying to make sense of their decisions and of what

made them think that they were different than other Canadians. They were critical of others' behaviours online and curious to figure out the rationale behind the behaviours they disagreed with and the reasons why these behaviours bothered them.

They were critical of social media. They realized that when people adopted this medium as their main source of information, they were exposed to only one side of the stories, most of the time. They figured out that most of what popped up on their News feed was controlled by algorithms with a sole purpose to affirm their beliefs, regardless of what these beliefs were.

Participants were also critical of their own knowledge about the Syrian refugee crisis and admitted that what they knew was not sufficient to be used as counterargument. They criticized the lack of discussions about topics such as the resettlement of refugees, racism, or Islamophobia in schools. They believed that addressing these topics in schools would allow students to become exposed to different perspectives and help them construct an informed opinion. According to them, students would be less scared to express their views, prepared to deal with racism, and confident to argue their position while acknowledging and respecting others'.

While reflecting to answer the interview questions, the participants not only started to gradually engage in the development of thinking critically about the topic, they also started expressing empathy first towards the Syrian refugees and second towards the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians(ASRC). Participants realized that refugees needed to have their dignity acknowledged and respected:

You don't think that they have some sort of dignity and the volunteers almost hurt them.

You need to remind the volunteers that they are no longer the desperate things that you need to help. You have to realize that they are human and they have dignity. We had one

family who preferred to go back to Syria because of that specifically, when the volunteers treated them as if they were inferior.

When they were asked about what refugees thought, felt or would behave, many participants realized that they did not have a sure answer since they never experienced what refugees went through. Then they tried to answer the questions while admitting that their answers were personal assumptions, that one could only try to put himself or herself in the shoes of refugees, that one could only assume. Some of the comments were: “I never really understand racism because I never experienced it at all myself”, “if I put myself in their shoes, and this is not easy, I would be really just nervous because there is such a variety of responses like you really don’t know if you are going to be bullied or if everyone will be excited and wanting to talk to you”, and

If I was a Syrian refugee, I think I would be so scared. I will be walking on egg shells all the time making sure that I am not coming across like the way the media is painting me, I would not feel wanted at all. I would be hopeful that people would accept me and make me feel welcome but I would be scared if one person would attack me or post and say hateful things about me, prejudice things.

The participants also developed empathy towards the anti-Syrian refugee Canadians (ASRC). One participant said that both sides might have arguments that needed attention and everyone should “try to understand, take a side of things and try to understand why people might feel the other way”. When there is conflict, both sides need to be heard:

It is aggressive, it is part of the hype, but there is a grain of truth in what they are trying to express. In certain places one bad person caused a lot of harm. So to people who lost

whoever friend or family in these attacks, or is scared to lose someone, they might feel that even one Muslim is way too many. I can get it.

**From briefed bystander to influential agents of change: Participants realize that they can and must disrupt the discourses around Syrian refugees.** Cohen et al. (2012)

claimed that interest-driven activities such as gaming were the main predictor of youth's engagement in participatory political activity. Jenkins et al. (2009) deduced that these activities developed participatory skills, norms and networks that could be transferred to political activities. Another possible reason for engaging in participatory political acts could be the feeling of being dissatisfied, alienated or ignored by traditional political institutions, which motivates youth to benefit from the unprecedented means of expression and action offered by social media (Cohen et al., 2012).

Our study revealed an additional factor that could trigger youth participation: their realization that their bystander stance was contributing to the alienation of Syrian refugees. Participants gradually realized that their reluctance to be part of the conversation was actually harming the Syrian refugees as, most of the time, only one side of the story was being shared. One participant said:

There are so many people who are positive, so many who want you to feel welcomed in Canada, but this is not the voice that is heard because we tend to be a more passive voice. I am passive online. I am not loud. This is what bothers me. There is so much more positivity that does not reach refugees. This makes me sad, as a Canadian. As a global community we failed on a humane level for not making them feel welcome.

By the end of the interviews, participants started feeling responsible for and capable of disrupting the negative discourses about the Syrian refugees. They identified five instances when they never intervened before but would in the future.

First, the participants felt that they should show their support of positive posts about the resettlement of refugees to counterbalance the massive dissemination of hateful posts. Second, since the propaganda against the resettlement of refugees focused on disseminating fake news and alternative facts, they planned to report posts that were offensive or contained lies or misinformation. Third, participants would not be discouraged by the closed mindedness of some and would provide people with alternative arguments or stories that would allow them to better make a decision, as explained by one participant:

We must try to reply to negative posts. The author of the post will not change his/her mind, he/she will disagree with our comment, but others who have access to both our views would have the chance to reflect on both arguments and then decide.

Fourth, participants said they would make more efforts to anticipate behaviours after terror attacks to counter the violent accusations that would target Muslims and Muslim refugees. While many would expect Muslims to apologize after each terror attack, they would shift the focus from Muslims as suspects to Muslims as part of the community, equally affected by what happened. Fifth, they would acknowledge their own bias and actively communicate with people with opposing views. An example of comment from one participant was:

I think we all have beliefs that are racist in a way even if they are very subtle. One thing I feel effective is asking questions. To be completely honest with someone if someone sees something that is problematic for the lack of a better word just say: what do you mean by that? how do you feel about that? or if they make a statement: oh why do you feel like that?

or have you ever seen that happen? like do you know anything about that? Do you know anything about Syria? as simple as that.

## **Conclusion**

This study was conducted in a context where many signs and surveys were pointing out to the fact that there were 1) an increase of an intolerant, anti-immigrant, and anti-refugee sentiment in Canada (Cooper, 2017; McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 2017; Harell, 2017) and an urgency to motivate members of the Canadian civic society, including youth, to cease being bystanders and actively participate in facilitating the inclusion and the integration of Syrian refugees. However, this civic society was exposed to an aggressive online propaganda against the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and programs in educational settings were ill-designed to equip youth to face racism, to withstand the online flux of disinformation, and to play their role of agents of change.

We engaged twenty-two young participants in in-depth discussions using interview methods stemming from George Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology. Participants in this study were exceptional Canadians, as per Bloemraad's (2012) definition, who needed to trust that their voice mattered and that they could influence others to change. They acted as bystanders until they realized that their inaction was actually an action against their own beliefs about their humanitarian duty towards refugees. Impressively, their observations, explanations and predictions in regards to the rising of an anti-immigrant anti-Muslim sentiment almost matched our explanations based on group theories and results by researchers, experts in immigration.

On the one hand, through the interviews, the participants developed an understanding of their own understanding of the online discourse about the Syrian refugee crisis and of the role they played in shaping this discourse. On the other hand, the researchers identified the learning

and the skills that could be developed when youth are involved in recognizing and construing their construct system and others'. This could have a significant influence on how social workers and professionals in the education field create learning and training programs focused on fostering civic online reasoning and participatory politics.



## **General Conclusion**

This general conclusion starts with a summary of the study. Second, it shares the challenges encountered during the study and then discusses the study limitations. Third, it presents the contribution and the pedagogical implications of the study, followed by an overview of the achieved dissemination of the study's methodology and results. Finally, it concludes with four suggestions for future directions.

### **Summary of Study**

Many of today's 18 to 24 years old social media active users are critical of media content despite the wariness set by previous research. Their choice of the information and the news they read online is far from being random. They recognize the agendas and the algorithms behind the posts that pop up on their walls, and their hunger for having an influential voice that could disrupt the discourses about issues that affect their lives. Yet, a majority of youth choose to remain bystanders in an era where their social media presence and skills are needed the most.

The goal of this study was to answer the following research questions:

5. How do youth construe online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis?
6. How do youth construe their role in the integration and the inclusion of refugees in a context where the image of refugees is deeply influenced by social media?
7. What knowledge and skills do youth develop when they engage in analyzing their thoughts and behaviours in regards to sensitive and controversial issues such as the refugee crisis and resettlement?
8. How could this knowledge and these skills facilitate their engagement in civic online reasoning and participatory politics?

During the first meetings, the participants were convinced that despite the fact that they were able to withstand the digital propaganda against the refugees, they were helpless when it came to helping others recognize the signs of manipulation. Through the in-depth discussions, however, the participants had an “aha” moment. They suddenly realized that not only they could control how social media influenced them, but also that they could and should shape the online image that was shared online of the refugee presence in Canada. Their bystander stance was by itself an act against the resettlement of refugees, and this act had to stop. They started questioning their own answers, reflecting on their own behaviours online, trying to make sense of their decisions and of what made them think that they were different than other Canadians. Their empathy towards refugees increased and another developed towards the groups who rejected refugees. They identified factors that could lead to Islamophobia, racism and fear and developed strategies to counterbalance them and to help host societies make informed choices. The four instruments I used during the interviews were the catalyst of this transition and could be used as part of the active co-construction of learners involved in learning programs on sensitive and controversial topics such as the topic of the Syrian refugee settlement.

### **Challenges and Limitations of the Study**

In the following paragraphs I first present the challenges I overcame when conducting the study and then I discuss the study limitation.

**Challenges while conducting the study.** Seven challenges rose while I was conducting the study. These challenges involved: 1) the language used by participants, 2) the interview schedules, 3) the rigor of online techniques that are usually used in face-to-face offline meetings, 4) participants’ engagement and mortality rate, 5) participants’ position regarding the

resettlement of refugees, 6) my own biases and 7) my continuous and intentional exposure to the hate speech against Muslims.

First, participants' native tongue varied between English, French and Arabic. The fact that one of the criteria used to select the participants was being *fluent in English or French* addressed this issue. Nevertheless, I was vigilant during the elicitation of constructs, asking all participants to define and explain them in their own words. The other issue related to the language used was the fact that I, myself, am not an English or French native speaker. I also had to be very attentive during the interviews to catch the meanings of the words the participants were trying to convey, not the meanings I was familiar with, coming from my translations of words from Arabic to English or to French, or from English to French and vice versa.

Second, I faced some scheduling challenges. The participants were working or enrolled in courses. Many had to reschedule and I had to respect their schedules and manage my time around theirs.

Third, many techniques required physical objects such as the floor, the wall, a table, etc. I adapted these techniques to online environments and developed instruments that respected the guidelines discussed by the authors of these techniques. All the instruments, both the offline and the online ones were pilot tested with three youth (16, 18 and 20 years old) before meeting with participants to ensure rigor.

Fourth, in an attempt to limit mortality and encourage involvement, I incorporated a detailed description of participants' role in the consent form. I discussed this information thoroughly with the participants before they signed the forms and explained to them that, despite the fact that their presence during the whole process of the project was essential and very valuable, they had the right to withdraw at any time, no questions asked. Further, rescheduling

was always possible, as previously mentioned. In addition to a flexible meeting time, the participants had the choice to meet offline or online, and at any location they found convenient. From the 45 participants I recruited, 42 completed all the interviews.

Fifth, while I strived to recruit youth with different views and positionality regarding the resettlement of refugees, only youth who supported refugees accepted to be part of the study. This resulted in data collected from a leftist group in regards to the refugee crisis.

