

Factors Influencing Refugee Women's Adjustment in Quebec, Canada

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Abstract

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This study examines the lived experiences and adaptation processes of refugee women in Quebec, Canada with their young children. The research focuses on understanding the complex challenges women encounter, including language barriers, employment difficulties, housing instability, and the absence of robust social support networks. Employing a phenomenological approach, the study captures the ways in which women navigate their new environment, emphasizing the role of resilience, community support, and individual coping strategies. The findings indicate that while refugee women express gratitude for the safety and opportunities provided in Canada, they face considerable obstacles in their daily lives, such as balancing child-rearing responsibilities with the need to acquire language proficiency and secure gainful employment. The study underscores the importance of targeted support systems to address the specific needs of refugee mothers, particularly in areas such as language acquisition, employment assistance, and access to flexible childcare. The insights gained from this research contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the refugee experience in Canada and highlight the necessity for policies that support the successful integration of refugee families.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Review of the Literature

Factors Influencing Refugee Women's Adjustment in Quebec, Canada

Refugees who settle in Western cultures can often experience difficulties in their adaptation and adjustment to the new cultures (Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021; van Klingerren & Spierings, 2020). Some research suggests that within the first year of resettlement refugees often experience higher levels of depression than non-migrants (Carswell et al., 2011 as cited in Yun et al. 2020; Geirsdottir et al., 2021). They frequently encounter challenges in learning a new language, finding employment, housing, and having to learn the laws, norms, and values of their new society (Organista, Organista, and Kurasaki, 2005 as cited in Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010). These challenges are also likely to be exacerbated by discrimination (Sheikh et al., 2022) and difficulty finding safe housing as a result of low wages and poor employment rates (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). Encouragingly, studies also show that, by the end of their first decade in their new countries, refugee populations will have higher salaries, have more stable employment, and acquire higher levels of English proficiency than economic migrants (Beisou & Hou, 2001 as cited in Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). In Canada, there is evidence that over time, the refugee population experiences lower levels of depression in comparison to the Canadian born population (Kirmayer et al., 2011). These long-term outcomes suggest that, despite their difficult circumstances, many refugee people will integrate well and find strategies for positive adaptation in their new societies.

Nevertheless, the acculturation process is considerably harder for women and especially those who migrate with their minor children. Their success in long-term and short-term adaptation are mitigated by many pre-migration factors (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019; van Klingerren & Spierings, 2020), such as individual's temperament, personality traits, adherence to cultural or religious traditions (Hirad et al., 2022; Walther et al., 2021). In

addition, the individual's level of education and second-language exposure to the host culture's dominant language, as well as exposure to traumatic events are important predictors of successful adaptation (Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021; Hira et al., 2022; Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019; Sheikh et al., 2022; van Klinger & Spierings, 2020; Yun et al., 2021). Furthermore, the refugees' post-migration contexts are also important in mitigating their successful adaptation. These include: how welcoming they perceive their host societies to be, their perceived levels of social connectedness, their success in mastering the host country's language and their access to employment resources (Ahmad et al., 2021; Geirsdottir et al., 2021; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010; Sheikh et al., 2022).

Many of the quantitative studies have offered valuable insight into the correlations between refugee persons' contexts and their ability to adapt to their new cultures by looking at rates of un/employment and diagnosed psychological conditions, such as clinical depression (Fogden et al., 2020; Geirsdottir et al., 2021; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). In parallel, qualitative research tends to adopt a resilience-focused approach such as identifying factors that are related to positive growth, resiliency, and techniques used to move forward in a positive way (Ahmad et al., 2021; Hira et al., 2022; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010; Sheikh et al., 2022; Walther et al., 2021).

The following literature review aims to elaborate further on some of the factors known to influence a refugee person's adaptation in Western cultures by exploring both quantitative and qualitative research. Specific emphasis will be placed on the unique ways these factors influence refugee women's and mothers' adaptation.

Review of the Literature

Individual and Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Resilience

The term ‘resilience’ generally refers to the capacity of individuals to survive in the face of stress and shocks (Hall and Lamont, 2013).

Personality Traits

Oshio, Taku, Hirano and Saeed (2018) suggest that an individual’s overall level of resiliency can be explained in part by their personality traits. They suggest that all individuals range from high to low on the “big five personality traits”: neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness. In their meta-analysis of 30 studies with a total of 15,609 participants studies examining the link between these five personality traits and resilience, there is a significant positive association between resilience and extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, as well as a significant negative association with neuroticism (Oshio et al., 2018).

Some of the qualitative findings on refugee groups replicated similar findings of associations between personality differences and the individual’s ability to positively adapt to their new host society. For example, in their research on Syrian refugees living in Germany, Walther et al. (2021) found that individuals who were social activists in their home country displayed a similar level of social engagement in Germany. Several participants in their study indicated that they carried their positive social engagement into the current society by volunteering with various organizations. One participant in their study organized a political demonstration within the first month of arrival in Germany. Some refugees reported that they volunteered and supported other newcomers, and in doing so, they were able to maintain a positive outlook on their own situations to help ease their own integration process.

Interviews with refugees identified another factor, gratitude, as particularly helpful in the initial months of adjustment after arriving in a new host country (Walther et al., 2021).

Expressions of gratitude are related to a person's general levels of optimism and openness or one's predisposition to "look forward" to positive outcomes. Some refugees, for example, expressed relief at being in a safe environment, and grateful that Germany, the host country, provided them with opportunities that they no longer have in Syria. For women especially, the personality trait of openness allowed them to view their migration as gaining access to opportunities both professionally and personally.

Furthermore, actively seeking out relationships and making social connections are also associated with more positive adaptation. In a study conducted by Hiram et al. (2022), one individual stated that once he had arrived in America, he would brew Syrian tea and sit in front of his home with several chairs, inviting passers-by to sit with him and drink tea with him. Despite language barriers, the participant expressed that those who joined him found ways to communicate and connect with each other. Another participant in Walther et al.'s study (2021) stated that he frequently went out to play sports in a local venue and he would insert himself in the game with the locals. These individuals proactively shared common behaviours oriented toward connecting with others, despite linguistic and cultural differences.

Finally, those who held fewer expectations, but a positive outlook adjusted more positively than those who had higher expectations but were uncertain about their possibilities for successful adaptation. In their research, Hiram et al. (2022) had several participants who encountered the same issue of having unrecognized education in the United States. Within their study, there were two men who were both formally trained as engineers in Iraq. One individual was 61 years of age, and the other 30. The elder male expressed disappointment at being asked to

repeat his education to receive recognition as an engineer. The younger individual readily accepted that, upon arrival, their education would not be recognized and was therefore willing to accept working “anywhere” until he completed his studies to become recognized in the United States. Comparing these two participants, the former held high expectations that were not attainable, while the latter had lower expectations but believed that he could overcome the initial challenges. Among refugees, those with a positive outlook believed that the inability to transfer their prior training and work experience from their home country to their host country opened opportunities to improve themselves and to refine their skills. One of the participants in Hiram et al.’s study (2022, p. 7) was able to focus on the progress he made, despite having taken several decades to reach the same professional position as the one he held in Afghanistan.

Cultural Alignment

Some refugees reported cultural alignment with their host society positively impacted their adaptation. In a study conducted by Walther et al. (2021), some participants stated that Germany’s more liberal views on sex, sexuality, and religion afforded them the opportunities to adopt values that were not permitted in their country of origin. In turn, they felt a sense of belonging among in their new country. The process of personal alignment is not an entirely static phenomenon; rather it can fluctuate between maintaining previously held beliefs while gradually adopting new cultural norms and values of the host society. In their research, Van Kilenegen and Spierings (2020), hypothesized that women would be more likely to identify with their host cultures and would adjust more quickly than men because they had more to gain personally from their new culture. This hypothesis was based on the premise that most refugee women came from cultures where religious practices put them in a subordinate role. According to this, women who immigrate to Western European countries would benefit more from adopting European standards

of gender equality than their male compatriots (van Klingereren & Spierings, 2020). From a sample of 3,802 Turkish individuals who were either economic migrants to Western Europe or European-born children of Turkish descent, van Klingereren & Spierings (2020) found that women were more likely to identify with values of gender equality than men, regardless of their personal levels of religiosity. More importantly, many Turkish women retained their religious identity while decoupling themselves from the gender-restrictive norms of their culture; suggesting that they were able to renegotiate their religious/cultural identities with their religious/cultural identities (van Klingereren & Spierings, 2020). In another study by Walther et al. (2021), one of the female participants who was in her 30s expressed a feeling of emancipation after moving to Germany; she found new meaning in her life that extended beyond her identity as a wife and a mother and experienced herself as a self-directing human being.

Age of Migration

In a Canadian study that used the “General Social Survey” to help identify patterns or determinants of immigrant populations’ sense of belonging to Canada (Hou, Schellenberg and Berry, 2016), one of the important predictors of successful adaptation to life in Canada was the age of migration. Immigrants and refugees adjust to Canada better when they arrive before the age of 24 years (Hou et al., 2016). Those who entered Canada at a younger age were more likely to identify with Canada than with their country of origin. One of the reasons why acculturation is easier for younger individuals is their ease in learning Canada’s two official languages, English and French. Younger refugees and immigrants, especially those who are in school, have more opportunities to be immersed in the new languages. They also have a higher incentive to learn the language because they expect to settle in the host country, be employed and take advantage of social opportunities (Dustmann and Fabri, 2003, as cited in Hou & Beiser, 2006).

In contrast to the experience of young refugees or migrants, a study conducted in Australia reported that the adaptation process for migrants aged 55 years and older had a more challenging time adapting to their new country because of their difficulty in acquiring the new language. The inability to communicate with ease significantly hindered them from fully integrating into Australian society (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). On a functional level, language mastery allows refugee people to participate in important daily functions such as banking, socializing, accessing social and medical services, and participating in formal or informal education. In Canada, obtaining Canadian citizenship requires basic English or French proficiency (Hou & Bieser, 2006). Using the University of Toronto Refugee Resettlement Project, a 10-year longitudinal study of 608 Southeast Asian refugees in Canada, Hou and Bieser (2006) found that a younger age of migration was associated with more significant and faster language acquisition, but for refugees who arrived at an older age, the negative association between language acquisition and age could be mitigated, in part, by previous levels of education and English-as-a-second-language exposure before immigration (Hou & Bieser, 2006, p.152).

Age of migration is also correlated with the weight of responsibilities shouldered by the refugee population as seen in Walther et al. (2021)'s exploration of resiliency in a German-based Syrian refugee population. The younger refugees reported that they did not experience the same loss of social status as their elders, and they viewed themselves as having a long future ahead of themselves (p.13). They also had fewer responsibilities related to caring for families or spouses, and interestingly, the data from Lichtenstein and Puma (2019) found that although elderly populations experienced more difficulties integrating into their host country, their presence in the extended family facilitates and eases the adaptation of their children or grandchildren, by providing the needed functions of childcare and housework, etc. In other words, the older

refugees provided the space and support for their children and grandchildren to attend language classes or to seek employment (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019).

Individual Religiosity

Many refugees come from societies where many of their cultural and value systems are strongly influenced by a set of dominant religious beliefs and traditions. An individual's religiosity may be expressed in one of both forms: (1) external forms of religious experiences such as communal worship, religious community action, and outward displays of culturally accepted religious behaviours, or (2) personal conviction, beliefs, overall levels of faith, and practices which may extend beyond the religious community. For example, an external form of religiosity may involve wearing a hijab or being actively involved within their religious community, but the individual may not be spiritually religious, following the main tenets of the religion such as prayer or fasting. Conversely, an individual higher in personal religiosity is more likely to engage in spiritual activities, such as praying in private. However, only personal spirituality or religiosity is associated with high levels of acculturation (van Klingereren & Spierings, 2020). For those who adhere to external forms of religiosity, their religious community serves as a reinforcer of social norms and values. This makes it more challenging for an individual to deviate from the norms and values of their religious community, for fear of alienation and exclusion. However, those individuals who adhere to personal religiosity, but are less active in the religious community can integrate the Western norms and values of their new cultures, such as gender equality, without fearing judgment by the religious community (Diehl & Koenig, 2009; Kogan & Weismann, 2019 as cited in van Klingereren & Spierings, 2020).

To study the impact of religiosity on a woman's likelihood of integrating successfully into Western European culture, van Klingereren and Spierings (2020), analyzed data from the

“2000 Families” project about the migration histories of Turkish people who had temporarily or permanently moved to Western Europe beginning in the 1960s. In this sample, women who practiced personal religiosity could identify with their religious/spiritual heritage while also adopting European values of equality and gender roles. In contrast, women who practiced external, communal religiosity continued to abide by norms and values that were strongly influenced by their religious traditions. In other words, their beliefs on gender-based roles within the home and society were sustained and reinforced by others within their religious community.

Notwithstanding, religiosity can provide strong coping mechanisms for men and women when dealing with the difficult circumstances of migration (Hirad et al., 2023) Refugees are likely to attribute their challenging situations to the will of God or to a pre-determined destiny. Some participants expressed a feeling of God being with them and a constant feeling of not being alone. When feeling isolated, beliefs about the presence of God provided them with comfort and a sense of control.

Trauma in the Premigration Contexts and Resilience

A person’s premigration exposure to traumatic events will have an impact on their ability to adapt once they have resettled into a new society. Examining the histories of 1,509 refugee applicants who relocated to Australia over a four-year period between 2013 to 2017, Fogen, Berle, and Steele (2020) found that 91.5% of respondents reported experiencing at least one form of premigration exposure to trauma, such as harsh living conditions, war and conflict, violence, imprisonment and/or kidnapping, political and/or religious persecution, natural disasters, or other non-specified forms of trauma. For many refugees, traumatic events are the primary reason for fleeing their country. For example, refugees from South Sudan seek to avoid being forcibly recruited by rebel groups who fight the Northern government (Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham,

2010). Refugees from Myanmar flee to avoid religious persecution (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). Refugees from Syria flee to escape an escalating civil war (de Smet et al., 2019).

In a research study of 83 Middle Eastern asylum-seeking refugees in Albania, Fino et al. (2020) identified 17 different forms of potential trauma a refugee person could have been exposed to in addition to their length of stay in a refugee camp. Their findings indicated that the more forms of trauma an individual was exposed to, the more likely they were to receive a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder and other comorbid psychiatric disorders. The length of time a refugee person spends living in a refugee camp before settling in a host country is also related to stress and trauma. However, how these traumatic events impact a refugee person's ability to positively adapt to a new society will depend, in part, on their overall levels of trait resilience. The results of this study suggested that levels of trait resilience were negatively correlated with post-traumatic stress disorders and psychiatric morbidity. Refugees who exhibited high trait resilience tended to utilize an engagement coping style, rather than a disengaged coping style (Fino et al., 2020).

For individuals with higher levels of trait resilience and engagement coping styles, previous traumatic experiences served as a driving force for positive adjustment to their new societies. They overtly compared the challenges experienced in their countries of origin or refugee camps with the ease and reassurance provided by their new host country. For example, one 53-year-old Iraqi Christian acknowledged that leaving everything behind was a difficult and traumatic experience, yet the peace of mind and feeling of safety was "invaluable" and made the initial adaptation struggles all worthwhile (Hirad et al., 2023). In sum, their engagement coping styles were associated with more constructive and adaptive behaviours (Fino et al., 2020).

Migrating with Children

Refugee people who migrated with spouses or children also experienced more positive adaptation and acculturation. Walther et al. (2021) summarized the desires of these refugee parents, highlighting their wish to provide new opportunities to their children, to remain hopeful for their children, and to reduce stress for their children. Through these responsibilities, they experienced new beginnings and found meaning in their new lives in the host country. These parents also conveyed that they were able to adopt a resilient attitude when they thought of their children's future. One of the parents stated that post-migration, he frequently felt utterly exasperated, discouraged, and hopeless. During these moments, the participant stated that he would often focus on his child and his role as a father and would then make the conscious decision to look beyond his negative feelings and focus on the positive aspects of migration. For refugee parents, their children can serve as protective factors to positive psychological adjustment.

Nevertheless, refugee mothers experienced significantly more stress and challenges in adaptation compared with non-mothers and men. Once resettled into a new country, refugee mothers tend to focus primarily on the needs of the family. For example, they may remain at home assisting their children in their adaptation to school, finding extracurriculars, accompanying children to different appointments, and handling home and domestic care, while fathers are more likely to seek employment to support the family financially (Hou & Beiser, 2006; Beiser & Hou, 2000). While their supportive roles within their families enabled their children to thrive, they often lost opportunities for language acquisition and meaningful employment during the first decade of relocation (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2018; Hou & Beiser, 2006b; Hou et al., 2016; Kaida et al., 2020; Beiser & Hou, 2000). One of the Syrian refugees

who resettled in Germany expressed that because she was a mother and homemaker to her small children, she was exempt and excluded from attending weekday language classes; to compensate, she had to attend language classes on the weekends (Walther et al., 2021).

Postmigration Contexts

Existing Levels of Education and Language

The inability to attain language proficiency is one of the main acculturative stresses associated with refugeeism (Yun et al., 2021). For many refugees, prior mastery of the language of the host country alleviates the burden of having to learn a new language, and it is one of the most impactful predictors of quicker integration and employment upon entering a country as a refugee claimant (Feeney, 2000; DeVortez et al., 2004 as cited in Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). A longitudinal survey evaluating refugee integration in Denver, Colorado conducted by Lichtenstein and Puma (2019), English language skills was one of the highest predictors of employment after 10 years of resettlement in their new country. Those with higher English proficiency were employed in more stable and better-paying jobs than those who needed to learn the language. For women, the language-employment gap was more pronounced than their male counterparts, even 10 years after resettlement (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019). In an earlier study conducted in Canada, the English-language gap was also more pronounced in women despite evidence the affordance of English language fluency is much higher for women than men (Hou and Beiser, 2006).

Previous levels of education and English language attainment have been identified by multiple studies as an important determinant of a refugee person's sense of belonging, employment, and overall acculturation into Canadian society (Hou et al., 2016.; Kaida et al., 2020; Beiser & Hou, 2000). For women, these findings underline a strong disadvantage in the

female community, especially those who enter Canada as married women. For older or married women, the overall levels of previous education attainment are significantly lower than for men. In the Canadian sample, women were roughly half as likely to attain a certain level of language proficiency compared to men, however, these findings appeared to be entirely mitigated by previous levels of education and exposure to English (Hou & Beiser, 2006).

Social Support and Perceived Discrimination

Upon arrival in their host country, refugee and asylum-seeking people have a strong need to be included in a community. Among one of the most impactful factors of successful adaptation is the perception of community and belongingness (Ahmad et al., 2021; Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021; Kohli & Fineran, 2020; Walther et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2021) Community support can be extended by those from similar cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious communities as refugees or asylum-seekers.

However, community support from individuals in the host country is particularly crucial because it has the potential to mitigate discrimination toward refugees and asylum-seekers. In a study that included 112 refugees, asylum-seeking, and internally displaced Muslim migrants, Sheikh et al. (2022) assessed the levels of trauma exposure, perceived discrimination, social connectedness, and posttraumatic cognitions among refugee people. The participants reported high levels of discrimination toward newcomers based on religious (88%), ethnic (80%), and racial (67%) identities. Nevertheless, the researchers hypothesized that a sense of social connectedness with other individuals within the host society – regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion – would lead to positive adaptation, while perceived discrimination would increase negative posttraumatic cognitions. The results of the study confirmed that for the refugees/migrants who have experienced trauma prior to the migration process, the feeling of

social connectedness significantly mitigated symptoms of PTSD and subsequent posttraumatic cognitions. Therefore, having opportunities to create bonds with individuals who are born in or long-term citizens of the new society can foster the individual's perception and experience of social harmony and positive adaptation while significantly lowering levels of stress-related symptoms. In cases where the individual did not report measures that qualified for PTSD, social connectedness showed strong negative associations with post-traumatic cognitions. Moreover, perceived levels of discrimination were significantly associated with posttraumatic cognitions (Sheikh et al., 2022).

For refugee mothers, having a strong sense of community and belongingness is highly correlated with subsequent adaptations. In an American study by Kohli and Fineran (2020), Somali refugee mothers reported feelings of powerlessness that were exacerbated by being in a host country where they were deprived of the support of extended families, and loss of employment status. In the host country, struggling with the language barriers increased the level of social isolation. Having to adapt to new parenting styles and discipline strategies made them feel as though they were powerless and unable to meet the needs of their children (Kohli & Fineran, 2020). For the women in this study, many had begun to build relationships within their cultural community located in the United States to help bridge the gap between the loss of support with the increase in responsibilities which has been identified as a common experience among refugees from diverse backgrounds according to the findings of Hiram et al. (2023). Nevertheless, despite their connections with the local community, women continued to express struggling to understand the rules for parenting and effective strategies within their current communities (Kohli & Fineran, 2020).

In a study assessing the perspectives of 27 elderly Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants who have migrated to Canada, the participants expressed that beyond having same-culture social support, it was important to have meaningful and non-judgemental exchanges with the Canadian-born population. Beyond supporting newcomers to learn the language, social connection could build mutual trust and foster social harmony (Ahmad et al., 2021). While some participants believed that this was up to the individuals to take charge and immerse themselves in the host society, other individuals believed that having workplace and government initiatives, such as diversity inclusion training, could offset the fear among many refugees that they are perceived as an increased risk of terrorist attacks within the host nation (Wike, Strokes, Simmons, 2016 as cited in Frotveit & Anna, 2021). In a four-year longitudinal study that included Sudanese refugees in Australia (Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010), respondents expressed that a wariness of discrimination and being erroneously associated with terrorism are likely to hinder a refugee person's positive adaptation. Twenty percent of respondents reported that they had experienced discrimination and were denied employment based on their race, language abilities, or ethnicity.

Language Acquisition

Mastering the language of the host country is a key driver of refugees' positive adaptation and integration. In a study conducted by Yun et al. (2021), Iraqi women who settled in the United States reported high levels of acculturative stress related to language acquisition. Women who are refugees often enter the host country with lower levels of pre-existing education than men, and they are also likely to be influenced by cultural traditions that expect them to focus more on the needs of their families. Even though many countries offer language instruction for newcomers, women's participation in language classes are significantly lower than men,

because they do not have access to secure childcare services that would allow them to benefit from these language classes (Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021). In some cases, it is also expressed as a cultural expectation that women should deprioritize language learning and stay home to raise their children (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, women who were able to attend language classes reported that their language teachers, especially those who are accepting and supportive, play a pivotal role in facilitating their positive adaptation and integration into the host country (Walther et al., 2021). Whether they are language teachers from government-sponsored language classes or individuals in the community who volunteer their time to work with newcomers, they are impactful in helping refugees and newcomers become proficient in the host country's language, and also in community building (Walther et al., 2021).

Support In Entering the Labour Market

Regardless of gender, work security and professional recognition have been linked with a refugee person's positive adaptation. Syrian refugees reported that their employment and work helped to distract them from trauma by keeping themselves "busy" (Walther et al., 2021). Similarly, in Ahmad's study (2015) older Tamil participants stated that finding work that matched their educational credentials, skills, and interests had a lifelong impact on their economic situation (Ahmad et al., 2021, p.5). Unfortunately, language barriers and/or unrecognized credentials can be insurmountable obstacles (Hirad et al., 2023), despite having government policies that promote work placement, acknowledgement of education and professional credentials (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Researchers who interviewed immigrants from Tamil, Middle Eastern, and African backgrounds report the newcomers' frustration around entering the labour market (Ahmad et al.,

2021; Hiran et al., 2023; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010; Yun et al., 2021). Many individuals who previously held high-paying professional jobs in their home countries were unable to be recognized for their credentials and experience in their new country (Hiran et al., 2023). Refugee women continue to experience greater barriers than men due to the types of jobs available and access. For example, research by Frotveit and Shkodych (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee women were disproportionately affected by the loss of employment during this time because they held low-security, contractual work in the service industry (Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021).

In Kaida et al.'s analysis (2020) of the long-term economic integration of resettled refugees based on the type of sponsorship, there's evidence to suggest that those who are sponsored by private, non-governmental organizations received better short- and long-term economic support than government-sponsored refugees. Private sponsors, such as religious/church communities, also serve as a community context for socialization, acculturation, language learning and employment bridges. In contrast, government-sponsored refugees must rely on hard-to-reach government employees for assistance (Kaida et al., 2020; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017).

Chapter 2: The Present Study

Context

Successful adaptation to a new society is impacted by an individual's resilience, as well as many pre-migration and post-migration factors. Continued research is needed to further understand the complex, multi-dimensional interactions of these factors so that policies and services can be implemented to maximize refugees' full integration into the host country. There is no doubt that the host country holds an important role in integration and assisting refugees to learn the new languages, find adequate employment, and provide a welcoming social environment. The degree to which refugees feel welcomed and fully included in the society will impact their motivation to participate fully within it.

Women refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly those with young children, are likely to be at higher risk of marginalization (Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019a) because of disadvantages in language acquisition and employment. More support is needed in the development of language proficiency, in finding employment, in finding affordable and reliable childcare, and in building social connections. In Quebec, it is generally recommended that children below the age of 12 require adult supervision and care (educlois, 2023). As a result, refugee women with young children may encounter additional barriers to social integration. There is a consensus among researchers that creating initiatives that support refugee women will have short- and long-term consequences on their adaptation and overall functioning.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to document the lived-experiences and process of adaptation of refugee women who arrived in Canada with their young children who are under the age of 12 years. The specific goals of the present study were four-fold:

- (1) to provide the space for refugee women and mothers share their needs and experiences since their arrival in Canada,
- (2) to explore the areas in which they feel adequately supported, as well as areas where they have unmet needs,
- (3) to understand how their unmet needs impact their daily lives,
- (4) and to document their worries and concerns for their future in Montreal. The results of this study aimed to shed light on the nature and scope of the support system that could mitigate their short-term and long-term stressors and risks.

Methodology

Phenomenological Research Approach

The current study adopted a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is primarily concerned with comprehending the profoundness and significance of individual experiences. The essence of phenomenological investigation lies in grasping the essence of participants' lived encounters, without attempting to construct a theory based on these experiences. The emphasis is on understanding the experiences and knowledge of the participants themselves (Hays & Singh, 2012). The process of phenomenological research begins with looking at the subjective experiences of each participant before searching for common themes across them. In the current research study, the student researcher was interested in examining how women and mothers entering Quebec interpret their experiences and identifying salient commonalities among the participants.

Participants

After obtaining approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Concordia University (see Appendix 7), eight female refugees were recruited to participate in the present

study. Their inclusion criteria were: (1) age of 18 years or older; (2) having entered Canada as a refugee; (3) currently parenting their minor child(ren) under the age of 12 years; (4) able to communicate in English and/or French and/or is comfortable with the presence of an interpreter. They were recruited by convenience sampling and word-of-mouth. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, in order to protect their privacy.

Sources of Data

Demographic Questionnaire

The participants were asked to fill out a 15-item demographic questionnaire that included questions about the participant's age, the age(s) of their children, their levels of education, their country of origin, the neighbourhoods they currently live in, and their current social support circle (Appendix 2a, b, and c). The original questionnaire had three copies, one in English, one in French, and one in Spanish. Additional translations would have been made based on participant needs.

Resilience Questionnaire

Each participant was given the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA), a 28-item questionnaire aimed to assess resilience by taking into account the participants' family, social, and individual contexts (Appendix 3a, b, c, and d). The RSA is considered to be an appropriate tool for assessing resiliency and exists in several languages (Morote et al., 2017). The participants had the option to complete the assessment in English, French, Arabic, and Spanish.

Semi-Structured Interview

The student researcher interviewed each of the participants individually, following a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix 4a, b, and c). The questions in the interview were divided into 5 major themes:

- (1) What are the participants' experiences related to their adaptation to the language, education, and cultural differences?
- (2) What are their expectations and experience related to employment or seeking employment;
- (3) What kind of community support is available to them, and who is providing the support;
- (4) What kind of social-service support is available to them, and from which social-service agency
- (5) What are their parenting experiences since arriving in Canada, including how to find appropriate daycare/school placement, teacher-parent relationships, discipline strategies, family life and relationship with their children
- (6) What is their overall level of satisfaction since they have been living in Canada? What works and what is/are the continuous struggle(s)? What is their stress level on an "average day" (Appendix 5). Participants will be provided with the image of a thermometer with a rating scale from 10-100 whereby they assessed their stress on a typical day.

Each interview was expected to take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours, but due to the requirement of a translator for many of the interviews, it was more common that they took about 2 to 2.5 hours. At the participant's request, the interview could have been conducted over two consecutive days or in one day, depending on the availability and preference of each participant.

The participants were given the list of interview questions at least 48 hours before the interview. This allowed them to have time to read and reflect on the questions, with the assumption that they would be more forthcoming if they had time to reflect on their experience prior to the interview.

Procedures

When potential participants expressed interest in the study, the student-researcher contacted the potential participant via email to further discuss the implications of participating in the study. In the conversation, the student-researcher emphasized that participation is voluntary, and consent could be withdrawn at any moment. If the potential participant affirmed her interest and willingness to participate in the study, the student-researcher proceeded to make arrangements for a time and place to: (1) sign the written consent form, (2) complete the demographic questionnaire, (3) complete the Resilience Scale for Adults (4) to receive the list of questions for the semi-structured interviews.

Finally, a list of health and mental resources was shared with the participants (see Appendix 6).

Analysis of Data

Interviews

A thematic, inductive approach was used to analyze the interview data. Consistent with the objectives of this phenomenological study, a set of codes were derived from the interviews to organize and cluster common themes shared by the participants about their lived experiences.

First, the interviews were transcribed. Second, after a thorough overview of the verbatim, a set of codes was identified. Each code represented a shared idea that corresponded to the five major themes of the semi-structured interview questions.

Questionnaires

Given the small sample size, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the participants' responses on the Resilience Scale for Adults and the Stress Thermometer.

Chapter 3: Results

Introduction to the Participants

Ayan

Ayan entered Canada with her husband and two children in 2018. Her husband was a Palestinian who lived in Lebanon as a refugee; as a result, their children, born in Lebanon, could not obtain Lebanese citizenship despite their mother's citizenship. Prior to coming to Canada, the family of four lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Ayan worked as a physiotherapist and her husband was employed as a licensed nurse practitioner. Their decision to come to Quebec was twofold. Firstly, Ayan felt strongly that her children deserved the right to citizenship, something they were denied from birth. Secondly, her oldest child was diagnosed with Level-3 Autism Spectrum Disorder, requiring intensive and costly care and therapies that were more accessible in Canada than in Lebanon or the UAE.

During her childhood, Ayan learned both French and English in school, which was particularly advantageous for her in Montreal, Quebec. Since arriving in Canada, Ayan welcomed a third child in early 2023. At the time of the data collection for this study, she was her family's primary breadwinner working at the Amazon corporation. Her husband was enrolled in "Francisation" courses, largely because he did not have the language proficiency to be employed.

In May 2024, Ayan and her family received Canadian citizenship. However, when she actively participated in this study, she was a refugee.

Mayren

Mayren arrived in Canada in the summer of 2023 with her then 6-year-old child while she was pregnant with her second child. She is the only participant in the study to have arrived in

Canada while pregnant. Mayren has a degree in business and worked in foreign trade before her migration. Her oldest child, now 7, was born in Mexico.

Mayren is a Mexican who comes from a devout Christian family. At the time of her interview, she was two months postpartum— there is no doubt that the demands of having a newborn exacerbated the challenges in adapting to life in her new country. Nevertheless, Mayren frequently discusses religion and God in her interviews, emphasizing positivity and gratitude for her safety in Canada.

At the time of her participation in this study, Mayren was a full-time mother, which prevented her from working or attending full-time “Francisation” courses. Instead, she used the popular application “Duolingo” to learn French. Mayren is optimistic about her future in Canada. She dreams of owning her own home, having a successful career for her husband, ensuring a good education for her children, and establishing her own beauty business. However, she has not yet met with a judge or been granted permission to stay in Canada, which she identifies as her greatest source of stress.

Choco

Choco is a mother of one from Colombia and the only participant in this study with a distant relative in Montreal, Canada. Before moving to Canada in 2022, Choco and her husband lived in the United States for three years. As migrants without documents, Choco worked in a restaurant doing various jobs, including work as a cook, cashier, and server. Her husband's cousin, already established in Montreal, has been instrumental in helping her find housing, co-sign documents, secure her child's education, and provide a strong support network for her and her husband. This cousin and their family often offer childcare and respite, making a significant difference in Choco's life.

In Columbia, Choco was a laboratory assistant and had her own catering business on the weekends. In her interviews, she frequently compares the employment opportunities for immigrants in the countries, the United States and Canada, stating that finding employment was easier as a non-English speaker in the United States than it has been as a non-English/French speaker in Canada. At the time of her interview, Choco has not yet been given a court date to meet with a judge. She identifies this as her most significant stressor, explaining that lawyer fees are costly, and she feels her lack of confirmation prevents her from properly establishing a life in Canada.

Choco expressed a highly adaptable mindset and stated that she accepted that her prior professional training in Columbia would not be recognized in Quebec, but she is willing to do “whatever it takes” to support her family.

Maria

Maria comes from Venezuela, where she and her spouse were both university professors— Maria taught Law, while her spouse taught Economics. She is a mother of four children and a stepmother to one. In 2014 and 2015, she and her husband attempted to obtain study permits for Quebec, Canada, where they aspired to learn French, but they were denied on both occasions. Education is important for Maria, who believes the right to use one's intelligence is fundamental to human dignity. Throughout her interview, Maria emphasizes that the decision to leave Venezuela was made collectively by both parents and children, not out of a desire to abandon their home country, but for the human rights to express themselves freely.

Maria explains their philosophical disagreements with the Venezuelan government compelled them to move to Canada. Initially, the family fled to the United States, but later, they sought asylum in Canada, crossing the border on foot from Maine to Quebec in November 2022.

Maria is the only participant who entered Canada this way; she recalled the day she arrived as the moment she fell in love with the country. At the time when she participated in the study, Maria and her family had not yet been granted a court date or permission to stay in Canada permanently.

Maya

Maya fled violence in Mexico, seeking safety for herself and her toddler in Canada. She is a single mother from Mexico and the only participant in this study without a spouse or an actively involved father for her child. During her interview, she repeatedly referred to the challenge of balancing the financial strain of single-parenthood and the necessity of learning French. Although initially attending full-time “Francisation” courses, she had to leave the program to find better employment due to high rent costs, daily living expenses, and legal fees.

Despite being in Canada for less than a year at the time of her interview, Maya has become proficient in English, to the extent that she was able to be interviewed in English. She feels at home in Montreal and hopes to be granted permanent residency. She aspires to attend university and earn a degree in Social Work. Overall, Maya is grateful for the sense of security, the perceived lack of corruption, and the general orderliness she experiences in Canada.

Tina

Tina is a mother of two children from Venezuela. Before arriving in Canada in 2019, she and her family lived in the United States for four years; therefore, her children are fluent in English. Since coming to Canada, Tina and her husband have separated, but they maintain a positive relationship, and he remains her primary source of support.

Tina had to move four times before settling in a good neighbourhood and a stable environment for her family. They are happy to be living in Canada, feeling much safer compared to Venezuela and the United States, where Tina feared the prevalent gun violence.

One of Tina's struggles is fostering a sense of Venezuelan identity in her children, who have spent most of their lives outside their home country. Tina hopes to receive a court date soon, as her main concern is fully starting her life in Canada, where she has been since 2019.

Laura

Laura comes from Colombia, where she obtained her degree in Engineering and worked as a sanitary engineer. She first settled in Hamilton, Ontario, with her husband in 2019, where she gave birth to her first child. As such, she is the only participant who arrived in Canada without children. Following the birth of her child, Laura and her husband moved to Quebec City, Quebec, to be near her husband's brother and his family.

Laura has become fluent in English and French without attending formal language courses; she achieved her bilingualism through popular culture, news, radio, and television. In Quebec City, where she currently lives, Laura has opened her home daycare, where she cares for her child and five other children during the day. She is currently expecting her second child. Laura feels at home in Canada and has no serious concerns about raising her children here. She believes she has integrated well into society and feels generally welcomed in Quebec and Canadian society. Her greatest hope is to see her family in Colombia, who have yet to meet her first child due to repeated visa denials. Otherwise, she reports that her stress levels are very low.

Estrellita

Estrellita is from Mexico, where she worked as an auxiliary nurse. She is a mother of two children, and her husband's earlier arrival uniquely facilitated her journey to Canada. He settled

in Canada ahead of the family, securing an apartment, clothing, furniture, and stable employment. When Estrellita and her children joined him in the fall of 2023, she found the transition smooth and relatively stress-free.

Estrellita attends Francisation courses full-time and has completed 5 out of 8 levels. Before leaving Mexico, she made a conscious effort to bring all her academic records to Canada, and she is in the process of having her previous degree in nursing recognized by the I'Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec; she is eager to pass her nursing exam to resume her profession. Motivated to join the workforce, Estrellita keeps herself busy with Francisation classes, volunteering at her Francisation center for various workshops and events, and caring for her family. Like Laura, Estrellita also self-reports her stress levels as significantly lower than the other participants; she attributes her relatively low-stress life to being a full-time student and caring for her family, but she expects that her stress level might increase when she begins working full-time.

Estrellita is the only participant who expressed concerns about parenting in Canada. She has heard anecdotal stories of police removing children from their families, which has led to a recurring theme in her interviews about the fear of being too strict with her children. Moreover, she is concerned about social norms around gender and sexuality. Despite this fear, she is happy to be in Canada and is determined to establish a successful nursing career.

A New Beginning

Arriving in Quebec

The interviews conducted in the current study did not delve deeply into the participants' specific experiences of entering Quebec, Canada. Nevertheless, two of the participants' encounters with border agents at the Canadian border were notably impactful.

Maria, who crossed on foot at the Maine-Quebec border with her family, felt protected by the border agents who placed them in a police car and escorted them to a refugee center:

My first impression was this feeling of complete freedom. You get the feeling that everything was going to change. I felt calm in entering Canada. [...] when we came here and saw the cops and the police officers [...] we felt a sense of security and protection, and we felt supported in the process [...] one of the officials [...] turned up the music because he said, 'I think this will calm you down.' He said it in the little Spanish he knew. That's where Canada won my heart

Maria's positive experience is echoed by other participants like Estrellita, who emphasized the emotions they felt upon arrival: "I felt safe and protected."

In contrast, Maya, who entered Canada by air and arrived at Montreal's YUL airport with her son, was met by an immigration officer who attempted to persuade them to withdraw their claims and return home. Maya found this particularly striking as the personnel was of Latino origin:

[The man] was Chilean, Latin American. He is the one that made us feel so bad at the airport. And I told him, 'Why? Why did you do that? You're [also] not Canadian. You don't know the story of every person. I know [there are] too many [Latin American immigrants to Canada], but you don't have the right to do that.' But you know, it's his job. He has to do that because he was trying to persuade people to go back. It's his job.

Most women had mixed emotions when they arrived in Canada. Among the negative feelings, the women were most preoccupied with their immigration/refugee status in Canada. The challenges of leaving their families, abandoning a successful career, and starting a new life in a foreign country were juxtaposed with positive emotions and hope for a better future:

I was nervous and very afraid, but I was also very excited for the life that I was waiting for. – Maya

Canada was very big and I felt very small, especially regarding language and the ability to communicate with other people. This was emphasized by being pregnant and needing medical care. I felt alone and small. – Mayren

Facing a New Life

Overall, the women in this study were generally satisfied by the services offered in Quebec. When the interviewer asked if there was anything they needed, all participants emphasized that they were already very grateful for all that was offered.

God bless Canada because I was so sad when I came, and I was telling my mom [...] that they've given me so much health [care] even if we stay or not. I'm so grateful and God bless Canada for all the help they've given. - Mayren

I think [the services] are very good. I don't know [...] in my country, they will never help you. I feel this is too much. [...] I think it's everything. I am so thankful for that. It's too much help. – Maya

Upon entry into Canada, asylum-seekers receive the Brown Paper and the Welcome Guide, which list resources for medical care, including prenatal, perinatal and pediatric care (Appendix 6). In Quebec, asylum-seekers have access to a French language and culture programs, commonly known as “Francisation” courses. Five women, Choco, Maria, Maya, Tina, and Estrellita, have accessed the Francisation program, but all women, except for Estrellita, needed to stop the program due to their financial constraints.

Like many asylum-seekers who do not have family or extended-family support, they also rely on non-governmental organizations. The participants reported –several resource centers , such as Praid, Centre Alpha Lira, Caci, and food banks in religious communities , as having provided much-needed social and language support and food resources (Appendix 6). Three of the women relied heavily on Praid. For instance, Ayan, who entered Canada with her special needs child, accessed medical services and social follow-ups and obtained a social worker from the CLSC through Praid. The organization also facilitated referrals to the Montreal Children’s Hospital for her child’s specialized care and respite services for herself and her husband.

Maria attended career and language workshops offered at Centre Alpha Lira; she also credited this Centre for helping her find her first apartment in Montreal. Every participant in the current study has used food banks at some point, and 4 of the participants – Maria, Choco, Mayren, and Estrellita – continue to rely on food banks on a regular basis.

Adaptation and Integration

We Are Safe Here!

Most participants came to Canada to seek a safer life for themselves and their families.

As such, the joy and peace they feel are palpable:

I feel so happy to be here. We are so safe – Maya

You can just go out and [there is no need to] worry when you're out with your kids. You don't need to worry that anything's going to happen and that's the most important thing. -
Mayren

Entering here [...] we felt supported [...]; we felt a sense of security and protection. -
Maria

Choco appreciates the orderliness of Canadian society to the extent that she feels safe to allow her children more independence:

When you're waiting for the bus or waiting for the little doll in the light to be able to walk across the street or go from one way to the other [...] people will stop at the stop sign. People wait [...] to cross the street. [...] When you go to a park you would be calm and you will feel it's okay. [...] It was the first time for [my son] to school by himself this last Friday [...] and I felt safe, I felt like it's okay for him to go. I feel security over here, that's a big deal!

Caught in the Struggle – Housing, Income, Employment and Language Proficiency

Although all participants had found appropriate housing at the time of their interviews and they were no longer living in refugee shelters, the search for adequate and affordable

housing was a major source of stress. Criteria for suitable housing, according to the parents of this study, are related to their children's development and safety:

When you have a child who needs to jump [and] when you have a baby who is just started to walk and they need to [move] freely without having a neighbor knock on the ceiling, to say, “Hey, [expletive]” things like that. – Ayan

Without access to government-subsidized housing, refugee claimants who enter Canada without reference letters, credit histories, or financial sponsors immediately face a startling reality:

It was hard to find [housing] because [landlords] don't rent easily, and of course you don't have a history or credit score. – Maya

Choco, the only participant who has a cousin living in Montreal, was able to lease an apartment by having her cousin co-sign the lease:

We were looking for an apartment, but they wouldn't give us the contract or anything, so we had to put it under [our cousin's] name.

Mayren and Maya turned to social media, such as Preta Apartamentos y Habitaciones on Facebook, where they were able to find a safe home. However, as newcomers who are unfamiliar with the city and the modes of transportation, the process can be frustrating. One participant, Ayan, was directed to see apartments:

They told me, ‘Hey, there's this apartment that is empty, go and visit the place.’ [...] It was horrible [...] We were new to the area and [...] didn't have a companion with us. All they would give you is an address [...]. I was going on the bus for two hours sometimes to find a mess and come back. And it was very horrible. So, this was a waste of time.

The lack of affordable housing also means that rents are unregulated and subject to sharp increases. Like many urban cities, rent in Montreal has skyrocketed since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ayan notes in her interview that she does not know how she would have been able to find an appropriate home had she arrived in Canada today, given the elevated cost of housing since her arrival in 2019:

I believe now it is much worse. [...] If I want to move now, I don't have options [...] the [rent] would be double. And [the landlords] will [choose] because you have one appointment, [but] there are 10 people in line waiting for [it].