Sixth, I had to challenge my own biases. I am a Muslim immigrant who comes from the Middle East and who has witnessed the era when Syrian armies were forcefully occupying my country –Lebanon, and terrorizing me, my family and my counterparts. I had to recognize that the Syrian refugees and myself were victimized by the same totalitarian dictatorial regime. Helping them does not negate my years of suffering, on the contrary, it compensates for the helplessness I was forced to live during the war.

Seventh, in order to conduct my study, I immersed myself in social media interactions and hate speech targeting the refugee crisis after terror attacks and sexual assaults. Most of the content and the tone used were very aggressive and oftentimes attacking my identity of a Muslim immigrant woman. I was able to develop a shield that protected me from the cruelty shared online. I moved beyond this cruelty to examine the reasons behind the hate speech and reflected on strategies to eradicate the problem from its roots. Straddling my subjectivities of Muslim immigrant woman and of Canadian woman allowed me to develop empathy towards host society members and to recognize their fear, their worry and their need to survive.

**Limitations of the study.** First, there is no single correct way to construe online interactions about the Syrian refugee crisis, nor a single way to anticipate their impact on the offline integration and inclusion of the refugees. By the same token, there is no single correct

way to interpret the different construct systems used in the process. I consider legitimate all the constructions of the participants. By the same token, I consider my construal i.e. analysis and interpretation of the data to be legitimate too. Similarly, I consider the readers' construal of my construal legitimate. Thus the findings, results and conclusions I shared represent one particular system or way to answering this study's research questions. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results of this study, but they could be transferable to other youth from host societies who engage in a construction of experience similar to that of this study's participants and psychologically share similar processes, as per Kelly's commonality corollary.

Second, the participants in this study were youth supportive of the Syrian refugee resettlement, yet they opted for a bystander stance for reasons explained in the fourth manuscript. While it is possible to assume that similar outcomes could emerge from the use of the techniques with youth who are against the arrival of refugees, i.e. bystanders could become ready to actively advocate against the resettlement of refugees, I am in no position to claim that these techniques could help youth shift positions.

Third, the in-depth discussions conducted during the study helped youth become ready to act, but did not accompany them during the action. While I can state that a transformation occurred in terms of stance—moving from being a bystander to becoming ready to act and to lead change—examining the actions that result from this transformation requires further research, which is beyond the scope of this doctoral study.

### **Contribution and Pedagogical Implications**

This study carries important pedagogical implications to educators, in particular civic educators, social workers, curriculum developer, policy makers and parents concerned with the takeover of social media by hate speech proponents, namely the social media propaganda against

the resettlement of Syrian refugees. It presents a model that can inform educational contexts to help youth withstand manipulation and fight racism, hate speech, and radicalization. The process, which is composed of concrete tools and strategies and could require three to four meetings of one to two hours each, engages youth in transformative in-depth discussions.

The following section first lists the learning and behavioral goals that youth could reach through the adoption of the model. Second, it presents the model. Third, it discusses the knowledge and skills that educators, social workers, parents and professional engaged with youth would need to develop in order to facilitate the proposed transformative in-depth discussions imbedded in the model.

**Learning and behavioral goals.** Adopting this model in the context of digital age propaganda targeting social or political sensitive and controversial issues will engage bystander youth (18 to 24 years old) in the process of actively becoming agents of change, through learning about themselves. Notably, adopting this model will allow 18 to 24 years old to:

1. Investigate their perception of the genesis of the issue targeted by the propaganda campaign.
2. Recognize their stance on the ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign.
3. Reflect on their positioning in the context in which the propaganda occurs.
4. Evaluate their attitudes towards and perception of the propagandists.
5. Identify the reasons why they and their network are potential target audiences.
6. Explain their interpretation of the main message diffused by the propagandists.
7. Predict the different potential interpretations of the propaganda's main message by different groups.
8. Classify the online environments they use in common with the propagandists.
9. Recognize their interpretation of propagandist behaviours.

- Analyze their perception of the media used by the propagandists.
  - Examine their evaluation of the strategies used by the propagandists to maximize effect.
10. Explain their prediction of how these behaviours could influence audience reaction.
11. Compare and contrast the online behaviours of propaganda supporters and those engaged in a counterpropaganda, if present.
12. Explain their online behavior in the context of the propaganda.
13. Explain their anticipation of potential effect of social media propaganda on offline behaviours, if any.
14. Discuss potential digital counter-propagandist strategies they might use, such as:
- Demonstrating compassion.
  - Doing their own research.
    - i. Using multiple digital tools and platforms to ensure high-quality investigations.
    - ii. Exploiting social networks in the quest for information.
    - iii. Analyzing information credibility.
  - Shaping online discourses.
    - i. Identifying target audience.
    - ii. Framing the information to create stories.
    - iii. Expressing their own perspective with respect and civility in a digital format.
    - iv. Accepting to consider others' arguments.
    - v. Detecting arguments based on fear.
    - vi. Using persuasive strategies.

- vii. Engaging in conversations with people with diverse standpoints.
- viii. Anticipating backlash and cyberbullying.
- ix. Investing in expanding own online audience that could serve as a vehicle to spread counter-propagandists' perspectives.
- x. Designing the digital footprint that will generate from their own civic and political activities.
- xi. Having an influence.
  - a. Going public.
  - b. Inviting others to join the counter-propaganda campaign.
  - c. Mobilizing others for the counter-propaganda cause.
  - d. Building support.
  - e. Circulating multimedia using digital tools, platforms, and social networks.
  - f. Anticipating possible or unexpected outcomes.
  - g. Planning adequate responses to targeted audience.
  - h. Opting for informed arguments.
  - i. Recognizing that all voices matter.
  - j. Acknowledging that making someone change their social or political views is difficult.
  - k. Accepting that change is possible.
  - l. Identifying behaviours to adapt during the process, such as: being patient, creative and persistent.

15. Discuss catalysts and inhibitors of counter-propagandist strategies.

16. Establish strategies to be active:



- enhance the catalysts of their own counter-propagandist behaviours.
- eliminate the inhibitors of their own counter-propagandist behaviours.

17. Discuss plans to assess and evaluate their own counter-propaganda actions.

18. Evaluate their readiness to engage in counter-propaganda actions.

**The *Get Ready to Act Against Social Media Propaganda* model.** Based on the results of this study, moving from the *bystander* stance to the *active agent of change* stance in the context of digital age propaganda targeting a sensitive and controversial issue cannot be done in a snap of a finger. Changing the posture of the passive *bystander* to the *active agent of change* is achieved through five iterative stages, in which learning about oneself is key. The five stages are: Question, analyze, design, prepare and evaluate (Figure 2).

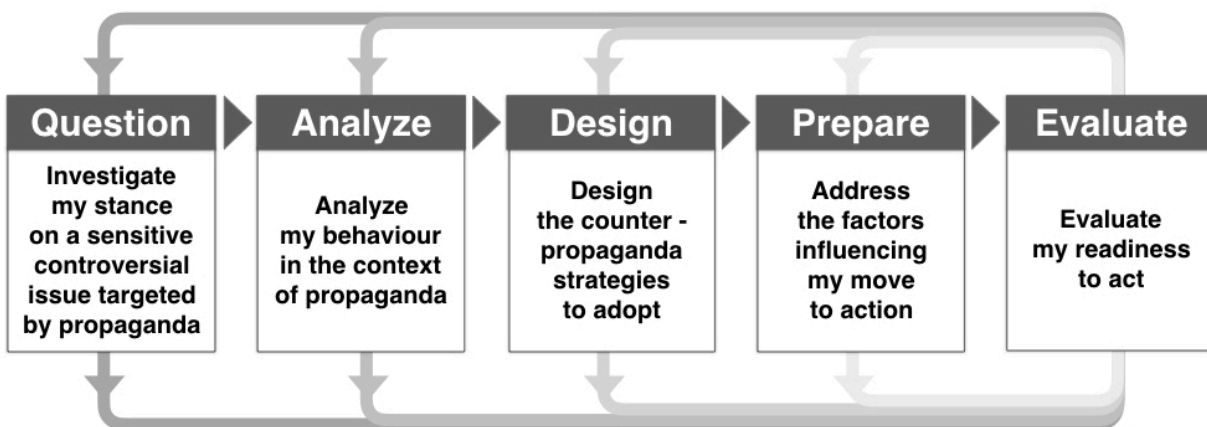


Figure 2. **Get Ready to Act Against Social Media Propaganda:** a five-stage iterative model

In the *question* stage, youth investigate how they construe their stance on a sensitive controversial issue targeted by social media propaganda. Recognizing their position and the genesis of their beliefs sets the stage for examining the behaviours that should, in the proactive scenario, generate from this stance. In the *analyze* stage, youth identify the *bystander* behaviours they currently exhibit when they encounter or are targeted by social media propaganda about this

issue. They discuss how they construe these behaviours and explain the reasons behind them. They also examine their network's behaviours and how they react to them.

Once their stance is identified and their current behaviours examined, youth engage in the *design* stage. In this stage, youth create their own online digital counter-propaganda strategies based on their social media skills and the propagandists behaviours they recognized in the analysis stage. After these strategies are detailed, youth consider the catalysts and the inhibitors of their move to action. Designing strategies does not imply their implementation. Thus, In the *prepare* stage, youth recall the factors that motivate them to engage in the counter-propaganda actions, and address the factors that could hinder their agency.

The *evaluation* stage is mandatory before actually moving to action. In this stage, youth evaluate their readiness to act. At that point, youth determined their positioning in regards to the sensitive and controversial issue, they have recognized the reasons why they act as bystanders, and they have designed a clear plan for action and they have addressed the factors that could hold them back. The question that remains is: Are they confident enough to act? Or is a return to a previous stage needed?

Learning about oneself is key in each stage of the model. In the context of this study, the questioning was facilitated through a series of techniques adapted from the Personal Construct Psychology methodology. These techniques are Kelly's self-characterization technique, Procter's perceiver element grid, Kelly's repertory grid test and Hinkle's laddering technique. These techniques are detailed in the third manuscript of this thesis.

These four techniques helped generate enough data to determine the stages of a model to move from *bystander* to *agent of change* and to extract the key questioning that allows youth to come back to the source of their thinking about the social media propaganda. However, I

acknowledge that it might be very demanding for practitioners to use because the techniques require advanced research methodology training. The model presented in Figure 3 proposes a set of questions that was uncovered through using the four techniques with the 22 Canadian participants of the study. Through the synthesis of the results, key questions for each stages were coined. All the questions are followed by the “*why?*” question.

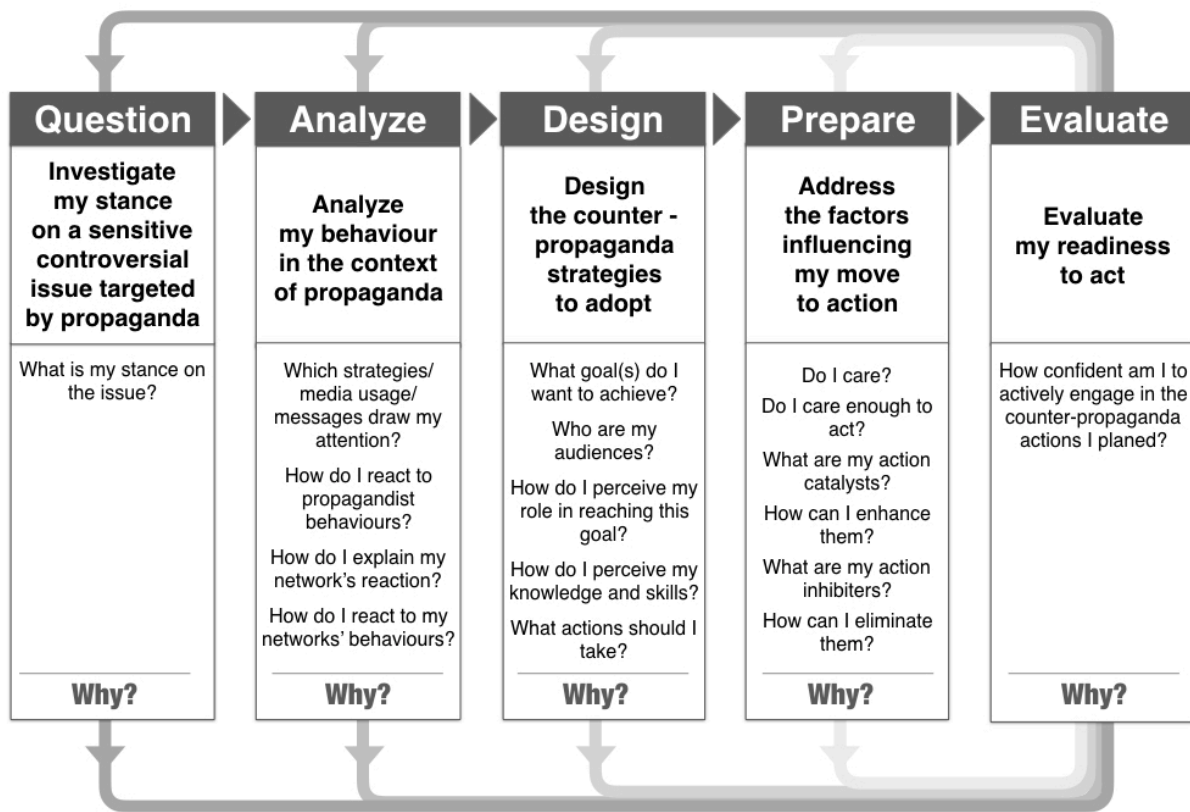


Figure 3. Key questions addressed in each stage of the model

Through the *Get Ready to Act Against Social Media Propaganda* model I propose based on the results of my study, I posit that learning about oneself and understanding one’s own behaviours in regards to a sensitive and controversial issue targeted by digital age propaganda is key to transform *bystanders* into *agents of change*. It helps individuals examine and address what holds them back and equip and empower them to get ready to be actively involved in counter-

propaganda behaviours. However, being ready does not imply going through and taking action. Thus, the model I propose is one phase of a more complex iterative model that would include action implementations and the evaluation of these actions after adoption (Figure 4).

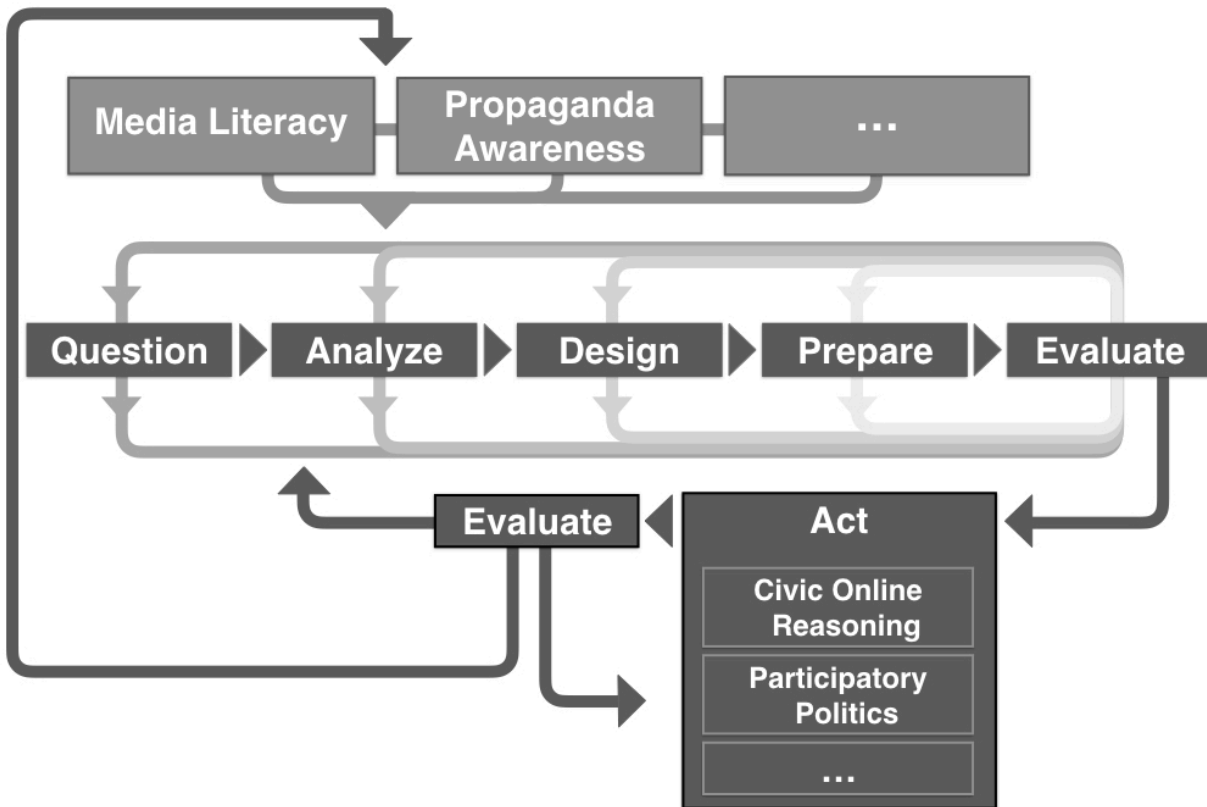


Figure 4. The model as part of a more complex model

The strength of this model is its potential transferability to a wide variety of sensitive and controversial political or social issues and to different contexts of tension, where individuals opt for a *bystander* stance while their agency could make a difference. In the context of this study, 22 passive bystander youth aged between 18 and 24 years old, supportive of the Syrian refugee resettlement, constructed knowledge about themselves. This knowledge facilitated the development of their agency. Towards the end of the interviews, youth affirmed that they were ready to play an active role in confronting social media propaganda against refugees. Further,

they realized that social media propaganda influences people's offline behaviours towards refugees and they became ready to anticipate offline anti-refugee behaviours and address them.

**Requirements to use the *Get Ready to Act Against Social Media Propaganda* model and the techniques attached to it.** To involve youth in learning about themselves and developing agency, I used techniques stemming from Personal Construct Psychology. The uniqueness of these techniques is their power to engage interviewees in in-depth transformative discussions. Anybody who wishes to use them would need to be immersed in Personal Construct Theory (PCP) and obtain a rigorous training to develop interviewing skills in PCP, such as suspending own personal values, listening credulously, being reflexive and verbally skilled and taking account of culture-dictated constructs. My knowledge and skills in using the techniques evolved with every interview I conducted. Any educator, social worker, or parent who would choose to use the aforementioned PCP techniques to address sensitive and controversial issues should expect that there is a learning journey involved in using such in-depth discussion approaches.

### **Dissemination of the Study**

The methodology adopted in this study was presented and discussed during the XIIIth European Personal Construct Association Conference in Padua, Italy in July 2016. It was validated by members of the George Kelly Society, notably by Dr. Harry Procter, father of the Qualitative Grids, including the Perceiver element grid that I used during my first interview with the participants.

Two of the manuscripts were published in the Personal Construct Theory & Practice journal, a third was submitted to the journal Directions (vol. 8) and awaiting reviewing. A

10000-word version of the fourth manuscript will be submitted to the journal of Constructivist Psychology shortly.

The study was presented in seven peer reviewed conferences, including the International Symposium on Teaching about Extremism, Terror and Trauma: Radicalization, the International Congress on Personal Construct Psychology, CSSE, ACFAS, the National Metropolis Conference, SHERPA and the European Personal Construct Association Conference. It has attracted the attention of mainstream media, such as LaPresse, the Huffington Post, The Conversation Canada, and Arabic newspapers and magazines, and it was presented during Concordia's 3Minute Thesis competition and ACFAS' MT180 (ma thèse en 180 secondes).

Further, the study was presented during the three phases of the SSHRC Storytellers competition, first through a 3-minute video, second through a live presentation at Congress 2017 at Ryerson University, Toronto, and third during the SSHRC Impact Awards ceremony that happened at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in the presence of his Excellency the Governor General David Johnston.

### **Future Directions**

I foresee four future directions to this study. First, the data collected from the European and Middle Eastern participants will be analyzed. The results will be compared and contrasted with the ones that emerged from the data collected in Canada. This process will shed light on the global experience lived through transnational social media spaces. The refugee crisis, hate speech, and radicalization are all global events. Their implications span across nations and borders. While many react to terror attacks and sexual assaults happening in their own neighborhoods or countries, others live these experiences vicariously through social media. The reactions, consequences and major decisions could be context specific or problem specific. It is

of utmost importance to identify the potential solutions that can be generalizable or transferable to other contexts.

Second, I had the opportunity to interview 42 participants, all proponent of the settlement of refugees. A complementary step would be to interview youth from the opposing camp, authors of hate speech, and understand how they view their role in the integration and the inclusion of refugees. Going through the process of understanding oneself could help this youth identify where their intolerance is coming from, and hopefully challenge it.

Third, the four instruments used in this study are very powerful and could be adapted to other contexts and groups of people where othering occurs and is heavily influenced and reinforced by social media. These instruments will help shed light on the influence of social media on the inclusion of indigenous people, LGBT groups, Blacks, people with disabilities and other groups victimized through social media, and disrupt the hate discourses and cyberbullying targeting them.

Fourth, while this study proposes a model that would help bystander host society youth get ready to take action, following closely this youth through an ethnography study that would examine and evaluate their counter-propagandist action in regards to the resettlement of Syrian refugees would be of utmost importance. According to the recently released 2016 census of population by Statistics Canada (2017b), one in five persons in Canada is foreign-born, and Syria is the seventh top country of birth of these immigrants. Host society youth who choose to advocate for these newcomers could play a key role in facilitating their integration and their inclusion in Canada, and help them become fully-fledge productive citizens, despite the unstoppable social media propaganda against them.