Sadly, most asylum-seekers are further penalized because they are unable to secure well-paid jobs to offset the high cost of housing. Their plight is exacerbated by language issues. The participants in this study all felt that not being able to speak French limits them to low-paying jobs, even though they all had at least some form of post-secondary education with professions in the medical field, hard sciences, Law, business, etc. Choco, a pharmacist in her native country, said she knew that upon arrival, she would be asked to work in jobs that were outside of her field of expertise and that this is just a reality of immigration:

When you leave your country, you leave with the idea that “I'll work where I can work”. [...] I knew I was not going to do what I was doing in Colombia. [...] I'll do whatever it takes. [...] Because it was all about survival, and I just have to survive. – Choco

Ayan, Laura, and Tina also accepted that they had to lower their expectations about finding employment that matched their professional qualifications and degrees. Tina summed up their predicament, “We work in whatever we can!”

All participants acknowledged that fluency and proficiency in French are fundamental to their future success. Three of the participants – Choco, Maria and Tina, a laboratory assistant, a Law professor, and an accountant, respectively, in their native countries – experienced direct or indirect discrimination based on their refugee status, language skills, and their heritage. Choco believed that without French, she would be confined to low-paying jobs. Tina experienced direct racism when she spoke English at work:

In the last[work] place, a lot of people did not want us speaking English. They were a little bit racist, not just with Latino. [...] We came to that [work] place through [an employment agency]. There were a lot of people from different cultures, and they were racist against them as well. – Tina

Maria did not experience discrimination directly, but her husband did, which supported her belief that there is systemic racism toward Latin American people:

for [us] it's a common thing I've seen with the people I've spoken with, I feel like for Latinos, it's tough to find a job [regardless] of whether you know [French] or not.

Ayan, who was proficient in French and English before arriving in Quebec, also believes that her “typically Muslim name” might limit her opportunities for professional employment:

It has not been hard for me to find work. But it's been impossible to find the perfect job. [...] I worry about finding [good] jobs in the future.

Five participants enrolled in full-time French courses when they first arrived in Quebec. Nevertheless, the harsh reality of day-to-day survival blunts their efforts to improve their French. The \$230-per-week subsidy offered by the Government of Quebec to full-time Francisation students (Government of Quebec, 2024) is far from sufficient in a city where rents are high, not to mention that asylum seekers have to pay for lawyers to complete their claims. Over time, all but one discontinued due to financial constraints:

We did try. We did make an effort to learn French, but expenses were [also high] I was studying French until December [2023]. I did three levels, as I said, but we have to stop. - Choco

I want to keep studying [French] but right now I need to work because I need to cover all my expenses. - Maya

Either you have to work or you have to study. [...] We don't have enough time to do both
- Maria

Living here costs a lot. We have to pay for rent, and lawyer fees. The French courses do not pay enough for us to live. – Tina
While being fluent in French is necessary for their future in Quebec, Mayren added:

Something else that I think about a lot is: what's going to happen if [the government denies our refugee claims], then we have to save some money to be able to go back and have some money when we go back - money to survive thereafter.

An excerpt from Choco sums up the impossible choices that women like her have to make:

It's been hard to prioritize language because there's a lot of expenses and lawyers [...] and the kid and the homework [...] and the cooking and cleaning, and homework. [...] My husband also was learning French at night, but he had to stop [...] because he had to do the [housework] and take care of the child while I was working [at night]. We did try. We did make an effort to learn French but [...] if they tell us “no” we will have to leave the country so [our work and looking after the family] are our priorities right now.

In the meantime, Mayren is using “Duolingo” to learn French. Laura, Ayan, Maya and Estrellita are listening to the radio and watching television in French regularly to learn the language.

Friendship and Support Network

All women who participated in this study left behind a valuable support network: their parents and extended families:

In Venezuela [...] our families and friends and siblings were all really close and we would [help each other] whenever or whatever happens, everyone's there to help you. [Here] we are doing everything on our own. – Maria

Maya, Choco, Tina, and Estrellita used to rely, on a daily or near-daily basis, on support from their children’s grandmothers and/or aunts:

My house was really close to my in-laws. Also, my mom was living an hour’s drive away, so whenever [my child] was sick she would come and spend one or two nights with us to take care of him. So yeah, we were supported in every single way because we were really close to family there. – Choco

Laura, who was pregnant when she sought asylum in Quebec, was pained by the fact that her parents had not yet met her child – their first grandchild. As an asylum-seeker, Laura is

unable to return to visit her parents, and her parents' applications for tourist visas to come here were twice denied. She recounted the moment when she had realized that she would be here alone, without the support of her parents:

All my life I want to be a mother so when I knew that I pregnant I was very happy. But I want to share that happiness with my family. [At the same time], I [also received] the papers to come here. I [was thinking that my parents would not see my child being born], six or seven months [ahead], it was very hard for me that night. Yeah. I cry a lot. – Laura

Two participants, Mayren and Ayan, did not experience the loss of family support as acutely as the other participants because they lived farther away from family before entering Canada. Nevertheless, Ayan states in her interview that the kind of care her special-needs child requires is intensive and that she feels the cumulative stress stemming from the many facets of her life, "It's stressful, and we're alone. It's so hard to be away from our family."

Being far from their families and extended families, these women are struggling with a minimal social network. Maria, who worked weekends, would bring her children to work with her each weekend because she had no other form of childcare. Not having made many new friends, these women do not know who to turn to in times of need:

I haven't really managed to make any friends. Maybe more like acquaintances ... There is a woman I met at the [refugee] shelter [...], I don't like to ask [...] but if it's completely necessary I will [ask her]. But I will try not to. – Maya

I have nobody here, I know that if I want to go out I have to take the children. And if I want to work again, I have nobody here [to help me] – Estrellita

Ayan recalled her sadness giving birth to her third child alone, because her husband was the only person who could stay at home with their older children when she went into labour:

I went into labor by myself [because] I didn't feel comfortable calling anyone [...] So [my husband] had to stay with the kids. [...] I gave birth by myself, I was all alone until

the next day. This is a situation where I really needed support, and I didn't know where to go or who to contact.

Sometimes friendship develops from the shared experience as coworkers or as new arrivals to the city taking Francisation courses. Mayren, who shares an apartment with other newcomers, identified her roommates as potential support persons:

[...] friends, I don't have yet but I have my roommates. [...] We have a good time. And we're together. We have dinner together. We keep each other company.

The Supportive Role of Religion and Spiritualism

Affiliation with a religious group varied among participants. Five out of eight participants cited their religious affiliation to a Catholic church as an important source of support. Among them, Mayren and Estrellita both attend church service twice weekly; Maria attends church service every Sunday, and Choco and Tina are eager to find the right church and community:

I've been to a couple of Christian churches. I'm looking for a place that has that kind of religion here in Montreal – Tina

We're not part of a community. However, we are trying to find a community where my 12-year-old son can [go through his Confirmation] – Choco

Ayan and Laura both do not regularly attend religious services. Ayan is a devout and practicing Muslim who is guided by the belief that “[...] this whole planet belongs to our creator”. She and her family used to go to the Mosque when she lived in UAE, but they no longer do so for fear of the hate and violence toward Muslims in Canada, “I worried about [our] physical safety, that [we will be] attacked as Muslims.”

Affiliation with a church is important because it provides not only spiritual comfort but also the much-needed social support. Maya, who identified as spiritually religious, goes to a Spanish-speaking church because it was a way to connect with other Latinos and to build social

network. Mayren attends church service twice a week and attends a bible study group. This allows her to meet more individuals who she and her family can rely on for support, “At the church, they help us a lot with whatever we need. They are always there to help.”

Despite differences in their religious practice, many participants highlighted the supportive role of religion in their adaptation process. Faith provided a source of strength, comfort, and community amidst the challenges of resettlement:

From the bottom of my heart. I think that God has given me the strength to go on. [God] will always be that strength in me. He has given me hope. He has given me inner peace. He has given me trust in what I'm doing. I think like we as human beings always [need to] have something [we can depend on]. For me that certainty is my family, but [my driving force] is God, for sure. - Maria

Mayren believes that “Without God, I would be nothing”. Choco uses a Spanish proverb, “God squeezes you but would never choke you” to describe how she feels protected by the presence of God; to emphasize this, she said, “God does not give you more than you can handle.”

Parenting

A shared belief among all participants is that Canada is a safe place to raise children. But what does raising children in a different country or culture mean? This is where the women have somewhat divergent views. Laura and Ayan opined that parenting style is not determined by country or culture:

I don't think it is dependent on nationality; I think it depends on personality. – Laura

[In Canada], I don't know if there is any specific Canadian [parenting style]. [...] The Arabs who live here are Canadians. [...] You see Italian-Canadians. Each community has its own. So, I don't see that there is [such as thing as] Canadian [parenting] – Ayan

Mayren, Choco, Maria, Maya, Tina, and Estrellita stated that they were not entirely sure what Canadian parenting is, because they have not befriended any Canadian or Quebecois families.

Nevertheless, based on what they have heard and through their observations, they felt quite different from “Canadian parents” in several ways:

We knew coming here we have to be more open minded because it's a completely different society. So, I have to get to know the culture first so that I can help my children.
- Maria

Discipline

Some participants noted clear differences between their discipline style and the style they observed from Canadian parents. Mayren admired “Canadian” parents for their infinite patience:

I've noticed when I go to the supermarket, how patient [Canadian parents] are! The kids are throwing tantrums and the parents waited patiently. I'm like, ‘how did they do that?’

Mayren is cautious about using some of her previous discipline tactics in Canada:

When [we] got [our] tickets to come to Canada, my younger child joking said, ‘now that we’re on our way to Canada, you can’t throw slippers at me anymore [...] Mom, you can’t hit me [in Canada]’. In Mexico we have this thing where we’d throw a slipper. I used to do that sometimes, it's common there but now my daughter says, ‘I can tell the police. You can’t do that here.’

Tina also felt the need to “Canadianize” her discipline style by becoming less disciplinarian and more mentor-like:

Of course we have to change a lot of things around because [...] it's a different country [...] We have changed; we have adapted to be a guide and a mentor for them

While Mayren and Tina may wish to embrace “Canadian parenting”, some parents were more skeptical:

I think that from such a young age [children in Canada] have so much freedom and they get to do whatever they want. I feel like parents here don't have the right to discipline their kids. – Estrellita.

I feel like there's a lot of liberty and not so much control here – Maria

Choco and Estrellita adhere to their child-centred philosophy, as they have always done:

We still follow the same norms and rules as we did [when we were living] in Colombia. But of course, when we left, he was smaller. Now he's a lot bigger. So, I think the rules and how we discipline have changed. We have to be a little more serious and rigorous about rules.[...] If there was a need to [...] be more rigid and strict, we would. But no, I don't feel [my parenting] has changed.” – Choco

We have never been parents that hit their children. We've never been like that. We try to speak more with our children. – Estrellita

Safety and Supervision

Mayren and Maria noticed that Canadian parents were not afraid to allow their children to be independent. Mayren observed that Canadian parents seemed more at ease to maintain a farther distance from their children in the park:

When I'm [at the park with my daughter], I want to see what she is doing, I don't want her to get hurt. Other parents are more like, ‘Okay, I'm going to let them play and I'm just going to let them be.’ [Canadian parents] don't worry as much [about safety].

Encouraging children’s independence by allowing them to walk to school alone was another observation that impressed Maria:

I want to take [my 13 year-old daughter] to the bus stop but she wants to walk [by herself]. It's something I have to do [because] it's something common here and I feel like I have to start trusting [...] my kid and the environment as well.

Children Integrating in Schools

Six of the participants in this study - Ayan, Mayren, Choco, Maria, Tina, and Estrellita – have school-aged children ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 10. These mothers, who play a key role in supporting their children’s school integration, reported two main preoccupations. First, they anticipated that the initial shock of moving to a new country and adapting to new social

norms would be difficult for their children. Choco's son was scolded by his teachers for hugging, touching or wanting to hold hands with his friends. She explains:

We [Colombians] are very [physically touchy...]. We have to explain to [my son] 'don't touch the girls and hug them [...]. They're not used to that.'

The second and more pervasive challenge is related to learning French. Mayren feels that there has been a lack of empathy from the teachers toward her daughter:

One day, my daughter came [home] crying because the teacher yelled at her because she didn't understand [what the teacher said].

In fact, Mayren's daughter was only in school for a short while before her schooling was disrupted by a six-week teacher strike. This was followed shortly by the Christmas and New Year holidays. Nevertheless, the teacher did not seem very understanding.

Children from two families – Tina's and Maria's – first learned English when they lived in the U.S., and they found adjusting to French school more difficult. Tina's child expresses a dislike of French and has taken a longer time to adjust to the language difference, "My oldest [son] doesn't like French and he's having a little bit more trouble learning [...]". Maria explains that, despite having been in Quebec since 2021, her school-aged children are still attending an integration class (*classe d'accueil*). Among her two children, her older daughter is more resistant to speaking French:

[My older daughter] is 13 and starting high school [in September]. [...] She can read, listen, and understand it very well, but she doesn't want to speak French. [...] Whenever she socializes [with other kids at school] she would [only] speak English. [...]

In contrast, her younger son, who is more extroverted, embraced the French language wholeheartedly and his trilingualism has earned him "super star" status among his peers:

My son tells me, ‘everyone speaks to me because [I am] the translator for everyone [...] I know English, I know French, [and] I know Spanish, so [other students and teachers] come to me and ask me to translate for everyone.’

Overall, the mothers with school-aged children are generally positive about their children’s education in Quebec. Choco, who has to guide her son to adapt to the social norms, is very impressed with the language support they have received:

...the [Francisation] program [...] helps immigrant people [to learn French]. Even [my son’s] [classe d’accueil] program is an invaluable experience for him. I feel [and] he feels very welcomed in that program

Even Ayan, who has gone through five school changes for her special needs son, has finally found a school where she is satisfied with her son’s care:

This [current] school is the best school because the principal is the best human ever. Literally, he is an amazing [and] creative [man]. And this reflects on his staff.

The participants expressed appreciation for the school and individual teachers’ efforts to communicate effectively with them using whatever resources available. None of the participants in the study reported that communication with their children’s teachers was strained, made overly difficult, or unpleasant. Technology for simultaneous translation, such as ClassDojo, facilitated Tina’s and Maria’s communication with their children’s teachers. The teachers’ willingness to communicate with the parents in English was also highlighted by Maya and Mayren:

The teachers and I are able to communicate in English as we both speak good enough English to understand one another. – Maya

I was with my husband and my husband speaks English. So then the two of us were supporting each other to speak in English with the with the teacher. – Mayren

Moreover, in Maya, Estrellita, Maria and Tina's experience, the schools had some Spanish-speaking employees, such as the children's main teachers or other teachers, who would attend meetings and act as translators for the families.

[Some] teachers would go and look for someone that spoke Spanish. Now [my oldest child's] teacher speaks a little bit of Spanish – Estrellita

Thankfully, there's a teacher in the school that speaks Spanish, so he would act as a translator – Tina

[My daughter's] teacher is from Haiti and she can speak Spanish, English and French. And she would ask [us], "do you want to communicate in English or Spanish or French?" – Maria

Fears and Concerns

While raising children to be independent may be a "good thing", five women in this study worry about the impact of freedom and choice on their children's views on gender/sexuality and legalized drug use.

Gender and sexuality. Ayan, Mayren, Maria, and Estrellita, mothers who self-identify as more religious, were worried about the more liberal views on gender and sexuality in Canadian society. Ayan and Estrellita are particularly concerned about how these topics are being taught to children in school:

[...] People from the LGBTQ community would go to schools and they would give workshops and they talk very openly to children in elementary schools, telling them that [they] can decide if they want to be a girl or a boy. I'm not okay with it." – Estrellita

The behaviour [regarding] gender identity - this is something that, coming from Lebanon and the UAE, you would rarely see – Ayan.

For Maria, becoming a parent in Canada means that she has to “get used to” the idea that her children will have different values and beliefs than her own culture and upbringing, " in terms of gender and sexuality. I think I'm working on it. I think I have to get used to it.”

Another progressive policy in Canada that worries some participants is the legalization of marijuana and open use of drugs. For Maria and Tina, who came from countries where drug-use is illegal, their primary concern and worry is for their children’s safety:

Because [Canada is] more liberal [...] there's a lot of permissive stuff that it's not legal or permitted in Venezuela. [...] There are a lot of things that I'm not used to and that I don't think are good and [I] do not accept [...] In Venezuela you don't really see [drugs] often. I'm worried of my kids falling into those [drug habits]. – Tina.

Where I come from it's not legal to use any drugs. If someone was using it, you wouldn't see it. [...] In our last apartment [here in Montreal], there was always the smell of marijuana because [one of my neighbours is] using it. I had to call the cops on him and ask him to stop because there are children around and my children would smell it. – Maria

Raising Children in a Racialized Environment. Of the 8 women, only Ayan cited persistent racial discrimination. Ayan is an Arab Muslim, and she frequently feels unwelcome because of her ethnicity and religion. When asked if she or her family attend a religious institution here in Montreal, she expressed that she does not regularly attend a mosque with her family for fear of being targeted.

Ayan felt that although she speaks fluent English and French, finding a job in her field was hard due to her typically Arab name. She worries not only about her name but also the names of her children. For example, her daughter came home from school one day and reported that a child in her class called her brother’s name “a disgusting name”:

I have concerns regarding discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, and when it comes to their names, which are clearly [Arab]. I worry sometimes [...] that they might not have equal opportunities.

Access to Medical Services

Two women, Maya and Ayan, entered the country with children who required long-term medical care and follow-ups. They are most impressed with and thankful for the services afforded to their children.

Maya arrived in Canada with her toddler son, who was born with a cleft palate. While still living in the refugee shelter, her son contracted a fungal infection. Maya was thankful that her child was able to receive immediate medical care while still living in the shelter, free of charge:

[My child] is doing a lot of speech therapy. And [the therapist] will eventually determine whether he needs one surgery or two surgeries. And thankfully for my [refugee] status [in Canada], they don't charge me anything. – Maya

Ayan's oldest child requires a range of services, including speech therapy, applied behavioural analysis therapy, and occupational therapy. Ayan relied on the Brown Paper to access medical services as soon as she arrived in Canada; the Montreal Children's Hospital immediately arranged to have her son's medical files transferred from Mexico. She reckons that the care that her son receives in Montreal would be unaffordable in the UAE or Lebanon, even when accounting for the fact that they had better-paying jobs in their fields in the UAE. In fact, access to this essential care is one of the main reasons why Ayan and her family relocated to Canada:

Having a child with disability who needs interventions, it wasn't covered by our insurance [in the UAE] So, we ended up paying for everything. And imagine, that is more expensive there than it is here. – Ayan

Mayren, who has given birth in Mexico and in Canada, spoke about her birthing experience in Canada far more favourably than that in Mexico:

When I gave birth at the hospital [in Mexico]... I was in a shared room with other people. No epidural. They did [an episiotomy]. [In Canada, my experience] was very good. They were offering me a ball that I could use to [minimize] the pain. And they were offering me things like a hot bath. [...] In Mexico, they leave you there until you give birth. So that was a positive [experience here]. Also [in Canada] my husband was with me all the time. He helped me cut the cord. It was a very beautiful experience. It was just all very beautiful.

Overall, the participants expressed that their access to medical services meets their general needs. Nevertheless, the treatment protocol for non-threatening or benign conditions in Canada often seemed cold and unhelpful. With limited or no access to family doctors, mothers turned to hospitals' emergency care for treatment, only to be dismissed. Estrellita recounted an incident that left her feeling helpless:

When we came here, [my child was sick]. We went straight to the hospital. But I left [the hospital] with no medication, nothing. They told me it was nothing serious. [...] They were not very helpful.

The long waiting time to receive services at the hospital could sometimes be exasperating:

The health [services] is [slow]. [Waiting] 4, 5, or 6 hours is hard. Because I can't find an appointment [with a doctor in a clinic], that's just [what I had to do]. That's it." – Laura

The hospital here takes so long. I had to take my daughter and we were there for hours and then they just gave her Tylenol! – Mayren

An unpleasant experience with aggressive hospital staff also left two of the participants with the impression that there is racism in Canada. Mayren, who was pregnant when she arrived in Canada, was publicly berated by hospital personnel in the hospital waiting room for not speaking French:

The Secretary was very rude to me. [...]. I was having a hard time. And she was telling me that "here we don't speak Spanish, [speak] "English" or "French". I was really crying and she was yelling at me. I [pleaded, "please understand that we just arrived, we've [only] been here a month". But she was very rude to me.

Ayan, who was very impressed with the services rendered to her son, who has disabilities, also had a very negative experience where she was insulted by a medical receptionist who was overtly hostile when she realized they were asylum seekers:

We went to [the] hospital; I cannot tell you how much I remember the look of the [receptionist] and the way she treated us. As soon as [she saw] the identification, the brown paper, the way she treated us [immediately changed] [...] Her impoliteness her rudeness toward us. I still remember it. These experiences are not only shocking and hurtful at the time, they leave a negative imprint that are long-lasting. It has been almost six years now, but I still feel that anger. Imagine, I was at the hospital four years [after the incident] and that was the first thing [that came to my mind].

Resilience and Stress

Each participant completed the Adult Resilience Scale (AMR-R), a self-report questionnaire with 28 questions. Responses are given on scale from “1” to “5”, where “1” indicates very low resilience and “5” indicates very high resilience. Participants also rated their stress level on a stress thermometer that ranged from 0 to 100, where “0” represented the lowest stress level and “100” represented the highest stress level. The findings are presented in Table 1.

All participants in the study reported at least moderate levels of perceived resilience; among them, 6 of the 8 participants also reported high to very high-stress levels. The two outliers are Laura and Estrellita, who reported the lowest levels of stress.