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## Appendix 1: Recruitment Announcements

### Content of Post

(The English version follows)

Chers amis,

Je suis dans le processus de planifier ma collecte de données pour mon projet de doctorat et j'ai besoin de votre aide pour trouver des participants. À travers ma recherche, je vise à comprendre les différents construits que nos jeunes utilisent pour interpréter les interactions en ligne à propos des événements globaux et locaux liés à la crise des réfugiés Syriens et comment ces interprétations influencent leurs comportements inclusifs hors ligne.

Durant les attaques auxquels Paris a fait face, les jeunes avaient accès à des environnements transnationaux en ligne où les histoires tragiques ont été partagées, des sentiments de désespoir ont été diffusés, et les craintes ont été intensifiées. Cela a conduit à une grande variété de réponses et une division entre ceux qui soutenaient les réfugiés et ceux qui opposaient leur arrivée au pays, redoutant les conséquences que cela pourrait engendrer. Des pétitions avec des centaines de milliers de signatures ont été partagées en ligne avec des commentaires exprimant l'opinion d'un grand nombre de membres des sociétés d'accueil en ce qui concerne ces nouveaux arrivants. Les agressions sexuelles à Cologne et les attaques à Bruxelles ont engendré des réactions similaires.

L'objectif principal de mon projet est d'étudier comment les jeunes interprètent les interactions en ligne au sujet de ces événements politiques. Ma recherche permet aux jeunes de faire l'implicite explicite, et de réfléchir sur la façon dont leurs interprétations des interactions transnationales influencent leur vie.

**À l'heure où la plupart des études et les aides versées se concentrent sur l'intégration des réfugiés, mon objectif est d'écouter et de partager la voix des jeunes des sociétés d'accueil en ce qui concerne la crise et comprendre leur disposition à inclure ces réfugiés dans les milieux éducationnels et professionnels.**

Je cherche des participants entre 15 et 24 ans, actifs sur les médias sociaux et vivant dans une zone touchée par l'afflux des réfugiés syriens. Les participants seront invités à trois entrevues. Cependant, ils peuvent choisir de participer à seulement une ou deux d'entre elles. Ces entrevues vont être effectuées en ligne via Skype.

Première entrevue : 60-90 minutes

Deuxième entrevue : 60-90 minutes

Troisième entrevue : 30-45 minutes

Les informations recueillies seront anonymes. Cela signifie qu'il ne sera pas possible de faire un lien entre les participants et les informations fournies.

Dear all,

I am in the process of planning my data collection for my Ph.D. research project and **I need your help to find participants**. Through my research, I want to understand the different construct systems that our youth use when they interpret online interactions about global and local assaults and how these interpretations direct their inclusive behaviours offline.

During the unfortunate Paris attacks, youth had access to online transnational environments

where tragic stories were shared, feelings of despair were broadcasted, and fears were intensified. This led to a wide variety of responses and a division between those who supported the refugees and those who opposed their settlement in their countries, dreading the ramifications this could engender. Petitions with hundreds of thousands of signatures were advocating for or against, with comments expressing the opinions of a large number of the host societies in regards to these newcomers. Cologne's sexual assaults and the latest Brussels' bombing engendered similar reactions.

The overarching objective of my project is to study how youth interpret the online interactions about these political events. My research allows youth to make the implicit explicit, and to reflect on how their interpretations of transnational interactions influence their lives.

**While most studies focus on the refugees' integration, my objective is to focus on the voice of the host society's youth in regards to the crisis and their readiness level to include these refugees, both in educational and professional settings.**

I need participants who are between 15 and 24 years old, active in social media and living in any area of this globe affected by the influx of the Syrian refugees.

The participants will be invited to attend three interviews. However, they can choose to participate in only one or two of them. These interviews could be done online through Skype or any other app like Facetime, at the participants' convenience.

- 1 First interview: 60-90 minutes
- 2 Second interview: 60-90 minutes
- 3 Third interview: 30-45 minutes

The gathered information will be anonymous. That means it will not be possible to make a link between the participants and the provided information.

*Message/Inbox me if you happen to be between 15 and 24 years old and willing to participate in my project (thank you so much in advance!) or know anyone who would be.*

Merci, merci, merci!

Nadia Naffi

nadianaffi@gmail.com

Facebook: nadia naffi

Skype : Nadia.Naffi

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/nadia-naffi/20/759/296>

# Dear Facebook Friends I Need Your Help! Chers amis Facebookiens j'ai besoin de votre aide!



NADIA NAFFI · MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2016 404 Reads



Nadia Naffi

April 4 · 🌐

Dear Facebook Friends I Need Your Help! Chers amis Facebookiens j'ai besoin de votre aide!

(The english version follows)

Chers amis,

Je suis dans le processus de planifier ma collecte de données pour mon projet de doctorat et j'ai besoin de votre aide pour trouver des participants. À travers ma recherche, je vise à comprendre les différents construits que nos jeunes utilisent pour interpréter les interactions en ligne à propos des événements globaux et locaux liés à la crise des réfugiés Syriens et comment ces interprétations influencent leurs comportements inclusifs hors ligne.

Durant les attaques auxquels Paris a fait face, les jeunes avaient accès à des environnements transnationaux...

...

[See More](#)

👍 2

1 Comment 46 Shares

Concordia Graduate Students' Association

Discussion Members Events Photos Files

Write something...

**Nadia Naffi**  
just now · Montreal

Hello Concordians! I need your help! My Comprehensive exam is done and now it is time for the real interesting stuff. I need participants to my research project, between 15 and 24 years old, who are active in social media, and not necessarily immigrants themselves. The purpose of the research is to understand how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants and refugees in social media. The participants will be invited to attend three interviews.

- 1) First interview: 60-90 minutes
- 2) Second interview: 60-90 minutes
- 3) Third interview: 30 minutes

We can meet online or at Concordia. The gathered information will be anonymous. That means it will not be possible to make a link between the participant and the provided information. Message me if interested, or know anyone who would be. Thank you in advance for your help.

ADD MEMBERS  
Enter name or email address...

MEMBERS 5,185 Members (105 new)

Message Invite by Email

DESCRIPTION  
The Graduate Student Association is a non-profit corporation wh... See More

GROUP CHATS  
No group chats, start one now.

Start New Chat

CREATE NEW GROUPS  
Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates. [Create Group](#)

RECENT GROUP PHOTOS [See All](#)



nadianaffi

Posts Activity



**Nadia Naffi**

Instructional Designer / Conceprice pédagogiq...

Hello all ! I need your help! I need participants to my research project, between 15 & 24 years old, active in social media, not necessarily immigrants themselves. The purpose of the research is to understand how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants & refugees in social media.

The participants will be invited to attend 3 interviews.

1st 60-90 minutes

2nd 60-90 minutes

3rd 30 minutes

We can meet online or @Concordia.

The gathered information will be anonymous.

Message me if interested, or know anyone who would be.

Thank you in advance for your help.



Like



Comment



Share



Search for people, jobs, companies, and more...

Home

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Education

Jobs

Interests

Educational Consultant? - Training Materials Designed For Educational Cons...



**Nadia Naffi**

Instructional Designer / Conceprice pédagog...

Your recent activity

9 people viewed your profile in the past 3 days

249 views on your update "Hello all ! I need your help! I need participa..."



Share an update



Upload a photo



Publish a post



**Nadia Naffi**

Instructional Designer / Conceprice pédagogique / Part-time Faculty /Professeur ...

1s

Dear all, I am looking for participants to my research project, 15 - 24 years old, active in social media and living anywhere on this globe! My research aims to understand how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of the Syrian refugees in social media. The participants are invited to attend 3 online or offline interviews, at the participants' convenience. The gathered information will be anonymous. Message/Inbox me if you are willing to participate to my project (thank you so much in advance!) or know anyone who would be. show less

Like · Comment · Share

## Appendix 2: Information Letter and Consent and Assent Forms

### Information letter- Parents



### Information Letter – Parents or legal guardians

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Attached please find the consent form for the participation of your child in the research project conducted by Nadia Naffi, PhD student at Concordia University. This is an unfunded study about how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants in general and Syrian refugees in particular in social media. Please complete and sign this consent form before we start the interviews with your son/daughter. Your adolescent, as a participant in this study, will sign an assent form. In this form, we will explain to him/her the aim of the study, his/her role in the study, and all the details related to the interviews and his/her free choice to discontinue the participation to this study at any time without having to provide any reason. We would also like to inform you that should an unanticipated heinous discovery emerge (i.e. abuse, bullying, intention to harm self or other, or other criminal issue) all concerned parties would be informed, including you, the legal authorities and the ethics committee at Concordia University. Your son/daughter will be asked if he/she has friends who use social media and may be interested to participate in the study. The name of your son/daughter will not be disclosed to the friends he/she refers.

If you allow your son/daughter to participate in the study, please fill and return the forms attached. By filling these forms, you are giving your consent to your son/daughter to participate in this study, and you understand that your adolescent is free to change his/her mind at any time, that his/her participation is strictly confidential, and that the data from this study will be published at a later date, but without your adolescent's name. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Nadia Naffi at 514-585 5865 or Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson, at 514 848-2424 ext. 5476.

Thank you for your participation and for taking the time to help us with this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann-L. Davidson".

Nadia Naffi  
MA Educational Technology student  
Concordia University

Ann-Louise Davidson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Concordia University



Consent Form (Legal Guardian)

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media



**INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

**Study Title:** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media

**Researcher:** Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

514 848 2424 Ext.5476      [Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca](mailto:Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca)

**Source of funding for the study:** No funding

**Student Researcher:** Nadia Naffi

**Student's Contact Information**

514 585 5865      [na\\_aboutk@education.concordia.ca](mailto:na_aboutk@education.concordia.ca)

Your child is being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want your child to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

**A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the research is to understand how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants and refugees in social media.

**B. PROCEDURES**

If your child participates, he/she will be asked to attend three interviews.

- 1) First interview: 90-120 minutes
- 2) Second interview: 60-90 minutes
- 3) Third interview: 30 minutes

In total, participating in this study will take a maximum of four hours, distributed on three inconsecutive days.

Your child may stop at anytime for a break, he/she may ask to continue at another time, and or can withdraw (stop) from the whole study at anytime with no need of justification.

As a research participant, your child's responsibilities would be: To attend the scheduled interview meetings and to actively engage in the discussions. He/she will be asked if he/she has

friends who use social media and may be interested to participate in the study. The researcher will not reveal your child's name to the friends you refer.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

Your child might or might not personally benefit from participating in this research. Potential benefits include: While discussing with Nadia his/her experience in social media, your child will be more aware of how he/she interprets posts on social media and how it influences his/her daily offline life.

### **D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research, and except as described in this form. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, regulatory authorities might examine the information gathered. By allowing your child to participate, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

The information gathered will be anonymous. That means that it will not be possible to make a link between your child and the information you provide.

We will protect the information by: The data including the audio files and the transcriptions will be securely stored in Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson's office FB 6.321 in a locked cabinet and the access to it will be restricted.

The data (recordings and transcriptions) will be conserved on a hard drive, and will be destroyed after five years. Any set of data that has been printed for the purpose of analysis will also be destroyed with a paper shredder after five years.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify your child in the published results.

In certain situations, we might be legally required to disclose the information that your child provide. This includes situations where a "heinous discovery" emerges such as abuse, bullying, intention to harm self or other or other criminal issue. If this kind of situation arises, we will disclose the information as required by law, despite what is written in this form.

### **F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

Your child does not have to participate in this research. It is purely your and his/her decision. If your child does participate, he/she can stop at any time. He/she can also ask that the information he/she provided not be used, and his/her choice will be respected. If he/she decides that he/she does not want us to use his/her information, he/she must tell the researcher no later than one month after the last interview meeting.

We will tell your child if we learn of anything that could affect his/her decision to stay in the research.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

**G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION**

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree that my child participates in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

Assent Form

**Assent TO PARTICIPATE IN** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media



## INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**Study Title:** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media

**Researcher:** Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

514 848 2424 Ext.5476      [Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca](mailto:Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca)

**Source of funding for the study:** No funding

**Student Researcher:** Nadia Naffi

**Student's Contact Information**

514 585 5865      [na\\_aboutk@education.concordia.ca](mailto:na_aboutk@education.concordia.ca)

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to understand how youth construe the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants and refugees in social media.

### B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to attend three interviews.

- 1) First interview: 90-120 minutes
- 2) Second interview: 60-90 minutes
- 3) Third interview: 30 minutes

In total, participating in this study will take a maximum of four hours, distributed on three inconsecutive days.

You may stop at anytime for a break, you may ask to continue at another time, and or can withdraw (stop) from the whole study at anytime with no need of justification.

As a research participant, your responsibilities would be: To attend the scheduled interview meetings and to actively engage in the discussions. You will be asked if you have friends who

use social media and may be interested to participate in the study. The researcher will not reveal your name to the friends you refer.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

You might or might not personally benefit from participating in this research. Potential benefits include: While discussing with Nadia your experience in social media, you will be more aware of how you interpret posts on social media and how it influences your daily offline life.

### **D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research, and except as described in this form. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, regulatory authorities might examine the information gathered. By participating, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

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You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher no later than one month after the last interview meeting.

We will tell you if we learn of anything that could affect your decision to stay in the research.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

**G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION**

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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Consent Form (Participants Between 18 and 24 Years Old)

**Assent TO PARTICIPATE IN** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media



## INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**Study Title:** How Youth Construe the Concepts of Inclusion and Exclusion in Social Media

**Researcher:** Dr. Ann-Louise Davidson

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

514 848 2424 Ext.5476      [Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca](mailto:Ann-louise@education.concordia.ca)

**Source of funding for the study:** No funding

**Student Researcher:** Nadia Naffi

**Student's Contact Information**

514 585 5865      [na\\_aboutk@education.concordia.ca](mailto:na_aboutk@education.concordia.ca)

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We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

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You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher no later than one month after the last interview meeting.

We will tell you if we learn of anything that could affect your decision to stay in the research.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.



**G. PARTICIPANT’S DECLARATION**

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SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 3: Pope Francis Shocks World

News > People

# Donald Trump supporters get their news from a strange media universe – and it's frequently fact-free

Concern over the presence of fake news websites has grown during the election

Andrew Buncombe New York | [@AndrewBuncombe](#) | Monday 14 November 2016 19:38 GMT

 41 comments

   **145**  
shares

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The Independent Online

## Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Releases Statement

TOPICS: Pope Francis Endorses Donald Trump



One of the many fake stories to be shared by millions claimed Pope Francis was backing Mr Trump *WTOE5 News*

Appendix 4: Donald Trump Jr. Tweet's About Refugees and Skittles



## Appendix 5: Screen Captures of Online Posts and Comments

**680 NEWS**  
November 16, 2015 · 🌐

Video: #Toronto couple changes sign after backlash from asking Muslims if they're sorry <http://ow.ly/UJyjd>



**Ashlynn Waddill**  
November 17, 2015 · 🌐

I think Jesus had something to say for people of faith who wore it on their sleeve and acted completely contrary to the purpose of their faith... I think it's Matthew 23 "Woe to you, Pharisees, you hypocrites! You slam the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces... You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"  
#SyrianRefugees



**What the Bible Says About How to Treat Refugees**

12 verses about loving immigrants, refugees and displaced people.

RELEVANTMAGAZINE.COM

**Virgin Radio Montreal**  
96 30 mins · 🌐

These guys.



**Three Montreal Friends Show That Muslims And Non-Muslims Are United**

"They cannot separate us."

BUZZFEED.COM | BY ISHMAEL N. DARO

**Latreille** shared a link.  
20 hrs · 🌐



**Stop aux immigrant syriens**

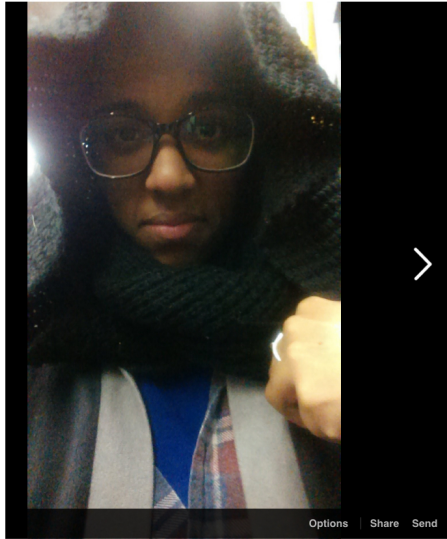
Les canadiens et canadiennes ont peur de leur securite ce qui sest passer a paris le terrorisme doit pas venir jusuquau canada je demande a monsieur le premier ministre du canada de stopper les immigrants syrien je demande aussi au ptemier ministre du

PETITIONS24.NET

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

4 people like this.

16 shares



**Kayla Christy Gerber**  
November 17 · Edited · 🌐

Today, I had my scarf over my ears and wrapped around my head to keep me warm. En route from a friends house on Bloor to Bathurst station a man stopped to to attack me, pushed me, grabbed me by my jacket and continued to yell at me to remove my hijab and leave his country. I'll leave this one for you to comment on. Because I'm still baffled.

\*Note: I am not a Muslim, nor a refugee but today I saw how it felt to be unsafe where you are trying to find safety.\*

Please share, and share, and share

Share

64 people like this.

701 shares

View previous comments 56 of 60

**Josie Cole** Im speechless.. total loss for words.  
2 · November 17 at 7:14pm

**Katie Elizabeth Billard** Oh my god. I'm so sorry this happened to you ! Sending all the love and happy vibes !  
November 17 at 7:16pm

**Kayla Christy Gerber** It's okay, it was an eye opener and I am very much okay  
November 17 at 7:17pm

**Candy Crawford Brown** Should have bagged the sick bastards then told him to go back to

**CBC News**  
1 hr · 🌐

Police have arrested a man after a YouTube video showed a man in a Joker mask vowing to kill Muslims in Quebec.



**Montreal police make arrest in case of masked man who vowed to kill Muslims**  
cbc.ca

2K Likes 400 Comments

Like Comment Share

**Cathy Sherwood**  
November 17, 2015 · The Huffington Post · 🌐

At risk of over posting on this topic, but I can't apologize. I implore you to consider the similarities here and, as the author states, "Rather than repeat the mistake we promised never to forget, we must learn to address our fears without forgetting our humanity." Please share.  
[#makeadifference](#) [#syrianrefugees](#)



**What the Holocaust Can Teach Us About the Syrian Refugee Crisis**  
The State Department's response to the Syrian crisis virtually mirrors its official response to the Holocaust. From the outset of World War II, the State Department...

WWW.HUFFINGTONPOST.COM

**The Toronto Star**  
3 hrs · 🌐

A reader has been receiving hateful emails targeting Muslims from a friend who has many positive characteristics. "I feel uncomfortable telling her she is a racist bigot. How does one handle this?"



**Help inform friend rather than call them a racist: Gallinger | Toronto Star**  
Friend upset over receiving 'racist emails' in regards to people of Muslim faith.

ON.THESTAR.COM



**Zaid Hamid-Best Comedian**

Like Page

December 17, 2015 at 1:53am

Belgium invented new technique to stop [#SyrianRefugees](#) crossing the border. It's cheap and effective

PS: No support for animal slaughter



677 Likes 31 Comments 66 Shares



**The Young Conservative Show with Steve Janiszak**

Like Page

January 3 at 1:03am

Rape epidemic running rampant in Finland thanks to [#SyrianRefugees](#) and our government wants to bring them here by the tens of thousands!!

-Young Conservative

[WWW.YOUNGCONSERVATIVE.NET](http://WWW.YOUNGCONSERVATIVE.NET)



**FINLAND: Rape epidemic by Muslim migrants is only one reason why Finns don't want more Muslim...**

Is rampant rape the price Finnish women must pay for giving asylum to Muslim migrants? Finland, now, has become "one of the least safe countries in Europe"

[WWW.NEVERAGAINCANADA.CA](http://WWW.NEVERAGAINCANADA.CA)



**Alice McGee**

January 6 at 8:55am · Daily Mail Online

"Similar attacks occurred simultaneously in other cities" Now deny that was coordinated. Nope no problems with islamic immigrants and their rape culture, right?

[#islam](#) [#apologists](#) [#islamophobia](#) [#cologneattacks](#) [#islamicrefugees](#) [#Syrianrefugees](#) [#islamicrapeculture](#)



**Teenage victim of Cologne sex mob describes harrowing ordeal**

The teenager, named only as Michelle, appeared on German TV to recount the harrowing ordeal she endured during the city's New Year's Eve celebrations last...

[DAILYMAIL.CO.UK](http://DAILYMAIL.CO.UK)

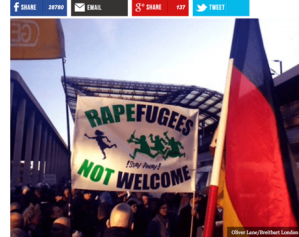


# #Rapefugees Trending on Twitter After Cologne NYE Attacks – And the Rhetoric Is Spreading

By Clive Lampan January 01 2016

One week after New Year's Eve celebrations soured in Cologne, Germany, when an apparently coordinated outbreak of sexual assault, mugging and rape of some 90 women ringing in 2016 broke out, #Rapefugees is trending on Twitter, and that anti-refugee rhetoric is spreading across the European Union.

## 'RAPEFUGEES NOT WELCOME': THOUSANDS TAKE TO COLOGNE STREETS TO PROTEST MIGRANT SEX ATTACKS



Ashish Bhamar shared Zaid Hamid-Best Comedian's photo. 15 hrs ·

#RAPEfugees Syrian peacefuls showing their gratitude to the people who welcomed them, feed them, sheltered them. #SyrianRefugees



Zaid Hamid-Best Comedian January 9 at 9:31pm ·

2015 : Refugee  
2016 : RAPEfugee

Poor migrants raped 500 German girls on New Year's eve in Cologne later people gathered to protest against Poor Syrian rapist police cracked down and Merkel Govt blame anti migrant protestors for creating nuisance.