Several factors likely mitigated Laura’s stress level: (1) she is living in Quebec City, where the cost of living, particularly rent, is significantly lower than in Montreal; (2) she lived in Canada for over a year before becoming a mother, which gave her time to learn English before facing the challenges of motherhood; (3) at the time of the interview, she was the owner of a daycare and she finds her work fulfilling; (4) through her daycare, she has frequent and positive interactions with the parents of the children she cares for. These combined factors—affordable

housing, language skills, fulfilling employment, and a strong support network — likely contribute to Laura's unexpectedly low stress levels.

The other outlier, Estrellita, is the only participant whose husband had secured employment and housing before she arrived with their children. Not having to work to support her family, she: (1) fully benefits from Francisation courses; and (2) remains socially active in her new communities. Being an auxiliary nurse, she has skills that are in great demand in Quebec, and she is hopeful that she will receive her nursing accreditation once she becomes proficient in French.

Table 1. Participants level of resilience and level of stress:

	Resilience Level		Stress Level	
	Median Score*		Score**	
Ayan	3	Moderate	70	High
Mayren	4	High	70-80	High-to-Very High
Maya	4	High	80	Very High
Choco	4	High	80	Very High
Tina	4	High	80-100	Very High
Maria	5	Very High	40-80	Moderate-to-High
Laura	5	Very High	20	Low
Estrellita	5	Very High	10	Low

* 3 = Moderate; 4 = High; 5 = Very High

** 25 or lower = Low; 25-50 = Moderate; 50-75 = High; 75+ = Very High

The Waiting Game

Refugees and asylum-seekers who file for protection are expected to wait 24 months or more before decisions about their status are made (<https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/applying-refugee-protection/pages/index.aspx>). At the time of the interviews, Ayan and her family are the only ones who have met with a judge and have been granted the right to stay in Canada. Tina, for example, has been waiting for over three years. Not surprisingly, these women are

preoccupied with the future of their families, and their most significant source of stress stems from the uncertainty about their future in Canada:

There is still no news [about whether we can stay in Canada] after 4 years. [...] We hope to find some stability here in Canada once our papers are finished” – Tina

[We have yet to] meet with a judge. [We have to wait until] we know the final decision [...] Hopefully we will be [accepted] and we can start planning and start [focusing on our] life projects. [For] now everything is so uncertain and we cannot plan ahead. But yeah, that's our biggest worry right now.” – Choco

That's my number one worry. What's going to happen? Are we going to stay or not? What are we going to do if we [cannot] stay? That's something that I think about on a daily basis. – Mayren

The only thing that is so hard, it's so so stressful for me is the time that [it takes] to get a final answer from a judge. – Laura

Looking to the Future

Seeing the “Good” in Canadian Culture

The cold winters in Canada are ubiquitous, and those who come from warmer climates will undoubtedly find “the cold” unbearable. The women who participated in this study, who came from Colombia, Lebanon, Mexico, and Venezuela, unanimously reported that the winter weather is hard and could lead to them feeling more isolated. They look forward to the summer months when the city really “comes to life.”

The corporal sensation of the Canadian “cold” is also accompanied by the interpersonal “cold,” and the contrast with their “warm” culture is glaring. Latino culture is socially oriented. Holidays are often celebrated and marked by loud and large family events. Affection is demonstrative, with lots of hugging, kissing, and touching, not only between close family but also amongst friends. Choco’s son was reprimanded at school for “hugging and touching other children [which made] other children feel uncomfortable.” In Latino culture, closeness is not

only linked with kinship, but also reinforced by proximity. Choco points out that she does not know the names of any of her neighbors in Canada, something that would be unimaginable in Colombia.

But the “cold Canadians”, are also perceived by the participants as “respectful, empathetic, clean, orderly, and trustworthy”. Maya appreciates the sense of “safety and security” that comes with a very “organized” society. The organization and predictable procedures of everyday life – such as easy-to-find governmental information, easy-to-access information about schooling and everyday needs – reinforce her sense of security. After all, “It's better here, you know? [...] the structure [that is in] Canada – for me, it's perfect.”

Several participants remarked on the cleanliness in general, where public trash cans are available to ensure a “clean environment”. Mayen was particularly impressed by this, “It's so clean here! That's beautiful!”

The “cold” Canadians are also thrifty and uncomplicated. Ayan points out that neither in Lebanon nor in the UAE is the culture of thrifting viewed so positively as in Canada. Thrifting is the Canadian style of social-community:

On Facebook, [there are sites] to donate extra food instead of [throwing them in the garbage.]. [There are sites] to donate the toys we don't need, or [clothing] that are too small.]. I can just give them to others. [... With other neighborswe exchange things. [These are] behaviours I love.

Orderliness, cleanliness and thrift intertwine with Canadian's love of nature, which Ayan coined “the Canadian simplicity”:

I feel that most people [in Canada] like simple things. They love nature, they love camping, they love outdoor activities, and I like the same [things]. So, this was something that I admire - the simplicity, if I can call it that.

Over time, the stereotype of the “cold” Canadians is chipped away by casual and unexpected encounters with warm and friendly “Canadian” strangers. Laura and Estrellita echoed, “People are super nice here [...] we feel welcomed here.” One participant, Maria, shares an encounter she had with a Quebecois woman in a Tim Hortons coffee shop, which she found very touching:

I went to [Tim Hortons and to] get a coffee [...] A Canadian woman started speaking in Spanish, she took out a piece of chocolate from her purse and gave it to me. She started saying “I'm so grateful that people like you are coming to my country. Welcome, welcome to my country”. She even gave me \$5 because she didn't have any more chocolate and she wanted me [buy something for my children]. That really warmed my heart. That... makes you want to stay here.

Becoming Québécoise:

Similar to their children’s experiences, women also experienced a wide range of sentiments when asked to reflect on their overall level of integration in Quebec. Several participants, such as Tina who has been here for more than 4 years, still feel like an outsider:

“There are some days when I feel totally out of place. It's been hard for me to fully integrate. I don't know if it is because of my lack of time [...] I would love to find the time to be able to fully integrate and start learning about the traditions and customs here. I would love that, but it's been hard.” – Tina

“I don't have opportunities to socialize like my husband. My husband goes out every day to work and he's made friends [...] it's been easier for him” – Mayren

“I think it will take more time, like 2 or 3 years to experience more and learn more” – Maya

For several other participants, such as Mayren, Choco, and Maya, they feel that in order to be fully integrated, they need to become more proficient in the language:

I feel like language is a huge barrier [...] that is not letting me feel fully integrated here in Canada – Choco

For Maria, however, full integration is also predicated on the acceptance of her professional skills and knowledge. Since entering Canada as a respected law professor, Maria has been unable to work in her former profession. Evident in her responses on the Adult Resilience Scale, despite scoring quite high in overall resilience, Maria does not feel as if she is living up to her potential in Quebec society when she checked off “not at all” for the question “I have opportunities to show others I can act responsibly”. When discussing her experience of feeling integrated and welcomed in Quebec she says:

[The Quebec government] built this program so that we can learn the languages and everything. It's a wonderful program [...] but they should get to know who you are and what your abilities are. So you can find a job where you can feel useful to society... I think one of the biggest issues [here] is the lack of [recognition for one's] abilities [...] Being able to make a contribution to society] as a human being is something that would change [our] lives.

Maria's perception is echoed by Laura, who owns her own daycare in Quebec City. She feels welcomed by the parents of the children in her daycare and has easily adjusted to Quebec culture. When asked if she felt integrated into Quebec society she replied, without hesitation, “Yes, I like it.”

Estrellita, who came from Mexico at the end of Summer 2023, feels integrated into Quebec society from the beginning. Besides attending full-time Francisation, she regularly volunteers at French-language workshops and activities. In her interview she said:

Everything [in Quebec] seems normal [...] I like to volunteer at the organization where I do the Francisation. The lady in charge would call me, ‘Hey, there's this workshop’ or “There are these activities? Are you free? Do you want to come?” So, I would say yeah, and I'll go to whatever they ask me. I like to be there and [I feel] integrated.

Estrellita and Laura both appear to be thriving in Quebec. The two women self-reported their overall stress levels as substantially lower than the overall stress levels of the other participants. They have managed to learn French quickly despite their limited time in the

province, and they are also the two participants who identified the least differences between their own countries' cultures—Mexico, Colombia, and Canadian culture.

Dreams for the Future

Envisioning their future in 20 years, the participants in this study expressed a strong desire for stability and security, particularly for well-being and better opportunities for their spouses and children. This sentiment is exemplified by Mayren's acknowledgment of stability as essential for her children and Tina's hope to find stability in Canada after experiencing upheaval in their previous countries:

I would like that very much to stay [in Canada]. It's the most important thing for the children. I would stay here mostly [because it is good for the future of my children]. – Mayren

I am very optimistic [the next 20 years]..... We just keep on fighting and keep working. I just want to take my kids out into the world and [this is what I am doing] for them right now. [...My husband and I] are looking for stability [and that is why we had] to move [away] from our country . We couldn't find it in the States, either. So we just hope to find that stability here in Canada. – Tina

Their optimism includes aspirations for education, career advancement, and entrepreneurship. Ayan reflects on the uncertainty surrounding her career prospects but remains hopeful about leveraging her skills and experiences for future opportunities. Similarly, Maria envisions furthering her education and pursuing a career in teaching, emphasizing the importance of language proficiency for her dreams:

I would like to [be a teacher],it doesn't matter if it's adults or children. My French teacher told me that [... I could] teach high school, or CEGEP, or even university. But [before that] I need to feel comfortable in the language.

Maya, too, would like to go back to school for further training so that she could make a valuable contribution to society: “ I’d like to go back to school. I’m interested in Social Work and [...] I would like to pursue a degree in social work”.

Additionally, some participants articulate a sense of wanting to integrate into society as quickly as possible using their prior training and skills. Estrellita never lost sight of her goal to continue her profession in nursing, but her ambition includes learning other languages:

In 20 years I will [be able] to speak in English [as well]. I'm 34 years old but I think I still got time to do a lot of things. Here I have met a lot of people [who] speak four or five languages, I want to be able to [speak] at least three, Spanish, English, and French.

A notable aspect of the refugee women's discussions about their long-term aspirations in Canada is the prominent role of their husbands and children in shaping these goals. Rather than focusing solely on their individual trajectories, their aspirations are harmonized with the broader context of their family responsibilities. While all participants stressed the importance of protecting their children’s safety and nurturing them to succeed in school, Ayan and Mayren also included dreams for their husbands:

I know that my husband would really like to have a taco place. He had a taco place in Mexico and it's a big dream of his to have that here too. I would like the kids to go to school to get educated. [As for myself], I know how to do eyelashes and I would love to have my own beauty business. – Mayren

Chapter 4: Summary and Discussion

The present study explored the lived and shared experiences of eight women who came to Quebec, Canada as refugee/asylum seekers, while parenting their minor children. Individual interviews with them provided valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of refugee women's adaptation experiences in Quebec, Canada, including the pre-migration and post-migration factors that influenced their overall adaptation to living in Quebec.

The women who participated in this study are eager to settle in Canada, a country that could provide safety, security and better opportunities for their children. They expressed gratitude for the governmental support they received when they first arrived, and for the myriads of non-governmental support provided by social and religious communities to facilitate their adaptation to life in Quebec. Nevertheless, they also have to overcome many immediate challenges – finding housing, learning a new language, seeking employment, adapting to social and cultural differences, and feeling a sense of belonging. Successful coping and adaptation is predicated on one's resilience.

Sources of Resilience

Previous research by Oshio et al. (2018) reported that among personality traits, the “Big Five” – an individual's extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism – are highly correlated with higher resilience. The participants in this study all have completed minimally their secondary studies, with six of the eight participants having achieved post-secondary degrees in Health Sciences (Ayan, physiotherapist), Business (Mayren, foreign trade), Law (Maria, university professor), Engineering (Laura) and Nursing (Estrellita). In order to support their families, they are open to accepting whatever jobs available, with one participant

who is seeking to become qualified in Quebec in her previous profession (Estrellita, in Nursing).

The eagerness to embrace a new cultural and linguistic world is also observed among all participants, with one of the participants seeking additional French immersion experience (Estrellita, who volunteers in her Francization courses).

In addition, these women's resilience is also derived from other sources, including their cultural alignment, religiosity-spiritualism, language attainment, and hope for a better future for their children.

Cultural Alignment

Previous research suggests that a strong sense of cultural alignment with a host society positively impacts refugee adaptation to the host society. The experience of cultural alignment accounts for previously held beliefs and the gradual adaptation of the new culture. That is, the experience of alignment is in constant movement and shifting (Walther et al., 2021; van Klingereren & Spierings, 2020).

Four of the participants expressed a high degree of cultural alignment. They either did not find Quebec to be any different from their native country (Laura, Estrellita) or they actually preferred the way things work in Quebec (Maya, Laura). Among the participants who experienced some degree of “culture shock,” they expressed a strong willingness to “adapt” (Tina, Maria).

Previous research conducted by Van Klingereren and Spierings (2020) suggested that women adapt more easily than men, as women have more to gain from cultural adaptation than men. This hypothesis was based on the belief that refugees often come from countries with more stringent gender rules and norms; therefore, women will benefit more highly from being in a European/ Western context. While the women in this study are showing positive adaptation to

living in Quebec, two other factors should also be considered. First, a stay-at-home refugee mother who is caring for young children may experience more difficulties than her husband who is working and has more access to socialization. Second, being able to communicate in French or English might be a more important facilitator of adaptation than gender itself.

Individual Religiosity and Spiritualism

All eight participants in this study identify with a religious faith: one Muslim and seven Christians. They all stated that their faith has played an active and positive role in their adaptation to Canada. Their experience concurred with van Klingerren and Spierings's (2020) findings, who found that personal convictions, beliefs, and overall levels of faith were more closely related to high levels of acculturation.

However, van Klingerren and Spierings (2020)'s assertion that women would deviate from their religious beliefs and the gender and social norms of their cultures in order to adapt to a new culture was not observed in the present study. Participants who attend church regularly are more likely to express a certain discomfort and difficulty adjusting to the liberal gender and sexuality norms in Canada. One participant of Muslim faith no longer attends Mosque services not because of her desire to abandon her religion, but because of her fear of anti-Muslim violence in Quebec.

Envisioning a Better Life for Their Children

Findings from Walther et al. (2021) found that refugees who immigrate with children tended to experience more positive adaptation and acculturation. The positive adaptation could be attributed to the sense of responsibility parents feel toward their children to provide opportunities and safety and to reduce their overall stress. The findings of the current study

concur with these findings. All of the women expressed a desire to remain in Canada specifically to provide a safer life and better opportunities for their children; this long-term goal motivates them to continue working, so far in low-paying jobs, and living in uncertainty, while awaiting news about their future in Quebec/Canada. These findings appear to be in line with previous research, which indicates that focusing on children's futures and comforts can serve as a form of resilience for parents.

Needs and Challenges

While the current study was in alignment with research indicating that being parents can encourage positive adaptation, having children also introduces specific challenges. Previous research indicates that migrating with children will often result in less language acquisition and less meaningful employment after the first decade of relocation (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2018; Hou & Beiser, 2006b; Hou et al., 2016; Kaida et al., 2020; Beiser & Hou, 2000). Women are also more likely to prioritize childcare and family needs before language acquisition and career goals (Froteveit & Shkodych, 2021). Among the six participants who arrived with children and who did not speak French, four of them had to quit the language courses to focus on meeting the family's childcare and financial needs.

Lack of Affordable Housing and Cost of Living Burdens

The participants in the study unanimously report that they are faced with the burdens of elevated living costs and limited financial resources. A stable and safe living arrangement is a necessity for family life and security, but this is most challenging for women and their families who have arrived during or post-COVID-19 pandemic (Maya, Choco, Mayren). As a result, all but one participant (Estrellita) has to choose between employment and Francisation classes. The

role of housing and the cost of living was not taken into account in previous research, even though the right to affordable and safe housing is a non-negotiable need.

Research conducted by Statistics Canada found the average cost of a home in Canada in 2022 rose 33%, which is equivalent to \$179,000 above the pre-pandemic rate. The negative impact of the higher costs of living was particularly impactful on low-income households and younger populations. By early 2022, 3 out of every 10 Canadians expressed that they had concerns regarding their ability to pay their mortgages or rent, and by the end of 2022, this number rose to 44% (Gellathy & McCormack, 2023).

Discrimination and Social Support

Experiencing discrimination and feelings of belongingness are particularly impactful with respect to the overall sense of well-being for migrants and newcomers (Ahmad et al., 2021; Frotveit & Shkodych, 2021; Kohli & Fineran, 2020; Walther et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2021).

While most participants are able to overlook isolated incidences of discrimination from “random people”, several participants believe that there is overt racism toward Latinos and Muslims. Racial hostility contributed to feelings of anger and frustration among participants, and in one of them, created doubts about her long-term adaptation in Quebec. Refugee status and an inability to communicate in French are believed to be the main reasons for discrimination. More pervasively, all participants report workplace and institutional discrimination; for instance, professional accreditations from foreign countries are often not considered equivalent in Quebec/Canada, which can be perceived as a form of discrimination.

Nevertheless, several participants explained that the general safety of living in Canada is more important to them than the occasional instances of discrimination. Ultimately, the

discrimination that stemmed from individuals not related to the participant in any direct way did not seem to impact the participants or threaten their general sense of safety in Canada.

Experiences of kindness are deeply touching and can mitigate the negative feelings of being discriminated, hence are equally impactful for the well-being of these women. There is a general agreement among all participants that Canadians are very kind, empathetic, and welcoming. According to the research by Sheik et al. (2022), acceptance, support and resources can be particularly important coming from cultural natives or long-term residents. A fleeting encounter with a Canadian/Quebecer who offered welcoming words can be immensely comforting and reaffirms their desire to stay in Canada.

All participants also report using at least one of the established governmental services and non-governmental organizations (CLSC; Charro, Centre Alpha Lira, Praidia, Welcome center, and Caci) to assist them in medical referrals, employment support, language courses, and with the provision of coupons for purchasing daily necessities. Although the women who participated in this study are often not broadly informed of government services, they are satisfied with the services they have been offered since their arrival. Five of the eight participants rely on non-governmental organizations to guide them to the appropriate government resources. Several participants pointed out that the social services in Quebec are far more extensive and superior to those in their home countries.

Community organizations and religious institutions provide critical support and services to meet the needs of refugees and newcomers. For several women who are regular church attendants, their Spanish-speaking churches provide valuable support, including food banks and community building. Overall, the testimonies of the participants confirm previous findings, which state that private support initiatives such as churches can often have a more positive

impact on adaptation than public services due to wait lists and clientele volume (Kaida et al., 2020; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017).

For the participants in the study, refugeeism is related to a significant reduction in family/social support to the extent that they could not name one person who could help them in the case of an absolute emergency. Previous research into the experiences of women who lose the support of extended families and employment status indicates that these women often report feeling exacerbated, sad, and powerless (Kohli & Fineran, 2020). Their social isolation is further exacerbated by the fact that most of the participants have not yet made any Quebecois/se or Canadian friends. Some participants indicated that an increase in interactions with Quebecois individuals could mitigate the stress of being away from their families, and lead to better cultural understanding, including their understanding of parenting practices and discipline strategies. Kohli and Fineran (2020) previously reported that social connectedness could help newcomers better understand parenting rules and strategies normative to the host culture.

In the meantime, participants in this study turn to other refugee mothers for social support. It was also noteworthy that all participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the present study and to tell their stories. Having the chance to speak candidly in a one-to-one, participant-focused setting was cathartic for some of the participants.

Language Proficiency

Outside of Quebec, earlier investigations into the role of English language skills indicate that a newcomer's level of English was one of the highest predictors of belongingness and overall acculturation into Canadian society (Hou et al., 2016.; Kaida et al., 2020; Beiser & Hou, 2000). Findings in the current study lend support to the hypothesis that language proficiency is, in part, associated with feeling more integrated. The women in this study who reported feeling

most integrated were all comfortable communicating in either English and/or French. The women who felt least integrated all spoke a minimal amount of the aforementioned languages.

Chapter 5: Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study shed light on the complex experiences of refugee women navigating life in Quebec, Canada as mothers of young children. The multifaceted nature of their adaptation, shaped by a combination of resilience and cultural, social and linguistic factors, emphasizes the importance of providing systemic and integrated support that addresses the needs of refugee women. In doing so, Canada can continue to build a more inclusive society that values their contributions and experiences.

This chapter will focus on the limitations of this study, followed by recommendations for future research and considerations for mitigating challenges for refugee mothers.

Limitation of the Study

Notwithstanding the potential contributions of this study, there are several methodological limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the current study includes a small sample of 8 refugee women, recruited by convenience sampling and word-of-mouth. This recruitment method yielded seven participants of Latin American origin who share similar religious (Christian, Catholic) and linguistic (Spanish) backgrounds. Their reasons for leaving their country are mainly safety and economic. Therefore, they are unlikely to represent the experiences of refugee women from vastly different religious/cultural/linguistic backgrounds or those who arrive in Canada under significantly different circumstances. In parallel, the experience of one Arab Muslim participant also cannot

be generalized to other women from other Muslim or non-Muslim backgrounds. Therefore, caution is needed to not over-generalize the findings from this study.

In addition, the participants of the current study are minimally high school graduates, and several have attained university and professional accreditations in their home country. As such, they possess higher cultural capital that differentiates them from those who enter Canada with substantially lower levels of education and/or without previous professional careers. For example, women with less formal education or professional experience might be less resilient, encounter greater limitations in social mobility, and experience different stressors which are not captured in this study. Future research should include a more diverse sample to provide a broader understanding of the experiences of refugee women across different cultural and socioeconomic spectra, thereby allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the factors influencing adaptation and integration.

Second, the researcher's limited proficiency in Spanish should also be noted. A translator was required for seven of the interviews, either partially or completely. The involvement of a translator might have resulted in miscommunication or loss of nuance, as the translator's interpretations and choices of words could affect how a message was conveyed and understood. For instance, one notable issue was associated with the word "discipline." Several participants interpreted "discipline" as "punishment", rather than a broader concept related to educating or guiding children. This difference in interpretation reflects the challenges inherent in surface-level translation while overlooking cultural connotations and meanings. Therefore, the language barrier and the reliance on a translator run the risk of misrepresenting a participant's thoughts and experiences.

To mitigate these challenges, future research should: (1) provide training to the translators to ensure that they have a deeper understanding of theories and contexts related to the study; such training could help to bridge the gap between linguistic translation and cultural interpretation, ensuring a more accurate and nuanced representation of participants' experiences; and (2) include member-checking or respondent-verification procedures, so that participants have opportunities to clarify or expand on their responses, which could help address any misunderstandings or ambiguities.

Third, as an English-speaking, Canadian-born, Caucasian Muslim woman who wears an explicit religious symbol (a hijab), I, the researcher, may be perceived as an outsider or not part of the participants' cultural, ethnic, or social "in-group," which could have inadvertently inhibited the participants from sharing sensitive or personal information with someone they perceived as different or unfamiliar. Additionally, the presence of an interpreter who was part of the participants' in-group could have introduced another layer of complexity. Participants might have been concerned about maintaining a particular image or reputation within their community, leading them to withhold certain information or alter their accounts. For example, they might have avoided discussing taboo or shameful topics within their culture or community, or they might have presented themselves in a more favorable light to align with perceived cultural norms or expectations. In acknowledging these limitations, future researchers must take great caution to ensure that the power dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and social contexts minimally affect the data.

Fourth, the research study was conducted entirely online due to constraints such as geographic location, work and childcare considerations, etc. It is possible that participants may be uncomfortable with or unfamiliar with technology or could have experienced challenges in

accessing and using the necessary technological tools needed for this research, including logging in, accessing the microphone, and completing forms. All of these difficulties potentially affected the quality and depth of the data collected. Moreover, the virtual nature of the study might also pose challenges in establishing rapport and building trust, which are crucial for eliciting honest and comprehensive responses in qualitative research. The absence of in-person cues and non-verbal communication may have limited the depth of interaction and the researcher's ability to fully interpret participants' emotional responses. Consequently, these factors may have contributed to less nuanced data, thereby influencing some of the findings and conclusions of the study.

Fifth, the study utilized self-report measures to assess participants' stress levels, resilience, and experiences. While self-report measures are valuable for capturing personal perspectives, they inherently rely on participants' ability to recall and articulate their thoughts and feelings accurately. Additionally, the lack of direct observation or corroborating data from other sources means that the findings are based solely on the participants' subjective accounts, which may not fully reflect their actual experiences.

Future Research and Recommendations

The results of this study not only provide a glimpse of refugee women's experience as adaptable but also highlight that women's well-being is inextricably related to their role as mothers and spouses and how they balance their needs with those of their families. Investigating how family life is impacted by refugeeism would inform more effective support programs.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the adaptation process, longitudinal studies that track refugee women and their families over several years are necessary. Most of the refugee women in this study are awaiting news about their prospects of becoming a permanent

resident in Canada. Longitudinal studies that focus on how their coping mechanisms evolve and how they make the transition to becoming productive citizens in Canada would provide invaluable insights into their sources of resilience and problem-solving strategies as they navigate life's challenges.

Most of the research conducted in Canada assesses variables such as language acquisition from an English perspective. Long-term data focusing more specifically on Quebec and the French language could provide valuable insights into refugees' evolving needs and challenges, informing continuous improvement of support services.

The complex relationships between gender, cultural adaptation and adaptation suggest that more nuanced research is needed to understand the specific challenges and advantages experienced by refugee mothers in Quebec. Differences in research findings could be due to the specific population assessed, that is, mostly Latin-American women, or due to some of the unique characteristics of Quebec, such as subsidized daycare programs, which may ease access to childcare.

The experience of the participants in this study provides several valuable recommendations for the organization of social services, particularly in increasing the “accessibility” of services. More explicit communication about available resources, possibly through a centralized information system accessible to all newcomers, could be one consideration. Enhanced support could include more comprehensive social integration programs, mental health support, parenting support, etc., that address both immediate and long-term needs of refugees. Emerged in this study is the crucial support afforded by religious organizations - food dispensation, socialization, etc. – highlighting the need for increased collaboration between governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies to promote community integration.

These systems should aim to provide accessible avenues for building social networks and fostering a sense of belonging within the broader community.

The elevated cost of living and the challenge of finding affordable housing were major concerns for all participants. There is a need for prioritization of designated housing for refugees while ensuring that government subsidies and financial assistance are proportional to the cost of living. This would enable refugees to focus on language acquisition and career-training/accreditation, without the constant strain of financial insecurity. Immigration policies that facilitate credential recognition would allow Canada to benefit from the resources afforded by skilled migrants, and at the same time, augmenting the newcomers' sense of self-worth and belongingness.

Several participants of this study suggested that the Francisation process could be integrated with professional internships or placements so that they are developing facilitate the development of language that could be immediately used in workplace settings. Given the close interplay between language acquisition and employment, it is essential to design language programs that are flexible and tailored to the needs of refugee women. By combining professional/work training with French language enrichment, it would bridge the gap between refugees' competencies and labour market demands.

Finally, the prolonged waiting periods between a refugee's initial claim and their meeting with a judge can lead to stagnation in language acquisition and other areas of personal and career development. Several participants expressed hesitation in investing in French language courses due to the uncertainty surrounding their future in Quebec. This hesitation, driven by the financial burden and potential futility of such an investment, highlights the critical need for more efficient

processing of refugee claims and support systems that encourage proactive engagement in language learning and integration efforts.

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Appendix 1a



Participants Needed!

Do you match this profile?



- 18+
- Entered Canada as a refugee
- Mother of at least one child below the age of 12
- Can speak English and/or French (or would be comfortable with an interpreter present)

About me:

My name is Anna-Marie. I'm a graduate student in Concordia University's Child studies program.

I am looking for women who have entered Canada as refugees and who have young children.

Aim of this study:

- Explore your needs
- Understand how unmet needs may impact your daily life
- Document worries and concerns for the future
- Improve outcomes for women in similar situations

Interested or have questions?
Please contact me:
annamarie.leducdevries@concordia.ca



Appendix 1b



Participant^{es} recherchées!

Correspondez-vous à ce profil ?



- 18 ans ou plus
- Entrée au Canada en tant que réfugiée
- Mère d'au moins un enfant de moins de 12 ans
- Capable de communiquer en anglais et/ou en français (ou à l'aise avec l'utilisation d'un interprète)

À propos de moi:

Je m'appelle Anna-Marie. Je suis une étudiante diplômée du programme "Child Studies" de l'Université Concordia.

Je recherche des femmes qui sont entrées au Canada en tant que réfugiées et qui ont de jeunes enfants.

Objectif de cette étude :

- Explorer vos besoins
- Comprendre comment les besoins non satisfaits peuvent avoir un impact sur votre vie quotidienne
- Documenter les inquiétudes et les inquiétudes pour l'avenir
- Améliorer les résultats pour les femmes dans des situations similaires

Vous êtes intéressée ou vous avez des questions ?

N'hésitez pas à me contacter :

annamarie.leducdevries@concordia.ca



Appendix 1c

**¡Se buscan participantes!****¿Se identifica con este perfil?**

- 18+
- Haber entrado a Canadá como refugiada
- Madre de al menos un/a niño/a menor de 12 años

Acerca de mí:

Mi nombre es Anna-Marie. Soy estudiante de posgrado en el programa de estudios infantiles en la Universidad de Concordia.

Busco mujeres que hayan entrado a Canadá como refugiadas y que tengan niños pequeños.

Objetivo de este estudio

- Explorar sus necesidades
- Comprender cómo las necesidades insatisfechas pueden afectar su vida diaria
- Documentar sus preocupaciones e inquietudes
- Proponer servicios que ayuden a mujeres en situaciones similares

¿Está interesada o tiene alguna pregunta?
Por favor comuníquese conmigo:
annamarie.leducdevries@concordia.ca





مطلوب مشاركات!

هل تتوفر فيك هذه المواصفات ؟



- 18+
- دخلت كندا كلاجئة.
- أم لطفل واحد على الأقل يقل عمره عن 12 عامًا.
- يمكنك التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية و/أو الفرنسية (أو سيكون من المناسب لك وجود مترجم فوري).

بعض المعلومات عني:

اسمي آنا ماري. أنا طالبة دراسات عليا في برنامج دراسات الطفل بجامعة كونكورديا. أبحث عن النساء اللاتي دخلن كندا كلاجئات ولديهن أطفال صغار.

الهدف من هذه الدراسة:

- استكشاف احتياجاتك.
- فهم كيف يمكن أن تؤثر الاحتياجات غير الملباة على حياتك اليومية.
- توثيق مخاوفك وقلقك المتعلق بالمستقبل.
- تحسين النتائج بالنسبة للنساء في المواقف المماثلة.

هل أنت مهتمة أو لديك أسئلة؟
الرجاء التواصل معي:
annamarie.leducdevries@concordia.ca



Appendix 2a
Demographics Questionnaire – English

1. How old are you?
 - a. 18-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50+
 - e. Prefer not to answer

2. Where did you live before arriving in Quebec?

3. Who you live with in your household? (e.g., spouse, child/children, parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.)?

4. How many children do you have?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5+

5. How old are your children? (Please separate ages with commas such as 4, 7, 12, etc.)

6. If you have a child under the age of 5 years, does he/she attend daycare?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. Do you have other children who are attending elementary or high school?
 - a. Yes;
 - i. What grade(s) is/are he/she/they in
 - b. No

8. In which year did you enter Quebec / Canada?

9. What was your highest level of education before you came to Quebec?
 - a. Elementary school – How many years?
 - b. Secondary School – How many years?
 - c. Post-secondary studies – How many years?

- d. Trade School or Technical School – How many years?
10. Did you speak any English or French prior to coming to Quebec?
- Yes, English
 - Yes, French
 - Yes, both
 - None
11. Which language(s) do you speak at home among the adults?
- Which language(s) do you speak at home with the children?
12. What is your marital status?
- Married
 - Married, but separated
 - Single, never married
 - Cohabitation, but not married
 - Widowed
 - Divorced, and remarried
 - Divorced, and presently a single parent
13. Have you completed or are currently attending any of the Quebec French-language courses?
- Yes; For how long?
 - No
14. Are you currently employed?
- Yes; on average how many hours do you work per week?
 - No, I am not employed.
15. Do you identify with a religious culture?
- Yes
 - If yes, please specify
 - No

Appendix 2b
Questionnaire Démographique – Français

1. Quel âge as-tu
 - a. 18-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50+
 - e. préfère ne pas répondre

2. Où viviez-vous avant d'arriver au Québec ?

3. Avec qui vivez-vous dans votre foyer ? (par exemple, conjoint, enfant(s), parents, grands-parents, frères et sœurs, etc.) ?

4. Combien d'enfants avez-vous ?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5+

5. Quel âge ont vos enfants ? (Veuillez séparer les âges par des virgules telles que 4, 7, 12, etc.)

6. Si vous avez un enfant de moins de 5 ans, fréquente-t-il une garderie ?
 - a. Oui
 - b. Non

7. Avez-vous d'autres enfants qui fréquentent l'école primaire ou secondaire ?
 - a. un. Oui;
 - i. Dans quelle classe se trouve-t-il/elle/ils
 - b. Non

8. En quelle année êtes-vous entré au Québec/Canada ?

9. Quel était votre niveau de scolarité le plus élevé avant de venir au Québec ?

- a. École primaire – Combien d'années ?
 - b. Lycée / Secondaire – Combien d'années ?
 - c. Études postsecondaires – Combien d'années ?
 - d. Ecole de métiers ou école technique –
10. Parlez-vous anglais ou français avant de venir au Québec ?
- a. Oui, l'anglais
 - b. Oui, le français
 - c. Oui, les deux
 - d. Aucun
11. Quelle(s) langue(s) parlez-vous à la maison parmi les adultes ?
- Quelle(s) langue(s) parlez-vous à la maison avec les enfants ?
12. Quel est votre statut marital ?
- a. Marié
 - b. Marié, mais séparé
 - c. Célibataire jamais marié
 - d. Cohabitation, mais pas marié
 - e. Veuf
 - f. Divorcé et remarié
 - g. Divorcé et actuellement parent seul
13. Avez-vous complété ou suivez-vous actuellement un cours de français au Québec?
- a. Oui; Pendant combien de temps?
 - b. Non
14. Êtes-vous actuellement employé ?
- a. Oui; en moyenne, combien d'heures travaillez-vous par semaine ?
 - b. Non, je ne suis pas employé.
15. Vous identifiez-vous à une culture religieuse ?
- a. Oui
 - i. Si oui, veuillez préciser
 - b. Non

Appendix 2c
Cuestionario demográfico

2. ¿Cuántos años tiene?
- c. 18-29
 - d. 30-39
 - e. 40-49
 - f. 50+
 - g. Prefiero no responder
2. ¿Dónde vivía antes de llegar a Quebec?
-
3. ¿Con quién vive en su hogar? (por ejemplo, cónyuge, hijo(s), padres, abuelos, hermanos, etc.)?
-
4. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5+
5. ¿Qué edad tienen sus hijos? (Por favor separe las edades con comas como 4, 7, 12, etc.)
-
6. ¿Si tiene un hijo menor de 5 años, asiste a la guardería?
- a. Sí
 - b. No
7. ¿Tiene otros hijos que asisten a la escuela primaria o secundaria?
- a. Sí;
 - i. ¿En qué grado(s) está(n) él/ella/ellos?
 - b. No
8. ¿En qué año ingresó a Quebec/Canadá?
-
9. ¿Cuál era su nivel más alto de educación antes de venir a Quebec?
- a. Escuela primaria – ¿Cuántos años?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- b. Escuela Secundaria – ¿Cuántos años?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- c. Estudios postsecundarios: ¿Cuántos años?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- d. Escuela de Comercio o Escuela Técnica – ¿Cuántos años?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

10. ¿Hablabas algo de inglés o francés antes de venir a Quebec?

- a. Si, Ingles
- b. Si, Frances
- c. Si, ambos
- d. Ninguno

11. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla usted en casa entre los adultos?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- ¿Qué idioma(s) habla usted en casa con los niños?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

12. ¿Cuál es tu estado marital?

- Casado
- Casado, pero separado
- Soltero nunca casado
- Convivencia, pero no casado.
- Viudo
- Divorciado y vuelto a casar
- Divorciado y actualmente padre soltero

13. ¿Ha completado o está asistiendo actualmente a alguno de los cursos de francés de Quebec?

- a. Sí; ¿Por cuánto tiempo?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- b. No

14. ¿Está trabajando actualmente?

- a. Sí; ¿En promedio cuantas horas trabaja por semana?

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

- b. No, no estoy empleado.

15. ¿Te identificas con una cultura religiosa?

- a. Sí
 - i. En caso afirmativo, especifique

Haga clic o toque aquí para ingresar texto.

b. No

Appendix 3a
ADULT RESILIENCE SCALE (ARM-R) – English Version

To what extent do the sentences below describe you? Please check one answer for each statement.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A lot
1. I have people I can respect in my life	1	2	3	4	5
2. I cooperate with people around me	1	2	3	4	5
3. Getting and improving qualifications or skills is important to me	1	2	3	4	5
4. I know how to behave in different social situations	1	2	3	4	5
5. My family have usually supported me throughout my life	1	2	3	4	5
6. My family know a lot about me	1	2	3	4	5
7. If I am hungry I have money to buy food	1	2	3	4	5
8. I try to finish what I start	1	2	3	4	5
9. Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am proud of my ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
11. People think that I am fun to be around	1	2	3	4	5
12. I talk to my family/partner about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5
13. I can solve problems without harming myself or others (e.g., without using drugs or being violent)	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel supported by my friends	1	2	3	4	5
15. I know where to get help in my community	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel I belong in my community.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My family stands my me in difficult times	1	2	3	4	5

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18. My friends stand by me in difficult times	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am treated fairly in my community	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have opportunities to show others I can act responsibly	1	2	3	4	5
21. I know my own strengths	1	2	3	4	5
22. I participate in organized religious activities	1	2	3	4	5
23. I think it is important to support my community	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel safe when I am with my family	1	2	3	4	5
25. I have opportunities to be useful in life	1	2	3	4	5
26. I enjoy my family/partners' cultural and family traditions	1	2	3	4	5
27. I enjoy my community's culture	1	2	3	4	5
28. I am proud of my nationality	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 3b
ADULT RESILIENCE SCALE (Version Française)

Dans quelle mesure les phrases ci-dessous vous décrivent-elles ? Encerclez une réponse pour chaque énoncé

	Pas du tout d'accord	Un peu d'accord	Quelque peu d'accord	Assez d'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
1. J'ai des gens dans ma vie que je respecte	1	2	3	4	5
2. Je coopère avec les gens autour de moi	1	2	3	4	5
3. Il est important pour moi d'obtenir et améliorer mes compétences et mes qualifications	1	2	3	4	5
4. Je sais comment me comporter dans différents contextes sociaux	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ma famille m'a généralement soutenu tout au long de ma vie	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ma famille me connaît très bien	1	2	3	4	5
7. Si j'ai faim, j'ai de l'argent pour acheter de la nourriture	1	2	3	4	5
8. J'essaie de finir ce que j'ai commencé	1	2	3	4	5
9. Mes croyances spirituelles sont pour moi une source de force	1	2	3	4	5
10. Je suis fier/fière de mon origine ethnique	1	2	3	4	5
11. Les gens pensent que je suis amusant à côtoyer	1	2	3	4	5
12. Je parle à ma famille/partenaire de ce que je ressens	1	2	3	4	5
13. Je peux résoudre des problèmes sans comportements destructeurs ou autodestructeurs (par exemple, sans consommation d'alcool ou de drogues ou devenir violent)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Je me sens soutenu(e) par mes amis	1	2	3	4	5
15. Je sais où obtenir de l'aide dans ma communauté	1	2	3	4	5
16. Je sais où obtenir de l'aide dans ma communauté	1	2	3	4	5

17. Ma famille me soutient dans les moments difficiles	1	2	3	4	5
18. Mes amis me soutiennent dans les moments difficiles	1	2	3	4	5
19. Je suis traité(e) équitablement dans ma communauté	1	2	3	4	5
20. J'ai l'occasion de montrer aux autres que je peux agir de manière responsable	1	2	3	4	5
21. Je connais mes propres forces	1	2	3	4	5
22. Je participe à des activités religieuses organisées	1	2	3	4	5
23. Je pense qu'il est important de soutenir ma communauté	1	2	3	4	5
24. Je me sens en sécurité quand je suis avec ma famille	1	2	3	4	5
25. J'ai des opportunités d'être utile dans la vie	1	2	3	4	5
26. J'apprécie la culture de ma famille/partenaire et traditions familiales	1	2	3	4	5
27. J'apprécie la culture de ma communauté	1	2	3	4	5
28. Je suis fier/fière de ma nationalité	1	2	3	4	5

٥	٤	٣	٢	١	١٨- يقف أصدقائي بجانبني في الأوقات الصعبة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	١٩- تتم معاملتي بشكل عادل في مجتمعي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٠- لدي فرص لأظهر للآخرين أنه باستطاعتي التصرف بشكل مسؤول
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢١- أنا على علم بنقاط قوتي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٢- أشارك في فعاليات دينية منظمة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٣- أعتقد أنه من المهم دعم مجتمعي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٤- أشعر بالأمان عندما أكون مع عائلتي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٥- لدي فرص لأكون نافعا في الحياة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٦- أستمتع بالتقاليد العائلية والثقافية الخاصة بي وبعائلتي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	٢٧- أستمتع بثقافة مجتمعي
٥	٤		٢	١	٢٨- أنا فخور بقوميّتي

Appendix 3d
ESCALA DE RESILIENCIA DEL ADULTO (ARM-R)

¿En qué medida te describen las siguientes frases? Por favor marque una respuesta para cada afirmación.

	Nada	Un Poco	Más o menos at	Mucho	Bastante
1. Tengo personas a las que puedo respetar en mi vida.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Colaboro con la gente que me rodea	1	2	3	4	5
3. Obtener y mejorar cualificaciones o habilidades es importante para mí	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sé comportarme en diferentes situaciones sociales.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Mi familia normalmente me ha apoyado durante toda mi vida.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Mi familia sabe mucho sobre mí.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Si tengo hambre tengo dinero para comprar comida	1	2	3	4	5
8. Intento terminar lo que empiezo	1	2	3	4	5
9. Las creencias espirituales son una fuente de fortaleza para mí.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Estoy orgulloso de mi origen étnico.	1	2	3	4	5
11. La gente piensa que es divertido estar conmigo	1	2	3	4	5
12. Hablo con mi familia/pareja sobre cómo me siento	1	2	3	4	5
13. Puedo resolver problemas sin hacer daño a mismo o los demás (por ejemplo, sin consumir drogas ni ser violento)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Me siento apoyado por mis amigos	1	2	3	4	5
15. Sé dónde conseguir ayuda en mi comunidad	1	2	3	4	5

16. Siento que pertenezco a mi comunidad	1	2	3	4	5
17. Mi familia me apoya en tiempos difíciles	1	2	3	4	5
18. Mis amigos me apoyan en los momentos difíciles	1	2	3	4	5
19. Me tratan justamente en mi comunidad.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Tengo oportunidades de demostrar a los demás que puedo actuar responsablemente	1	2	3	4	5
21. Conozco mis propias fortalezas	1	2	3	4	5
22. Participo en actividades religiosas organizadas	1	2	3	4	5
23. Creo que es importante apoyar a mi comunidad.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Me siento seguro cuando estoy con mi familia	1	2	3	4	5
25. Tengo oportunidades de ser útil en la vida	1	2	3	4	5
26. Disfruto de las tradiciones culturales y familiares de mi familia/pareja.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Disfruto de la cultura de mi comunidad	1	2	3	4	5
28. Estoy orgulloso de mi nacionalidad	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 4a
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The questions in the interview will be divided into six (6) major themes:

1. What are the participants' experiences related to their adaptation to the language, education, cultural differences?
2. What are their expectations and experience related to employment or seeking employment;
3. What kind of community support is available to them, and who is providing the support;
4. What kind of social-service support is available to them, and from which social-service agency?
5. What are their parenting experiences since arriving in Canada, including how to find appropriate daycare/school placement, teacher-parent relationships, discipline strategies, family life and relationship with their children?
6. What is their overall level of satisfaction since they have been living in Canada? What works and what is/are the continuous struggle(s)? What is their stress level on an "average day"?