Chutyapa Level : Mamata Banarjee

1 Like

CBC News January 7 at 9:30am · Toronto, ON ·

The short answer is no.



### Do government-assisted refugees receive more money for food than Canadians on welfare?

Federal and provincial officials debunk a widely circulated post on social media claiming Syrian refugees received more money for food than...

UBU.GA

Matthew William Pord As a Canadian I already pay to help vets, seniors and homeless. I'm willing to pay more on top of that to help refugees. This years refugees are next years tax payers.  
Like · Reply · 661 · January 7 at 9:52am  
↳ 84 Replies

David Jamieson Brace yourself, misinformed bigots who either can't or won't read the actual allocations of funding documents and procedures and such. Funny, because it's the same allocations as ever really, scaling with the times of course, but if anyone thinks being a refugee is a free ride of lollipops and candy canes, then you are sadly mistaken.  
Let's start here: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?q=105...>

### Do government-assisted refugees get more income support and benefits than Canadian pensioners do?

No. Refugees do not get more financial help from the federal government than Canadian pensioners do. A widely circulated email makes this false claim. The email mistakenly includes the one-time start-up payment as part of the monthly payment. The amount of monthly financial support that government-a...

CIC.GC.CA

Like · Reply · 540 · January 7 at 9:35am

The Huffington Post Canada 1 hr ·

Liberals had hoped to hit the target before the end of 2015. (via The Huffington Post Canada Politics)



### Target To Resettle 10K Refugees May Be Met Tuesday

#WelcomeRefugees

HUFFPTO

Eugene Osudar we need 100,000 syrian children and women and men in canada and to stop bombing syrians now, and stop selling weapons to saudi arabia, stop sending troops to syria and iraq and withdraw our military from afghanistan, now.  
Like · Reply · 6 · 1 hr  
↳ 1 Reply

Crystal Maltory It takes time, they are screening everyone before bring anyone over. I just hope no more things like the pepper spraying happens. No matter how you feel about this subject, think of it this way...they are coming to a new country...where they may b... See More  
Like · Reply · 7 · 1 hr

Ritchie Brennick I guess press bands He west europe are working...we cant take care of our own homeless,people with mental health issues,unemployment...our \$ is crashing yet our hippie PM continues ignoring our own backyard issues preferring to bring people into our country that will never fit in,blending  
Like · Reply · 1 min · Edited

Jason Pap Just cancel bring in anymore! We already support too many Muslims who don't work already.  
Like · Reply · 1 · 24 mins

The Globe and Mail February 27 at 9:45pm ·

The 25,000th Syrian refugee has arrived in Canada, two days ahead of the Liberal government's commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrians by the end of February.



### Liberals reach resettlement goal as 25,000th Syrian refugee arrives in Canada

A plane carrying the 25,000th Syrian refugee landed in Montreal Saturday night

THEGLOBEANDMAIL.COM

Riz Ahmed Someone said "25000 new mouths to feed" I say 50,000 new hands to build Canadian economy. Let's work all together to make this nation strong.  
Like · Reply · 621 · February 27 at 9:55pm  
↳ 117 Replies

Daryl Nelson The Syrian refugees in my neighbourhood have been welcomed with open arms and hearts. Welcome to Canada! I'm glad you are here!  
Like · Reply · 151 · February 27 at 10:10pm  
↳ 12 Replies

Markie MK We are all immigrants. Let's not forget that Canada opened its doors for my family 21 years ago. I was a child, and today I am proud to be a doctor in this beautiful country and be able to help others! I had opportunities I would have never had otherwise  
Like · Reply · 149 · February 27 at 10:12pm  
↳ 30 Replies

Linden Reese I sincerely hope that they will, each and every one, seek to become true Canadians, do well in their new lives and leave any old world prejudices behind.  
Like · Reply · 75 · February 27 at 9:53pm  
↳ 24 Replies

Zac Bonville So all a sudden we have money for them? refugees get everything handed to them on a silver platter, yet us real Canadians have to struggle finding a job and feeding our own families. Yeh sure!! Let's have all the Syrian refugees and immigrants come to Canada and take over!  
Like · Reply · 26 · February 27 at 10:45pm · Edited  
↳ 30 Replies

CBC News  
January 9 at 2:00pm

Far-right demonstrators, women's rights activists and left-wing counter-protesters all took to the streets of Cologne on Saturday.



### German riot police clash with anti-immigrant protesters in Cologne

Riot police using water cannon and tear gas were on high alert Saturday in a tense faceoff with over a thousand anti-immigrant protesters outside the...

CBC.CA

**Brenda Naylor** I don't blame the men of Cologne and other places for standing up for their country. The gov't is supposed to protect the citizens, not hide it and when it explodes blame the victims. Merkel and the mayor should be in jail!

Like · Reply · 178 · January 9 at 2:04pm

↳ 91 Replies

**Martin Bentler** Where were these police when women getting rape by the animals Merkel brought in?

Loading...

**Ivy Slesien** I think Germany has done more than enough apologizing for standing up for their country. They need to take a stand against what is happening in their country now.

Like · Reply · 163 · January 9 at 2:05pm

↳ 26 Replies

**David Jay Boyd** Germany, France, Sweden, things have certainly changed, lives have been lost and it's getting worse... when people are butchered on the streets of Paris and 200 or so women are assaulted in Cologne by what police estimate to be 1,000 "foreign" men you just can't bury your head in the sand any longer....

Like · Reply · 53 · January 9 at 2:30pm

↳ 19 Replies

**Amelie Josefsson** Swedes will be the next to revolt against the ridiculous open door immigration policies. I can't speak for Germany but Sweden has changed so much and not in a positive way. Countries need to have a proper immigration policy including proper vetting prior to new arrivals setting foot in the country and enforcing borders.

Like · Reply · 59 · January 9 at 2:00pm

↳ 7 Replies

The Huffington Post Canada  
January 9 at 2:00pm

"If we now take all the refugees into custody, if we erect fences around our homes and country... then we give up all we have achieved."



### Protesters Take To Cologne's Streets As Merkel Pledges New Laws

Women's rights activists, far-right demonstrators and leftwing counter-protesters took to the streets of Cologne.

HUFF.TO

**David Arthur Campbell Lawford** The antisemitic rights position is so weak and a slippery slope.

"Darker skinned males were drunk and partying. Refugees are dark skinned. Therefore the men where all refugees. Islam condones rape because ISIS does it. That's where all refugees come from so they are all rapists."

How people can actually think that this is reality points to the power of the media to be able to twist the truth.

Like · Reply · 17 · January 9 at 3:33pm

↳ 7 Replies

**Guillermo Bolanos** This action of protesters in Cologne is not about Nazis, Racists and Bigots is it the consequence of the bad German government administration actions of opening the doors to many refugees.

Like · Reply · 20 hrs

**Doug Strelfel** "DO NOT" blame all refugees, all arab people, or any group of actual people unless they actually committed these crimes.

"DO" admit that Middle Eastern culture played a role here, and talk about how we can fix it!

Like · Reply · 11 · January 9 at 2:44pm

↳ 8 Replies

**Kate Peterson Merkel**, you better be quick with the newly promised laws because another million refugees are headed to your country and Europe. And stop following orders from other countries and lodges. Do the right thing. Stop the illegal immigration. Build camps ... See More

Like · Reply · 5 · January 9 at 7:55pm

↳ 22 Replies

CBC News  
January 9 at 10:30am

As many as 30 children, women and men were treated for exposure to pepper spray at a "Welcome Night."



### 'This isn't who we are': Trudeau decries attack on Syrian refugees in Vancouver

A crowd of refugees attending a welcome event at the Muslim Association of Canada Centre in Vancouver were pepper sprayed by an unknown man on...

CBC.CA

**Brent O'Connor** This was allowed to escalate to this level because not enough people challenge the strong anti-muslim and anti-refugee sentiment here on social media and elsewhere, while sharing propoganda meant to distort the truth... To every person that has shared misinformation about Muslims and/or the refugees, you have played a role in this... Come on people, we're better than this.

Like · Reply · 171 · January 9 at 10:41am · Edited

↳ 141 Replies · 8 hrs

**Aidan Aberdale** That's a terrible thing to do. No matter how you feel about refugees coming to Canada, there's absolutely no excuse for harming them.

And you can't blame them for wanting to come to Canada.. Who wouldn't want to?

Like · Reply · 91 · January 9 at 10:38am

↳ 11 Replies

The Huffington Post Canada  
6 hrs ·

"This isn't who we are - and doesn't reflect the warm welcome Canadians have offered."



### Trudeau Condemns Attack On Syrian Refugees In Vancouver

The attack happened outside the Muslim Association of Canada Centre during a "welcome night" event for newly arrived Syrian refugees.

HUFF.TO





Some 121 women were reportedly robbed, threatened or sexually molested by gangs of mostly drunk men while out celebrating.



### German police chief fired over New Year's Eve assaults

The Cologne police chief has been fired amid criticism of his force's handling of a string of New Year's Eve assaults and robberies.

CBC.CA

Jason Patrice Congratulations, CBC, you are the only media outlet to report this story without using the words MUSLIM, ISLAM, REFUGEE or MIGRANT. Bravo, PC cowards.

Like Reply 162 · Yesterday at 5:36pm · Edited

67 Replies · 8 hrs

Tammie Johnson I am so disappointed in the cbc's lack of integrity. CBC can no longer be trusted to tell whole truths no matter how ugly. They are too afraid to be called racist and islamophobic. Tell the whole ugly truth. Everybody already knows the assailants were Arab and north African asylum seekers. Why can't you say it?? Halve truths are meaningless. Tell the new property or get off the airwaves!

Like Reply 128 · Yesterday at 5:49pm · Edited

31 Replies · 9 hrs



@FrantizekPaul Syrian #Rapefugees gang-rape 14 and 15 year old girls in Southern Germany. #SyrianRefugees #migrantcrisis #Merkel

https://t.co/8EqWvZA2ck

https://twitter.com/FrantizekPaul/status/685449479353319424



### Two teenage girls gang-raped by four 'Syrian nationals' in southern Germany

Reports flood in of sexual assaults against women across Germany as leaked police report states Cologne suspects 'claimed to be Syrian refugees'

T.CO | BY JUSTIN HUGGLER IN COLOGNE



Marc Savoleu CMG!!! Ça pas d'allure de voir les commentaires racistes des québécois! En passant, les derniers actes terroristes fait en sol canadien, n'ont pas été fait par des musulmans, mais plutôt par des QUÉBÉCOIS!!!