Themes	Questions	Probes	Further Probes
Introduction	<p>Greetings; Establish consent; Reiteration of the right to withdraw at any moment.</p> <p>What were your first impressions when you arrived in Quebec?</p>	<p>What are 5 words you can use to describe how you felt when you arrived in Quebec?</p> <p>Did you have any family, friends, or friends of friends who were already living in Montreal?</p>	
(1) What are the participants' experiences related	Did you learn or speak English or French when		

<p>to their adaptation to the language, education, cultural differences?</p>	<p>you were living in XXX (country of origin)?</p> <p>How would you describe your experience having to learn French (and or English)?</p> <p>Which language is easier for you to learn – English or French?</p> <p>When you first arrived in Quebec, what were some of the things or customs that seemed most different or strange to you?</p>	<p>What are some of the things you are doing to try to improve your communication in French and/or English?</p> <p>Were there any things or customs that was different that you liked, or didn't like? Why?</p>	
<p>(2) What are their expectations and experience related to employment or seeking employment?</p>	<p>When you were in XXX, you went to school until YYY (level of education). How do you think your previous level of education impacted your integration process?</p>	<p>Have you experienced any challenges in finding employment? Why or Why not?</p> <p>Would you have liked to go back to school? What would be your goals, and why?</p>	
<p>(3) What kind of community support is available to them, and who is providing the support?</p>	<p>Who do you count as your <i>friends</i> in Montreal? What qualities do they have that you value the most?</p> <p>Are you actively involved in any religious or cultural community?</p>	<p>To what extent are your friends able to step in to help you in your day-to-day life?</p> <p>What kind of activities of festivities do you do together?</p>	
<p>(4) What kind of social-service support is available to them, and from which social-service agency?</p>	<p>The governments offers a range of services to help new comers adapted to life in Quebec. Which Social Services have you tapped into? What was</p>	<p>e.g., resettlement – finding temporary and permanent housing, setting up a house (furniture, linen, household objects,</p>	

	<p>helpful? What was not helpful?</p>	<p>clothing, installing electricity, internet);</p> <p>e.g., help to register for federal and provincial programs – Interim Federal Health Program,</p> <p>e.g., school start-up for children – how to register for school, getting school supplies;</p>	
<p>(5) What are their parenting experiences since arriving in Canada, including how to find appropriate daycare/school placement, teacher-parent relationships, discipline strategies, family life and relationship with their children?</p>	<p>How would you describe a typical Canadian parent? What are the similarities and differences between you and a typical Canadian parent?</p> <p>How are your children doing? Do they seem happy when they go to daycare or school? Have they made friends?</p> <p>How would you describe your communication with your child’s/children’s teachers/educators?</p>	<p>Is/Are your child/children able to speak French?</p> <p>Did your child/children ever complain that someone (peers or teacher/educator) in school is not nice?</p> <p>Have you met the teachers and/or educators? Did you have a conversation with them?</p>	<p>Did the teachers/educators seem interested in how your child/children is/are at home?</p> <p>If communication has been difficult, did the school try to include a translator?</p>
	<p><u>Only for parents who came to Quebec with children:</u></p> <p>When you were living in XXX, did you have regular support from</p>	<p>If you needed to leave your children to do an errand, or to if you feel tired and needed</p>	

	<p>family (e.g., parents, siblings, in-laws)?</p> <p>Have the ways you discipline your children changed since you came to Canada? If so, can you give an example</p> <p>Have your experiences as a parent changed compared to your pre-migration? If so, can you give an example</p>	<p>someone to look after your child(ren) for a little while, who did you contact for help?</p> <p>Since you have been living here, has anyone said to you, “you can’t do that...you are in Canada now and you are not allowed to”</p> <p>Are you more worried about your children than before?</p>	<p>Is there something that worries you that you did not have to worry about when you were living in XXX?</p> <p>Has the language of communication changed with your children since they started going to school in French?</p>
	<p><u>For parents who gave birth after they came to Montreal:</u></p> <p>How did you feel when you found out you were going to have a baby?</p> <p>Was there anything that you were worried about?</p> <p>What services did you receive re: birthing and parenting?</p>	<p>Who took care of you after you gave birth?</p> <p>What have you learned in prenatal and parenting classes that seemed strange or wrong to you?</p>	<p>How do you feel about being a parent when your own parents/in-laws are living far away?</p>
<p>(6) What is their overall level of satisfaction since they have been living in Canada? What works and what is/are the continuous struggle(s)? What</p>	<p>How do you feel you’ve integrated into the society in general?</p> <p>To what extent do you feel welcomed by Quebec /Canadian society?</p>	<p>What are some issues that cause stress in your everyday life?</p>	

<p>is their stress level on an “average day”?”</p>	<p>Have you experienced any discrimination since your arrival? If so, how did this impact you?</p>	<p>Where and by whom do you feel discrimination or prejudice?</p>	<p>How do you react and handle it?</p>
	<p>Do you feel optimistic about the next 20 years of your life here?</p>	<p>What are some of your goals for the next 20 years? Do they seem attainable? Why or why not?</p>	
<p>Closing Reflections</p>	<p>What do you think would be helpful to women entering Canada in the future? Is there something, or some kind of support, that does not yet exist which should exist?</p>	<p>What expectations did you have before your arrival? Has Canada/Quebec lived up to your expectations?</p>	<p>What could our governments do to maintain or strengthen immigrant’s/refugee’s family lives and parenting efficacy? What could our governments do differently to support immigrants’ or refugees adaptation and integration?</p>
	<p>In Quebec, there is a strong emphasis on communication between parents and teachers/educators. What suggestions would you give teachers/educators that would help them be more compassionate or empathetic to parents like yourself?</p>	<p>What are some of the things that teachers/educators “don’t get” that are frustrating to you/makes you unhappy about raising children in Canada/Quebec?</p>	

Appendix 4b Questions d'entretien semi-structuré

Les questions de l'entretien seront réparties en six (6) thèmes majeurs :

- (1) Quelles sont les expériences des participants liées à leur adaptation à la langue, à l'éducation et aux différences culturelles ?
- (2) Quelles sont leurs attentes et leurs expériences liées à l'emploi ou à la recherche d'emploi ;
- (3) Quel type de soutien communautaire est disponible pour eux, et qui le fournit ;
- (4) Quel type de soutien social est disponible pour eux, et de quel organisme de services sociaux provient-il ?
- (5) Quelles sont leurs expériences en matière de parentalité depuis leur arrivée au Canada, notamment la recherche d'une garderie ou d'une école appropriée, les relations entre les enseignants et les parents, les stratégies de discipline, la vie familiale et la relation avec leurs enfants ?
- (6) Quel est leur niveau de satisfaction global depuis qu'ils vivent au Canada ? Qu'est-ce qui fonctionne et quels sont les défis continus ? Quel est leur niveau de stress lors d'une "journée moyenne" ?

Thèmes	Questions	Enquête	Enquête Supplémentaires
Introduction	Salutations; Établissement du consentement; Réitération du droit de se retirer à tout moment. Quelles ont été vos premières impressions lorsque vous êtes arrivé(e) au Québec?	Quels sont 5 mots que vous pouvez utiliser pour décrire comment vous vous êtes senti(e) lorsque vous êtes arrivé(e) au Québec? Avez-vous de la famille, des amis ou des amis d'amis qui vivaient déjà à Montréal?	
(1) Quelles sont les expériences des participants liées à leur adaptation à la langue, à l'éducation et aux différences culturelles ?	Avez-vous appris ou parlé anglais ou français lorsque vous viviez dans XXX (pays d'origine)? Comment décririez-vous votre expérience d'apprentissage du français (et/ou de l'anglais)?	Quelles sont certaines des choses que vous faites pour essayer	

	<p>Quelle langue est plus facile pour vous à apprendre, l'anglais ou le français?</p> <p>Lorsque vous êtes arrivé(e) pour la première fois au Québec, quelles étaient certaines des choses ou coutumes qui vous semblaient les plus différentes ou étranges?</p>	<p>d'améliorer votre communication en français et/ou en anglais?</p> <p>Y avait-il des choses ou des coutumes différentes que vous avez appréciées ou que vous n'avez pas appréciées? Pourquoi?</p>	
(2) Quelles sont leurs attentes et leur expérience liées à l'emploi ou à la recherche d'emploi ?	<p>Quand vous étiez à XXX, vous avez fréquenté l'école jusqu'au niveau YYY. Comment pensez-vous que votre niveau d'éducation précédent a influencé votre processus d'intégration?</p>	<p>Avez-vous rencontré des défis pour trouver un emploi? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?</p> <p>Auriez-vous aimé retourner à l'école? Quels seraient vos objectifs, et pourquoi?</p>	
(3) Quel type de soutien communautaire est disponible pour eux, et qui fournit ce soutien ?	<p>Qui considérez-vous comme vos amis à Montréal? Quelles qualités appréciez-vous le plus chez eux?</p> <p>Êtes-vous activement impliqué(e) dans une communauté religieuse ou culturelle?</p>	<p>Dans quelle mesure vos amis sont-ils en mesure de vous aider dans votre vie quotidienne?</p> <p>Quel type d'activités ou de festivités faites-vous ensemble?</p>	

<p>(4) Quel type de soutien des services sociaux est disponible pour eux, et de quel organisme de services sociaux provient-il ?</p>	<p>Le gouvernement offre une gamme de services pour aider les nouveaux arrivants à s'adapter à la vie au Québec. À quels services sociaux avez-vous eu recours? Qu'a été utile? Qu'a été inutile?</p>	<p>Par exemple, réinstallation - trouver un logement temporaire et permanent, installer une maison (meubles, literie, objets ménagers, vêtements, installation de l'électricité, d'Internet);</p> <p>Par exemple, aide à l'inscription aux programmes fédéraux et provinciaux - Programme fédéral de santé intérimaire;</p> <p>Par exemple, démarrage de l'école pour les enfants - comment s'inscrire à l'école, obtenir des fournitures scolaires;</p>	
<p>(5) Quelles sont leurs expériences en matière de parentalité depuis leur arrivée au Canada, notamment la recherche d'une garderie ou d'une école appropriée, les relations entre les enseignants et les parents, les stratégies de discipline, la vie familiale et la relation avec leurs enfants?</p>	<p>Comment décririez-vous un parent canadien typique? Quelles sont les similitudes et les différences entre vous et un parent canadien typique?</p> <p>Comment se portent vos enfants ? Ont-ils l'air heureux quand ils vont à la garderie ou à l'école? Ont-ils des amis?</p> <p>Comment décririez-vous votre communication avec les enseignants ou les éducateurs de votre enfant/vos enfants?</p>	<p>Votre enfant/vos enfants parlent-ils français?</p> <p>Votre enfant/vos enfants se sont-ils déjà plaints que quelqu'un (leurs pairs ou un enseignant/éducateur) à l'école n'était pas gentil?</p> <p>Avez-vous rencontré les enseignants et/ou les éducateurs? Avez-vous eu une conversation avec eux?</p>	<p>Les enseignants/éducateurs semblaient-ils intéressés par la façon dont votre enfant/vos enfants se portent à la maison?</p> <p>Si la communication a été difficile, l'école a-</p>

			t-elle essayé d'inclure un traducteur?
	<p><u>Réservé aux parents venus au Québec avec des enfants:</u></p> <p>Lorsque vous viviez à XXX, aviez-vous un soutien régulier de la part de la famille (par exemple, parents, frères et sœurs, beaux-parents)?</p> <p>Les méthodes que vous utilisez pour discipliner vos enfants ont-elles changé depuis votre arrivée au Canada? Si oui, pouvez-vous donner un exemple?</p> <p>Vos expériences en tant que parent ont-elles changé par rapport à votre période pré-migration? Si oui, pouvez-vous donner un exemple?</p>	<p>Si vous deviez laisser vos enfants pour faire une course, ou si vous vous sentiez fatigué(e) et aviez besoin que quelqu'un s'occupe de vos enfants pendant un moment, à qui avez-vous demandé de l'aide?</p> <p>Depuis que vous vivez ici, quelqu'un vous a-t-il dit : "Vous ne pouvez pas faire ça... vous êtes au Canada maintenant et vous n'avez pas le droit de..."? </p> <p>Êtes-vous plus inquiet(e) pour vos enfants qu'auparavant?</p>	<p>Y a-t-il quelque chose qui vous inquiète maintenant et dont vous n'aviez pas à vous soucier lorsque vous viviez à XXX?</p> <p>La langue de communication avec vos enfants a-t-elle changé depuis qu'ils ont commencé à aller à l'école en français?</p>
	<p><u>Pour les parents qui ont donné naissance après leur arrivée à Montréal:</u></p> <p>Comment vous êtes-vous senti(e) lorsque vous avez découvert que vous alliez avoir un bébé?</p> <p>Y avait-il quelque chose qui vous inquiétait?</p>	<p>Qui s'est occupé de vous après votre accouchement?</p> <p>Qu'avez-vous appris dans les cours prénatals</p>	<p>Comment vous sentez-vous en tant que parent lorsque vos propres parents ou</p>

	Quels services avez-vous reçus en ce qui concerne l'accouchement et la parentalité?	et de parentalité qui vous a semblé étrange ou incorrect?	beaux-parents vivent loin?
(6) Quel est leur niveau de satisfaction global depuis qu'ils vivent au Canada? Qu'est-ce qui fonctionne bien et quels sont les défis continus? Quel est leur niveau de stress en une "journée moyenne"?	Comment vous sentez-vous intégré(e) dans la société en général? Dans quelle mesure vous sentez-vous accueilli(e) par la société québécoise/canadienne? Avez-vous fait l'expérience de discrimination depuis votre arrivée? Si oui, comment cela vous a-t-il affecté	Quels sont certains des problèmes qui causent du stress dans votre vie quotidienne? Où et par qui ressentez-vous de la discrimination ou des préjugés?	Comment réagissez-vous et gérez-vous cela ?
	Vous sentez-vous optimiste à propos des 20 prochaines années de votre vie ici?	Quels sont certains de vos objectifs pour les 20 prochaines années? Vous semblent-ils réalisables? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?	
Réflexions finales	Que pensez-vous qui serait utile aux femmes qui arriveront au Canada à l'avenir? Y a-t-il quelque chose, ou un type de soutien, qui n'existe pas encore mais qui devrait exister? Au Québec, il y a une forte importance accordée à la communication entre les parents et les enseignants/éducateurs. Quelles suggestions donneriez-vous aux enseignants/éducateurs pour les aider à être plus compatissants ou empathiques envers des parents comme vous?	Quelles étaient vos attentes avant votre arrivée? Le Canada/le Québec a-t-il répondu à vos attentes? Quelles sont certaines des choses que les enseignants/éducateurs "ne comprennent pas" et qui vous frustrent ou vous rendent mécontent(e) de l'éducation de vos enfants au Canada/au Québec?	Que pourraient faire nos gouvernements pour maintenir ou renforcer la vie familiale des immigrants/réfugiés et leur efficacité en tant que parents? Que pourraient faire nos gouvernements différemment pour soutenir l'adaptation et l'intégration des immigrants ou des réfugiés?

Appendix 4c
Preguntas de la entrevista semiestructuradas

Las preguntas de la entrevista se dividirán en seis (6) temas principales:

7. ¿Cuáles son las experiencias relacionadas con la adaptación al idioma, educación, diferencias culturales?
8. ¿Cuáles son las expectativas y experiencias en relación con el empleo o la búsqueda de empleo?
9. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo comunitario está disponible para ellos y quién lo proporciona?
10. ¿Qué tipo de servicios sociales están disponibles para ellos y qué agencia lo brinda?
11. ¿Cuáles son sus experiencias como padres desde que llegaron a Canadá, incluyendo cómo encontrar una ubicación adecuada en una guardería/escuela/colegio, las relaciones entre padres y maestros, estrategias de disciplina, vida familiar y relación con sus hijos?
12. ¿Cuál es su nivel general de satisfacción desde que viven en Canadá? ¿Qué funciona y cuáles son las luchas continuas? ¿Cuál es su nivel de estrés en un “día normal”?

Temas	Preguntas	Guia	Guia
Introducción	Saludos; Establecer consentimiento; Reiteración del derecho a desistir en cualquier momento. ¿Cuáles fueron sus primeras impresiones cuando llegó a Quebec?	¿Utilizando 5 palabras describa cómo se sintió cuando llegó a Quebec? ¿Tenía familiares, amigos o amigos de amigos que ya vivían en Montreal?	

<p>(7) ¿Cuáles son las experiencias de los participantes relacionadas con su adaptación al idioma, educación, diferencias culturales?</p>	<p>¿Aprendiste o hablabas inglés o francés cuando vivías en XXX (país de origen)?</p> <p>¿Cómo describirías tu experiencia al tener que aprender francés (y/o inglés)?</p> <p>¿Qué idioma te resulta más fácil aprender: el inglés o el francés?</p> <p>Cuando llegaste por primera vez a Quebec, ¿cuáles fueron algunas de las cosas o costumbres que le parecieron más diferentes o extrañas?</p>	<p>¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que estás haciendo para tratar de mejorar tu comunicación en francés y/o inglés?</p> <p>¿Hubo cosas o costumbres diferentes que te gustaron o no te gustaron? ¿Por qué?</p>	
<p>(8) ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas y experiencia en relación con el empleo o la búsqueda de empleo?</p>	<p>Cuando estabas en XXX, fuiste a la escuela hasta YYY (nivel de educación). ¿Cómo cree que su nivel educativo anterior impactó su proceso de integración?</p>	<p>¿Ha experimentado algún desafío para encontrar empleo? ¿Por qué si o por qué no?</p> <p>¿Te hubiera gustado volver a la escuela? ¿Cuáles serían tus objetivos y por qué?</p>	
<p>(9) ¿Qué tipo de apoyo comunitario está disponible para ellos y quién brinda el apoyo?</p>	<p>¿A quiénes consideras tus amigos en Montreal? ¿Qué cualidades tienen que valoras más?</p> <p>¿Está involucrado activamente en alguna comunidad religiosa o cultural?</p>	<p>¿Hasta qué punto tus amigos pueden intervenir para ayudarte en tu vida diaria?</p> <p>¿Qué tipo de actividades de festividades hacéis juntos?</p>	
<p>(10) ¿Qué tipo de servicios sociales están disponibles para ellos y de qué organismo los obtiene?</p>	<p>El gobierno ofrece una gama de servicios para ayudar a los recién llegados a adaptarse a la</p>	<p>por ejemplo, reasentamiento: encontrar vivienda temporal y</p>	

	<p>vida en Quebec. ¿A qué servicios sociales ha recurrido? ¿Qué fue útil? ¿Qué no fue útil?</p>	<p>permanente, establecer una casa (muebles, ropa de cama, objetos domésticos, ropa, instalación de electricidad, internet);</p> <p>por ejemplo, ayuda para registrarse en programas federales y provinciales – Programa Federal Provisional de Salud,</p> <p>por ejemplo, inicio de clases para niños: cómo inscribirse en la escuela, cómo obtener útiles escolares;</p>	
<p>(11) ¿Cuáles son sus experiencias como padres desde que llegaron a Canadá, incluyendo cómo encontrar una ubicación adecuada en una guardería/escuela/colegio, las relaciones entre padres y maestros, estrategias de disciplina, vida familiar y relación con sus hijos?</p>	<p>¿Cómo describiría a un padre canadiense típico? ¿Cuáles son las similitudes y diferencias entre usted y un padre canadiense típico?</p> <p>¿Cómo están sus hijos? ¿Parecen felices cuando van a la guardería o a la escuela? ¿Han hecho amigos?</p> <p>¿Cómo describiría su comunicación con los maestros/educadores de su(s) hijo(s)?</p>	<p>¿Su(s) hijo(s) puede(n) hablar francés?</p> <p>¿Su hijo(a) alguna vez se quejó de que alguien (compañeros o maestro/educador) en la escuela no es amable?</p> <p>¿Ha conocido a los profesores y/o educadores? ¿Tuvo una conversación con ellos?</p>	<p>¿Los maestros/educadores parecieron interesados en cómo está(n) su(s) hijo(s) en casa?</p> <p>Si la comunicación ha sido difícil, ¿la escuela intentó incluir un traductor?</p>