Like Reply 1 · February 11 at 7:03pm

Patrick Gosselin Marc, je veux bien croire que certains Québécois peuvent être racistes (comme partout dans le monde en passant, on a pas la palme d'or dans ce domaine) Mais je ne vois aucuns commentaires racistes dans les 6 id...

Like Reply · February 14 at 11:24am

Picard Alain encore une autruche qui se cache la face et voit pas se qui se passe DANS LE MONDE...bravo et jespere ta pas de fille

Like Reply 1 · February 14 at 4:58pm

Marc Savoleu Boni Voilà un Redneck qui vient lancer sa merde sur Facebook!

Like Reply 1 · February 14 at 5:12pm

Dénis Giroux Perso-Complet Marc les deux derniers actes terroristes on été fait par des musulmans Québécois. Musulman c'est pas une couleur de peau c'est une religion.

Like Reply 1 · February 15 at 7:56am

Marc Savoleu Dénis Giroux Perso-Complet veux tu que l'on parle de la FLO? Eu aussi c'étaient une gangs de terroristes QUÉBÉCOIS!

Like Reply · February 15 at 8:58am

Stephane Chartrand tu n a air d un raciste to,c dans ta tete de merdre que ca se passe!!!!!!

Like Reply · Yesterday at 6:17am

Stephane Chartrand c pour ca qu il veut pas apprendre le FRANCAIS, et c nous les racistes,avec mon argent et notre argent, à du front mon gars, i aime ca le trouble,tu vois pas se qui se passe en europe,ben non au canada ca va être mieux!!!!!!!

Like Reply · Yesterday at 6:21am



The town's population just jumped by one percent thanks to the arrival of five new Syrian families (via CBC Radio's DNTO).



### Welcome to Altona, Manitoba: Population 4,500, plus 45 new refugees

In Canada, the big cities get most of the credit for being multicultural. But the face of small town Canada is changing, too.

CBC.CA

Don-Jessie Oldford I cannot tolerate the ignorance of some here with their comments. Did you know that there are areas of Syria where they have snow? Also, most the refugees are people who had owned nice houses, and all the appliances, including many owing the second car...

Like Reply 347 · Yesterday at 7:53am · Edited

70 Replies · 1 hr

Zlibwan Rivers Welcome to Kanata (Canada) my brothers and sisters. Indigenous peoples welcome you. I hope all you feel safe and secure here. You will face prejudice and discrimination here but just keep your head up.



"We came out here today with our families and kids to really truly thank all Canadians and just tell them thank you from the bottom of our hearts for what they have done for us."



### Syrian Refugees Hand Out Roses, Messages Of Thanks In Saskatoon

"Syrians love Saskatoon!"

HUFFPOST

Joe Archibald This is great! If you still don't want people like this in our country, you are less Canadian then these wonderful new members of our Canadian family!

Like Reply 160 · February 22 at 6:36pm

7 Replies

Deborah Garrick We Canadians are honoured that you are here, so thank you fellow new Canadians!!!!

Like Reply 91 · February 22 at 6:37pm

6 Replies

Cameron Peck So where are the refugees overthrowing the government and causing us 'true' Canadians grief?

On yes they don't exist... See More

Like Reply 28 · February 22 at 6:25pm · Edited

Joe Archibald And Dave, if you want to talk about benefit to Canada, I think these new Canadians will become incredibly grateful, motivated people who will work incredibly hard to make their new country a better place. The children we welcome will someday have their... See More

Like Reply 35 · February 22 at 7:23pm

1 Reply

Jeanette Belliveau-Javoie a lot of our own Canadians are living day by day, as for money food shelter, We are Canada We are to help our Canada, New Canada to appreciate our country

Like Reply · February 22 at 7:23pm


4 Replies

Catherine Lee Please remember, middle class n rich taxpayers are paying for the refugees to live even though we are in deficits n our natives n locals are in need of help too.

Like Reply 6 · February 22 at 7:32pm

**CNN** March 7 at 7:47am · 🌐

This small city in Canada welcomes Syrian r




How the Syrian crisis came home to small town Canada

WWW.CNN.COM | BY MONI BASU, JOURNALIST

5.9K 625 Comments 421 Shares

**CNN** March 7 at 7:47am · 🌐

This small city in Canada welcomes Syrian refuge



How the Syrian crisis came home to s

WWW.CNN.COM | BY MONI BASU, JOURNALIST

5.9K 625 C

**Angry**


- Don Lee
- Steven Thomas
- Dominic Anthony D'Alessandro II
- Shervin A
- Anastasiya Yeremenko
- Ryan Charlton
- Jakub Mikolášek
- Darshan Ram
- Jason Rodriguez
- Jo Jo
- Arceus Resurreccion
- Tony Aaron Pillaso
- Tammy Adams
- 박해진
- Ididro Flores
- Ruslan Tkachenko
- Emilio Vasquez
- Josh Conkle
- Deli Ana Starford Valentine
- and 58 more...

**Love**

- Kyle Groenenboom
- Daevin Thomas
- Liz Acevedo-Alstrum
- MaNs ReZa
- Sara Leonard Davis
- Becky Bomar
- Cherie Dawn Stogsdill
- Melanie Thompson
- Grace Zelda Maasin
- Holly Hootman
- Crystal Shupe
- Bernice Breitfeld
- Jose Mercado
- Roxann Clarke
- Ariesti Yurida Manan
- Mercedes Brambila
- Lana Jalouga Hassad
- Deanna Thomas
- Lila Grace
- and 404 more...

**The Huffington Post Canada** March 11 at 8:00pm · 🌐

Heartbreaking.



**This Photo Of A Newborn Shows The Real Cost Of Europe's Shut Borders**

The haunting image that was shot in a Greek refugee camp has sparked outcry on social media.

HUFFPOST

**Tabi Tabi** This article isn't about any of you with your perfect little lives of privilege. It's about an innocent little baby who was born in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yes these people should reconsider making babies at a time and place like this, but... See More

Like · Reply · 46 · March 11 at 10:53pm

14 Replies

**Eva Sopkova** I just love how this article says that Europe has failed to adequately deal with the thousands of migrants and refugees arriving there every day. If you ever lived in Europe or still have part of your family living there you would know that most of the people there struggle to get by. Some European countries can barely take care of their own people. How are they supposed to take care of this many new refugees??

Like · Reply · 12 · March 11 at 11:42pm

8 Replies

**Carole Diane Gagne** It is truly heartbreaking for this infant...but in all honesty, it makes me sad that adults cannot quit reproducing when the situation is so bleak and hellish...have they no forethought about putting another human being in the world in such horrible c... See More

Like · Reply · 10 · March 11 at 8:39pm

15 Replies

**Cheri Clark** Let's not be blinded to the real reason this is happening. If the Middle East hadn't been destabilized by war mongering and greed, this wouldn't be happening. 🙄

Like · Reply · 3 · March 12 at 11:31am

**Moray Kennedy** These people don't seem to consider birth control at all, who would want to bring a baby into such a dismal existence??

Like · Reply · March 13 at 12:31am

**Trish Fougner** And yet here in Canada we complain about the most ridiculous things. How about basic human life essentials? The world needs to care more. We are all here together. Imagine if this was your family?

**Andrew Jissink** Trying to blame Europe for protecting itself against Muslim extremists by showing heart wrenching photos is pretty pathetic. The reason for these atrocities is that the people in power do not care about their own people and are vying for power and money at any cost. Get rid of the root of the problem and the problem is solved even if that means eliminating a culture of greed, lies and deceit

Like · Reply · 6 · March 12 at 12:10am

Hide 12 Replies

**Peter Burgess** The reason for these atrocities is because the West, Europe included, fostered a civil war and now bomb them. That's the "root" of the problem. How many Syrian refugees were there 8 years ago? Zip.

Like · Reply · 2 · March 12 at 12:59am

**Andrew Jissink** Peter Burgess under a ruthless regime that regularly tortured, killed and stole from their own people.....

Like · Reply · March 12 at 2:25am

**Jari D'oman** Peter Burgess you are everywhere telling your crap that has no base whatsoever! Get your info straight first before you spread this idiotic idea tha it's Europe fault! Did you ever noticed that idiots in the mid east were fighting over for 300 years? Go knock on Arabic friends to found out why they don't help their kind!

French right-wing party leader blasts Canada's immigration policy in Quebec City



5:15 AM · 21 Mar 2016

Peter Van Hoof · Works at Tupperware US & Canada who she thinks she is ?to come to Canada to lecture Canadians on how they should manage their country???

Peter Van Hoof · Works at Tupperware US & Canada French people who have been the main cause of the genocides in Africa want to export their hatred to the rest of the world.THEY COLLABORATE WITH THE NAZIS AND SENT MILLIONS OF JEWS TO DEATH CAMPS AND NOW THEY WANT TO DO THE SAME WITH MUSLIMS

Jacques Pronovost · Université Laval How about the genocide of aboriginals in Australia by the Commonwealth ? Or the numerous genocidal crimes in India by the British Empire ?

Should I also mention the cultural genocide of autochtones in Canada and the same actions towards all french speaking Canadians over the past centuries ?

Where have you been ? In a tupperware ?

George Woodbridge · Friendly rebel at Changing the World She should shut up

Harriet Resman · Concordia STAY OUT OF OUR BUSINESS, STICK TO TRYING TO DESTROY FRANCE. WE DO NOT WANT YOUR RIGHT WING POLITICS HERE...PLEASE GO HOME !!!

Jo Walsh Va chier marine pis mele toi de tes affaires

David Imrie · Telecentre Agent at CAA Manitoba Mind your own business - didn't they learn from Charles DeGaulle?

Jim McColm Why give this female version of Trump the time of day.

Kathleen Schaller Baggio · Toronto, Ontario "A multicultural society is a society in conflict".....Really?

Simon Vallée - Really. See Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya. These are all multicultural countries, based on the Ottoman Millet system that encouraged religious communities to develop their own identity and communities. Put a modern democratic State over such a society, and you're likely to get civil wars sooner or later.

Nationalism is a sine qua non condition for the peaceful stability of a modern democracy. The secular national identity helps brings citizens together and fosters solidarity between all citizens rather than having exclusive communities that care only about the interests of their own members.

John Larsson Haha! She's a fascist! What else would we expect this disgusting woman to say?

Diane Morrison · Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal Who cares what she think!

Danielle Gosselin Alors qu'elle retourne chez elle la Le Pen

Derek Raymond Her views are spreading across Europe. Europeans are waking up and realizing they are tired of seeing their ways of life eroded by mass immigration and invader refugees. That's not being racist, that's being responsible. What is wrong with wanting to protect your country from changing to something you don't want it to be.

If that makes one a fascist then we need more fascists.

You will see a massive movement to the right in Europe as people wake up and realize their socialist left wing governments have sold them down the river.

Look at Germany right now and Sweden both moving to the right.

Nicholas Todd "Europeans are waking up and realizing they are tired of seeing their ways of life eroded by mass immigration and invader refugees."