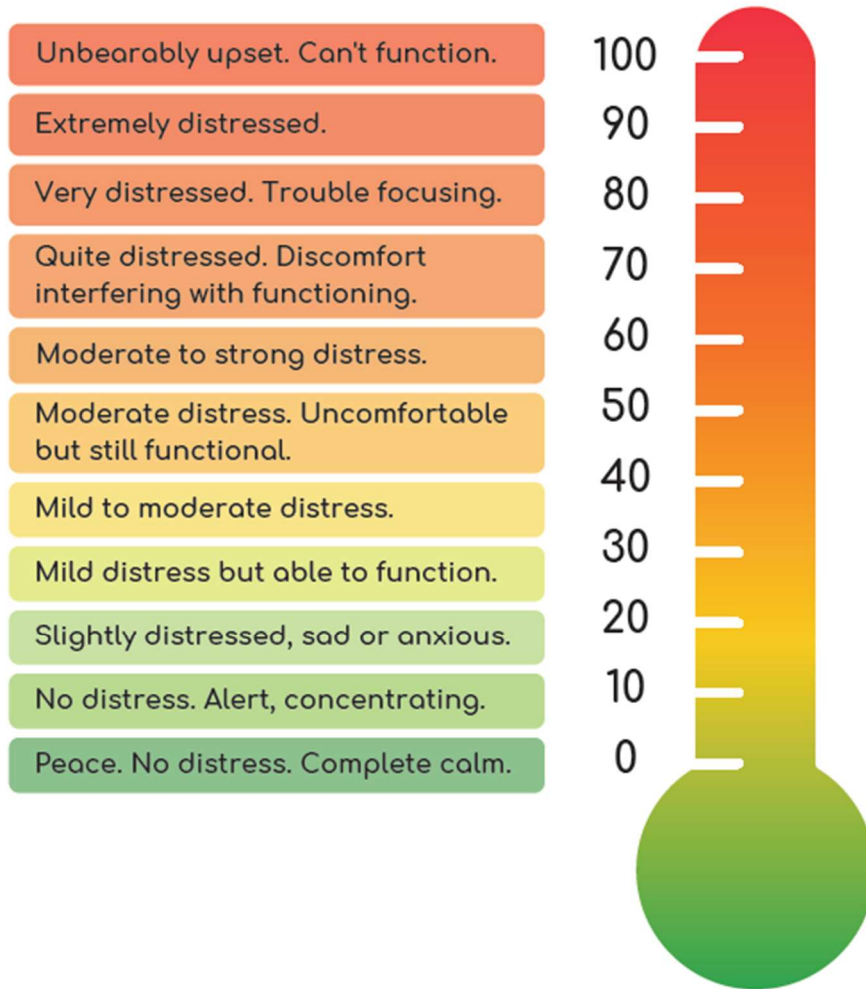
	<p><u>Sólo para padres que vinieron a Quebec con niños:</u></p> <p>Cuando vivía en XXX, ¿tenía apoyo regular de su familia (p. ej., padres, hermanos, suegros)?</p> <p>¿Han cambiado las formas en que disciplina a sus hijos desde que llegó a Canadá? Si es así, ¿puedes dar un ejemplo?</p> <p>¿Han cambiado sus experiencias como padre en comparación con su experiencia anterior a la migración? Si es así, ¿puedes dar un ejemplo?</p>	<p>Si necesitaba dejar a sus hijos para hacer un mandado, o si se siente cansado y necesita que alguien cuide a sus hijos por un tiempo, ¿a quién contactó para pedir ayuda?</p> <p>Desde que vive aquí, ¿alguien le ha dicho: "no puede hacer eso... ahora está en Canadá y no se le permite..."</p> <p>¿Estás más preocupado por tus hijos que antes?</p>	<p>¿Hay algo que te preocupa de lo que no tenías que preocuparte cuando vivías en XXX?</p> <p>¿Ha cambiado el idioma de comunicación con sus hijos desde que empezaron a ir al colegio en francés?</p>
	<p><u>Para padres que dieron a luz después de llegar a Montreal:</u></p> <p>¿Cómo te sentiste cuando supiste que ibas a tener un bebé?</p> <p>¿Había algo que le preocupara?</p> <p>¿Qué servicios recibió en relación con el parto y la crianza de los hijos?</p>	<p>¿Quién te cuidó después de que diste a luz?</p> <p>¿Qué ha aprendido en las clases prenatales y para padres que le pareció extraño o incorrecto?</p>	<p>¿Cómo te sientes al ser padre cuando tus propios padres o suegros viven lejos?</p>
<p>(12) ¿Cuál es su nivel general de satisfacción desde que viven en Canadá? ¿Qué funciona y cuáles son las luchas continuas? ¿Cuál es su</p>	<p>¿Cómo sientes que te has integrado a la sociedad en general?</p> <p>¿En qué medida se siente acogido por la sociedad quebequense/canadiense?</p>	<p>¿Cuáles son algunos de los problemas que causan estrés en su vida diaria?</p>	

<p>nivel de estrés en un “día normal”?</p>			
	<p>¿Ha experimentado alguna discriminación desde su llegada? Si es así, ¿cómo le afectó esto?</p>	<p>¿Dónde y por quién siente discriminación o prejuicio?</p>	<p>¿Cómo reaccionas y lo manejas?</p>
	<p>¿Se siente optimista sobre los próximos 20 años de su vida aquí?</p>	<p>Cuáles son algunos de tus objetivos durante los próximos 20 años? ¿Parecen alcanzables? ¿Por qué si o por qué no?</p>	
<p>Reflexiones finales</p>	<p>¿Qué crees que sería útil para las mujeres que ingresen a Canadá en el futuro? ¿Hay algo o algún tipo de apoyo que aún no existe y que debería existir?</p>	<p>¿Qué expectativas tenía antes de su llegada? ¿Canadá/Québec ha estado a la altura de sus expectativas?</p>	<p>¿Qué podrían hacer nuestros gobiernos para mantener o fortalecer la vida familiar y la eficacia parental de los inmigrantes/refugiados? ¿Qué podrían hacer nuestros gobiernos de manera diferente para apoyar la adaptación e integración de inmigrantes o refugiados?</p>

	<p>En Quebec, hay un fuerte énfasis en la comunicación entre padres y profesores/educadores. ¿Qué sugerencias les daría a los profesores/educadores que les ayudarían a ser más compasivos o empáticos con padres como usted?</p>	<p>¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que los profesores/educadores “no entienden” que le resultan frustrantes o le hacen infeliz al criar hijos en Canadá/Québec?</p>	
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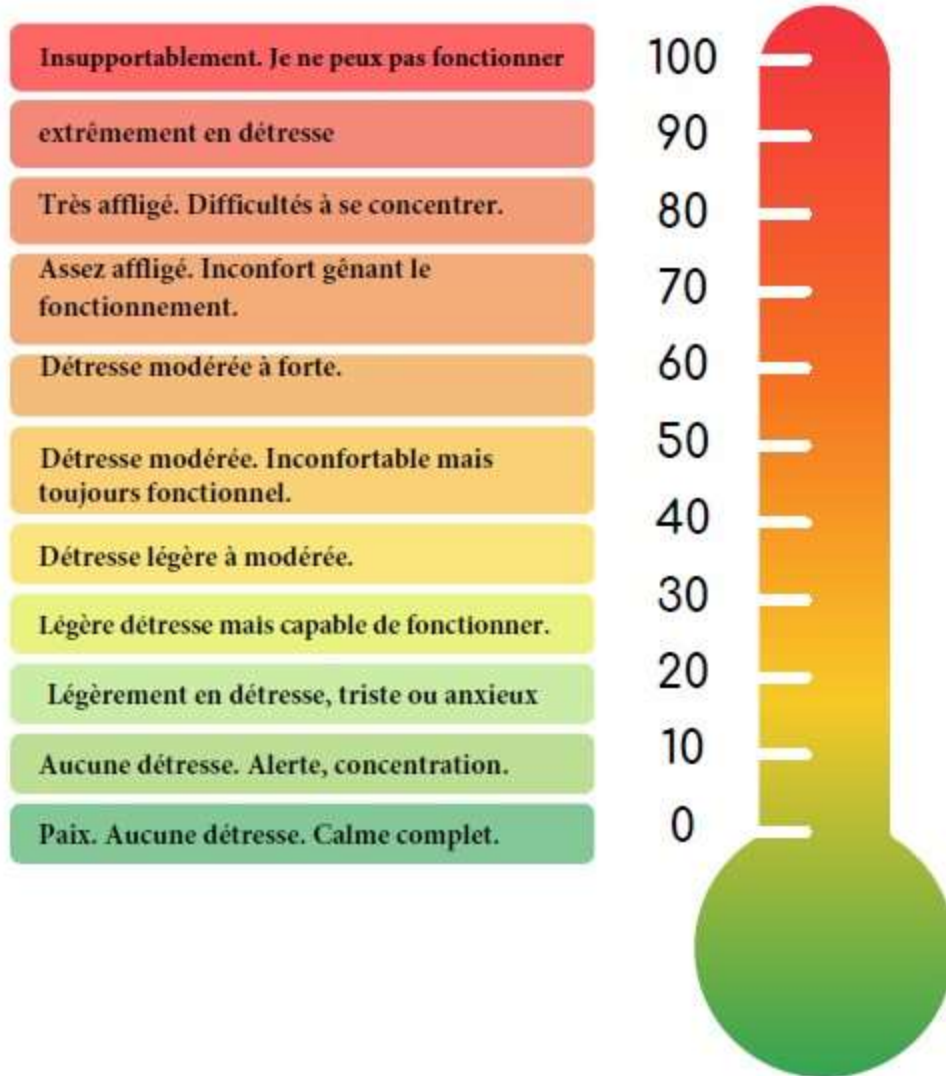
Appendix 5a

how stressed are you?



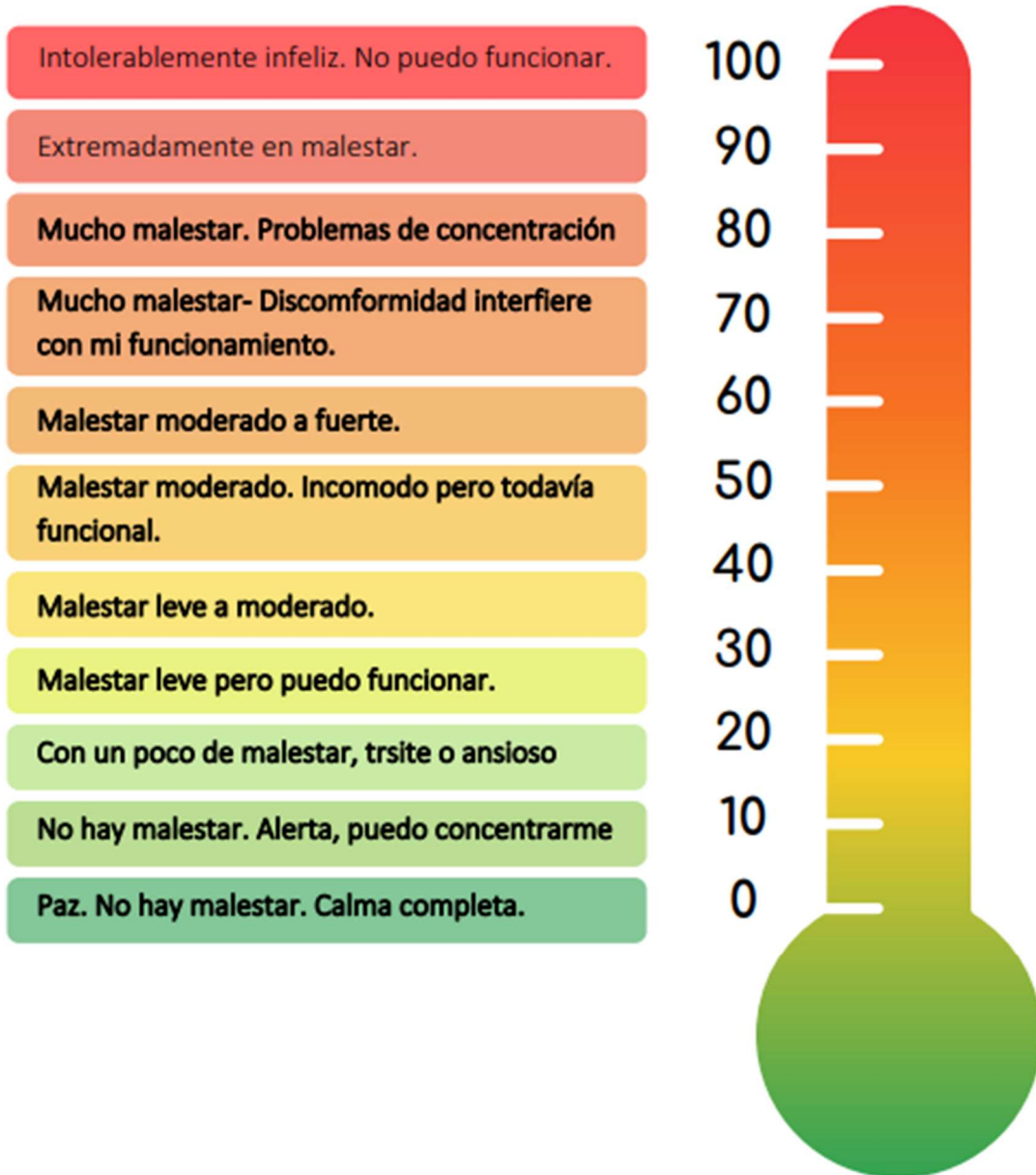
Appendix 5b

À quel point êtes-vous stressé?



Appendix 5c

¿Qué tan estresado estás?



Appendix 6

Resources and Services for Asylum-Seekers in Quebec

The Brown Paper : Upon entering Canada, asylum seekers received initial services to support themselves and their families. One of the most notable of these services is the *Brown Paper*, or "RPCD", which is a brown-coloured document issued by the Interim Federal Health Program that allows refugee claimants to access medical care while they await their appointment with a judge. However, some physicians do not accept the *Brown Paper*, necessitating referral to a panel of physicians who will provide care covered by the document (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2023).

The Welcome Guide: The Welcome Guide included information about accessing and scheduling hospital and medical appointments, how to enrol children in schools. Asylum-seekers who received care through the Welcome Guide were supported in securing medical appointments, including prenatal, perinatal and pediatric care. The guide also include resources for obtaining furniture (Welcome Collective, 2020).

Francization: Francization courses are free and sometimes paid courses offered by the Quebec government to individuals over the age of 16 years old. There are a series of 8 10-week leveled courses 25-30 hours per week located all over the province. The courses range from beginner to intermediate level French classes (Gouvernement du Quebec, 2024).

Praida: Praida is a regional program for the settlement and integration of asylum-seekers, assisting the asylum seekers to make referrals based on individual needs. The services offered at Praida include social functioning assessments, needs assessment and risk factor screening, evaluation of eligibility for temporary shelter and transportation, information on immigration, settlement, and integration processes, guidance to internal or external complementary resources, and well-being assessment for resettled refugees living on the island of Montreal (Praida, 2024).

Centre Alpha Lira: Centre Alpha Lira is a welcoming center for newcomers in Eastern Quebec around the Sept-Iles area aimed at supporting their successful integration into Quebec society. The organization offers training programs such as workshops on integration, learning French, socialization, and employment support and provides welcoming guides (Centre Alpha Lira, 2023).

Caci: The Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes (CACI), a non-profit organisation established in 1993. Its primary mission is to support newcomers settling in Quebec, and to assist all immigrant communities in integrating into Quebec society. CACI provides a comprehensive range of services including groups of French language learners and groups attending the "Objectif Intégration" sessions, which focus on democratic values and Quebec culture. CACI's services are available to the entire Greater Montreal population including permanent residents, international students, temporary foreign workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and Canadian citizens new to the province (CACI, 2024).

Appendix 7



SUMMARY PROTOCOL FORM (SPF)

Office of Research – Research Ethics Unit – GM 900 – 514-848-2424 ext. 2425 – oor.ethics@concordia.ca – www.concordia.ca/offices/oor.html

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL RESEARCHERS

All researchers (faculty and students), as well as anyone who is part of the research team, who will be working directly or indirectly with human participants and/or data derived from human participants, will be required to complete the TCPS [CORE](#) Certification. Once completed, please forward your certificate to oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Please take note of the following before completing this form:

- **You must not conduct research involving human participants until you have received your Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects (Certificate).**
- In order to obtain your Certificate, your study must receive approval from the appropriate committee:
 - Faculty research and student research involving greater than minimal risk are reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).
 - Minimal risk student research is reviewed by the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER)
 - Minimal risk student research conducted exclusively for pedagogical purposes is reviewed at the departmental level. **Do not use this form for such research.** Please use the Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form, available on the Office of Research (OOR) website referenced above, and consult with your academic department for review procedures. Note that activities of this nature are considered to be a pedagogical exercise and not research meant to contribute to the body of knowledge of the field. As such, while results may be disseminated in the public domain, they cannot be published in peer reviewed journals or presented at conferences as research findings.
 - Independent student research that is not affiliated with a thesis, a course, or the Science College undergraduate program are not reviewed by the OOR and will require review by an Independent Research Board (IRB).
- Research funding will not be released until your Certificate has been issued, and any other required certification (e.g. biohazard, radiation safety) has been obtained. For information about your research funding, please consult:
 - Faculty and staff: OOR
 - Graduate students: School of Graduate Studies
 - Undergraduate students: Financial Aid and Awards Office or the Faculty or Department
- Faculty members are required to submit studies for ethics approval by uploading this form, as well as all supporting documentation, to ConRAD. Access to ConRAD can be found in the MyConcordia portal.
 - If necessary, faculty members may complete this form and submit it by e-mail, from their official Concordia email address, to oor.ethics@concordia.ca along with all supporting documentation. Email submissions from non-Concordia email addresses will not be opened.
- Student researchers are asked to submit this form and all supporting documentation by e-mail from their official Concordia email address, except for departmental review. Please note:
 - Email submissions from non-Concordia email addresses will not be opened.
 - Handwritten forms will not be accepted.
 - Incomplete or omitted responses may result in delays.

- This form expands to accommodate your responses.
- Please ensure that all questions are answered completely (provide as much information as possible) and that samples of all materials are provided.
- Please allow the appropriate amount of time for your study to be reviewed:
 - UHREC reviews greater than minimal risk research at the monthly meeting, which is usually scheduled on the second Thursday of each month. You must submit your study by the 1st of the month to be reviewed at that month's meeting. Please confirm the date of the meeting on our webpage/FAQ section or with the staff of the Research Ethics Unit. Expedited reviews conducted by UHREC require a minimum of 8 weeks.
 - CER reviews generally require 4 to 6 weeks.
- Research must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:
 - The [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#)
 - The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
 - The [Official Policies of Concordia University](#), including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.
- The Certificate is valid for one year. In order to maintain their approval and renew their Certificate, it is the researcher's responsibility to submit an Annual Report Form one month before the expiry date that appears on the Certificate. Research must not be conducted under an expired certificate.
- Please note that all changes to an already approved protocol must be submitted for review and approved by the UHREC prior to being implemented. As such, you must submit an amendment request to the OOR.
- In order to ensure that ongoing research is compliant with current best practices and that the documents on file reflect the research activities researchers are carrying out, complete resubmissions are required every 5 years.
- Please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at 514-848-2424 ext. 2425 if you need more information on the ethics review process or the ethical requirements that apply to your study.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS

- If your research is part of your faculty supervisor's research, as approved, please have him or her inform the Research Ethics Unit via email that you will be working on the study.
- If your research is an addition to your faculty supervisor's study, please have him or her submit an amendment request, and any revised documents via e-mail. You must not begin your research until the amendment has been approved.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

- Please note that the SPF was designed to prompt reflection on the research project and all its possible implications. Please take the time to consider each question carefully in order to determine if and how it applies to your project.
- Please make sure that you are using the most recent version of the SPF by checking the OOR website.
- Please answer each question completely and provide as much information as possible; if you believe the question is not applicable, enter not applicable and provide justification.
- Do not alter the questions on this form or delete any material. Where questions are followed by a checklist, please answer by checking the applicable boxes.
- The form can be signed and submitted as follows:
 - Faculty research submitted on ConRAD will be considered as signed as per section 16.
 - SPFs for faculty research submitted via the faculty member's official Concordia e-mail address will also be considered as signed as per section 16.

- Both faculty and student researchers may submit a scanned pdf of the signature page by e-mail. In this case, the full SPF should also be submitted by e-mail in Word or pdf format (not scanned).
- If you do not have access to a scanner, the signature page may be submitted on paper to the OOR.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Please submit any additional documents as separate files in Word or PDF format.

STUDY TITLE: Factors Influencing Refugee Women's Adjustment in Quebec, Canada

1. BASIC INFORMATION

Principal Investigator's Status:

- Concordia faculty
- Concordia staff
- Visiting scholar
- Affiliate researcher
- Postdoctoral fellow
- PhD Student
- Master's student
- Undergraduate student (Honours thesis and Science College only)
- Other (please specify):

Type of Submission:

- New study
- 5-Year Resubmission. Approved protocol number (e.g. 30001234): _____
- Amendment Request. Approved protocol number (e.g. 30001234): _____

Where will the research be conducted?

- Canada
- Another jurisdiction: _____

2. STUDY TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Please be reminded that submissions containing attachments will only be accepted from an official Concordia email address

Role	Name	Department	Phone #	Concordia Email Address
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Principal Investigator	AnnaMarie Leduc de Vries	Education – Child Studies	514 773-8236	Annamarie.leducdevries@mail.concordia.ca
Faculty Supervisor (For student research only)	Dr. Elsa Lo	Education – Child Studies		Elsa.lo@concordia.ca

Additional Team Members

Please provide names of all team members that will be interacting with human participants or handling research data, as well as those authorized to correspond with the OOR on behalf of the PI.

For all external co-PIs and collaborators, please note that you must contact your respective REB to determine local requirements. Copies of alternate ethics certification will be required for full approval to be obtained at Concordia University.

Role	Name	Department	Phone #	e-mail address

Committee Members (For research conducted by PhD/Master students):

Committee Member	Department
Dr. Miranda D’Amico	Education – Child Studies
Dr. Harriet Hariclia Petrakos	Education – Child Studies

Multi-Jurisdictional Research

Does the research involve researchers affiliated with an institution other than Concordia? If so, please complete the following table, including the Concordia researcher’s role and description of the activities to be conducted at Concordia. If researchers have multiple institutional affiliations, please include a line for each institution. ([Chapter 8 of the TCPS 2](#))

If applicable, please provide a copy of any additional submissions and ethics certification from the collaborating institutions.

Not applicable.

Researcher's Name	Institutional Affiliation	Role in the research (e.g. principal investigator, coinvestigator, collaborator)	Research activities that will be conducted at this specific institution

3. PROJECT AND FUNDING SOURCES

Please list all sources of funds that will be used for this research. Provide the exact title of the funding source, if different from the title of this research and indicate the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself. Please note that fellowships or scholarships are not considered research funding for the purposes of this section.

Not Applicable.

Funding Source	Grant Holder	Project Title*	Award Period	
			Start Date	End Date

Notes:

* Please provide the project title as it appears on the Notice of Award or equivalent documentation.

† If you have applied for funding and the decision is still pending, please enter "applied".

4. OTHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Please include copies of all applicable certification with this application

- a. Have you completed your TCPS CORE Certification?

Note that this is a requirement for all research involving human participants

Yes No

b. Does the research involve any of the following? Check all that apply:

- Controlled goods or technology
- Hazardous materials or explosives
- Biohazardous materials
- Human biological specimens
- Radioisotopes, lasers, x-ray equipment or magnetic fields
- Protected acts (requiring professional certification)
- A medical intervention, healthcare intervention or invasive procedures

Please submit any certification or authorization documents that may be relevant to ethics review for research involving human participants.

Do not delete, re-order, or omit any section or any of the questions under each section heading. Answer every part of each section. Forms with incomplete sections will be returned.

5. LAY SUMMARY

Please provide a brief description of the research in everyday language. The summary should make sense to a person with no discipline-specific training and it should not use overly technical terms. Please describe the project and its objectives, including any research questions to be investigated. Please also include the anticipated value or benefits to society of the research. Finally, how will results be disseminated (e.g. thesis, presentations, internet, film, publications)?

Please do not copy / paste the thesis proposal or grant application.

Research suggests that refugee and immigrant women's adaptation to their new country are likely to experience difficulty in relation to their parenting experiences. Two main factors are: (1) feeling a lack of support because they are far from family and their previous support networks, and (2) they must also navigate in a society where childrearing practices may differ from what is considered the norm in their home country. However, there are also many factors that can contribute to women's positive adaptation. For instance, those who have higher levels of internal spirituality tend to be able to adopt positive coping skills while also adapting positively to their new cultures. Having previous levels of English and/or French supports women's integration based on ease of access to services and support. Having prior skills and education that are readily transferrable to the new country facilitates entry into the workforce. The accessibility of social support, including childcare and parenting services, is especially positive for refugee or immigrant women/mothers. Furthermore, resilience, which is a person's ability to persevere or adapt positively when experiencing major life challenges, increases the likelihood of establishing positive relationships and seeking experiences which will lead to a favourable adaptation.

The current research project will explore refugee women/mothers' adaptation in Montreal, an urban, Quebec society. The research has four identified goals, which include the following:

1. provide the space for refugee women and mothers to share their needs and experiences since their arrival in Canada;
2. explore the areas in which they feel adequately supported, as well as areas where they have unmet needs;
3. Identify the sources of social and governmental support available to them; and

4. understand how their unmet needs impact their personal lives, family and parenting experience.

The findings of this research study will provide insight into refugee women's lived experience, including their experience in parenting, specifically in an urban Quebec context. It would also shed light on the social and governmental systems that could mitigate short-term and long-term stressors and risks to refugee mothers of young children.

The final study results and write-up will be submitted to Concordia University's library repository, Spectrum, as is standard in fulfilling the requirements of a master's-level thesis. The results of the final study are intended to be published.

6. RISK LEVEL AND SCHOLARLY REVIEW

As part of the research, will participants be exposed to risk that is greater than minimal?

Greater than minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of possible harms and risks implied by participation in the research are greater than those encountered by participants in aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.

Yes

No

Has this research received favorable review for scholarly merit?

Scholarly review is not required for minimal risk research.

For faculty research, funding from a granting agency such as CIHR, FQRSC, or CINQ is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the name of the agency.

For student research, a successful defense of a thesis or dissertation proposal is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the date of your proposal defense.

Yes Funding agency or date of defense: _____

No

Not required

If you answered no, please submit a Scholarly Review Form, available on the OOR website.

7. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Will any of the participants be part of the following categories?

Please only check a box if the category of participant is a target population for this study.

- Minors (individuals under 18 years old)
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Individuals with cognitive disabilities
- Indigenous peoples of Canada and/or abroad
- Vulnerable individuals or groups (vulnerability may be caused by limited capacity or limited access to social goods such as rights, opportunities and power, and includes individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of the research project, or those who live with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis)

a) Please describe potential participants, including any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

The participants will be 6-8 women who are:

- Aged 18 years or older,
- Entered Canada as refugees,
- Who currently parent at least one child aged 12-years or younger,
- Who can speak English or French, or are comfortable using a translator.

b) Indicate if participants are a captive population (e.g., prisoners, residents in a center) or are in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher such as being students, clients, patients or family members. If so, explain how perceived coercion/undue influence will be addressed in order to ensure that participants do not feel pressure to participate or perceive that they may be penalized for choosing not to participate. ([Article 3.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

Not applicable to this study.

c) Please describe in detail how potential participants will be identified and invited to participate. In addition, please submit all recruitment materials to be used (e.g. poster(s), flyers, cards, advertisement(s), letter(s), telephone, email, and other verbal scripts). ([Article 3.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

Note that while the snowball method of recruitment is acceptable, in order to protect the potential participants' right to privacy and confidentiality, the researcher is not permitted to initiate direct contact with a potential participant whose contact information is not publicly available. Rather, recruitment material must be provided by the researcher to their contacts for further dissemination. Those interested would then contact the researcher directly.

Participants will be recruited at several community levels: (1) through word-of-mouth or through contacts via social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), (2) university's Office for International Students, (3) the Refugee Center located at: 1610 Sainte-Catherine O Bureau 40, (4) community places where there is likely to be a refugee population, such as places for religious and/or community gatherings.

Individuals who are interested in participating will also be asked if they have any friends or family that they believe would fit the criteria for the present study. In the case where participants may have an individual in mind, they will be given the option to pass on the student researcher's information (e.g. email address and phone number).

Interested participants would then contact the student researcher directly if they are interested in participating in the study.

- d) Please provide the anticipated start and end date of the research phase involving interaction with human participants, for the purposes of recruitment and/or data collection.

Note that recruitment or direct interaction for data gathering purposes with human participants is not permitted until full ethics approval is awarded. Conducting research without valid ethics approval is considered research misconduct. Only UHREC/CER approved versions of research documents can be used.

The start date for the current research will begin as soon as ethics approval is granted with the flyer distribution and interviews with interested participants. The end of data collection is expected to be in May 2024, and the final thesis write-up would be completed by the end of August 2024.

- e) Please provide a detailed, sequential description of the procedures to be used in this study. Describe all methods that will be used (e.g. fieldwork, surveys interviews, focus groups, standardized testing, video/audio taping), as well as the setting in which the research will take place. In addition, please submit all instruments to be used to gather data, for example questionnaires or interview guides for each type of participant.

The setting of the research will be: (1) at Concordia University in a reserved room in the FG building, or one of the research offices at the Observational Nursery of the Department of Education, or (2) in a private room at a community location where the participations has an established affiliation (e.g., The Refugee Centre), or (3) online via Zoom or Teams. Participants will be given the option to choose based on their personal comfort and individual circumstances.

Participants who gave consent to take part in the study will be asked to complete 3 questionnaires and one semistructured questionnaire:

- (a) 15-item demographics questionnaire completed by the participant – See Appendix 3a and 3b,
- (b) A 28-item self-report resilience survey – See appendix 4a, 4b, and 4c,
- (c) Stress Thermometer – See Appendix 5a and 5b
- (d) and the semi-structured questionnaire – See appendix 6a and 6b

The data collected from the three measurements will be saved on an Excel file using student-researcher's private Microsoft Excel 2021.

Subsequently, each participant will be scheduled (via phone or an online link such as Calendly or Doodle) to meet with the researcher for a semi-structured interview. In the event that the participants agree to the presence of a translator, the meeting location and time will be scheduled according to all parties' availability. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim via a built-in Voice Memos application on Samsung (Android iOS, version). The phone is not currently linked to a personal cloud and will remind on the device. In the event that an in-person meeting is not possible for the participant, and if the participant prefers to meet online, then a Zoom/Teams meeting could be scheduled. All online meetings will be recorded using the built-in features of the Zoom/Teams platforms. If a participant cannot meet in person and is not comfortable or not able to meet on Zoom/Teams, a telephone interview will be scheduled and recorded on the student-researcher's phone, where it will later be transferred onto the computer hard drive.

Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews will be transcribed and analyzed through Qualitative Research Methods that involve three levels of coding. In the first level of coding, descriptive and in-vivo coding will be used (Saldaña, 2021) to identify the overall theme of each participant's responses. This level of coding will include values and emotion coding, as it is likely that parents' personal values and emotions surrounding their migration and adaptation experiences will surface during the interviews. In the second coding cycle, the participants' responses will be organized into distinct categories using focused coding. Finally, axial coding will further group categories into unique themes. This form of coding is appropriate as such themes may allow for the emergence of a cyclical relation in the participants' lived experience (Saldaña, 2021). Excel Spreadsheet will be used to record the thematic sameness or differences between the participants.

Please describe any incentive participants will receive. Indicate the terms (lump sum or prorated), the value, and means of disbursement. ([Article 3.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

Please note that if you use a lump sum payment, the amount must be paid in full in the event a participant withdraws.

Not applicable, participants will not receive any monetary incentive.

f) Do any of the research procedures require special training, such as conducting interviews on sensitive topics and/or with vulnerable populations or medical procedures? If so, please indicate who will conduct the procedures, what their qualifications are and whether they have previous experience. For a student PI, please provide information on the mentorship available to you.

It is not applicable; no special training is required.

g) When doing research with certain groups of participants (e.g. school children, cultural groups, institutionalized people) and/or in other jurisdictions, organizational /community/governmental permission is sometimes needed. If applicable, please explain how this will be obtained. Include copies of approval letters once obtained. ([Article 9.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

The student researcher's supervisor is a licensed psychologist in Quebec; she will assist the student researcher in addressing sensitive topics that may arise during the interview process.

8. INFORMED CONSENT

Please note that each participant should be provided with a copy of the consent form in addition to the one they sign, which is to be kept by the researcher. ([Chapter 3 of the TCPS 2](#))

Written consent forms and oral consent scripts should follow the consent form template available on the OOR website. Please include all of the information shown in the sample, adapting it as necessary for the research.

Translated versions must be based off of the final approved consent form and provided to the OOR.

a) Please explain in detail the process for soliciting informed consent from potential participants. In addition, please submit the written consent form.

Participants will be given copies of the questionnaires along with a copy of the semi-structured interview questions at the same time as they are provided with their consent forms. This will allow participants to read all of the forms before they provide their informed consent.

b) Please note that written consent is the preferred method for obtaining consent. However, in certain circumstances, oral consent may be appropriate. If oral consent will be used, please submit a consent script and describe how consent will be documented.

This is not applicable; written consent will be used in the current research project.

The use of an oral consent procedure needs to be justified and its approval is at the discretion of the applicable ethics committee (either the UHREC or CER). Note that convenience cannot be used as justification.

c) Does the research involve individuals belonging to cultural traditions in which individualized consent may not be appropriate, or in which additional consent, such as group consent or consent from community leaders, may be required? If so, please describe the appropriate format of consent, and how it will be solicited. ([Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2](#))

Not applicable to the current study.

9. DECEPTION

a) Does the research involve any form of deception of participants? If so, please describe the deception, explain why the deception is necessary, and explain how participants will be de-briefed at the end of their participation. If deception is involved, please submit a debriefing script. ([Article 3.7A of the TCPS 2](#))

Please note that deception includes giving participants false information, withholding relevant information, and providing information designed to mislead.

Not applicable. This research does not involve any form of deception. As part of their consent process, participants will be informed of the research study's goals and intentions.

- b) If deception is involved, please note that participants must be provided with the opportunity to refuse consent and request the withdrawal of their data once they have been made aware of the details of the study. This should take place while it is still possible to give participants this option (e.g. prior to de-identification, etc.) . Include a checkbox in the debriefing script so participants can clearly indicate their choice and a section for the participant's signature. Please provide a copy of the debriefing script. ([Article 3.7A of the TCPS 2](#))

Not applicable to the current study.

10. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL AND DATA REMOVAL

- a) Please explain how participants will be informed that they are free to discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequences. ([Article 3.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

Participants will be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any moment during the research process, without any consequences. Before the semi-structured interview takes place (see appendix 6a and 6b), participants will again be reminded that their participation is voluntary. If the student-researcher notices that the participants are displaying signs of discomfort e.g. verbally expressing discomfort or physically withdrawing, crying, etc. The participants will be asked if they wish to continue and reminded of their right to withdraw.

- b) Please explain what will happen to the information obtained from a participant if they withdraw. For example, will their information be automatically destroyed or excluded from analysis if the participant discontinues? Please describe any limits on withdrawing a participant's data, such as a deadline related to publishing data. Note that a clear deadline, such as a specific date or timeframe, must be provided. ([Article 3.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, all of the data associated with the participant will be permanently and securely purged (e.g., files deleted, questionnaires and consent forms shredded). Participants will have up until June 1st 2024 to choose to withdraw their participation even if their interviews have already taken place.

11. RISKS AND BENEFITS ([Articles 2.10, 2.11 of the TCPS 2](#))

- a) Please identify any foreseeable benefits to participants. If there are no benefits, state this explicitly. *Note that incentives are not considered a benefit to participating in a research study.*

There are no direct benefits to the participants for their participation in the research study. However, in participating in the study, the participants may indirectly benefit from having their experience recognized and accepted without judgement. The student-researcher, with the support of her thesis supervisor who is also a developmental psychologist, could also provide referral sources related to parenting.

- b) Describe the scientific, scholarly or societal benefits of the proposed research

While Statistics Canada provides some of the quantitative data for the understanding of refugee women's experience, there is limited information that is phenomenological and qualitative in nature that highlights their experiences adapting to Canada as women and mothers. Moreover, refugee mothers/women who arrive in Montreal are likely to experience a unique set of challenges related to language requirements (French) and limited access to services in their native language. For this reason, the exploration of refugee women/mothers living in Montreal could shed light on the experiences of women living in Quebec.

- c) Please identify any foreseeable risks to participants, including any physical or psychological discomfort or fatigue; emotional, social, legal, or political risks; risks to their relationships with others, or to their financial wellbeing. Please take the time to consider this question and mention any type of risk, no matter how remote the likelihood of it occurring.

Because the participants are refugee women, they are new to Canada and discussing topics such as their needs and their support systems or completing their resilience questionnaire can possibly lead participants to feel more guarded, uncomfortable or untrusting.

- d) Please describe how the risks identified above will be minimized. For example, if individuals who are particularly susceptible to these risks will be excluded from participating, please describe how they will be identified. Furthermore, if there is a chance that researchers will discontinue participants' involvement for their own well-being, please state the criteria that will be used.

Throughout the research duration, the student-researcher will exercise sensibility and caution to monitor the risk of emotional and psychological discomfort by: (1) Verbally checking in throughout the interview using phrases such as "Do you feel comfortable discussing this?" or "Are you feeling comfortable?", (2) observing and reflecting on non-verbal body language, such as gaze (avoidance), crying, voice tone, fidgetiness, or silence.

- e) Should the risks detailed above be realized, please describe how the situation will be managed. For example, if referrals to appropriate resources are available, please provide a list. If there is a chance that participants will need first aid or medical attention, please describe what arrangements have been made.

In the event that participants appears to be distressed or uncomfortable, their participant as a voluntary will be reiterated, i.e. the participant has the right to withdraw her participation without consequence, and data collected up until that moment will be purged.

12. REPORTABLE SITUATIONS AND INCIDENTAL FINDINGS

a) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a situation that would have to be reported to appropriate authorities, such as child abuse or an imminent threat of serious harm to specific individuals? If so, please describe the situation, how it would be handled, and who the proper authorities are. ([Article 5.1 of the TCPS 2](#))

Please note that legal requirements apply in such situations. It is the researcher's responsibility to be familiar with the laws in force in the jurisdiction where the research is being conducted.

Because the current research proposal is interested in investigating parental support and strategies, there is a possibility that parents reveal that they are using parenting strategies which are inappropriate or abusive. In the event that such a finding was to occur, I would consult with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Elsa Lo. Following a supportive and educational stance, the parents may be referred to external support such as the CLSC, CSSS or whichever form of support or intervention is deemed appropriate for the specific context. If necessary, the appropriate authorities will be contacted (DPJ).

b) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a material incidental finding? If so, please describe how it would be handled. ([Article 3.4 of the TCPS 2](#))

Please note that a material incidental finding is an unanticipated discovery made in the course of research but that is outside the scope of the research, such as a previously undiagnosed medical or psychiatric condition that has significant welfare implications for the participant or others.

In the event that a participant expresses concerns related to psychosocial or mental health issues, appropriate resources will be provided such as:

Maison St-Jacques – provides group counselling free of charge

<https://maisonstjacques.com>

514 526-4132

AMI-Quebec – Offers free counselling for caregivers (families and friends of someone living with mental illness)

Centre de reference de Grand Montreal

<https://crgm.ca>

PRAIDA (Regional Program for the Settlement and Integration of Asylum Seekers)

<https://www.ciusscentreouest.ca/programmes-et-services/praida-programme-regional-daccueil-et-dintegration-des-demandeurs-dasile/>

PARACOM is consortium aimed to assist individuals by providing alternative mental health support through community support

<https://paracom.ca>

13. CONFIDENTIALITY, ACCESS, AND STORAGE

a) Please describe the path of the data from collection to storage to its eventual archiving or disposal, including details on short and long-term storage (format, duration, and location), measures taken to prevent unauthorized access, who will have access, and final destination (including archiving, or destruction). ([Article 5.3 of the TCPS 2](#))

1. The devices used by the student-researcher to collect data (e.g., laptop computer, mobile phone) will be password-protected. All data collected will be safeguarded in password-protected encrypted folders on the hard drive and backed up on a password-protected external USB drive. The USB key will be stored in a secure, locked cabinet in the researcher's thesis supervisor's office.
2. The consent forms, which includes the participants name and other private information, will be kept in a confidential encrypted folder titled "consent forms" in the master folder
3. There will be separate encrypted folders within the master folder titled "Participant 1" "Participant 2" "Participant 3" "Participant 4" "Participant 5" "Participant 6" and "Participant 7" Inside of these folders will contain their Demographic Questionnaires, their Resilience Questionnaires, their Stress Thermometer, as well as the recordings and transcriptions of their semi-structure interviews.
4. Additionally, there will be a final encrypted folder titled "data," which will contain the Excel tables with comparative data as well as the Excel folder used to code the collective transcriptions thematically.
5. The USB key will be kept indefinitely, and the data stored in the USB key could inform future research or be published gradually.
6. All data files on the researcher's laptop computer and mobile phone will be securely purged 5 years after the study is completed.

b) Please identify the access that the research team will have to participants' identity:

If you check more than one box, please specify the category of participants it applies to.

	Category	Definition	Category of Participant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disclosed	The research team will know the participants' real identity and it will be revealed in disseminated results.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participant Choice	The research team will know the participants' real identity. Participants will be able to choose which level of disclosure they wish for their real identity in disseminated results.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confidential	The research team will know the participants' real identity. Participants' identities will not be disclosed in disseminated results.	

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coded	Direct identifiers will be removed and replaced with a code on the information provided. Only specific individuals on the research team will have access to the code, meaning that they can re-identify the participant if necessary. The real identity of the participant will not be revealed in disseminated results.	All Participants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pseudonym	The research team will not know the real identity of the participant. Information provided will be linked to an individual, but that individual will only provide a fictitious name which will appear in disseminated results.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indirectly identified	The information provided is not associated with direct identifiers (such as the participant's name), but it is associated with information that can reasonably be expected to identify an individual through a combination of indirect identifiers (such as place of residence or unique personal characteristics) for both the research team and in disseminated results	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anonymized	The information provided had identifiers associated with it at the time of collection, but these identifiers were entirely removed from the data set before the data were made available to the Concordia research team. The research team will not be able to link the information provided to the participant's real identity.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anonymous	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it, and the risk of identification of individuals is low, or very low.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe)		

- c) Would the revelation of participants' identity be particularly sensitive, for example, because they belong to a stigmatized group? If so, please describe any special measures that will be taken to respect the wishes of the participants regarding the disclosure of their identity.

Not applicable.

- d) Please describe what access research participants will have to study results, and any additional information that will be provided to participants post-participation (e.g. resources, etc.).

Once the M.A. Thesis is completed, the participants will be given the opportunity to ask any questions related to their experience in the study. If they wish to obtain the findings of the study, they are invited to contact (by phone or e-mail) the research or her thesis supervisor, and a condensed summary can be sent to them.

- e) In some research traditions, such as participatory action research, and research of a socio-political nature, there can be concerns about giving participant groups a "voice". This is especially the case with groups that have been oppressed or whose views have been suppressed in their cultural location. If these concerns are relevant for the current participant groups, please describe how they will be addressed in the project. ([Articles 9.6](#) and [Section 10.a](#) of the TCPS 2)

Please note that for the purpose of this evaluation, co-researchers in a participatory research action are considered participants and must consent to participate and provide oral or written consent.

In the case of phenomenological research, accurately representing women's experiences is vital to the goal of the research. For this reason, member-checking will take place before the final research write-up, whereby participants will be asked to confirm the accuracy of representation along with the comfort regarding information shared.

14. ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the conduct of this research. For example, are there responsibilities to participants beyond the purposes of this study?

Not Applicable.

15. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

Study Title:

Please complete the following:

- I agree that this ethics application accurately describes the research project that I plan to conduct.
- I agree that no recruitment or data collection for this protocol will commence before ethics clearance.
- No changes will be made to the research project as described in this protocol without receiving ethics clearance from the relevant Research Ethics Board (HREC or CER). I will submit a detailed amendment request if I wish to make modifications to this research
- The Research Ethics Board will be notified immediately of any alleged or real ethical breaches or concerns, adverse events, or participant complaints that arise during or after the course of this research project.
- An Annual Report must be submitted to the Office of Research, in the month prior to the expiration of the current certificate, in order to renew the ethics approval for an additional year.

I agree to conduct all activities conducted in relation to the research described in this form in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:

- The [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#)
- The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
- The [Official Policies of Concordia University](#), including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.

Principal Investigator Signature: Anna-Marie Leduc de Vries

Date: _____ 2024/03/08

FACULTY SUPERVISOR STATEMENT (REQUIRED FOR STUDENT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS):

- I have read and approved this project.
- I affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval, and that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human participant research at Concordia University. I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: 

Date: _____ March 4, 2024