But that isn't OUR "way of life" it never has been. You dislike that? I would suggest you relocate to Europe and help to intensify the problems they created for themselves, which we for the most part have thus far avoided. I don't want Canada to be a European nation. It's a North American nation. You should move. Your attitude doesn't fit here. And say "hi" to Ernst Zundel while you're there.

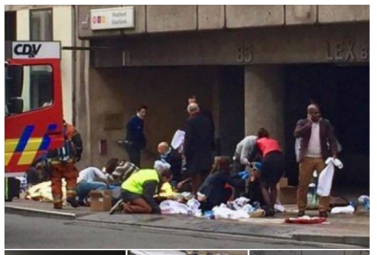
Derek Raymond Nicholas, I didn't know you spoke for all of Canada, wow you are one powerful person.

Funny how Left leaning Canadians always seem to talk about wanting to be more like Europe and especially those Socialist Meccas of the world, the Scandinavian countries.

I really don't hear a lot of Canadians saying they wish they can be more like America or Mexico!

I also never once said that Canada was like Europe, but it certainly will move in that direction should we not be careful with our immigration and make sure we are controlling it in a socially responsible and an economically responsible manner.

Brussels Terrorist Attacks added 9 new photos.



Belgium Charges Three More With Terrorism as Victim Toll Reaches 35

Belgian prosecutors charged three more suspects Monday with being part of a...

WSJ.COM | BY JULIAN E. BARNES

Simon Bricklin All of these middle easterners are extremists in their thinking and they destroyed their own country's and can no longer survive there so they've flocked to the places where governments are stupid enough to give them money for nothing. People are getting fed up with the "religion of peace" and are almost to the point of taking the law into their own hands just for survival purposes. Moderate Muslims do nothing because most moderates agree with using violence to advance the death cult. Moderates are just as guilty as the radicals!

## Appendix 6: Comments Used as Elements in the Repertory Grid Tests

<p>We need to help people desperately fleeing the same senseless violence we are afraid of. My family came to Canada fleeing war and persecution. Thanks to the love and kindness of a few Canadians, we prospered and became contributing members of society. Please don't let fear and ignorance stand in the way of humanity.</p>	<p>Canada has often stepped up to the plate accepting refugees and they have become Canadians contributing to this wonderful country. IT IS NOW FOR US TO DO SO AGAIN...they aren't refugees by choice!</p>	<p>It saddens me that so many Canadians are reading stories from unreliable sources and taking others hatred verbatim. Refugees are fleeing from these broken countries and Canada should be welcoming them with open arms. I work with numerous people who have come here fleeing their war torn homes and have made Canada their new home. They contribute to our economy and become members of our communities. Stop the hate.</p>
<p>The Canada I grew up in and love is an inclusive country. How we treat the least of these is a measure of who we are</p>	<p>Syrian refugees are running from the same things we are scared of. they are not the problem.</p>	<p>Everyone deserves a safe place to live.</p>
<p>When someone is running from harm you don't slam the door in their face. You let them in and slam it behind them</p>	<p>They would have nightmares one day after landing in Canada and reading Canadian newspaper comments.</p>	<p>My birth country is far from here, but I feel more at home here. I believe that any newcomer will develop the same kind of deep love to these lands and its people. Welcome!</p>
<p>I'm Canadian and helping is what we do!!</p>	<p>No Syrian rapists and terrorists in Canada! Stop this madness now!</p>	<p>Canada is so naïve</p>
<p>We are full...close the borders to immigrants</p>	<p>After the recent events in cologne i have completely switched from supporting the refugee causes</p>	<p>CANADIANS FIRST - MUSLIMS NEVER</p>
<p>Islam is the motherlode of bad ideas. A lot of these refugees have no intention of assimilating. They fucked up their own countries, and now they're going to try to impose the same backwards, savage ideologies within our borders.</p>	<p>No my friend it will be you, and your children who will be forced to adapt to their ways, not the other way around.</p>	<p>those people demand that the Canadians adopt THEIR culture and beliefs as they deem their faith, laws and customs superior to ours</p>
<p>Diversity is not a strength; it is a weakness. Diversity just got over a hundred people murdered in Paris, and you want to flood our country with the same group of people. If I'm standing in my door and 25000 rattle snakes are coming towards me, do I let them in because you say not all rattle snakes are dangerous. At least 1000 of those rattlesnakes are peaceful and will not bite me? If you let in the 25000 rattle snakes, you will get bitten. It</p>	<p>If ONE Canadian is attacked by a 'refugee' or if ONE Canadian loses a job to one of them then it is ONE too many. It's time we put our Nation first. I want my tax dollars to feed our homeless and support our veterans, not these foreign nationals who share nothing with us - linguistically or culturally. The people who built this country would be ashamed of our misguided attempts to create some multicultural utopia, which exists</p>	<p>I am a hard working Canadian woman and have always contributed and paid more than my fair share of taxes. Every year at tax time the government tells me I haven't paid enough and takes more. When I see this type of spending it frustrates me immensely. I do feel for these people, but I also believe that we can do other things to help. Our homeless, our senior citizens, our natives are living in horrible</p>

<p>is better to close the door to protect yourself and your family.</p>	<p>only in the minds of leftist elites.</p>	<p>conditions and are crying for help and their own government has forgotten about them, yet they are spending absurd amounts of money to help the refugees????</p>
<p>We do not need any more people who do not share our beliefs and would change our way of life! It hasn't been so very long since we have had equality for women, Medicare, and welfare to help our citizens in times of need we don't need to disrupt our society by bringing in people who will destroy that!</p>	<p>Islam is a primitive violent religion practiced by the scum of the earth. Europe is being invaded by force, and we bring them over, house and feed them willingly? The cowards should go back and fight for their own country. This forced multicultural, politically bullshit needs to stop.</p>	<p>Stop bringing refugees to Canada; who is going to pay for them? the taxpayer? this is wrong, wrong. As long as the situation in Alberta is bad, unemployment is high, the LIBERALS should focus on creating jobs for Canadians and help our homeless. STOP BRINGING REFUGEES TO CANADA</p>
<p>Our seniors and people who are destitute because of our economic crisis should be given priority to people who are culturally different from the Canadians, who despise our customs, our religion and our way of life.</p>	<p>No Muslims --and that's not racist-- they don't integrate well and the proof is in no-go zones in France and Sweden not to mention added burden on Welfare because large families and they're uneducated. Not enough jobs already</p>	<p>If Canada is accepting all these Muslim refugees then they should only be allowed in if they are prepared to accept Canadian values, our way of life, live under our law, dress as Canadians and accept gender equality</p>
<p>Stop these Refugee's from taking JOBS away from our 300,000+ unemployed CANADIAN CITIZENS. Charity starts at home so stop ignoring us Canadians who already live here.</p>	<p>This is not how I see my grandchildren future: openly discussing sharia laws on CBC and how to make easier for Muslims to get a mortgage. This is just a plague that will cripple Canada</p>	<p>I'm not against helping the unfortunate. These Muslims are like the plague. Treat them as such.</p>
<p>As an individual, I would help someone in danger of violence, without question. Why is it so hard for us to do as a country? I see the fear and hatred represented by the rejection of the Syrian refugees and Muslim people in general as a much greater threat to the Canada that I treasure than the small chance that extremists might be among the refugees</p>	<p>I do not want those Syrian refugees to come to our country. I am not against immigrants, what I do not like is Muslim immigrants. We have already enough of those. Muslim people bring us all sorts of problems. Anyway, they do not like us but they like whatever they can take from us. Instead, we should be more open to Chinese, Vietnamese, Latinos. These are peaceful people, they talk to us, smile at us, are friendly, all things Muslims are not.</p>	<p>We don't think they could integrate in the Canadian society and it could cause lots of problems in future then</p> <hr/> <p>Islam is not compatible with the Western way of life</p>

## Appendix 7: General demographic questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your nationality? Are you Canadian? If not, what is your legal status in Canada?
3. What is your mother tongue?
4. Are you a student? Do you have a job?
5. In which neighborhood do you live? Do you consider your neighborhood diverse? Why?
6. What do you know about the Syrian refugee crisis?
7. What do you know about the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada?
8. Have you ever been in contact with a Syrian refugee? How?
9. How do you describe the online interactions you encounter about the Syrian refugee crisis?

### Validation and wrap-up questions.

1. How do you define *inclusion*?
2. How can we include Syrian refugees?
3. How do you define *exclusion*?
4. How do we exclude Syrian refugees?
5. How do you guess online interactions impact your position or behavior towards Syrian refugee youth?
6. How do you guess online interactions impact Canadian youth's position or behavior towards the Syrian refugee youth?
7. How do you guess online interactions impact refugee youth's position or behavior towards the Canadian youth?

8. How do you guess online interactions impact the offline integration and inclusion of Syrian refugee youth?
9. If you had a role to play online in regards to the Syrian refugee youth's offline integration and inclusion, what would this role be?

Appendix 8: Billboard in Finland



**The Young Conservative Show with Steve Janiszak**

Like Page

January 3 at 1:03am · 🌐

Rape epidemic running rampant in Finland thanks to [#SyrianRefugees](#) and our government wants to bring them here by the tens of thousands!!

-Young Conservative

[WWW.YOUNGCONSERVATIVE.NET](http://WWW.YOUNGCONSERVATIVE.NET)



**FINLAND: Rape epidemic by Muslim migrants is only one reason why Finns don't want more Muslim...**

Is rampant rape the price Finnish women must pay for giving asylum to Muslim migrants? Finland, now, has become "one of the least safe countries in Europe"

[WWW.NEVERAGAINCANADA.CA](http://WWW.NEVERAGAINCANADA.CA)



## Appendix 9: #Rapefugees

 **Ashish Bharam** shared **Zaid Hamid-Best Comedian's** photo. 15 hrs · 🌐

#RAPEfugees Syrian peacefults showing their gratitude to the people who welcomed them, feed them, sheltered them.  
#SyrianRefugees



**Zaid Hamid-Best Comedian**

👍 Like Page

January 9 at 9:31pm · 🌐

2015 : Refugee  
2016 : RAPEfugee

Poor migrants raped 500 German girls on New Year's eve in Cologne later people gathered to protest against Poor Syrian rapist police cracked down and Merkel Govt blame anti migrant protestor for creating nuisance.

Chutiyapa Level : Mamata Banarjee

1 Like

## Appendix 10: Three Montreal Friends Show That Muslims and Non-Muslims Are United



**Virgin Radio Montreal**

30 mins · \*



These guys.



### Three Montreal Friends Show That Muslims And Non-Muslims Are United

"They cannot separate us."

BUZZFEED.COM | BY ISHMAEL N. DARO

Appendix 11: Do Government-Assisted Refugees Receive More Money for Food Than  
Canadians on Welfare?



CBC News

January 7 at 9:30am · Toronto, ON · 🌐

The short answer is no.



**Do government-assisted refugees receive more money  
for food than Canadians on welfare?**

Federal and provincial officials debunk a widely circulated post on social media claiming Syrian refugees received more money for food than Canadians on welfare.

CBC.CA